***TRUE STORIES***

**[](https://assets.weforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Emmanuel-2.jpg)Emmanuel, Ghana**

I suppose I am one of those who almost made it. You don’t hear much about migrants like me, because we didn’t die at sea or in the desert. We just didn’t make it to Europe.

I left home with the dream of getting to Europe, where I was told I would easily find a job which would mean I would be able to look after my siblings. My mother died when I was very young and our father basically abandoned us as he could not, or did not want to, take care of us. I felt I had no choice but to leave Ghana and try my luck in Europe.

After months of travelling through West Africa by whatever means, I eventually made it to Libya, where I paid €800 to men who promised they would put me on a big boat that would finally take me to Europe. It is difficult to explain and I have bad memories about this, but I had a terrible time in Libya. Those of us from certain African countries were treated very badly by men who kept us in dirty houses without much clean water and with very little edible food. They were very abusive and they seemed to enjoy the way they treated us. It did not matter to them that we had paid them all this money.

Finally, one day, after several weeks of waiting, I was one of about 75, mostly Africans, who were shoved onto a small rubber boat in the early morning when it was still dark. A few in our group initially refused to get onto this boat because it did not look strong or even big enough to carry all of us to Europe. The men in charge had weapons and were very aggressive. They were simply not interested in our complaints about the boat.

We did not make it to Europe.

Instead we spent five days aimlessly floating around and basically lost at sea. When the boat started losing air, we thought we were all going to die.

As our food and water ran out, we eventually drifted towards the Tunisian coast where we were rescued and sent to a detention centre in Tunis. I was in this centre for a month before I was freed.

Emmanuel was rescued from the detention centre and returned to Ghana with IOM (International Organisation for Migration) assistance and was provided with reintegration support, including a small grant that helped him start a business transporting yams to the market.

When I arrived back home in Ghana, my friends and relatives wanted to know why I had come back with nothing. There I was back home, when others were busy earning good money and looking after their families. Many wanted to know when I would try again to get to Europe.

However, I do not see myself as a failure. For me, the most important thing is that I feel lucky to have survived at sea. I am alive and that is what matters. Although I did not make it to Europe, I genuinely do not regret trying to get there. It was the only option I felt I had at the time.

One thing is certain, if I had opportunities here, I would not have been so desperate to try and go to Europe the way I did. If young people like me had jobs and a way to earn a living, we would not set off on these dangerous journeys.

After my experience, my advice to other young people is do not to make this journey. I know many of them may not listen and perhaps I too would probably not listen if I was very desperate to leave, but it is better to try very hard and make it here at home.

If you have to go, do it properly.

My dream now is to expand my business and end up employing other young people who will then no longer be desperate enough to try and put their lives at risk in this way.

I didn’t make it to Europe and I’m fine with it. For now, I have no desire to try that journey again.

I am very hopeful about the future.

I wish many other young people could be too.

Story told to Itayi Viriri, Media & Communications Officer, [*International Organization for* Migration](http://www.iom.int/)

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Activity on Emmanuel’s life:

1. Why do you think Emmanuel left Ghana?

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2. Describe Emmanuel’s living conditions in Libya.

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3. Did Emmanuel make it to Europe?

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4. How does he feel now that he is back to Ghana?

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