



# An analysis of African journalists' needs in migration coverage

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# AN ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN JOURNALISTS' NEEDS IN MIGRATION COVERAGE

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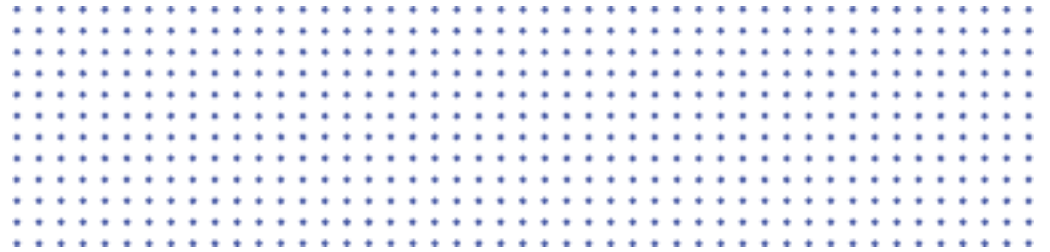
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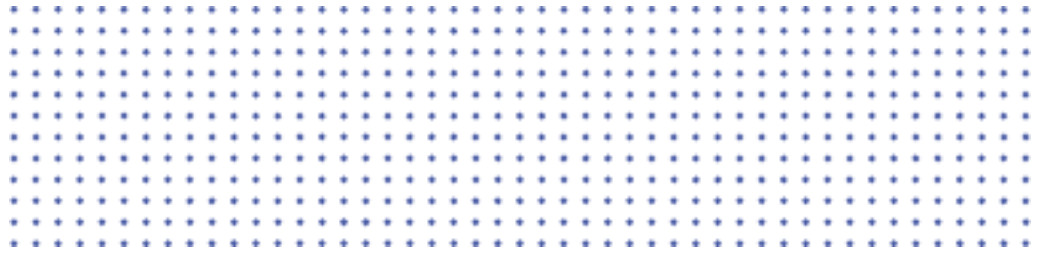




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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**he report summarizes the industry needs in the field of reporting migration and mobility. It presents an evaluation of the opportunities, but also the challenges and recommendations to covering migration and mobility through data collected via focus group discussions and key informant in-depth interviews. It provides insights on undertaking an online course on reporting migration and mobility and suggests some of the topics that could be included in a such a course.

The African media is such that most practitioners, especially in the expansive radio sector, are often not formally trained. They are identified for their talent in verbal communication and hired as entertainers who perform journalism functions as well. To maintain professionalism, it becomes imperative to train formally, but especially so on the job.

The indicative experiences of media professionals were sought and obtained from four media managers (one in Burkina Faso, one in Uganda and one in Malawi); five editors that in several cases also doubled as journalists (two in Burkina Faso, one in Malawi and two in Uganda); stakeholders that comprised organizations and researchers on the topic of migration and mobility (five in Burkina Faso, seven in Uganda, and two in Malawi). In addition, the views of students who had experience working with the media were sought from four in Burkina Faso, three from Malawi and two from Uganda.

Media professionals in Uganda note that reporting on migration and refugees is not deliberate to attract consistent or weekly reporting and that it is hard to get story sources where a lot of information is hidden and with limited access. They consider reporting as often incident-based and they think that reporters are often deployed according to the nature of the issue at hand.

In Malawi, the professionals who were interviewed believe that there are no dedicated reporters on the issue of migration and refugees which also means that “every reporter is at liberty to cover such stories.” They consider their coverage is framed around the human rights of the migrants and refugees: reporting tends to highlight the welfare of the refugees, exposing any human rights violations that one might be aware of.

In Burkina Faso, the group of media managers and editors also doubled as journalists. They noted that due to a shortage of media professionals, the roles are not always strictly defined. On many occasions, depending on the importance of an issue at hand, some editors have covered the stories themselves. However, they noted that for West Africa, the issue is a top priority since the region is a hotspot for labor migrants to Europe. Burkina Faso has also been for years a host of refugees from neighboring countries such as Ivory Coast and Mali. The story of Burkinabe who are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as well as those who are refugees in neighboring countries tends to be politically sensitive and some propaganda is twisting the narrative.



Other stakeholders complete the picture. Peggie Ayesiga, a Protection Officer Legal in the Ugandan Office of the Prime Minister in charge of the protection of refugees, registration and providing durable solutions noted how the reporting about refugees in Uganda media was “mostly negative.” Refugees are portrayed as foreigners taking up jobs and resources for nationals while receiving food and services from government and UN agencies at comparably better levels than nationals. For Dr. Ojara De-Saxone Pius, Director of the Refugee Law Project in the School of Law at Makerere University, “It is our responsibility as stakeholders to shine a spotlight on the many success stories of refugees and migrants.”

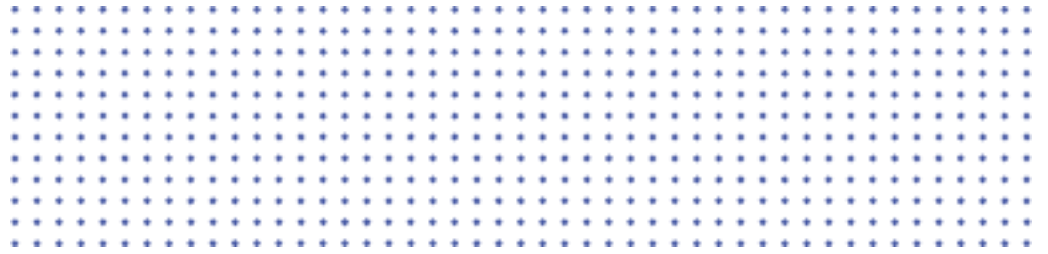
In West Africa, especially on the prevalent issues of illegal migration that trek through the Sahara Desert, professionals highlight how the stories are often picked from the Western news agencies without proper context. Many NGOs develop their own strategies for data collection, research, and information on migration and work with the mass media for awareness-raising work that focuses on showing the channels of regular migration and pointing out the dangers of irregular migration.

The proposed Small Private Online Course (SPOC) will have to address two major training tracks. The first one will be the exploration of the rather complex thematic on migration and mobility. All respondents pointed to the need to understand the nuances between the various terms used by journalists (Lengauer, p.35-42).

The second strand to address are the various pedagogical requirements to offer the course online in countries where infrastructure for online learning and teaching is still problematic.

The CoMMPASS project will, therefore, trigger a substantial number of high-quality journalistic pieces on migration and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa media (audience-oriented, people-centered, research-based, and ethically aware).





# INTRODUCTION

**M**igration is now one of the key challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the most vulnerable countries and especially in Africa. In order to raise awareness and empower citizens to counter the misinformation and disinformation often associated with these issues, media coverage is therefore crucial.

From 2023 to 2026, the EU-funded Erasmus+ CoMMPASS project (“Communicating Migration and Mobility - E-Learning Programs and Newsroom Applications for sub-Saharan Africa”) aims to build a distance learning platform on this topic for journalists and future journalists in Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Malawi, before expanding to other African partner countries. The online course will be available in English, French, Portuguese, and Swahili.

Project partners from six African and two European universities will jointly decide on the structure, content, and technology of this distance learning facility. They share their specific competencies for the common good, and all partners benefit through mutual knowledge sharing and capacity building.

Numerous interviews and reports have highlighted the gaps and shortcomings in this area, but there are very few specific academic studies. In a series of workshops with leading African journalism educators, several members of the CoMMPASS project have jointly identified specific challenges that need to be addressed in higher journalism education and newsrooms in African countries when it comes to covering migration: The issue is severely underreported in African countries (Assopgoum, 2011; Jaiteh, 2015; Chinje, 2016) or the same frames used by Western media are used (Harber, 2015; Serwornoo, 2018).

Against this background, the proposed online course should be equally useful and applicable to newsrooms and the media industry in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as to local NGOs and other media institutions. Given the current drastically changed conditions for education and training due to the Covid-19 crisis and the move towards digitisation to cope with the massive influx of new students, the need for such an online tool has become even more urgent, as has the need to build bridges between academia and industry.

Given that no academic curriculum for journalism training offers a substantive and interdisciplinary introduction to the analysis of migration issues, the design of this programme was considered in the light of four state-of-the-art reports.

The first report set the stage by reviewing the literature on migration and mobility, with a focus on sub-Saharan and North African narratives in countries of origin, transit, and destination for migrants. It includes good practices in reporting on migration and mobility and lessons learned.

The second maps best practices, methods, and techniques of e-learning curricula. It includes the results of a large-scale baseline study of potential beneficiaries in the six African universities that will be targeted initially, detailing students' needs and constraints in relation to e-learning.







# RATIONALE & DISCUSSION

The CoMMPASS project proposes to conceptualize a Small Private Online Course (SPOC) curriculum on media and migration for sub-Saharan Africa Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The project offers to support the highly needed digital transformation of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). In that regard, six HEIs from three developing countries namely Burkina Faso, Malawi and Uganda will participate in the project; alongside eight HEIs from several other African countries as associated partners.

Further, the project also envisages that the developed SPOC would be used by practicing journalists. The African media is such that most practitioners, especially in the expansive radio sector, are often not formally trained. They are identified for their talent in verbal communication and hired as entertainers who perform journalism functions as well. To maintain professionalism, it becomes imperative to train formally, but especially so on the job. In the scope of the CoMMPASS project, the African Media Initiative (AMI), which coordinates up to 2,000 members comprising the media industry across Africa, will serve as the main media industry partner to ensure such training is entrenched in newsrooms.

In this status report, insights are presented as obtained from focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews conducted with editors, media managers, journalists, and other stakeholders working within the media sector of the three project partner countries namely Burkina Faso, Malawi, and Uganda. In a subsequent phase, the views from other project associated partners that include six additional African countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Guinea-Bissau) will be captured. The report summarizes the industry needs in the field of reporting migration and mobility (mainly refugees). It presents an evaluation of the opportunities, but also the challenges and recommendations to covering migration and mobility.

The report also provides insights from the respondents on undertaking an online course on reporting migration and mobility. The respondents suggest some of the topics that could be included in a course on migration and mobility; and what format the course should take.

## Methodology

The findings within this report were obtained through mainly Focus group discussions (FGDs) and Key informant in-depth interviews (KIs) using interview guides. The FGD technique, also referred to by Wimmer and Dominick (2014, p.136) as “group interviewing”, brings together in one session individuals with diverse views on the topic. Hansen et al (1998) argue that KIs are important in research since they often guarantee that information-rich individuals are chosen. The nature of the study, therefore, rendered itself to seeking information-rich individuals that comprised media managers, editors, journalists, and journalism students who have working experience. The interviews were also conducted with stakeholders that comprised mainly organizations working in the sector of migration and mobility (mainly refugees) on their views on how they work with the media industry.



Due to time and logistical constraints, the initial pool of respondents has been drawn from the three partner countries of Burkina Faso, Malawi, and Uganda. However, since the proposed SPOC will be open to users across the globe, particularly in Africa, more views shall be sought from other stakeholders to strengthen the project's implementation. The foreseen approach would be to present the initial study to an expanded pool of media industry professionals to be organized with the AMI.

In the choice of respondents, gender was a key consideration ensuring that an equal number of females and males was selected. The quantitative variance in the research findings is because several respondents did not reply in the requisite time. Further, the major tracks in the media industry were considered such as print, broadcast (radio and television) as well as online.

The findings in this report are presented mainly under two themes. In the first instance, the report presents views from the respondents on how the media covers migration and mobility; and if there are any ways the coverage can be improved. The responses were sought and are presented in two groups by country from media practitioners (media managers, editors and journalists); and from stakeholders who represent some organizations that work in the sector of migration and mobility.

The second theme is on the training needs in the reporting of migration and mobility. The key focus was to probe the feasibility of offering the SPOC to practicing journalists and other media professionals especially editors and managers. Given how the media institutions function in Africa, would the journalists be able to follow the SPOC? If yes, what is the best format and time they prefer? What about the availability of infrastructure? Again, the responses were sought and are presented in two groups by country from media practitioners (media managers, editors, and journalists); and from stakeholders who represent mainly organizations that work in the sector of migration and mobility. On both themes, views of some journalism students who have interacted with the media as practitioners were also sought and presented herein.

## **The media coverage of migration and refugees**

The CoMMPASS SPOC will be designed with the needs of the media industry in mind. It will teach systematically, yet in a context-sensitive manner, how to identify and develop journalistic stories about migration relevant for local audiences. Several studies have showed that migration coverage in sub-Saharan Africa lacks entrepreneurial skills (Thorbjørnsrud & Ustad Figenschou (2016). The studies show that stories are dominated by elite political actors, not by the perspectives of the audience. And yet, if the media have to be sustainable and independent from the state, the needs of the readers, viewers, and listeners have to be addressed.

The CoMMPASS project will, therefore, train future journalists to systematically conceptualize journalistic articles with the needs and interests of the audience as the key priority. The curriculum also envisages to include the ethical dimension, best practice cases from different journalism cultures, and inspiration on how to pitch stories to newsrooms under difficult circumstances. In the proceeding section, we provide preliminary insights into the media industry needs for continuing education and self-learning within media enterprises. In the next stage of validation, we shall seek the support of the AMI to reach out to as many of their 2,000 independent media outlets on the African continent to widen the scope of the needs for such a SPOC focused on media professionals.

### ***Experiences of media professionals***

The indicative experiences of media professionals were sought and obtained from four media managers (one in Burkina Faso, one in Uganda and one in Malawi); five editors that in several cases also doubled as journalists (two in Burkina Faso, one in Malawi and two in Uganda); stakeholders that comprised organizations and researchers on the topic of migration

and mobility (five in Burkina Faso, seven in Uganda, and two in Malawi). In addition, the views of students who had experience working with the media were sought from four in Burkina Faso, three from Malawi and two from Uganda.

**Media professionals from Uganda**

According to the media professionals we interviewed from Vision Group and Nation Media Group in Uganda, their organizations cover issues related to migration and refugees. However, they noted that reporting was not deliberate to attract consistent or weekly reporting.

We usually go to report when there is an outcry, public outcry or a concern as shared by our sources and then we assign (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group).

Stories in refugee camps have been reported to be easy although at times it is hard to get story sources.

It's hard to get sources such as from UN agencies due to protocol and bureaucracy; and sometimes the topic is referred to as sensitive (Nobert Atukunda, Reporter, Nation Media Group).

It is complicated to report about labor externalization where a lot of information is hidden and with limited access, yet significant exploitation and inhumane treatment surround labor externalization.

One time we assigned a team of investigative reporters to find out the owners of labor companies in Uganda. This took four months to have that story done but it was another nightmare (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group).

Several media professionals at Vision Group said that the news covers refugee camps and labor export or externalization, which broadly falls under migration. The issues covered under migration include labor rights for Ugandans working in the Middle East where instances of torture and inhumane treatment have been reported.

Labor exporting companies have also been in the news on “how they conduct business whereby people have been robbed of their money with promises of being taken to work abroad” (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group).

The professionals noted that the reporting is often incident-based and reporters are deployed based on the nature of the issue at hand. “For example, if there is an incident happening, the news desk deploys” (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group).

However, there are instances of planned stories on migration and refugees which are usually handled by the investigative journalism desk.

Like we did an undercover series on Dubai where the investigations desk deployed” (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group).

Therefore, it depends on the nature of the news stories to cover and a suitable desk will usually deploy the features desk, investigations desk and news desk.

**Media professionals from Malawi**

The media professionals in Malawi that we interviewed said that they cover migration in the media, albeit not on a consistent basis. The category of journalists agreed that their editors and/or producers run the stories whenever they were presented.

The story was my idea and it wasn't difficult for my editors or producer because being an institution that promotes human rights, such stories are a priority (Thomas Kachere, a Senior News Analyst, The Times Group).

Esther Mischek Nyanja, a senior producer at Kuwala FM, cited another reason for her editors running her story without any hesitation. She said, that “since it was a running story, the editor didn’t have an objection and allowed it to pass and air it out (sic).”

The discussion with the Malawian journalists centered mainly on what was in July 2023 an issue following the government's order to the migrants to leave the town and go back to the camps (HRW, 2023).

Further, the respondents said that there were no dedicated reporters on the issue of migration and refugees. Two of them said that the stories were their own ideas. Esther Mischeck Nyanja observed “Since we don’t consider much about specialty, so every reporter is at liberty to cover such stories.”

In all cases, the respondents said that they covered the subject extensively and, as has already been pointed out, their editors did not hesitate to run the stories. In a way, therefore, enterprise journalism could be a great way to get more stories on migrants and refugees in the media.

The respondents seemed to imply that their coverage is framed around the human rights of the migrants and refugees. According to Thomas Kachere, the media house where he works “puts (sic) human rights issues very seriously and as such, reporters are encouraged to write stories of marginalized groups including the migrants and refugees.”

On her part, Esther Misheck Nyanja, said that her reporting is aimed at “considering their rights, if they have not been violated in any way.”

This implies that the reporting tends to highlight the welfare of the refugees, exposing any human rights violations that they might be aware of. Specifically, Thomas Kachere said that he even won an award for a story he wrote that exposed the ills that Malawian migrants in South Africa faced. He said:

For instance, in 2022, I was awarded a special trophy by Media Association Against Trafficking in Person (MAATIP) for exposing the ills migrants face.

Esther Misheck Nyanja was more specific when she said that “mostly we look at the welfare of women and children who are the most vulnerable people during the difficult situations.”

Regarding ease of access to sources, some respondents said that they did not find any difficulties finding sources and interviewing them, while it was the contrary for others. In Thomas Kachere’s words:

My experience on reporting about migrants has been a mixed bag. I didn't have problems in (sic) getting sources because I have a wide following both from Malawi and South Africa where many Malawians go in search of jobs.

However, Esther Misheck Nyanja experienced challenges when it came to accessing sources, even when the story was trending. She said:

My experience hasn’t been that good and not satisfactory because I don’t normally report on such issues unless otherwise; and like recently I covered it extensively because there was a special story about them, as there was an order from government to relocate to the camps, as most of the refugees resorted to live with the indigenous Malawians without proper documents. So, that was the time I can say many reporters took interest to cover that. It wasn’t easy to speak to the sources, especially the refugees themselves, even officials from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Thus, it was evident from the interviews that the popularity of a journalist and their experience in reporting on the matters, plays a key role in getting them access to sources.

## Media professionals from Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, the group of media managers and editors also doubled as journalists. They noted that due to a shortage of media professionals, the roles are not always strictly defined. On many occasions, depending on the importance of an issue at hand, some editors have covered the stories themselves.

On the issue of what priority the media accord to covering and reporting issues on migration and mobility, all the three respondents agreed that they were not aware of any media institution in the country that had a dedicated desk or reporter on the topic. An extract from one of the respondents demonstrates the point:

*Je dois dire qu'il n'y a pas de journaliste spécialisé sur les migrations dans notre journal, essentiellement pour des raisons économiques. Moi-même je n'ai jamais fait de reportage sur ces questions. Cependant ce sont des questions qui nous intéressent et que nous traitons régulièrement. Il y a des journalistes embarqués, avec des voyages organisés par les autorités. [I have to say that there is no journalist specialising in migration in our newspaper, mainly for economic reasons. I myself have never reported on these issues. However, they are issues that interest us and that we cover regularly. There are journalists on board, with trips organised by the authorities.] (Kindo Boureima, Reporter for the newspaper *Le Pays*).*

However, they noted that for West Africa, the issue is a top priority since the region is a hotspot for labor migrants to Europe. Burkina Faso has also been for years a host of refugees from neighboring countries such as Ivory Coast and Mali. Albert Nagreogo, a publication director of *Libreinfo.net* as well as a former editor-in-chief of Radio Omega from 2012-2016 and news presenter at Wat FM noted the importance of covering migration and mobility:

*Cela fait partie de nos priorités parce qu'on se dit que c'est aujourd'hui un mal qui ronge notre jeunesse, on voit comment nos jeunes meurent. Les frontières sont poreuses avec les pays voisins. La question fondamentale, c'est comment trouver des moyens pour aller à la rencontre de ces jeunes ? Ce sont des voyages qui nécessitent des déplacements, avec des frais de déplacement, de séjour, des frais de fixeurs... On est un journal qui est tout jeune, donc l'idée c'est comment s'adresser à ces jeunes-là pour ne pas rester dans un débat politique. [This is one of our priorities, because we feel that it is a disease that is eating away at our young people, and we see how our young people are dying. The borders are porous with neighbouring countries. The fundamental question is how can we find the means to reach these young people? These are trips that require travel, with travel costs, accommodation costs, fixer costs... We're a very young newspaper, so the idea is how to reach out to these young people so as not to get bogged down in a political debate.]*

The media professionals noted that key issues covered in Burkinabe media include labor migration and externalization, the rights and obligations of refugees as well as the internally displaced. Kindo Boureima noted that:

*Notre objectif c'est de faire prendre conscience à l'autorité [et] de montrer les difficultés auxquelles sont confrontées les personnes déplacées internes. [Our aim is to raise the authorities' awareness [and] to show the difficulties faced by internally displaced people.]*

The respondents noted that whenever the reporting happens, it is in varied formats and of varied length depending on the importance of the issue at hand. Fousseni Kindo, a journalist and an anchor at the State-owned *Télévision du Burkina* said that:

*Je fais souvent des émissions spéciales, des grands reportages sur des questions sensibles comme les migrations et la chaîne elle-même à ses propres productions, notamment dans des régions reculées du pays. Comme vous le savez, le pays est acculé à la crise sécuritaire et humanitaire. Cela peut être des initiatives ou bien des autorités qui se déplacent et nous les accompagnons pour remplir notre fonction de média au service du gouvernement. [I often do special programmes, major reports on sensitive issues such as migration, and the channel itself has its own productions, particularly in remote areas of the country. As you know, the country is facing a security and humanitarian crisis. It may be initiatives or authorities who travel, and we accompany them to fulfil our role as a media at the service of the government.]*

However, some respondents noted that the story of Burkinabe who are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as well as those who are refugees in neighboring countries tends to be politically sensitive and some propaganda is twisting the narrative. They noted that voices of the refugees and IDPs are often curtailed in favor of the narrative by politicians.

The three respondents noted that in terms of frequency, the topic of labor migration is a regular fixture in Burkinabe media. However, they noted that the issue is picked mainly from western-based news agencies since the local media do not have the resources to cover first-hand the stories of migrants.

In some instances, the local reporters are assigned to do follow-ups on the stories picked from international outlets to give them a local angle. In such cases, it becomes easy to interview local sources and sometimes eye witnesses.

On the other hand, the story of refugees is often locally sourced with information provided by organizations such as the UN refugee agency and other civil organizations working in the sector.

### **Experiences of stakeholders**

The stakeholders comprised researchers and representatives of some organizations that work in the sector of migration and mobility. In the case of Uganda, four of such stakeholders had been invited to discuss the broad topic on migration and mobility during a panel at the launch of the CoMMPASS project in June 2023 at Makerere University. In addition, three university researchers were also interviewed in the context of being stakeholders. In Burkina Faso, four stakeholders (two researchers and two in civil society) were interviewed. In Malawi, two researchers were interviewed.

The views of stakeholders in the three countries were extensive; incorporating the themes/areas the organizations generally focus on, to how they interact with the media and which training needs they propose the CoMMPASS project should focus on.

All the stakeholders noted the importance of the media in framing the issues of migration and mobility. However, most felt that the issues of refugees and migrants are often not top on the media agenda unless there is a crisis of some kind such as an influx or when a migrant has been involved in some form of criminality or other contentious issue. For instance, Frank Walusimbi, a Communications Officer with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Uganda noted that:

Generally, migration and refugee issues are covered by the media but with a focus on the shortfalls. Little or no attention is given to potential positive stories from refugee settlements in the country.

Further, the framing of refugees and migrants is also often of a victim. Stories of enterprise in business and other sectors are often not told. For instance, Dr. Ojara De-Saxone Pius, the Director of the Refugee Law Project in the School of Law at Makerere University stated that:

It is our responsibility as stakeholders to shine a spotlight on the many success stories of refugees and migrants.

Peggie Ayesiga, a Protection Officer Legal in the Ugandan Office of the Prime Minister in charge of the protection of refugees, registration and providing durable solutions noted how the reporting about refugees in Uganda media was “mostly negative”. She noted that refugees are portrayed as foreigners taking up jobs and resources for nationals while receiving food and services from government and UN agencies at comparably better levels than nationals.

Robert Mawanda the programs officer at the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Uganda said the media reporting in Uganda has been skewed towards the negative effects of labor migration and yet there are many benefits such as remittances. He also pointed to the imbalanced focus on low and unskilled workers to the Middle East forgetting the thousands of Ugandans working as professionals working all over the world, including in the Middle East.



In the case of West Africa, which is a hotspot for migration towards Europe, the interviewed stakeholders noted the prevalent issues of illegal migration that trek through the Sahara Desert. The respondents noted how the stories are often picked from the Western news agencies without proper context. Sébastien Ouédraogo, a coordinator of the 'Alerte Migration Afrique' association noted that:

*Notre premier domaine d'intervention c'est la lutte contre le trafic illicite des migrants, la traite des personnes et les pratiques assimilées, le deuxième c'est promouvoir et défendre le droit des migrants et les membres de leurs familles, le troisième volet c'est favoriser la réintégration et la réinsertion professionnelle et économique des personnes migrantes refoulées ou rapatriées, le quatrième c'est développer des programmes et projets axés sur la migration agriculture, migration santé, migration sécurité, migration environnement, migration éducation, migration main d'œuvre. [Our first area of intervention is the fight against the smuggling of migrants, human trafficking and similar practices; the second is to promote and defend the rights of migrants and members of their families; the third is to promote the reintegration and professional and economic rehabilitation of migrants who have been turned away or repatriated; the fourth is to develop programmes and projects focusing on agricultural migration, health migration, security migration, environmental migration, educational migration and labour migration].*

Other areas of intervention he pointed out included the provision of legal, material, financial and psycho-social assistance to migrants in prison or in conflict with the law in the host country. He also said his organisation develops strategies for data collection, research, and information on migration. He pointed out how his organisation has been in contact with migrants in transit or stranded, returning migrants as well as refugees and internal migrants.

On his part, Serges Noël Ouédraogo, who is the president of the 'Tocsin' association [founded in 1997 to promote human rights and the construction of a just peace in Burkina Faso and Africa] and member of the "Mobilities, travel, innovations and dynamics in Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa" laboratory said on all the migration and refugee issues that arise in Burkina, civil society actors are reactive through open declarations and media engagements. He noted that where necessary, they seek and obtain audiences with the authorities at all levels to advocate for the rights of migrants and refugees.

Serges Noël Ouédraogo stated that many civil society organisations in West Africa work with the mass media for awareness-raising work that focuses on showing the channels of regular migration and pointing out the dangers of irregular migration, thereby encouraging people to make informed decisions about whether or not to leave. Sébastien Ouédraogo pointed to an awareness-raising campaign, called the African Migration Caravan that he said had reached two regions, the centre and the centre-east of the country.

On the issue of having a sustained media engagement with the media, Serges Noël Ouédraogo recounted his experience and made some proposals:

*Il y a quelques années il y a eu un réseau des journalistes actifs dans les migrations et les diasporas. Maintenant je ne vois pas trop leurs activités. Je n'arrive pas trop à évaluer la liberté de leur couverture, sauf de façon événementielle, par exemple lorsque la Côte d'Ivoire a récemment levé la fermeture de ses frontières, longtemps après le Burkina et les autres pays : j'ai été contacté par des médias en français en moré et en dioula [pour réagir]. [La question c'est] comment faut-il faire pour qu'ils animent de manière régulière des débats, des rubriques, sur ces questions. [A few years ago, there was a network of journalists working on migration and diasporas. Now I don't really see their activities. I can't really assess the freedom of their coverage, except in an event-driven way; for example when Côte d'Ivoire recently lifted the closure of its borders, long after Burkina Faso and other countries: I was contacted by French-language, Moré-language and Dioula-language media [to react]. [The question is] how can we get them to hold regular debates and columns on these issues?]*

## Training needs in the reporting of migration and refugees

The proposed Small Private Online Course (SPOC) will have to address two major training tracks. The first one will be the exploration of the rather complex thematic on migration and mobility. The media professionals interviewed in the three sampled countries pointed to the need to understand the nuances between the various terms used by journalists (Lengauer, p.35-42).

The second strand to address are the various pedagogical requirements to offer the course online in countries where infrastructure for online learning and teaching is still problematic. Fortunately, some of the lecturers we interviewed reported having received some form of training on setting up online courses, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. Gerald Walulya, a senior lecturer, at Makerere University said that he had received some e-learning training and that helped build his confidence.

Tisaukirenji Tembo, a lecturer at MUBAS said:

Because the world is going digital and we have to adjust if we are to remain relevant. Today, I attended a training in Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). After the lessons Covid-19 brought, we have to be equipped to teach when such happens again. So I would say I am better equipped to handle an online course.

As such, most lecturers we interviewed said they were confident enough to facilitate an online course on migration and refugees because of the COVID-19 pandemic experience. However, some of the lecturers and researchers in Burkina Faso noted the lack of such specialized courses on the theme of migration and mobility. Moussa Sawadogo a journalism lecturer and researcher in Burkina Faso and Benin noted that:

*Au niveau de l'enseignement, il n'y a pas un cours spécifique qui traite de ces questions-là mais personnellement ce sont des sujets que j'aborde essentiellement à travers l'analyse des discours médiatiques ou des productions médiatiques, par rapport à l'image de l'Europe dans les médias, qui peuvent donner l'impression que le meilleur c'est ailleurs. C'est aussi à travers de mon expérience parce que j'ai été moi-même délégué du conseil des Burkinabè de l'étranger pour la Belgique et le Bénélux donc c'était des questions qui nous interpelaient, avec des éléments vécus concrets de gens que nous avons dû secourir et que nous avons documentés. Ce sont des éléments où je vais puiser pour illustrer les formations que je donne. [In terms of teaching, there is not a specific course that deals with these issues, but personally these are subjects that I approach essentially through the analysis of media discourse or media productions, in relation to the image of Europe in the media, which can give the impression that the best is elsewhere. It is also based on my own experience, because I myself was a delegate for Belgium and Benelux for the Conseil des Burkinabè de l'étranger (Council of Burkinabe Abroad), so these were issues that were of concern to us, with real-life examples of people we had to help and that we documented. These are the elements I draw on to illustrate the training courses I give.]*

The journalism professionals and the stakeholders that we interviewed noted the need by journalists to undertake such a course since there is hardly any specialized training on the thematic of migration and mobility. Kindo Boureima said:

*Le besoin est réel en lien avec ces questions, il n'y a pas de formation spécifique dispensées à part des sessions ponctuelles organisées par des ONG comme la Croix Rouge. Il y a des formations qui nous ont beaucoup aidés comme le journalisme sensible au conflit par exemple. Les questions du droit international seraient très intéressantes aussi [pour savoir] comment ne pas les exposer, ne pas les déshumaniser. [There is a real need in relation to these issues, but there is no specific training available apart from occasional sessions organised by NGOs such as the Red Cross. There are courses that have helped us a lot, such as conflict-sensitive journalism. Questions of international law would also be very interesting [to know] how not to expose them, how not to dehumanise them.]*

Albert Nagreogo also emphasized the need for such a course on migration and mobility for journalists and media professionals:

*On n'a pas d'organisation qui nous a dispensé un cours ou quoi que ce soit sur la migration et les réfugiés. On a des connaissances globales et pas spécifiques. Ce qu'on voudrait voir dans les formations c'est le droit des réfugiés : à quoi les réfugiés ont droit ? Comment faire pour éviter l'émigration clandestine ? Quelle politique sociale pour la jeunesse ? Quels sont les droits pour ceux qui partent quand ils arrivent dans un pays ? Est-ce qu'il y a un lexique particulier sur la migration ? Est-ce que les déplacés internes ça a une existence en droit ? [We don't have any organisation that has given us a course or anything on migration and refugees. Our knowledge is general, not specific. What we'd like to see in the training courses is refugee law: what are refugees entitled to? What can be done to prevent illegal emigration? What social policy for young people? What rights do those who leave have when they arrive in a country? Is there a specific vocabulary for migration? Do internally displaced persons exist in law? »]*

The e-learning modules are envisaged to work with introductory texts, best practice examples and case studies, in-depth readings, but also with (interactive) videos, audios, role plays, branching scenarios and quiz formats, so that the most varied and interactive didactics possible can be offered. The trainers shall also use the SPOC to connect to an (inter)national pool of journalists, migration experts, and other potential speakers for seminars. In this way, the platform shall offer networking opportunities. The topics for discussion will be varied to include: gender, law and rights of refugees and migrants, cultural issues.

Emile-Pierre Baziomo, a lecturer and researcher at the Pan-African Institute for Media, Information and Communication Studies and Research noted the need for media literacy with training that should go beyond journalism schools and institutions. He stated that:

*La formation sur le rapport des jeunes aux médias ne doit pas être destinée aux futurs journalistes ou aux journalistes en activité mais elle doit être ouverte à tous les citoyens pour qu'ils puissent être eux-mêmes disciplinés dans leur contact avec les médias [parce que] avec les usages numériques des jeunes aujourd'hui, ils n'ont pas besoin de journalistes, ils n'ont pas besoin de parents pour aller sur telle ou telle application. C'est eux-mêmes, en contact avec leur groupe social, qu'ils décident d'aller en contact ou de s'exposer ou même de se laisser aller sur des sites obscènes. [Training on young people's relationship with the media should not be aimed only at future journalists or working journalists, but should be open to all citizens so that they themselves can be disciplined in their contact with the media [because] with the digital uses of young people today, they do not need journalists, they don't need parents to go on this or that application. It's up to them, in contact with their social group, to decide whether to make contact or expose themselves or even let themselves go on obscene sites].*

The issue of translating the SPOC into different languages will be key. The CoMMPASS project partners will jointly produce an English pilot SPOC. The English pilot version will then be adapted into French, Portuguese, and Swahili.

Through the existing pool of international journalists and the integration of students initiatives – such as the Forum of European Journalism Students or Media Challenge Initiative – and practitioners' projects - such as Hostwriter (one of the partners in a sister Erasmus+ NEWSREEL II project), the SPOC will create additional opportunities for practicing and future journalists to network with international colleagues for cross-border projects in the field of migration and mobility. Students and journalists can be made aware of research grants offered by foundations, often crucial to fund extensive reporting on migration.

The CoMMPASS project will, therefore, trigger a substantial number of high-quality journalistic pieces on migration and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa media (audience-oriented, people-centered, research-based, and ethically aware). This is especially given that some of the stakeholders proposed the use of journalistic outputs such as written articles, video and audio products, as a form of assessment, in addition to testing for knowledge on issues to do with migration and refugees. For example, according to Gerald Walulya, a senior lecturer at Makerere University's Department of Journalism and Communication:

I think if you are teaching journalists you need to assess them on journalistic output. So I think you need to ask them to write stories about what they have been learning so that you see whether they have captured what you intended to have them capture.

Frank Walusimbi of UNHCR suggested “progressive written assessment tasking learners with different scenarios requiring them to explain how they would handle with them as reporters”. He also proposed “a practical assessment where learners interact with refugees [not real] and write stories/produce videos while following ethical guidelines”.

### **Feasibility of offering online teaching/learning**

The CoMMPASS project will produce an industry-relevant SPOC on migration coverage, addressing the practical needs of newsrooms in the different language areas in sub-Saharan Africa. The SPOC will be freely accessible to the media industry and will be actively communicated to newsrooms via newsletters, press work, social media campaigns, webinars, dissemination conferences, etc.

It is proposed that a selected group of newsrooms, addressed via the project industry partner the African Media Initiative, will participate in the pilot teaching of the CoMMPASS SPOC and will share their feedback with the project consortium. Journalists will connect in the collaborative spaces of the SPOC and improve their pan-African networks. Senior journalists will share their best practices in migration coverage with junior peers and journalism students via the SPOC and in the context of the collaborative workshop.

Each of the three selected countries has a unique experience of handling online learning and teaching. All the media professionals and stakeholders interviewed acknowledged the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic fast-tracked the use of online methods in academic and other institutions of learning. Some of the lecturers that we interviewed observed that the lockdowns that were instituted during the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to take on online teaching. Geoffrey Ssenoga, a technical instructor/lecturer at Uganda Christian University’s School of Journalism, Media and Communication, noted:

I think you are aware that teaching online... we kind of stumbled into it because of COVID-19. So we were kind of frog marched into it, especially if you are really teaching in order to be able to assess and grade students’ work.

### **Online learning in Uganda**

The online teaching and learning in Uganda has generally been responsive to Uganda’s national strategic plans. For institutions such as Makerere University, one of the project partner institutions, there is an existent ICT-Strategic Plan (2020-2030), which draws from Vision 2040, stating that “Uganda shall develop, improve and retool its ICT talent pool by building mechanism by adopting globally benchmarked, industry-rated skills assessment and training and certification standards”. The Strategic Plan also responds to aspirations of the National Development Plan (NDPIII) stating that “the ICT sector is required to facilitate sustainable, effective and efficient development through harnessing and utilizing ICT in all spheres of life.” More so, the 2020/2021- 2024/2025 Strategic Plan of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) stipulates its strategic objective as being to “promote use of Information Communication Technology in all sectors of the Council and in HEIs”, with emphasis on “implementation of online and digital (ODeL) capacity indicators to support mainstreaming online/e-learning in HEIs”.

In Uganda, several in-house training that are physical have been arranged for reporters where external resource persons have been engaged but not specific to migration. For instance, Reporter B from Vision Group noted that “in the *Bukedde* newspaper for which I mostly report, I have not received any training on covering migration and refugees.”

Generally, the reporters interviewed acknowledged that they are trained on investigative reporting which skills they use for migration issues. That, therefore, presents the need for training on migration “because of the dynamics and the language

used in this field” (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group). The training should focus on the language terms used in the field of migration and refugees in order to avoid a mix up of terminologies that usually happen in the reporting.

The challenge with reporting on refugees in Uganda, especially the internally displaced people, is the perception. Most communities have a one-sided perception about refugees and this is disseminated through media channels. Therefore, it is also critical for reporters to have enhanced skills to source information in circumstances of limited access. This would definitely bring out an understanding of the sources of information when it comes to migration issues.

Moreover, training areas should include international and domestic laws, human rights and protection, covering human interest stories, fact-checking and verification, ethical reporting and challenges faced by refugees and host communities (Nobert Atukunda, Reporter, Nation Media Group).

However, focus should be on addressing the dynamics and uniqueness of different media houses for adaptation rather than bundling up different journalists.

I think it is better to organize media house by media house because the dynamics in every media house differ and you need to be speaking to that when you are engaging with the team (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group).

The training should be modularized and staggered for every quarter with action points or stories to follow. Whereby “the following quarter kicks off by assessing stories that were churned out to take stock of what was grasped and what is lacking” (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group). This may also be a yardstick to assess progress on the quality of reporting.

In assessing whether there is progress, we can compare the quality of reporting, the biases that were there before, have they changed in our reporting, the voices we have been carrying, comparing them with the voices that we are now carrying after the training (Richard Kayiira, Media Manager, Vision Group).

### Online learning in Malawi

Like the case was in Uganda, some of the lecturers we interviewed credited the COVID-19 induced lockdowns with giving them their initial online teaching experiences. For example, Tisaukirenji Tembo, a lecturer at Malawi University of Business and Applied Science said, “during Covid-19, classes went online. It was a first for our institution.”

As for the media, it has been the journalists’ initiative to report on migration and refugee issues. This is commendable, especially when you consider that they admitted that their knowledge of nuances regarding the topic of migration and refugees is nothing beyond what a journalist needs to write a good story. For example, the respondents were able to differentiate between migrants and refugees. They were also able to name the various types of migrants such as climate migrants and economic migrants.

When asked about the training they have received from their media houses to enable them to cover migration and refugees, some said that they had not received any training. However, one pointed out that his media house was open to training on these matters. He said:

For example I was in RSA [Republic of South Africa], Cape Town, for three months where I was attached to GroundUp news, an online media [house] which also promotes human rights and among the issues covered were stories about migrants or refugees,” (Thomas Kachere, Senior News Analyst, The Times Group ).

From the above responses, one can aver that training in a country that is home to migrants from its neighbors could be a good starting point to better reporting on the issue of migrants and refugees. South Africa is a popular destination for migrants from neighboring countries such as Zimbabwe and Malawi.

Additionally, training does not necessarily have to take the formal “workshop” or “classroom” training, but attachments to a media house that specializes in such issues, can provide good grounding for a journalist who is interested in reporting these issues.

The respondents suggested the following issues that they would like to see covered in any training on reporting migration and refugees:

1. The difference between migrants and refugees and universal rights
2. Treaties governments sign
3. Human rights aspect
4. The role of the security agencies
5. The issuance of certificates of permits

They also agreed that an online course on reporting migration and refugees was feasible because it would give the journalists room to plan their participation in the course. “It is feasible to have such an online training since he can plan to have time for such studies,” said Thomas Kachere, a senior news analyst at The Times Group.

Regarding the length of the course, the consensus seemed to be around six months to a year. They argued that this was enough time to understand such matters. They also preferred a self-paced course where they would interact with the course materials on a weekly basis, as opposed to one where the instructor was very involved.

According to the respondents, it is important to have a task after every session and on a weekly basis. One specifically pointed to the online quiz as a possible form of assessment. In addition to being interested in reporting on the subject, the respondents said that appropriate gadgets, internet connectivity and financial resources were some of the enabling factors for them to participate in such an online training.

On the anticipated challenges to the training of reporters, the availability of participants for the training due to the unplanned nature of news stories was cited as one of the main ones.

Like you commit 10 reporters to participate in a training and all of a sudden, a big story happens in parliament. Some of them you had committed to the training are the ones reporting in parliament (Media Manager, Vision Group).

If a course is online, definitely some journalists will follow with a course design that is well-structured to fit journalists’ schedule but the impact could be little or limited. Further, if a course is to be done online, attention needs to be paid to issues of accessibility, affordability, and convenience. Relatedly, keeping participants engaged throughout the course could be difficult, especially in self-paced online courses where technical issues could arise (Reporter A, Nation Media Group).

Although self-pacing is flexible and appropriate to allow learners conceptualize and contextualize the subject with ease. The other issue is the follow up and keeping the team together. You find that many trained journalists end up leaving the media house or are deployed in another beat which breaks consistency in reporting.

One of the other challenges cited by the media professionals interviewed to the success of such an online course was internet interruptions and lack of active participation.

### Online learning in Burkina Faso

In 2018, the government of Burkina Faso created a virtual university dedicated exclusively to online training (UV-BF), in response to the high need and demand for higher education under the condition of a very limited number of HEIs in the country. UV-BF aims at giving students the opportunity to benefit from university diploma training in the cycles BTS, LICENCES, MASTER as well as short-term certifying training (two, three or four months). The Thomas Sankara University

has been promoting the use of information and communication technologies in education and teaching since its foundation. It has also accompanied and supported individual teachers' experiences, which has led since 2010 to academic training offers on the platform of the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* (AUF).

In order to federate and give synergy to these scattered experiences, an Open and Distance Institute (IFOAD) was created in January 2014 at the University Ouaga II renamed Thomas Sankara University. The primary mission of IFOAD is to organize, coordinate and manage all open and distance learning activities of the Thomas Sankara University, in collaboration with the training structures, notably the Training and Research Units and institutes. To this end, it aims to: develop and popularize distance education and training; train teachers and researchers in the use of information and communication technologies for education; organize the certification of skills in information technology and communication for all students of the Thomas Sankara University; expand the space of influence of Thomas Sankara University beyond its traditional geographic space through networking and partnership with countries in the sub-region.

In that respect, media professionals and stakeholders in Burkina Faso would benefit from an already existent policy environment as well as infrastructure for online teaching and learning. The interview with them was to assess whether they were aware of such a conducive policy environment and whether offering and following a SPOC would be feasible.

The media professionals that we interviewed said that they have not followed any dedicated training in covering and reporting migration and mobility. One of the respondents said that it was the first time he heard of the concept of SPOC. He found it an exciting way of reaching out to busy media professionals.

Respondents in Burkina Faso said that given the significance of the topic for West African countries, every media institution should provide in-house training or allow all journalists to follow such a dedicated course that the CoMMPASS project is proposing. Such training should be done in a conflict-sensitive manner as one of the media trainers noted.

*Il faudrait mettre en relation nos enseignements [du journalisme] avec les aspects de la cohésion sociale : comment par exemple faire du journalisme en évitant d'utiliser des mots, des termes, des concepts pour éviter que des jeunes qui vivaient en paix développent des initiatives pour se combattre. [...] Il faut éviter de mettre de l'huile sur le feu. [We need to relate our teaching [of journalism] to aspects of social cohesion: how, for example, can we do journalism without using words, terms, and concepts to prevent young people who used to live in peace from developing initiatives to fight each other? [...] We must avoid adding fuel to the fire] (Emile-Pierre Bazimo).*

On the issues to be covered, the three respondents agreed that labor externalization is an important topic that should include information on the push factors in countries of origin and the pull factors in the countries of destination. The focus should be on the youth by using the readily accessible formats such as social media and other online tools such as TikTok.

*L'émigration, ce sont des choses qui vont au-delà de la théorie, c'est du concret, c'est du vécu des gens, c'est l'avenir des gens, c'est des rêves brisés, des rêves interrompus, des traumatismes, c'est ce qui touche à l'être humain dans ce qu'il a de plus profond. [...] C'est important de préparer les étudiants à humaniser leurs reportages. [...] La mise en situation est importante [Emigration is about things that go beyond theory, it is about concrete things, it is about people's experiences, it is about people's futures, it is about broken dreams, interrupted dreams, traumas, it is about the deepest human experience. It is important to prepare students to humanise their reporting. [...] Role-playing is important in this matter] (Moussa Sawadogo).*

The other topic of significance is financial literacy and business skills that are central for youth. The information targeting youth on opportunities available at home should be readily shared in the media.

Since Burkina Faso has hosted thousands of refugees from other countries, the issue of rights and obligations of refugees is of paramount importance. Other topics such as public health as well as environmental conservation should also not be forgotten.





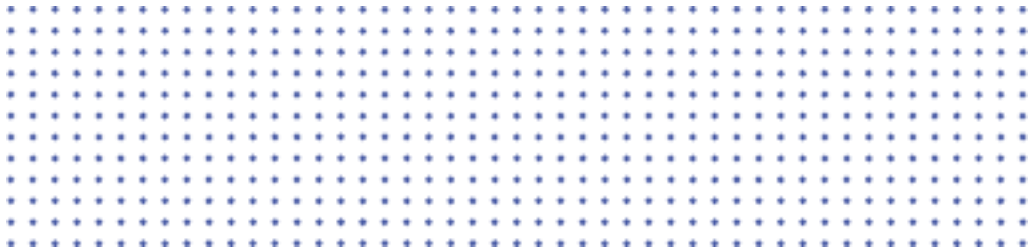


# CONCLUSION

All the media professionals and the stakeholders that we interviewed agreed with the proposal by the CoMMPASS to offer certification as an incentive for newsroom participants to successfully complete the full set of modules. They appreciated the proposal to have e-exams in the SPOC. They also agreed that in the interim starting period, outside institutions such as TU Dortmund could provide a certificate for media industry users having successfully completed all modules and passed an E-exam.

The stakeholders and the media professionals supported the idea that over time the certification process would be transferred to the partner HEIs, possibly to be implemented in partnership with the African Media Initiative. They agreed that such a move would strengthen and sustain partner HEIs ownership of the project and its visibility even further, as well as the partner HEIs engagement with the media industry.

The interview participants were supportive of the idea that the modules will promote a participatory training methodology, fostering teamwork and participants' engagement. They support the view that educators across the spectrum and the learners should find a selection of key texts online, as well as short videos produced exclusively for the SPOC, to be used as training material during classroom work, and a selection of best practice journalistic pieces.



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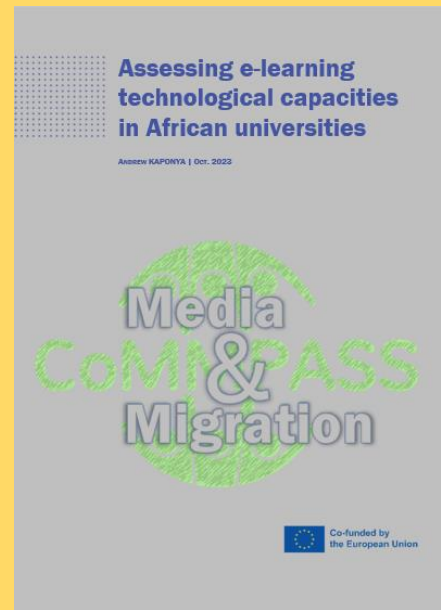
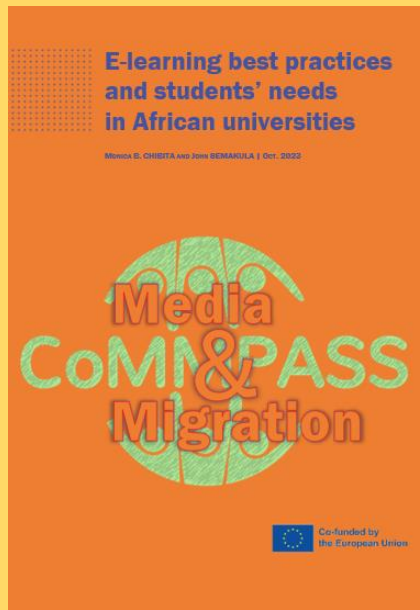
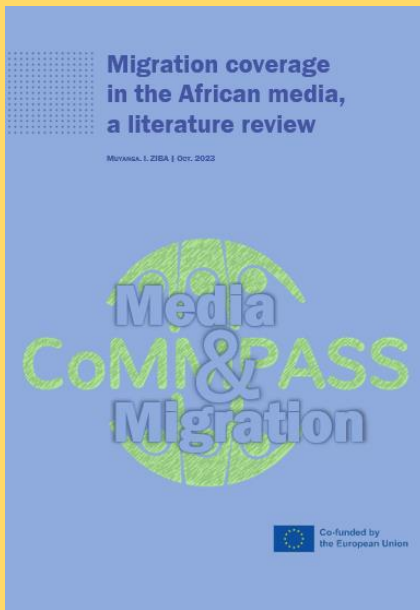
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