

Scaling Up Influential Counselling in Migration Information Campaigns

Frontline Worker Training: Self-Care
and Adaptive Counselling Skills



Contents

Contents	1
Acronyms	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
Methodology	5
Project Overview	6
Objectives	6
Achievements and challenges	6
Participants Outreach Strategy	8
The Frontline Worker Course	9
Enrollment and completion rates	9
Knowledge increase	11
Course content	12
Course format	15
Course accessibility	17
Recommendations	19
Further develop the testing phase, incorporating human-centred design principles and participatory approaches	19
Build on success in responding to unanticipated demand	19
Greater audience segmentation for relevant content	19
Apply lessons to increase engagement	20
Offline outreach for higher visibility	20
Further optimise for mobile, offline access, and microlearning	20
Boost engagement through peer-support	21
Annex A: Data Samples	22
Qualitative interviews	22
Quantitative interviews	23
Annex B: Course Format	24
Annex C: Case Studies	26
Case Study #1	26
Case Study #2	26
Case Study #3	27
Case Study #4	27
Case Study #5	28

Acronyms

EMR	Eastern Mediterranean Route
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMWT	Frontline Migrant Worker Training
IDI	In-Depth Interview
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
PSS	Psycho-Social Support
TMP	The Migrant Project
WBR	Western Balkans Route

Executive Summary

This report evaluates the Frontline Migrant Worker Training (FMWT), an online course aimed at improving the skills of workers dealing with migrants facing mental health challenges. The frontline worker course was developed to address critical gaps in training and capacity - particularly around self-care, mental health, and complex Psycho-Social Support (PSS) skills - thereby enabling frontline workers to better support migrants while maintaining their own wellbeing, especially given the increased demands following the pandemic and surge in migration flows. The course was divided into three modules:

1. Mental health and decision-making in migration
2. Adaptive counselling skills
3. Mental health challenges and self-care

The course was designed for frontline workers along the Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR) and Western Balkan Route (WBR) in regions such as Afghanistan, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Egypt, and Pakistan. It was later expanded to Nigeria due to the proven existing demand for online courses, with Nigerians becoming the first nationality among course participants. The course was made available in English, Farsi, Arabic, and Kurdish.

The course saw 265 enrollments. 60 (23%) participants began the course, 47 (18%) completed the first module, and 40 participants (15%) completed at least 75% of the content, which was required to earn a certificate of completion. 61% of the 265 who enrolled did not open the course at any point. The number of completions obtained was notably lower than the output target of 100 frontline workers completing the training set in the inception phase.

Nigerian participants made up the largest group for both enrollments (35%) and completions (27%). Pakistani participants exhibited the highest enrollment-to-completion ratio (43%). Only a few individuals from KRI, Iraq, Afghanistan, or Egypt enrolled in or completed the course. Many course participants were nationals of other countries. Most participants who completed the course did so in English.

The evaluation pointed to several areas for improvement:

- **Relevance** – Qualitative feedback highlighted that the course was extremely beneficial for junior workers who lacked formal training, whereas more experienced workers found it too basic, serving mainly as a refresher. Participants appreciated the self-care module, but some argued that it did not offer enough depth or practical applications. Approximately 40% of qualitative interview respondents indicated that videos, documentaries, and real-life testimonials could have bridged the gap between theoretical content and practical application.
- **Flexibility** – Frontline workers often face high workloads, which makes it difficult for them to prioritise an online course. Survey respondents identified lack of time (47%) and content that was not directly relevant to their work (38%) as primary barriers to completion. Additionally, more real-life case studies and interactive elements could better support frontline workers in their daily roles. Future versions of the course should also focus on providing more practical tools for self-care to further improve relevance among course participants.
- **Usability** – Course content was reportedly hard to access on smartphones, which was the overwhelming preference of users. About 96% of the total traffic to the Seefar Academy platform came from mobile phones. Course participants reported that the course interface was not mobile-friendly, impeding them from progressing on the course from their mobile devices. Optimising the course for mobile use, potentially through a dedicated mobile app, could significantly improve engagement and accessibility.

Scaling Up Influential Counselling in Migration Information Campaigns

- **Cultural** – Relatively high participation among English speakers and lower participation among non-English speakers suggests there may be issues with adaptation of the course to cultural context.

Despite the challenges in course engagement, the data showed a knowledge increase among those who completed it. Participants who completed the course showed a statistically significant improvement in knowledge, as measured by pre- and post-course quizzes. On average, the percentage increase in knowledge was 17%.



Introduction

This internal evaluation aimed to collect insights about the online training for frontline workers designed as part of the Pathways project. These insights will form the basis for recommendations to improve future online training programmes for frontline workers. The goal of this report was to provide evidence and recommendations for scaling up influential counselling in migration information campaigns.

Methodology

The evaluation integrated both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide comprehensive insights into course effectiveness. Through 20 in-depth interviews and five case studies, we explored participant profiles and their course experiences in detail. Complementing this qualitative data, 45 structured surveys provided measurable feedback on course implementation strategies and online learning best practices. This mixed-method approach enabled both a deep understanding of individual experiences and broader patterns of course effectiveness.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with those who had direct experience with the course as per the project's output. The sample of 20 interviewees was drawn from frontline workers who had:

1. Completed 75% or more of the course (N=25);
2. Completed between 15% and 75% of the course (N=22)

All frontline workers who fulfilled the above criteria were contacted by email, inviting them to participate in an in-depth interview to provide feedback on the course. Twenty participants responded and agreed to interview. Interviews were then scheduled online and led in the language of the respondent, being recorded when allowed to ease transcription by the officers. The interview guides asked respondents to provide feedback on:

- Relevance of the course content to their professional work,
- Challenges faced in accessing and/or completing the course,
- Biggest challenges faced as a frontline worker,
- Any impact that the course had on the frontline worker's way of working,
- Suggestions on how to further improve the course.

The case studies were built from in-depth interviews with course participants, ensuring to account for different perspectives and course participants' profiles. The demographic breakdown of the qualitative interview sample is available in Annex A. Case studies generated from the qualitative interviews conducted are available in Annex C.

The structured survey was initially aimed at gathering insights from frontline workers who had completed the course to understand if they had applied any of the learnings in their jobs. Responding to the context changes and in light of the course's low enrollment and completion rates, Seefar changed the focus of the structured survey.

Seefar designed a short structured survey widening the target sample to frontline workers, whether they had enrolled for the course or not. Out of the 45 frontline workers who completed the survey, 67% (30 out of 45) reported having enrolled in the FMWT. The survey included questions aimed at understanding:

1. The biggest challenges frontline workers face when working with migrants;
2. The most relevant course content;
3. The most engaging course format;
4. The barriers that would prevent frontline workers from completing the course.

The demographic breakdown of the quantitative survey sample is available in Annex A.

Project Overview

Objectives

The overall goal of the Pathways project was to deliver changes in knowledge, intentions and behaviours among people preparing to migrate irregularly or already in transit along the EMR and the WBR.

The FMWT, which is the focus of this report, was a subcomponent of the Pathways project aimed at delivering online counsellor training to frontline workers who interact with irregular migrants to inform future capacity-building approaches for scaling information campaigns. This training component was designed to amplify the project's impact by creating a network of skilled frontline workers who could effectively counsel and support migrants using proven methods, thus extending the reach of migration information campaigns beyond direct project activities.

The frontline migrant worker training's objectives were to:

1. Identify types and contexts for frontline migrant workers who will benefit from scalable migrant training on irregular migration;
2. Determine if frontline migrant workers use the skills and knowledge gained from the training;
3. Identify options and methods for sustainable capacity-building in frontline migrant worker skills like migrant counselling.

Achievements and challenges

The M&E strategy presents outputs and outcomes related to the project and, specifically the evaluation (Table 1). In summary, the FMWT:

- faced significant challenges in achieving a sufficient number of course enrollments and completions,
- was successful in providing useful material for junior officers who did not receive formal training,
- should have included more diverse teaching methods to better engage course participants,
- should have further developed course modules by using real-life examples, strategies, and tools to improve the applicability of the course teachings.

Table 1: Outputs and outcomes of the FMWT per the M&E strategy document

Indicator	Target %	Target No	Achieved
Medium-term outcomes			
Number of case studies of how frontline worker trainees have applied counselling skills from training in their work with migrants	NA	10	5
Short-term outcomes			
Percentage of frontline worker trainees who report readiness to apply new skills in their work with migrants	50%	50	0 ¹
Percentage of frontline worker trainees who report having improved knowledge about how to provide counselling support to migrants	70%	70	68% ²
Percentage of frontline worker trainees who report the training was helpful	85%	85	0
Outputs			
Number of frontline workers who complete training	NA	100	40
Number of qualitative interviews with frontline workers who complete training	20%	20	16
Number of structured surveys with frontline workers	70%	70	40

¹ The short term outcomes relied on participants completing the course with a check in call by Seefar officers 6 months after the completion. Given the low and late completion rate, Seefar was unable to conduct check in calls six months after the completion of the course, consequently most of the short term outcomes were not achieved.

² Of the 40 course participants who completed the training, 68% (27 of 40) scored higher on the final quiz compared to the initial quiz.

Participants Outreach Strategy

The participants' outreach strategy was launched on September 30, 2023. Initially, Seefar opted for an organic promotion via LinkedIn and the project team's professional networks. This approach generated 39,550 page views and 1,328 unique visitors to the Seefar Academy website, however, enrollments to the course remained low.

Starting December 2023, online promotion complemented offline outreach through LinkedIn. The FMWT was promoted on Meta through Seefar's *The Migrant Project* Facebook pages. The course was promoted online to users from Iraqi Kurdistan, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In the first month, the promotion generated 46,571 visitors and 73,614 page views for the Seefar Academy website.

Table 2 provides an overview of the metrics and costs of the online promotion. Although the online promotion was generally successful in generating engagement among social media users, targeting frontline workers on Facebook proved particularly difficult. This occurred mainly due to limitations of Meta interest-based targeting options and the popularity of *The Migrant Project* (TMP) brand among potential and transit migrants rather than frontline workers.

Table 2: Online promotion of the FMWT

Platform	Meta
Time period	Dec 2023 to Aug 2024
Language	Kurdish, Farsi, Arabic, and English
Target audience	Users from Iraqi Kurdistan, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Nigeria
Visitors	479,987
Link clicks	1,102,816
Cost	€3,250.11
Cost per link click	€0.002
Cost per view	€0.006

Starting in July 2024, the English version of the course was also shared with users in Nigeria due to high demand from this segment for other online courses designed by Seefar. Widening the geographical areas to Nigeria significantly increased visitors to the Seefar Academy website: Nigerians made up 52% (247,086) of the total visitors during the promotion period (December 2023 - August 2024).

During the period the FMWT was promoted online, most traffic to the Seefar Academy platform came from Nigeria (52%), Egypt (23%), Pakistan (10%), and Iraq (7%). The English FMWT received 3,632 page views, whereas the Arabic version 1,140.

Other unpaid online and offline outreach strategies were implemented to drive enrollments to the FMWT, and it was shared on:

1. ReliefWeb
2. DevEx Training Board
3. Several Facebook groups (e.g. Aid Workers Wellness Group)

Furthermore, the project team shared the course with:

1. *June 2023 to August 2024*: Referral network partners and their wider organisational network;
2. *June 2024*: Seefar's counselling roster, providing non-monetary incentives such as being considered for the counselling roster in the future should they complete the course and meet the necessary counselling qualifications;
3. *July 2024 - August 2024*: Relevant organisations in the Balkans region (Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo) through the consortium partner META;
4. *August 2024*: The Afghan Diaspora Network via the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

The Frontline Worker Course

Enrollment and completion rates

265 people enrolled in the course, and 40 participants completed more than 75% of it, gaining a certificate of completion. Table 3 presents the number of course enrollments and completions by nationality. The total number of enrollments by nationality is lower than 265 because some of the participants did not fill in the initial survey asking for demographic information such as nationality, age, or sex.

Table 3: Course enrollments and completions (>75% completed), by language

Nationality	Course Enrollments	Course Completions (>75%)
Afghan	27	4
Iraqi (KRI)	13	5
Nigerian	82	11
Pakistani	14	6
Egyptian	6	0
Iraqi	3	0
Other	84	14
TOTAL	231	40

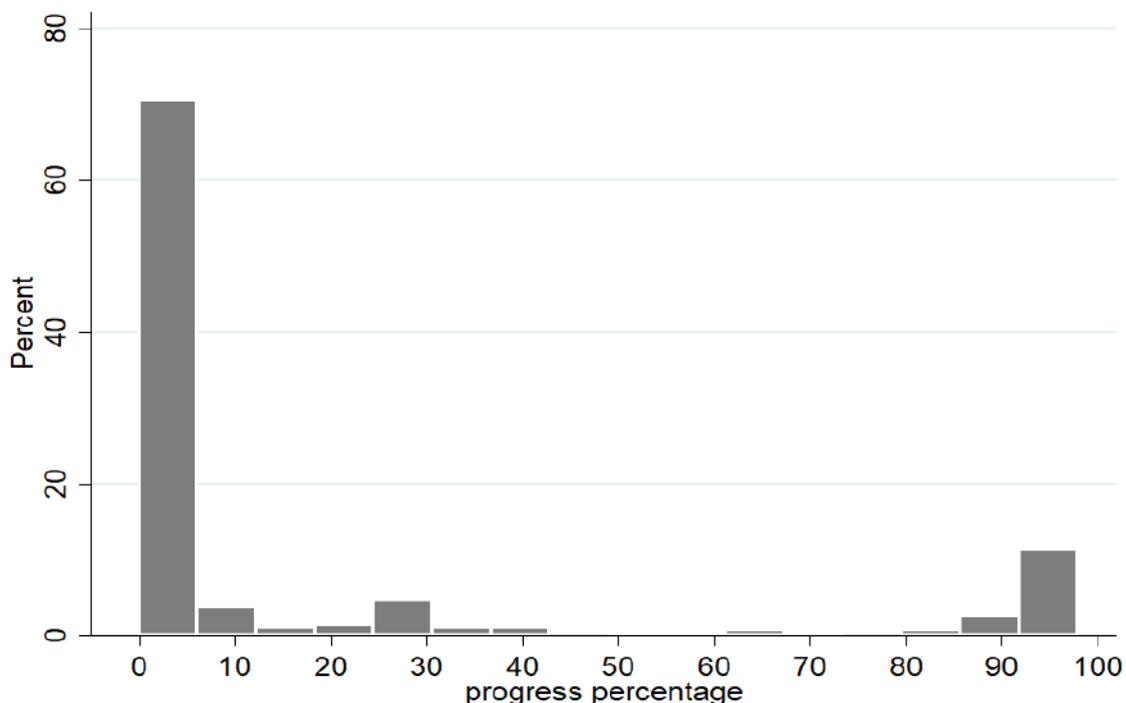
Scaling Up Influential Counselling in Migration Information Campaigns

Nigerians made up 31% of the total course enrollments and 27% of the total course completions, representing the main nationality who undertook the course and confirming a general interest in online courses in Nigeria.

Almost all participants completed the course in English. The course was made available on Seefar Academy, an e-learning Moodle platform specifically built for the Pathways project. The course was available in Farsi, Arabic, Kurdish, and English, yet the vast majority of the participants completed the course in English. There are different possible explanations for this. On the one hand, it may suggest that the outreach strategy implemented mostly targeted frontline workers who are proficient in English, thus being ineffective in engaging local NGOs in the KRI, Iraq, Egypt, and Pakistan. On the other hand, cultural sensitivity issues may play a role: one interviewee participant who, at the time of the interview, worked within the private sector pointed to the challenges of talking about mental health and said, *‘The biggest challenge I am facing is on topics such as mental issues. To talk about it is still a taboo’*. A female counselling Team Leader based in Australia added that *“local people should be involved in content creation; it should not be only one person who creates content for all different cultures.”*

Most individuals who signed up for the course never started it.³ Figure 1 shows the distribution of progress percentage among the 265 people who enrolled in the course. Most of the people who enrolled (61%, 163 of 265) never started any modules. Among those who started learning, some dropped out after completing approximately 30% of it. Only 15% (40 of 265) completed more than 75% of the modules and obtained a certificate.

Figure 1: Distribution of completion percentage among individuals who enrolled for the FMWT



³ This is a common trend for participants who sign up to Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). (Celik & Cagiltay, 2024).

The few course participants who dropped out of the course did so mostly in the first module. Of the 62 people who started the first module, 48 completed it. Of those 48, 42 completed the second module, and 40 reached the end of the third module, completing the whole course. Overall, the FMWT achieved a 15% completion rate (40 completions from 265 enrolments), which needs to be understood in the context of how Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) completion is measured. Research shows that traditional completion calculations that include all enrollments often underestimate a course's effectiveness, as many individuals who sign up never begin the course content.⁴

Course participants' retention was strong across modules. The progression pattern above indicates that once participants actively engaged with the content, they were highly likely to complete the full course. About 65% of the course participants who started the first module completed the whole course. The course's engagement metrics are particularly noteworthy given its rapid development and deployment timeline, multiple language offerings (English, Farsi, Arabic, and Kurdish), and the technical complexity of delivering mental health content across different cultural contexts.

Some trends emerged when looking at demographic differences among those who completed the course, but the sample is too small to draw any significant conclusion. The majority of the participants who completed the course (60%) were females. Although only 14 Pakistanis signed up for the course, 43% of them completed it, representing the highest enrollment/completion ratio among the different nationalities. The limited number of participants available precludes any significant conclusion from the trends observed.

Knowledge increase

At the beginning and the end of the training, participants had to complete a short quiz of 10 questions. The quiz was designed to measure knowledge on the course's topics before and after having completed it, ultimately measuring knowledge increase. Table 4 presents the average scores for the initial and final quizzes and their standard deviations for participants who completed the course. The standard deviations are very similar, indicating comparable variability in the scores.

Table 4: Average scores in the initial and final quizzes

	Average score (out of 10)	Standard deviation
Initial quiz	6	0.26
Final quiz	7	0.30

Course participants reported significantly higher scores on the training's topics after completing the course compared to before starting it. Out of the 40 participants who completed the course, 29 scored a higher grade on the final quiz compared to the initial quiz. The percentage increase in knowledge, as measured by the quiz scores, is approximately 17%. A t-test with equal variances was performed to test whether the difference between the average scores was significant,

⁴ Celik, B., & Cagiltay, K. (2024). Uncovering MOOC completion: A comparative study of completion rates from different perspectives. *Open Praxis*, 16(3), 445-456. Accessed 23/10/2024. Available at: <https://openpraxis.org/articles/606/files/66d16716e6c09.pdf>

and it proved to be statistically significant at the 1% level of significance. This suggests that the course was effective in improving overall knowledge of key topics among the participants.

Course content

The aim of the course was to help frontline workers better understand the mental health challenges they face as part of their job and apply strategies to support vulnerable migrants while also taking care of their own mental health.

The course was divided into three modules:

1. **Mental health and decision-making in migration:** focused on the mental health challenges that migrants undergo during their irregular migration journeys, offering strategies to recognise signs and consequences of trauma among migrants.
2. **Adaptive counselling skills:** presented key strategies for frontline migrant workers to effectively engage in conversations with migrants who underwent traumatic experiences. Strategies included, but were not limited to, active listening, recognising biases, and cultural sensitivity.
3. **Mental health challenges and self-care:** addressed the impact that exposure to trauma has on frontline workers, offering coping strategies including peer support, stress management, and self-care.

The choice to focus on mental health was made to ensure the course's content would be relevant to as many frontline workers as possible, regardless of the more specific role they covered within their organisations (e.g. legal aid or livelihoods counselling). Many qualitative interview respondents mentioned that when they started as frontline workers, the organisations they worked for did not provide such training. As a result, they struggled to keep a healthy work-life balance:

"I struggled. My first two years, it was very difficult. Mentally, I was carrying my work to the house. I was not able to leave work at work and go home. At home, throughout the night, I was thinking about the beneficiaries. My family members also noticed and told me that I had changed."

- Outreach Officer, Female, Philippines

"No, unfortunately, I did not receive proper training when I started my job. They just told me something - and went there and started to work. But we do talk about our problems and I ask my colleagues."

- Programme Officer, Female, Slovenia

Frontline workers who participated in the quantitative survey confirm that the topics addressed by the course are highly relevant to their profession. When asked the biggest challenges they face when working with migrants, quantitative survey respondents (whether they had enrolled in the course or not) reported access to mental health (42%), lack of training on legal systems (42%), and handling high caseloads/understaffing (39%). Training on legal systems is highly specific and depends on the context of each frontline worker, thus making it a difficult topic to cover in an online course. Mental health and self-care, on the other hand, are confirmed to be relevant for workers who are often faced with high workloads and severe understaffing. When asked to pick the three most important topics related to self-care they would like to learn about in an online training, respondents selected:

1. Effective self-care strategies for frontline workers (58%);
2. Supporting migrant health in crisis situation (51%);
3. Techniques for preventing and managing burnout (33%).⁵

⁵ Please note that the percentages presented do not add up to 100% because the question allowed multiple answers. The answers listed are the top three answers by respondents to the quantitative survey.

The content of the course was highly relevant for junior frontline workers who typically do not receive proper training on these topics. Focusing the training on mental health among frontline workers allowed it to target a wider audience within the frontline migrant workers' community, yet it also forced Seefar to develop more basic course content for it to be accessible to more people. As a result, the course content was helpful for participants in junior positions who had not received proper training from their organisations and were facing challenges on the job. A junior officer at a youth detention centre in Madrid said:

"I did not get training before the job. I was given orientation and told how the centre works. [...] Because of this course, I feel like I have more experience. The part about self-care was very important, but I had already been exposed to this information. But the rest about inheriting trauma and the rest of the information was very important. Identifying trauma was great. Even though I had an idea, this course put it into words and made it clearer for me. The way we could question some of the migrants about their lives, but ask in a way to make them feel comfortable was very helpful to me."

- Youth Detention Centre Officer, Male, Spain

More experienced frontline workers reported that the course material was too basic to meet their learning needs, but some claimed it was a good refresher of their onboarding. Frontline workers with more years of experience had already compensated the lack of formal training by the organisations they worked for by exploring online resources, one female Children Protection officer, based in Nigeria said, *"through online materials and training from partners, especially UNHCR, I learnt about ways to detach myself and keep work and life balance. I learned about self-care, my thoughts, my feelings and I have to think about my boundaries."* As a consequence, the course's teachings related to self-care strategies were typically less relevant for these workers and served mostly as a refresher, but did not expose them to new information. About 23% (14 of 62) of the course participants who started the first course module dropped out of the course before completing it. The data shows that most of them dropped out after starting the self-care strategies, suggesting the content was not relevant enough to engage the participants further.

"The course was good, but I think it needs more explanation in some of the parts. I wanted more detailed information about some of the knowledge that was shared on the course. I learned, it was good to refresh knowledge, but most of it I already knew. If I had more details in ways that I had not received in my previous training, it could have been much better for me."

- Administrative Officer, Female, Canada

Of those who had taken the course and were interviewed, nine out of 20 claimed that the course was a good refresher for the context in which they had already been trained. Those who work closely with migrants, specifically in counselling roles, argued that due to the high workload and focus on migrants' wellbeing, they tend to neglect themselves. For these participants, the course represented a good refresher for the content they had already been trained on regarding self-care.

“The self-care module was really beneficial as well. I learned that we should not engage with other people’s problems, instead, we need to take care of ourselves and that it is better to support people in tough situations without getting emotionally involved.”

- Counsellor, Male, KRI

“Actually, the course was very useful. Most of our work is related to trauma, and psycho-social support, and this is quite well covered in this course. Three to four things I have learned include how trauma affects migrants emotionally and physically, and understanding how to recognise the signs of trauma in migrants. Secondly, I have learned practically how to support migrants. It helps me understand how to listen to them, how to give them information, and how to create a safe environment for them. The important thing that I learned from this course is taking care of myself. The course taught me how to avoid burnout by practicing self-care, setting boundaries, and seeking support from others. Also how to manage stress, how to manage my work, while I do this challenging work.”

- Counsellor, Male, Germany

Although the course content aligned with key topics for frontline workers, it failed to reflect the diverse situations they faced, like working with various age groups, different genders or addressing special needs. For instance, two qualitative interview respondents who worked with children and/or minors flagged that the course did not provide guidance on how to handle such cases, which require a specific approach that differs from the one followed when interacting with adults. Similarly, course modules addressing how to interact with women or members of minorities (e.g. ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ individuals) would represent a valuable addition and increase the relevance of the course to different real-life scenarios.

“As I said, I used to work with children. I think there should be topics such as how to work with migrant children - the interviewing skills, how to identify a traumatised child, a child going through abuse. I think this is a really important aspect to include. Because you cannot work with adults and children the same way.”

- Child Protection Officer, Female, Nigeria

One of the qualitative interview respondents who had previously provided PSS to female Afghan

transit migrants in Türkiye reported that *“gendered experiences for both migrants and for frontline workers can be important content. What is the difference working with migrants among females vs. among males? I wish this was included in the course.”* Although she has been working with migrants for years, she argued, *“I still feel like I am not well equipped to help migrants emotionally and psychologically. Sometimes, it feels like I am working in a circle. I think more practical information would be best for us: workshops, online self-taught courses such as those at Seefar Academy. If they provide more practical solutions, they could all be very helpful.”*

Course format

The course made use of graphics, texts, case studies, questionnaires, and quizzes to keep engagement high throughout the course. Annex B presents some screenshots of the graphics used in the course.

Specifically, the course included:

1. An initial survey,
2. A final survey,
3. 2 case studies,
4. 1 assignment,
5. 9 quizzes throughout the course.

Some qualitative interview respondents argued that the real-life scenarios were too few and not specific enough to represent the diversity of frontline workers’ experiences. As one Programme Officer based in Slovenia reported: *“I loved the course, but it was really theoretical. It would be good if the course gives us more information about what to do in real situations.”* This is in line with 22% (10 of 45) of the quantitative survey respondents reporting that a lack of interactive elements or practical applications prevented them from completing the course. The same applied to self-care strategies, where respondents reported the wish to receive more structured tools and strategies to monitor and improve their mental health.

“I think the course was useful because it reminded me of self-care. So it was good to take it. I think with more details, we could benefit more. For example, if we are talking about how to detach from work stress, then what? Can we have specific suggestions and details about how to do this? How can we have a work plan and learn to update? How do we learn to take our self-care plan more seriously?”

- Administrative Officer, Female, Canada

Some qualitative respondents argued that the course relied heavily on texts and graphics and lacked more engaging teaching methods. Video testimonies from other frontline workers may be able to bridge the gap between theoretical teachings and real-life experiences while also allowing course participants to better identify with the situation discussed. About 40% (8 out of 20) qualitative interview respondents claimed that videos could have drawn more engagement, claiming that the course was text-heavy and documentaries, tutorial videos, and videos covering the lives of real frontline workers could have made the course more successful. When asked what format of training

they found most effective, quantitative survey respondents predominantly selected in-person workshops (58%, 26 of 40), instructor-led (44%, 20 of 45), and self-paced online courses (47%, 21 of 45). The data seems to suggest an interest among frontline workers for self-paced training that incorporates a certain degree of human interaction and guidance. On this matter, a Director of Operations based in Pakistan said, *“There was too much text, pre-quiz, post-quiz. There were not enough case studies.”* Another qualitative interview respondent added:

“Someone who has enough background might find that the course is too light on information, not enough detail, while having to read too much text and someone with not enough information might find it difficult to stay engaged because there is too much text. There weren’t enough case studies. But if it is online sessions, there are not enough videos.”

- Programme Manager, Female, Pakistan

One previous migrant counsellor with a psychology degree who is currently working in a specialised clinic for those with trauma stated that the course was very good, arguing that it fills a gap in mental health training but should develop a more effective format and teaching methods to engage participants more effectively.

“There was some good content in the course and I think for someone who does not have a counselling background, they can make use of this course. For instance, burnout and emotional detachment issues are challenging, and it can really be very helpful to someone in helping them manage their workload and their work stress. [...] If you develop courses like this, if the course is in brochure form, and if there is something like a booklet, then it could be good. Avoid using so many quizzes, and people would have an easier time engaging with the content.”

- Psychologist, Male, Pakistan

Although the platform included a community forum, it was not administered effectively to engage course participants. Some qualitative respondents pointed out that there was a missed opportunity to facilitate exchange between course participants through a forum or a chat dedicated to exchanging ideas and experiences. Although the platform offered this space, there was no officer appointed to manage the space and stimulate/moderate conversations among course participants.

“There should be somewhere on the course platform where participants share their views and experiences - a Discussion Spot. Like, a section where you can see and read

everyone's answers to the questions and you can add into that as well.'

- Child Protection Officer, Female, Nigeria

Frontline workers who completed the quantitative survey largely confirmed the qualitative findings. When asked what would make an online training more engaging for frontline workers, 50% (23 of 45) reported the use of engaging multimedia (e.g. videos, animations, case studies), 44% (20 of 45) mentioned short, interactive modules, and 44% (20 of 45) argued that a course certification would improve overall commitment. While the course offered a certification of completion, Seefar does not have brand recognition as an online course provider, which may decrease incentives among course participants to complete the training.

Course accessibility

Frontline workers are typically faced with a high workload due to severe understaffing, and thus, it may be particularly difficult to keep them engaged with an online course. When asked what obstacles would prevent them from participating in or completing the online course, quantitative survey respondents mentioned lack of time due to a high workload (47%), making it difficult to prioritise learning (33%) and course content that is not directly related to their day-to-day work (38%).⁶

Most of the traffic to the Seefar Academy platform came from smartphones, suggesting a mobile application may be more effective in driving engagement among course participants. Data from the Seefar Academy platform shows that 60% of the individuals who accessed the page during the first two months of organic promotion did it from a desktop, whereas 37% opened the webpage from a smartphone. During the whole implementation period, the percentages shifted dramatically, with 96% accessing the webpage from their smartphones and only 1% from their desktop. It is important to note that the online promotion through TMP likely drove many transit and potential migrants to the page who were not the target audience. Even so, taking into account the little time many frontline workers have at their disposal to learn something new, a mobile application would likely improve engagement among course participants. As one qualitative respondent reported:

"I have not completed the course. I had difficulty accessing the platform on my mobile, so I had to use my laptop to access the course. [...] The Seefar Academy platform is hard to access on the phone. I tried to finish, but I still have to complete the tasks to test the knowledge before proceeding to the next module - it is just going back and forth."

- Outreach Officer, Female, Philippines

Finally, some qualitative respondents reported that certain technical aspects of the course were poorly designed, becoming disruptive to the user experience. Although less significant, these disruptions

⁶ Please note that the percentages presented do not add up to 100% because the question allowed multiple answers. The answers listed are the top three answers by respondents to the quantitative survey.

Scaling Up Influential Counselling in Migration Information Campaigns

may have contributed to a generally low engagement among course participants, ultimately leading some of them to drop out.

“One of the most frustrating things was to tick and check the boxes. Every time I was reading about something, I had to click on that circle, and then it took me to the beginning of the module, so I had to scroll all the way down to pick the course back where I had left it.”

- Program Officer, Female, Slovenia

“The accessibility features of the course were not appealing: whenever I closed the website and came back, even if I saved my progress, it would take me to the first module. Even if I had answered the quizzes, it was bringing me back to the first module.”

- Team Leader, Female, Australia



Recommendations

Further develop the testing phase, incorporating human-centred design principles and participatory approaches

There are some problems that may have been resolved more quickly through a longer, more dedicated and higher-quality user testing phase. For instance, the course's content was relevant for more junior officers, whereas more experienced professionals reported the need for more challenging and practical training modules.

Including a broader variety of mechanisms through which end-users can input in the module design will increase course relevance, and, consequently, uptake. We suggest gathering feedback through four main steps across three stages: (1) pre-design, (2) design, and (3) post-launch.

During stage one, we recommend conducting pre-implementation surveys to gather insights into learning preferences, technical skills, and training needs. This will determine which modules frontline workers need the most, and which information would help them in practice. Online co-creation workshops with end-users should also be held to shape the content of specific modules in more detail.

During the design stage, focus group discussions (FGDs) should be held with participants who have completed at least one module. These discussions will collect feedback on the course content and platform features, allowing for adjustments as needed. Cultural differences should be accounted for when structuring the FGDs to develop a tailored approach for each target audience when necessary.

In the post-launch stage, the platform should offer ways for users to give ongoing feedback, such as through in-module rating systems and quick in-app surveys. Feedback mechanisms should be quick and effective to avoid disrupting the learning process of the participants.

Build on success in responding to unanticipated demand

A key unanticipated, positive impact of the FMWT was in being able to respond to unexpected demand from Nigerian audiences with no extra cost. This was possible because the English component of the course was considered highly relevant by Nigerian users. In the future, an improved version of the course could be prepared in key languages and provide an easy-to-mobilise asset in the event of new and emerging crises.

Greater audience segmentation for relevant content

Frontline workers represent a highly diverse group, facing different challenges based on their specific roles and the migrant populations they support. To create content that speaks directly to their needs, we recommend further segmenting frontline workers into targeted subgroups. For example, frontline workers engaging with children might need tools for trauma-informed care, while those working with women may need resources for handling gender-specific risks or providing support for survivors of gender-based violence. Segmentation will allow for training materials to provide more practical, scenario-based guidance. This approach will ensure that each subgroup receives content aligned with the specific demands of their work, resulting in more useful, relevant resources that are directly applicable in real-world situations.

Apply lessons to increase engagement

The content designed was largely text and assignment-based, which limited the engagement of users with the material. Course participants reported the desire for more engaging teaching methods. Some mechanisms to achieve higher content engagement include:

- **Multimedia:** Include videos tailored for learning platforms to break up dense text and illustrate complex concepts. Videos can include tutorials, case studies, and real-life scenarios relevant to course topics. AI-powered tools like Synthesia⁷ allow for quick production of high-quality videos with customised scripts and avatars, minimising production time and costs. These tools can generate professional, multilingual video content that resonates with diverse user groups and is adaptable for updates or future course iterations.
- **A/B testing and quick learning cycles:** Use MigrantMatch's⁸ AI-powered analytics to conduct A/B testing on different content formats (e.g., video lengths, styles, and language) and identify what resonates most. The continuous feedback loops allow for ongoing optimization of content and adjustments.
- **Real-life testimonials:** The use of real-life testimonials that share their experiences, whether on recorded videos or live sessions, will significantly increase the feeling of identification among course participants and allow them to understand how to implement the course's learnings in their work.

Offline outreach for higher visibility

Our experience with digital tools shows that offline outreach is a powerful tool for platform visibility, yet it needs to be structured through several different channels to prove its effectiveness. Connecting with communities directly through events, workshops, and local partnerships can make people more aware of the platform and more likely to use it. For audiences with limited online access or trust in digital tools, offline engagement builds credibility and gives users a chance to ask questions and understand the benefits. This approach helps reach a wider audience, encourages ongoing platform use, and often leads to word-of-mouth recommendations within target groups.

Further optimise for mobile, offline access, and microlearning

Seefar Academy's website data shows that 96% of users access the platform via mobile phones. Although high levels of mobile phone usage was anticipated initially, the course content was not designed principally with mobile phones in mind. For future projects, developing a dedicated mobile app or alternative delivery mechanism (for example, via Facebook or WhatsApp) will simplify access and make it easier for users to complete courses without needing a computer. A mobile app can also be designed to load content more efficiently during break or commuting times, offer a cleaner interface, and enable offline access for areas with unstable internet, ensuring a smoother learning experience on-the-go.

⁷ Synthesia is an AI-powered video generation platform that enables users to create engaging videos with digital avatars and synthetic voices, without needing actors or filming.

⁸ MigrantMatch is an AI-powered desktop app designed to continuously improve insight into irregular migration patterns and the most effective communication approaches. The platform uses machine learning techniques and social media audience data to develop targeted content, optimise audience engagement through continuous learning and feedback loops. Migrant Match is a Seefar proprietary tool.

Mobile apps also include the functionality to send notifications, which engages users who have installed the app. This feature can encourage users who started a course but haven't completed it, serving as a reminder and helping to maintain ongoing engagement.

Boost engagement through peer-support

Real-time peer support builds a sense of community, helping learners feel connected and supported in their learning journey. It is a technique well used in highly successful online learning providers (Coursera, Udemy, Khan Academy). It has the added benefit of strengthening ties between civil society actors.

Examples that could feasibly be implemented within the context of an AMIF-supported project:

- **Learning buddies** – Pair participants at the start of the course to create mutual support. Buddies can check in regularly, discuss course content, and encourage each other to complete modules.
- **Live online session** – Schedule a set number of sessions (e.g. monthly, bi-monthly) for participants to discuss in groups or have question and answer sessions about the course material or learn from each other's practice and experience.
- **Online forums** — Adding a dedicated forum within the platform will encourage active engagement and create a supportive community for participants. The space will allow learners to share insights and useful resources, ask questions, and connect with others who are facing similar situations. Assigning a moderator to guide discussions and encourage participation will help maintain activity, keep conversations focused, and promote the exchange.
- **Meet up within specific migrants' hubs** — frontline workers working in migrants' hubs face high levels of stress and difficult situations, thus, they would greatly benefit from the course material.



Annex A: Data Samples

Qualitative interviews

Demographics		No. of participants
Sex	Male	11
	Female	9
Age	18-24	0
	25-34	6
	35-44	12
	Over 44	2
Location	Nigeria	3
	KRI	2
	Pakistan	7
	Spain	1
	Canada	2
	Germany	1
	Kenya	1
	Philippines	1
	Slovenia	1
	Australia	1

Quantitative interviews

Demographics		Percentage
Sex	Male	53%
	Female	47%
Age	18-24	9%
	25-34	42%
	35-44	42%
	Over 44	7%
Ever enrolled in the Frontline Workers course	Yes	67%
	No	33%
Location	Nigeria	20%
	Pakistan	11%
	Turkey	9%
	Iraq	9%
	Afghanistan	4%
	Italy	4%
	Sudan	4%
	Other	39%

Annex B: Course Format

Figure 1: Graphics on the effects of trauma

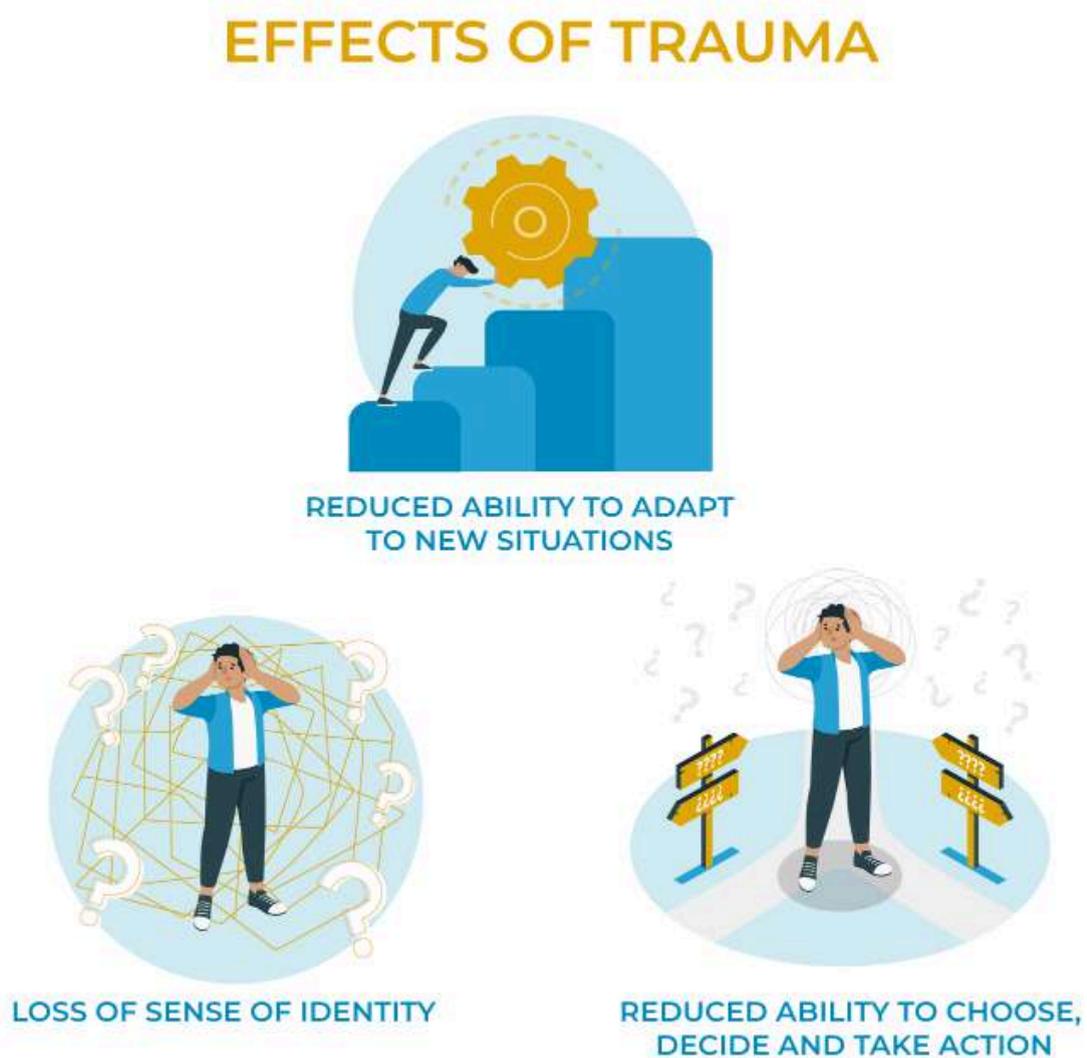
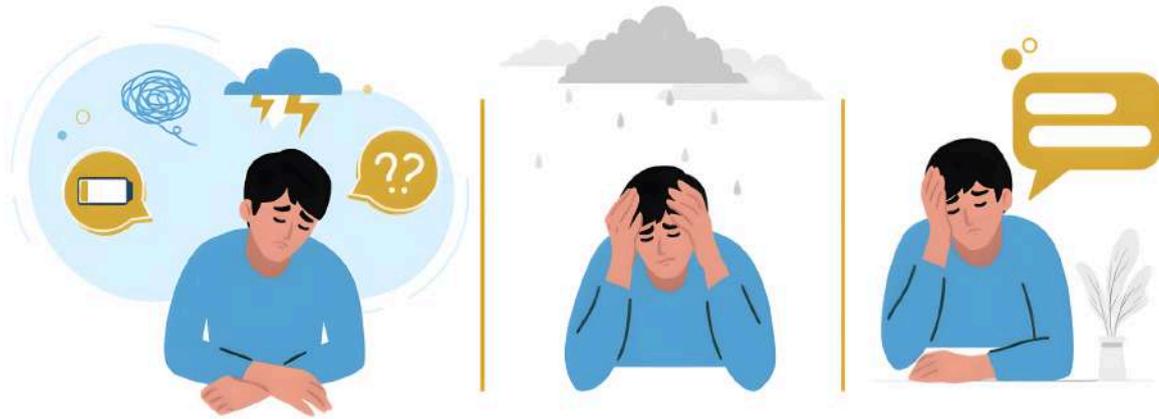


Figure 2: Real-life scenario

Voices from the field: Emir's story



My name is Emir. I work in Turkey for a hotline giving services to migrants in irregular situations. Last week, Zain, a migrant from Pakistan, reached out for assistance.

In our conversation, Zain shared his intentions for the future and the harsh realities he encountered on his path. His experiences left him feeling a sense of hopelessness.

My focus was to help Zain rediscover his strengths and look for options. I asked him how he's been able to face those challenges and plan for the future with everything he has gone through. We explored his coping strategies and discussed the love and responsibility he felt towards his family. Amidst his challenges, Zain had exhibited resourcefulness and problem-solving skills.

As our conversation continued, Zain's aspirations came to light. He yearned for his family's well-being and watching his sisters grow. We engaged in an open dialogue about the consequences of irregular migration. We highlighted the separation from his loved ones and personal safety concerns. While exploring alternatives, we compiled a range of options. These included avenues for skill enhancement through online courses and building his CV.

Annex C: Case Studies

Case Study #1

Roberto, a 25-year-old Colombian male working in a juvenile detention centre in Madrid, has been dealing with minors of migrant background. Though he initially had no specific motivation to work with migrants, his role involves managing their safety and addressing issues such as suicidal tendencies, self-harm, and aggressive behavior. Working night shifts, he often intervenes in situations like smoking-related risks or emotional crises, where he sometimes needs to get security involved. With only three months of full-time work experience in the field, he finds the work challenging, particularly because of the trauma and vulnerability many of these migrant minors carry.

He recently completed the Frontline Workers Course and found trauma-informed care very informative. He claimed that it helped him better understand the emotional and psychological complexities of the minors he works with. Through the course, he learned how to ask sensitive questions and identify signs of trauma, skills that have already improved his ability to support the migrant population at the centre where he works. While he is still new to the role, the course gave him fresh perspectives on how to handle vulnerable individuals, and he plans to continue applying these insights and skills as he gains more experience.

Case Study #2

Sahar, a 38-year-old female from Pakistan with a Master's degree in Economics and who has significant experience designing training in the humanitarian sector, provided extensive feedback on the course. Previously, she has worked with organisations such as Plan International, Save the Children, and UNDP. In her role at YEN, she has managed a large project covering five districts in Pakistan, focusing particularly on potential migrants. She has helped design training modules aimed at supporting returning migrants, addressing their financial and PSS needs. Her tasks include designing training materials, handling multiple projects, and developing strategies to assist migrants in reintegrating into society using the skills they gained abroad.

While taking the online course, she found the content too text-heavy and lacking in engagement, making it difficult to absorb much of the information. She believes the course could benefit from more videos, interactive activities and clearer instructions between sections. Despite the valuable content, she found it tiring and felt that success stories and real-life scenarios could have made it more motivating. She suggests incorporating psychological support elements, not only for the frontline workers, but for them to provide to the migrants they work with. Furthermore, she suggests offering digitised translations and audio formats to make the content more accessible and engaging for learners with diverse backgrounds.

Case Study #3

Shahram, a 34-year-old male frontline worker from Pakistan, was one of the beneficiaries of the Frontline Workers course.

Shahram has an MA in Social Science and nine years of experience working in the humanitarian sector with organisations such as ICMPD and Care International. He has been dedicated to supporting migrants and economic migrants, especially those from Afghanistan, through livelihood programs, business training and PSS. His motivation stems from witnessing the trauma migrants face when attempting to reach EU member countries and the social rejection they experience upon returning home following a deportation or voluntary return.

As Director of Operations, Shahram manages programmes in high-migrant-sender districts, ensuring the smooth delivery of PSS, logistics courses, and business development training. However, he hints at a lack of awareness among migrants regarding the value of livelihood programs, as many expect immediate financial aid. He further added that some migrants struggle to trust humanitarian organisations due to past negative experiences.

With regards to the course training, he claims to have been offered valuable content, but points out specific challenges in the course structure. He found the course layout and the abundance of quizzes overwhelming, suggesting the need for more user-friendly approaches, such as video tutorials and interactive elements. He highlights that frontline workers, especially those dealing with returnees and financially struggling migrants, need specialised training in business development to enhance their ability to provide practical support.

The complexity of the course platform and the heavy content can deter engagement, especially for emotionally drained participants. Therefore, he recommends simplifying the learning process to accommodate the busy schedules and emotional exhaustion of frontline workers, making the content more accessible and engaging.

Case Study #4

Sonia, a mid-career outreach officer based in the Philippines, has dedicated nearly 12 years to working with international and governmental organisations. Most recently, from February to June, she collaborated with Seefar under the Promotion of Learn Hub, a Seefar Academy initiative designed as an online course for migrant workers in the Philippines. Her role involved promoting the Learn Hub and working closely with local government units and organisations that address trafficking issues. Her tasks also involved recovery programmes, livelihood assistance, and meeting the immediate needs of trafficked migrant workers.

Sonia experiences the emotional strain of absorbing the issues faced by migrant workers, a challenge exacerbated by the difficulty of connecting them to appropriate resources. In regards to the frontline workers course, she claimed it was helpful but she would have preferred a mobile app, instead of a website. Balancing full-time motherhood made it even harder for her to complete the course, though she recognized its value, especially for frontline workers handling emotional strain. Motivated by its relevance to her field, she appreciated the course's helpful content but wished for more real-life scenarios to better grasp migration dynamics.

Case Study #5

Nina, a 33-year-old Nigerian, has been working with migrants for several years. Her interest in migration grew when she moved to Abuja and worked in the Highlands, where she constantly heard people say, "I want to migrate." This helped her understand the reasons behind the desire to migrate, particularly as the lack of awareness about the risks was a huge factor. Nina continues to receive calls from people she once counselled, expressing gratitude for the impact she made on their lives. During her work as a counsellor, she came across people who had experienced much trauma and was trained to listen to them with empathy. She recently helped a mother whose son wanted to migrate by sharing information on the risks of irregular migration. However, she faced significant challenges, including migrants being secretive about their plans due to cultural fears tied to envy and black magic. Despite her efforts to offer support, she often struggles to see migrants take such life-threatening risks in pursuit of livelihood opportunities.

Nina completed the course and found it useful. The course helped her understand how to provide better support to those she interacts with, even though she is currently not working in the migration field. She believes that learning about mental health and adaptive counselling skills. While the course was informative for Nina, she felt there were areas for improvement, such as the need for more engaging content like videos and animations, especially given the emotional nature of the topics. Despite these challenges, she recognizes the importance of the course in helping frontline workers like herself better address the complex issues surrounding migrants.

