



Funded by the European Union



NAMAN
NORTH AFRICA
MIGRATION
ACADEMIC NETWORK

Implemented by



ICMPD
International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE NORTH OF AFRICA: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC INCLUSION


Policy brief

Emilie Vidal
Tobias Metzner



emgpp

EVIDENCE-DRIVEN
MIGRATION GOVERNANCE POLICY
AND PRACTICE IN NORTH AFRICA



This summary examines entrepreneurship as a viable option for migrant women's socioeconomic inclusion in the North of Africa (NoA). The brief draws on a literature review and interviews with practitioners coming from academia, civil society, public institutions, international development, and private sector in four NoA countries: Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.


Migrant women in the NoA are exposed to structural and non-structural discrimination on basis of race, origin and gender, while being subject to the negative economic outlook affecting the globe following the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant women face persistent and interconnected challenges: a significant gender employment gap, limited access to finance, cultural barriers, unpaid care work and childcare responsibilities, and the lack of consideration to the different needs of men and women in migration policies, among others. The most frequently cited constraints hampering migrant women's entrepreneurship in the region, are the lack of a supportive ecosystem, and their legal standing which leaves them unsure of their future in their host communities and of the rights and resources available to them.

Despite recent efforts to facilitate entrepreneurship, overall, the environment remains challenging. National laws restricting foreigners' access to credit, administrative dysfunctions, complexity of the tax policies, vague or incomplete legal provisions and officials' unawareness of the legal provisions lead to a gap between legislation and enforcement and hinder the creation and formalisation of migrants' businesses. Moreover, entrepreneurship by nature is a high risk undertaking that requires time and material investment. Thus, migrant women who lack regular status do not have faith in local law enforcement and are not aware of their rights to work are unlikely to invest in the creation of a business.

In addition, entrepreneurship development programmes led by public agencies and international actors are usually subject to strict criteria and lack of appropriate financial and human resources to support effectively migrant-led projects. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems of these programmes and the unavailability of data on migrant women pose further challenges to adapt the policy response to migrant women's needs.

Still, there are indications that entrepreneurship can be an alternative strategy for female migrants to thrive in the region. First, the NoA States and EU Member States have committed to increase the economic contributions of migrant women through joining the main international conventions and development frameworks. Evidence also showed that business support policies which are explicitly open to all residents can increase cohesion between migrants and host communities and generate job opportunities for locals and migrants alike. However, development interventions should recognise that women face added gender-related barriers to participate in business support programmes and that these should be safe and apply a Do No Harm approach¹. Migrant women's resourcefulness, resilience, and skills; the fact that many migrant students are interested in building bridges with their community

¹ Do No Harm is a tool developed by Mary Anderson that requires humanitarian actors to endeavour not to cause further damage and suffering as a result of their actions. The principle has expanded and is applied in development cooperation. See Collaborative for Development Action (CDA). The Do No Harm Handbook.




of origin; and the unique positioning of migrants' civil society organisations (CSOs) should also be capitalised to support migrants' entrepreneurship and create wealth at the local level.

Lastly, migrants can bring to the market new products and services linked to their culture which will not compete with local ones, including in the creativity, arts, and handicrafts -sectors in which many women are skilled and interested. Developing migrant women's entrepreneurship can also generate a new narrative and enhance social acceptance of migrants. Finally, supporting migrant women as business leaders can encourage more women -native born and migrants - to enter the labour market, and in the long term enhance women's status and the recognition of their contribution to the society.

Recommendations for the European Commission

- Support NoA governments in their transition from countries of origin and transit to destination countries by supporting the training of officials and civil servants on migrant-inclusive entrepreneurship legislation and migrants' economic inclusion policies.
- Include migrant women as a target of multi-country cooperation programmes focusing on women's economic empowerment in the region (e.g., in EU External Action/GAP III supported and [UfM related projects](#)).
- Promote and develop entrepreneurship support programmes that are migrant and gender inclusive, including awareness raising campaigns on migrant women's rights to work, support measures from business launch to business expansion and participatory consultation mechanisms with migrants' CSOs.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that self-employment and business support programmes:
 - > Set gender indicators and collect data disaggregated by sex and country of origin²;
 - > Work with existing initiatives and networks set up with previous cooperation programmes such as the North Africa Migration Academic Network (NAMAN), Household International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean countries (MED-HIMS), and the Arab Barometer to supplement available data.


² It is important to distinguish between sex-disaggregated data which refers to collecting data and breaking it down separately for women and men and gender indicators and statistics which integrate a gender perspective in the collection, analysis, and presentation of statistical data. Gender indicators can be used to measure progress in gender equality over time, across different geographical areas and between different groups of women and men as well as in organisations, institutions, and systems (source: [European Institute for Gender Equality](#)).

- 
- Increase the visibility of entrepreneurship programmes and their achievements through accessible communication materials.
 - Promote a positive narrative on migrant women:
 - > That includes their recognition as champions of migration and promote success stories showcasing their resilience to generate models for native and foreign women;
 - > To mitigate harmful social norms against women's work and enhance social acceptance of migrants among local communities.
 - Conduct gender-inclusive research on migrants' integration in the labour market and produce statistics on women's appetite and success in entrepreneurship to inform future support policies and programmes -on migrant and native-born women.
 - Support local CSOs working to promote migrants' rights to economic integration and that commit to provide long-term support, beyond starting a business.
 - Mobilise banks and microfinance institutions to provide services tailored to migrants' needs, including the provision of information in relevant languages.

Recommendations for national actors in the NoA

- Adopt a holistic approach of migration governance by ensuring legal protection of migrants.
- Involve migrants' CSOs and women's rights CSOs in the design, implementation, and evaluation of entrepreneurship support programmes with the perspective of adapting them to migrant women's realities and make public information and business support services more accessible to migrants, while addressing the social norms and gender related challenges they face.
- Facilitate the creation and formalisation of enterprises by migrant students and their connection with markets to untap their potential for the national economy in partnership with students' associations, universities, and vocational training programmes.
- Ensure that institutions supporting entrepreneurship and registering businesses are collecting migration-related and sex-disaggregated data³ in partnership with academia and promote knowledge sharing between institutional actors to increase the availability and use of data on migrants' entrepreneurship.

³ For instance, by sex, age, country of birth, country of nationality, migratory status, date of first entry into the country, duration of residence, marital status, the level of education and the type and sector of activity.

- 
- Work with migrant communities' governmental counterparts to facilitate skill and training recognition and ensure accreditations are transferrable and recognised.
 - Cooperate with the private sector, including financial institutions, to develop business development programmes that are accessible to both migrant and host community women, and enhance the financing of migrants' businesses with a view to harness the potential of the local labour market and value chains.
 - Conduct research on migrant women's motivations and skills, on obstacles to their economic empowerment and on the effects of entrepreneurship on socioeconomic status.



Contact:

eMGPP_team@icmpd.org

Address :

ICMPD Regional Coordination Office for the Mediterranean
Development House,
4A St Anna Street, Floriana, FRN 9010, Malta

'This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union'