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CONCEPT NOTE
HIGH-LEVEL BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON

WORLD BANK – CENTER FOR MEDITERRANEAN INTEGRATION (CMI) FLAGSHIP REPORT
“FORCED DISPLACEMENT, MIGRATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL MOBILITY”

Center for Mediterranean Integration,
Marseille, France
November 5th, 2019

Background

A joint World Bank – Center for Mediterranean Integration (CMI) flagship report on “Forced Displacement, Migration and Human Capital Mobility” will be presented at the World Bank’s 2021 Annual Meetings in Marrakech, Morocco.

The first milestone in this process will consist in a high-level brainstorming workshop taking place on November 5, 2019, at the CMI office in Marseille, France (Villa Valmer, GDLN Room, 11 rue des Flots Bleus, 13007).

Objective

The primary objective of the event will be to conceptualize the flagship report by gathering ideas from experts and practitioners to elaborate the initial Concept Note, to be jointly drafted by CMI and the World Bank in the immediate follow-up to the event.

The workshop will, thereby, be instrumental to identify key themes and approaches to address some of the transversal and most pertinent issues for the migration agenda in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

From a development perspective, the World Bank and the CMI intend to identify and explore these issues in an innovative way, in order to prepare a new narrative and propose policy recommendations that the World Bank and its partners will be able to implement.

Participants

The meeting will bring together internationally-recognized experts from across the region, as well as senior World Bank staff with operational experience in this area. It will be chaired by World Bank MNA Vice-President, Mr. Ferid Belhaj.

Thematic Focus

At the present time, issues related to flows and movements of people – in all their forms – figure prominently among the most pressing, relevant and, often, divisive policy agendas in the Mediterranean region. Some populations are being forced to migrate, due to political factors, conflict, poverty, disasters, or water scarcity through the region, creating distress among host and origin countries, and multiple



externalities in the rest of the region. Vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, are being most affected by the instability associated with forced and irregular movements of people, and require special attention.

At the same time, young booming populations are searching for income earning opportunities beyond country boundaries, while policy makers are considering alternative approaches to mobility, conceived in its broadest sense, not only the movement of people, but also that of ideas and knowledge.

Therefore, a comprehensive approach to migration, which takes into account its root causes as well as all related challenges and opportunities, is needed.

The themes to be addressed at the workshop and explored in the flagship report aim to cover a broad range of migration and mobility-related issues, in connection with their main drivers behind at three levels: (a) macro (economic, social, demographic, political factors); micro (human capital, labor markets, natural capital, territorial triggers); and (c) meso (laws and regulations, bilateral agreements, diaspora, remittances). In addition, climate change will be considered as an “aggravating factor” which must be considered at all three levels, and a pressing reality in the region.

Political Factors and Conflict: Forced displacement

Starting with Palestinian refugees and following with the Syrian conflict and the consequent displacement crisis, the Mediterranean region has been at the center of refugee flows. Syrians are now displaced since almost 8 years, and while most of them are hosted in Mediterranean countries bordering Syria, a considerable number sought asylum in European countries passing through common Mediterranean migration routes. On top of this, a growing number of asylum seekers and refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq and Afghanistan reaches Mediterranean countries through a perilous journey rising up the urgency of finding safe and sustainable ways for hosting refugees in transit and destination countries.

Most forcibly displaced in the Mediterranean are hosted in urban areas rather than in camp settings. Some 5.63 million (May 2019) Syrians are registered as refugees in the Mashreq and North African countries, with Turkey hosting the highest absolute number of refugees in the world and Lebanon having the highest ratio of refugees to population. In these countries, more than 90 per cent of registered refugees is living in cities. Urban communities are particularly affected by the influx of refugees, which places additional strain on the provision of basic services and social cohesion. The sudden growth in population numbers poses a threat to the social cohesion of affected communities, particularly on marginalized groups already existing in the host communities, and increases pressure on services such as education, housing, waste management. These pressures on service delivery and municipal capacity generate a vicious cycle feeding further social tension between newcomers and local populations. The challenges municipalities face require not only significant additional resources, but also innovative solutions and thinking, and proactive responses.

What are the factors influencing the socio-economic inclusion of refugees: legal right to work, freedom of movement, financial inclusion, education level and recognition of certification, property rights? How to make refugees part of the development process and enable them to participate in local economic development?



Together with short-term challenges, the protracted nature of displacement raises the question of refugee self-reliance. With refugees being unable to return to their home country safely, their socio-economic inclusion in host communities is vital. In this direction, inclusive economic growth for host communities and refugees and the development of refugee resilience and self-reliance are key components of achieving protection and solutions-driven outcomes for refugees. If included in host local economic environment, refugees can also bring new opportunities to host communities. They can enhance the local business environment by bringing new skills or opening new markets, participate in the local labor force and also create jobs for locals through their entrepreneurship.

The importance of refugee inclusion is emphasized by a number of international organizations, academia, and philanthropic organizations. In line with this, employment strategies for all segments of the population are presented as necessary for the provision of decent work opportunities for all and labor market institutions and programs that support local integration for nationals, refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, and vulnerable populations such as women and youth. Likewise, recent research suggests that refugees can be seen as economic actors and active promoters of new forms of innovation in host communities, meaning the discourse should include them not only as solely recipients of international protection, but also providers of assistance and contributors to the local economy. To succeed in unlocking the potential of displaced populations, information should be made available to strengthen inclusion. This includes central- and local-level programs that ease their access to opportunities in entrepreneurship, recognition and accreditation of skills and competencies, and tailored vocational training.

However, displaced populations face barriers to access the labor market. Some countries do not allow refugees to work, and when given the legal right to work, other kind of barriers still compromise refugees' access to formal jobs. For instance, freedom of movement, financial inclusion, education level and recognition of certification, property rights and discrimination are all factors influencing refugees' socio-economic inclusion. Refugees' inclusion to drive local economic development forward is becoming increasingly relevant for host governments and requires determined efforts across all levels of governance to coordinate support mechanisms such as access to housing, banking, education, language classes and other welfare services, as well as acknowledging refugees' innovative skills leading to the establishment of refugee-led businesses.

Natural and Territorial Capital: Rural-Urban Exodus

Migration in the Mediterranean has a strong agricultural and rural dimension. Globally, a large share of migrants originates from rural areas, characterized by relatively higher rates of poverty and unemployment¹. In the MENA region, where 65% of the population lives in urban areas, vs. 55% globally, the rural-urban exodus requires particular attention.

At the crossroads of three continents, all Mediterranean countries are not only areas of origin (migration), but also becoming destination (immigration) and transit areas for migratory flows coming from Sub-

¹ Poverty in Egypt affects not only many children, but also populations living in rural areas. When compared to urban areas in Egypt, the poverty rate in rural areas was 37 percent higher as of July 2016 (the Borgen project).



Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Even though, agriculture and rural livelihoods are priority fields in policy agendas in all countries, public investments have consistently decreased in recent decades.

The implications of this phenomenon are significant in terms of food production, natural resource management, skill management, education, territorial integration, social protection, gender, and inclusive development. It follows that investing in sustainable agriculture and rural development, adaptation and resilient livelihoods, is a crucial component of any plan to tackle the current migration challenges in the Mediterranean region.

In addition, a growing number of rural people are being forced to leave their home because of natural disasters aggravated by climate change (floods, droughts, extreme water scarcity), land tenure insecurity and all tensions created by these factors. In this context, many people move because they perceive there are no other alternatives to escape poverty and live with dignity.

How to make rural migrants part of the development process? Can we build sustainable solutions to rural exodus by bringing in disruptive innovation and, for instance, by leveraging technology in digital agriculture and innovative solutions to water management?

The complexity of migratory dynamics and their significant impact on the future of agrarian and rural systems across the Mediterranean, call for dialogue and exchange at regional level among countries of origin, transit and destination, across different levels of governance as well as across policy sectors.

Since a large part of the Mediterranean youth population, expected to more than double by 2050, lives in rural areas and are often employed in agriculture, this rural – urban migration trend poses huge pressure on both rural economies² that are losing labor forces, while their ecosystems are deteriorating, and urban economies which need to invest on urban services and generate enough employment to absorb a booming labor force³.

Agriculture and rural development must be an integral part of any response to large migratory movements in the region. Sustainable solutions to rural exodus include investing in the circular economy, agroforestry, bio-food, ecological restoration, ecotourism and innovating in climate friendly digital agriculture and small-scale renewable energy projects.

Diaspora groups and returned migrants can also help rural areas through investments, skills and technology transfers, know-how and social networks. Remittances provide an often-important extra source of income and help migrants' communities in their countries of origin to escape poverty and hunger⁴.

² In Morocco agriculture employs about 40% of the national workforce (Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture)

³ Between 2007 and 2017, the urban population of Arab Maghreb Union countries increased by 14 million, including more than 50% rural migrants (The World Bank)

⁴ The percentage of remittances to GDP for MENA countries was 3% in 2003 and was particularly important for a number of countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.



Climate Change: the Aggravating Factor

How have desertification, droughts, flooding and rising sea levels interacted with other socioeconomic dynamics to spur the movement of human populations, and what can we expect in the near future? What practical steps can be taken to mitigate and adapt to the threat of climate change-induced massive migrations in the Mediterranean region already facing the direct impact of desertification, land degradation and water scarcity?

Climate change adds a new complexity to the areas of human mobility and settlement by exacerbating environmental degradation, and thereby water⁵ and food security. The effects of climate impact on water systems, particularly during droughts, is only aggravating existing migration forces in the region. This gradual process of environmental deterioration is likely to increase the flow of both voluntary and forced internal and cross-border human migration over the next decades. The link between climate change and migration is highly relevant from a security perspective, in an interdependent world, and is a strong incentive to further build the understanding of cross-border, cross-sector security and resilience issues (food, water, environmental, migratory, demographic, etc.) and their impacts on human mobility in the Mediterranean region.

Water and livelihood insecurity, population growth and mobility, employment, political and geo-strategic challenges are all complex topics and all inter-related. The Mediterranean region's future stability and resilience to human-made and environmental shocks is, to a large extent, dependent on the establishment and implementation of transboundary and regional responses to these climate change related issues.

Investing in Human capital: the Mobility of Labor, Skills and Knowledge

Given the aspirations of the youth in the Mediterranean region, how can investing in human capital and moving towards better integrated labor markets help create opportunities for “mobility” of labor and knowledge? From a development perspective, how can we develop a more comprehensive and holistic approach to mobility?

In today's world, it is helpful to understand mobility in the broadest sense of the term, including the transfers and sharing of skills and knowledge. Moving away from a narrow, often negative view – as in much popular discourse around migration and immigration – to this broader concept would help allow a 21st century narrative on mobility to emerge; one that recognizes the positive potential of mobility in drawing solutions to the challenges we face in today's fast-changing, globalized societies.

Populations across the region are faced with several interconnected challenges which affect young people in particular. Unemployment is extremely high, especially amongst the youth – with MENA youth unemployment at 26% - and among young graduates. Exacerbating this is the youth bulge, predicted to explode in the coming decades, with World Bank estimates of 300 million young people expected to enter the labor market in the region by 2050. This further pressure is added to young populations who are

⁵ When discussing water security, CMI refers to the following definition: “the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability” (UN-Water 2013, in Sadoff et. al. 2017)



already excluded on the economic, social and political levels, with a large proportion of the youth remaining in the informal sector and lacking income earning opportunities.

At the same time, globalization and the digital revolution are having profound effects on societies and are changing both the nature of work and the skills required to enter the labor market. New areas of expertise are emerging, as is the rising importance of 21st century skills. With a good part of the professions that will emerge in the coming years not yet known to date, the knowledge and skills acquired by the youth today will not be enough to grant them access to employment and enable them to cope with these changes. Current education systems in the region are already falling behind in terms of the quality of the education they deliver,⁶ and with the transformations underway, they are even less able to prepare the youth for entry into today's rapidly-changing labor market.

In a context in which youth unemployment is already the highest in the world, this makes for a bleak outlook for young people, leading many of them to emigrate, even if it means risking their lives for better prospects abroad. Within this context, migration has been stigmatized, adding a further challenge for the youth. Yet in reality, if well-managed, regularized migration and labor mobility represent an opportunity which could help foster youth inclusion throughout the region.

In the face of these challenges, what is required is a massive investment in human capital. This means a rethinking of quality education and skills, on the one hand, and, on the other, opening of mobility possibilities. The necessity of rethinking both education systems and the skills and competences they aim to deliver applies from early childhood education through to the tertiary level, and includes the cultivation of the necessary hard and soft 21st century skills, and targeted interventions that foster innovation and entrepreneurship, creativity, critical thinking and a certain openness to the world.

A new narrative is needed, with the recognition of both the potential of well-managed labor mobility and the ways in which labor markets create powerful “push” and “pull” factors for migration. Within this framework, mobility policies would be developed that are better adapted to the reality of today's labor markets. Relevant proactive labor market policies, the encouragement of circular migration, increased employability of prospective migrants through vocational training programs and active labor market policies, and diaspora engagement, may all contribute to the construction of such an approach to mobility.

Such an investment in human capital, including reforms in education and mobility policies, would contribute to fostering stronger youth inclusion in the region, as well as pushing for a move towards a more integrated Euro-Mediterranean labor market. Meeting the challenges present, allowing the youth to realize their potential and indeed moving towards a better integrated labor market at this regional level will all be achieved only if this sort of targeted action on youth, in terms of training and mobility policies, which facilitates labor exchanges and circular migration, is undertaken.

⁶ Students' test scores, compiled by PISA and TIMSS, show that the math proficiency of 15-year-old MENA students falls behind that of 13-year-olds in other regions. Moreover, World Bank figures show that when schooling is adjusted for learning, poor quality education in the region represents around three years of lost education.



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Towards a New Narrative: Recommendations

The workshop should end with a discussion on possible recommendations on how to face current challenges while building on the opportunities previously outlined. Going back to the initial framework including macro, micro and meso factors behind movements of people in the region, participants should envisage policy actions neither to stop nor to promote them, but geared towards placing migration at the heart of the development agenda in the region.