

YOUTH MIGRATION FROM RURAL AREAS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: socio-economic determinants, challenges and opportunities for targeted policies

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The Mediterranean is a historical crossroads region in terms of the movement of people. Since the 1960s, labour migration has become a structural feature of the region's economies. In 2015, nearly 24 million (23.9) people from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including registered refugees were living outside their country of birth. In this region, the majority of international migrants are originally from either the Mashreq or North Africa (93%) and 50% of migrants from North African countries go to Europe (IOM, 2016).

In North Africa, labour markets are segmented due to several cleavages (public/private, formal/informal and modern/traditional) and characterised by significant informality and precariousness, very low female participation, high unemployment and significant agricultural employment. Indeed, the region has the highest youth unemployment rate in the world of around 30% after the Arab Spring against a global average of 13% (ILO, 2018).

Beyond this challenging political and economic context, what is unique about youth in North African countries is demographic pressure as a key feature of education systems and job markets. The share of the population under the age of 30 years has exceeded 60%, and the working-age population (15-64 years old) is approaching 70% (UN-DESA, 2013). The key factors underlying unemployment are the limited job creation contributing to insufficient labour demand, and the skills mismatch between the education system and the labour market thus contributing to limited employability (WEF, 2017). Considering the high aspirations of youth to access education, jobs, marriage, housing and many other consumption items, the situation described here above puts a tremendous pressure on national political and economic systems and maintains the strong push factors for the emigration of youth from the region.

Mediterranean rural youth, especially skilled youth, have been increasingly leaving rural areas to migrate internally or internationally. They do not aspire to work in agriculture and rural-related activities because they do not find them attractive. This is due to the following main reasons: prevalent precarious and seasonal employment patterns; informal contracts of employment; commercialisation with no social protection measures (in terms of access to social security and other benefits); difficult and hazardous working conditions; employment which is considered marginal, with low productivity, low pay, and ultimately with low social status. At the same time, youth do not have the right skills, capital, credit and land, to access or generate productive and remunerative employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture-related activities.

Migration from rural areas is often perceived as a strategy to move to more affluent locations in order to escape poverty, or as a forced movement in response to adverse local conditions. However, this perception, which partly reflects the traditional “push-pull” model of migration, does not fully capture the complexity of migration in contemporary Africa and the Mediterranean. It ignores the ambivalent and complex relationships between poverty and migration and fails to understand the agency of migrants, which is a key feature of the decision to migrate, even under severe constraints. It also fails to take account of non-economic cultural, social or political factors, which play a decisive role in determining the direction of migration flows, but also their composition (in terms of sex, age, education, etc.), as well as the type of movement (internal/international, temporary/permanent, direct/stepwise, etc.). Many migrants are “driven” not only by effective labour demand at destination, but also by perceived economic opportunities, and educational or sociocultural motivations. Peer pressure and the desire to emulate “success” stories of migrants can also facilitate the spreading of a culture of emigration. Influenced by country-level structural factors, opportunities, needs and aspirations of young rural people also vary significantly according to specific contexts (IFAD, 2014).

Rural outmigration was shown to ease population pressures on scarce resources, enhance educational opportunities and skills development for youth, allow households to diversify their income sources through remittances and facilitate access to goods and services or invest in income-generating activities. However, in spite of the potential benefits that it can bring, rural outmigration, especially youth outmigration, is a reality that is challenging rural development and transformation, since it drains the most productive and dynamic labour force from the local economy and implies social costs for families and communities left behind. A very interesting dynamic is represented by the evolution of return intentions and by the changing patterns of migration, which, especially for the increasing number of skilled migrants, often respond more to transnational career paths and circular migration rather than a linear migration from origin and destination countries (Cardona Gil *et al.*, 2016). Permanent or temporary returns have therefore even greater potential to contribute to rural development. In this context, a more comprehensive approach is required, including the consideration of different socio-economic, political, demographic, cultural and environmental factors affecting migration, their multilevel dimension (macro, meso, micro), and how they operate in combination.

As for the structural, macro-level, migration drivers of rural out-migration, the stage of development of agriculture and rural development in the area of origin has a strong impact on job opportunities and on the perspectives offered by farm and non-farm activities to youth in the rural context. Unemployment, lack of decent employment opportunities, limited access to resources and services in rural areas play a key role in the decision to migrate. In particular, low or stagnant farm productivity, limited non-farm income-generating opportunities, inequitable distribution of land, remoteness and access to financial services and social protection, compounded by rural–urban differentials in the availability of social infrastructure (in particular roads, schools and hospitals) drive migration from rural to urban areas. Also, in the Mediterranean, growing constraints due to climate change have contributed to affect the agricultural sector and to intensify the migratory phenomenon: salinisation, soil erosion, water scarcity and increasingly frequent droughts are all risks that are expected to increase over the course of this century. When extreme climate events occur, agriculture bears most of the costs. Likewise, the side effects of climate change place a considerable burden on the agricultural sector and on rural communities (IFAD, 2014) and ultimately have an impact on the emigration propensity of the affected populations.

At individual level (micro-level), the propensity of rural youth to migrate finally depends on individual aspirations, values, desires, and on individual agency, i.e. spirit of initiative and strategy and planning ability. Rural youth can feel socially and politically excluded; they may not participate in family decision-making processes or in civic life, despite their significant contribution to family production. The desire for emancipation and the need to escape oppressive social and gender relations that sometimes persist in rural areas are important migration drivers for youth. The frustrations generated by heavy workloads, surveillance, youth exclusion and immobility impel them to move away from their places of origin (and from the agricultural sector).

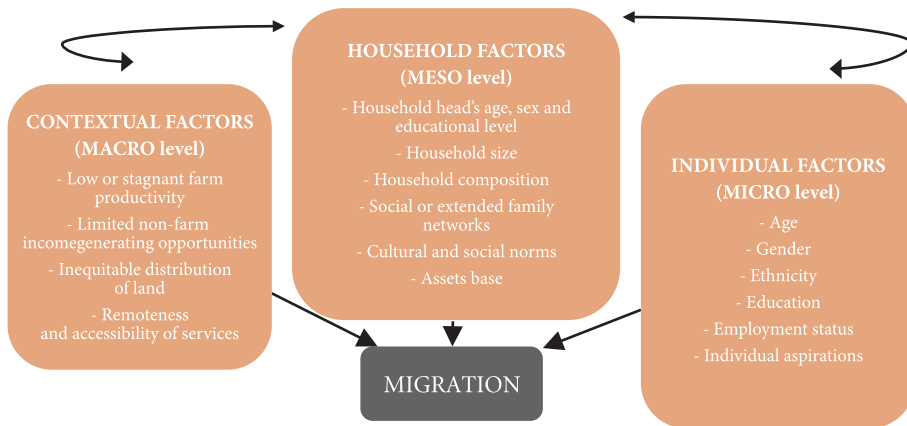
However, migration aspirations, do not automatically translate in migratory behaviour (Epstein and Gang 2006; Cairns and Smyth 2011). Whether someone migrates or not also depends on his or her “ability” or “capabilities” to turn the wish to move into actual migratory behaviour (Haas 2011; Carling 2013 and 2014). Therefore, migration aspirations should “be treated as a measure of migration potential rather than a proxy measure of actual future migration” (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006, p. 291). Considering migration as a function of migration aspirations and capabilities within a given social, economic and political context thus enables us to link micro- and macro- theories of migration in a meaningful way. After all, macro-level factors and developments shape opportunities for migration and simultaneously enable (or constrain) individual migration capabilities (Haas, 2011). Similarly, Godfried Engbersen and his colleagues (2013) argue that macro-level situations affect the motivations of potential migrants, who may (or may not) decide to move.

Although contextual factors undoubtedly play a role, migration aspirations are also largely dependent on information, perceptions, expectancies and value systems (Haas 2011 and 2014; Carling 2013 and 2014). Whether or not someone develops an

aspiration to move abroad partly depends on the information or “images” he or she receives about potential destination countries, and on his or her perception of the economic and political situation in the sending country (Van Mol *et al.*, 2016).

The meso level, i.e. networks and families are somehow a bridge between the macro (contextual) and the micro (individual) factors. Networks affect mobility aspirations: the exposure of rural youth to the relative wealth and success of migrants, combined with changing “urban” tastes and material aspirations, makes the rural way of life less appealing, discourages local people from working in traditional sectors, and encourages further outmigration. In many countries, this has led to the development of a pervasive “culture of migration”: youth can only imagine a future through migrating and they become less willing to work and build a future locally (Haas, 2010a). At the same time, networks of migrants abroad act as an enabler of emigration by providing information on how to organise the journey, together with moral and material support upon arrival at destination. Finally, migration is mainly a household-based strategy: rural youth are encouraged to migrate in order to diversify income sources through expected remittances, while the family helps by covering costs of migration (FAO, 2018) while continuing to exercise authority and control over young migrants.

Figure 1 - Drivers and impacts of migration



Source: Deotti and Estruch, 2016.

Factors shaping the impact of migration on rural areas of origin

While public debate and policy interventions on migration and development have mainly focused on migration management, brain drain, diaspora engagement, migrants' rights and remittance-enhancement, rural development remains an area mostly neglected by stakeholders. In this context, the rural dimension needs to be

better integrated into the debate on the impact of migration, on migrants themselves, on areas of origin and of destination.

Much of the – positive or negative – direction of the impact of migration depends on specific contexts and on a broad number of factors. These factors include the internal or international migration, the socio-economic profile of migrants (who migrates), the length (for how long) of stay abroad, the labour market migration integration at destination (which has an impact on the skills acquired and on the level of earnings), and the linkages maintained with the origin context while abroad. Furthermore, impacts on migration development can emerge in the immediate, medium or long term, and can be primarily felt at household level, but also at a broader systemic level (e.g. on the human capital, labour market, agricultural production and environment of origin areas).

Firstly, the impact on sending communities and areas differ according to whether migrants migrated at internal or international levels. Despite the fact that internal migration – mainly from inland rural areas to cities – accounts by far for the greatest share of human population movements (with a 4:1 ratio, indicating that for every four internal migrants there is one international migrant (UNDP, 2009), this phenomenon, and the impact it produces on origin rural contexts, is often poorly studied and understood.

Conservative estimates place the number of internal migrants globally at 763 million (UN-DESA, 2013), while more recent data estimate at 258 million the number of international migrants (UN-DESA, 2017). It is important to acknowledge the role of internal migration in the overall mobility scenario, since those who migrate out of their country tend to come from better-off households, have better access to financial, human (educational level) and social (networks) resources to prepare and develop their migration project and to integrate at destination. According to a recent study on Tunisia (Zuccotti *et al.*, 2018), behaviours and plans of internal and international migrants diverge substantially, as well as the impact on their households. In fact, while 60% of international migrants declared planning to return to the origin area either in the short or in the long term, only half of internal migrants in Tunisia declare this intention. Furthermore, international migrant households were shown to receive double the amount compared to internal migrant households.

Regarding the socio-economic profile, gender, age, education, skills level and occupation of those who migrate have a significant impact on the transfer and end-use of remittances and on the reason for migration, type of job that can be found in place of destination, and duration of migration. Women tend to send higher remittances to source areas, but due to social and moral codes surrounding gender relations, they may not have full control over their use. Younger household members are also likely to remit more.

The duration of migration and the frequency of temporary returns can vary widely, from seasonal movements, to short-term contract work, to long-term absence. Migration length can have an impact on the cumulative learning and the propensity to remit of migrants as well as on the relationships maintained with the sending households and communities.

Labour market integration of migrants at destination can also affect origin countries. Indeed, it affects the money earned by migrants and their ability to send remittances back to their country of origin or to save money for later investments once returned. The quantity and quality of soft and hard skills acquired by individuals while working abroad can also have an impact on the ability of migrants to contribute to the development of sending areas by transferring skills, ideas and technology and by reintegrating successfully into origin contexts (either in waged employment or developing entrepreneurship). Previous research on migration from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) showed prevalent downgrading patterns of labour market integration (employment in occupational levels lower than the educational level achieved by workers) of African migrants in Europe (Castagnone *et al.*, 2014), with few opportunities to revert this trend over time. Furthermore, integration in the lowest layers of the labour market did not enable the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge and human capital obtained abroad was not always brought back and reinvested in the origin country, due to different economic systems.

Migrants can indeed transmit technical know-how and new norms, values and ideas to non-migrants. This transfer of knowledge may take place upon return to their place of origin, through contacts with relatives, or indirectly through networks connecting diasporas with groups in the areas of origin. The stronger and more frequent such relations are, the more knowledge and skills circulate, and the higher the incidence of remittances and investments through diaspora and return migration. For example, seasonal migrants continue their agricultural activities and maintain strong links with their community of origin, while taking advantage of opportunities in rural areas. Again, (social, economic, cultural) integration at destination and transnationalism are positively correlated. A study of Ghanaian migrants based in the Netherlands (Mazzucato, 2008) shows that they are active in the labour market and participate in the Dutch economy at neighbourhood, city and national levels. At the same time, they also invest in Ghana: in housing, business, and well being and education of family members, including donations to funerals. They are economically (and socially and culturally) integrated in both places. However, despite the substantial contribution of remittances and double integration in countries of origin and of destination, the engagement of diaspora in agricultural and rural development remains limited. This is mainly due to the dispersion of migrants from rural communities and the difficulty of channelling contributions towards agriculture and rural development projects, due to limited information and the deriving risks. Often, weak networks and partnerships between rural development institutions (e.g. Ministry of Agriculture) and diaspora associations further hinder the engagement of the diaspora in rural areas.

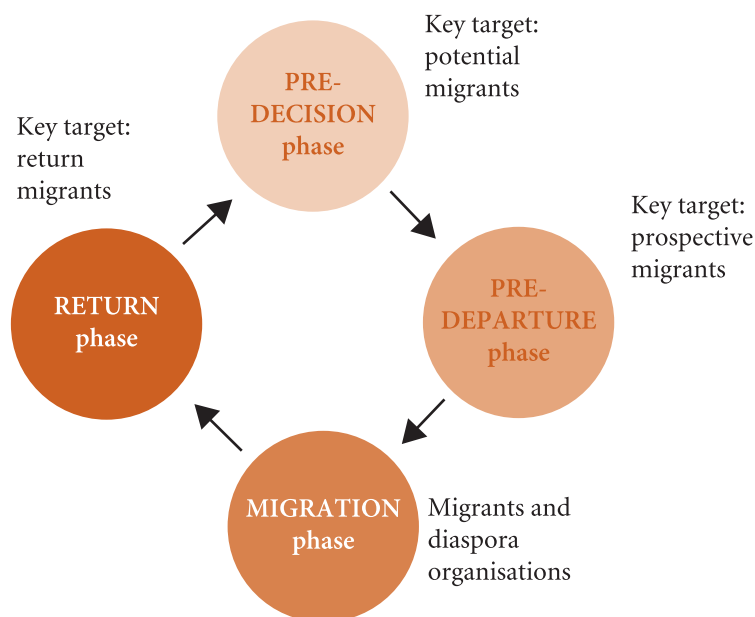
Policies addressing the challenges of rural outmigration

Recognising the importance of the rural economy in the decision to migrate, the challenge from a policy perspective is therefore to ensure that there are viable alternatives to rural outmigration for those who prefer to stay, and at the same time to ensure that migration is a protected, informed and free choice rather than a

constrained option, for those who choose to leave. Once migration is taking place, the policy objectives are to enhance the positive impacts of migration, while mitigating any negative impacts on the migrants and the areas of origin and destinations. This section reviews the policies addressing the nexus between migration and development (M&D) from the perspective of the migration cycle.

The concept of “migration cycle” as expressed by the Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMIDI)¹ summarises the migration process at micro level (i.e. from the perspective of individuals) in its different phases, from the moment an individual starts considering to migrate, up to the (possible) return. The migration cycle is a useful tool for identifying, in particular: 1) The challenges and opportunities for rural development in each phase of the cycle (before the decision-making, before departure, during migration and upon return) and the related possible policies and interventions; 2) The related target population groups and potential beneficiaries, as well as partners, for migration and rural development policies and interventions in each phase (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Key target groups for migration and development policies according to the migration cycle



Source: JMIDI and IOM, 2015.

1 - See website: www.migration4development.org

According to the type of migration, its context and the institutional environment, various policies can be adopted to harness the beneficial effects of migration and mitigate its negative consequences in origin countries, with specific references to rural areas of origin.

For example, in the pre-decision phase, potential migrants can be addressed by targeting the root drivers of migration through policies to better understand the factors that trigger migration decisions, and by addressing these factors, creating youth employment opportunities in line with aspirations, and improving working conditions and living standards in rural areas in order to provide alternatives to migration.

The pre-departure phase concerns prospective migrants. Candidate migrants often lack adequate access to pertinent, accurate and reliable information on labour market at destination and adequate preparations for jobs abroad. Furthermore, candidate migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by recruitment agencies, such as in the fees charged, the conditions promised or even in the actual job guaranteed. Policies that focus on ensuring that migration will have positive outcomes by providing information, services and protection from exploitation and by regulating and supervising international recruitment procedures and agencies, especially ensuring that these services are also available in rural areas. Intervention at this stage can also address irregular migration, by raising awareness and informing youth on risks associated to irregular migration, and at the same time taking specific measures against human trafficking and smuggling.

The migration phase concerns those who have already migrated (internationally or internally) and can contribute to rural development as migrants or diaspora. Policies should focus on providing incentives and financial services to enable migrants to send remittances, to transfer know-how and to directly invest in agriculture and rural development projects. Diaspora organisations and local associations also represent a key target and are potential partners in the formulating policies addressing migration and development in rural areas of origin countries. Measures at this stage should be based on detailed mapping and profiling of diaspora groups and organisations abroad, especially those originating from same rural communities and regions, in order to reach and engage them through an informed strategy.

The return phase concerns those who have migrated and are in the process of returning to their country/area of origin or who have already returned. Policies should facilitate productive psychosocial and economic reintegration of returnees, including through targeted incentives and services for entrepreneurship, portability of social protection and skills matching the labour market. Policy intervention that promotes productive reintegration in rural areas of origin and investment in agricultural projects, including improved access to land and credit could increase the returnees' contribution to the rural economy and also the beneficial effects of migration. Table 1 summarises the policies and interventions to address the issues encountered in each migration phase.

Table 1 - Policies and interventions by migration cycle phase to enhance the link between migration and rural development

Phase of the migration cycle	Target group/actors	Challenges	Policy responses
Pre-decision	Potential migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unemployment. - Poor working conditions. - Limited access to vocational education. - Limited access to markets. - Limited participation in policymaking. - Limited access to assets. - Negative mind-set about agriculture. - Lack of information about migration challenges and opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generating evidence to identify drivers of rural migration. - Understanding the factors that can trigger the migration decision in the specific context). - Creating youth employment (on- and off-farm) in line with youth aspirations. - Ameliorating working conditions and make rural jobs more attractive.
Pre-departure	Prospective migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited information about destinations. - Lack of skills matching demand at destination. - Vulnerability to human trafficking and exploitation. - Risk of unfair recruitment at destination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing pre-migration programmes in rural areas to provide information and preparation to prospective migrants. - Conducting information campaigns in origin countries and rural areas. - Promoting fair recruitment programmes specifically targeting migrants, including seasonal workers.

Table 1 - Policies and interventions by migration cycle phase to enhance the link between migration and rural development

Phase of the migration cycle	Target group/actors	Challenges	Policy responses
Migration	Migrants and diaspora organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to regular status at destination. - Lack of rights and access to services, increased vulnerability. - Impact on families left behind. - Integration challenges. - Limited information on opportunities in origin country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving access to remittance services in rural areas. - Facilitating investment in the rural economy. - Providing incentives for migrants to transfer technology to areas of origin. - Supporting migrant organisations abroad and investment in rural areas of origin. - Linking agriculture and migrant entrepreneurship. - Creating synergies with social protection initiatives in rural areas to reduce the negative impact on those left behind. - Enabling skills transfer and circulation, especially towards rural areas and for rural occupations and sectors. - Mapping skills through research and migrant databases.
Return	Return migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sociocultural reintegration in origin country. - Reintegration in labour market. - Limited knowledge of investment possibilities. - Limited networks and access to information. - Limited access to credit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fostering the return of qualified diaspora members and former international students in rural areas. - Supporting reintegration of returnees and contribution to the rural development of the country of origin. - Providing information and assistance for investment in agricultural projects. - Making social security portable. - Matching skills with labour demand for rural occupations in origin country through retraining and upskilling. - Setting up decentralised cooperation frameworks with the aim of supporting development in rural areas.

There is great potential for virtuous linkages between migration and development, but there are also many challenges. One of them is the limited policy coherence between migration, agriculture and rural development. There is a general disconnection between institutional frameworks addressing migration and those in charge of agriculture and rural development. Likewise, agricultural and rural development policies are often not migration-sensitive (Termine and Castagnone, 2018).

Building and ensuring coherence between migration and rural development requires the elaboration of concrete coordination mechanisms to facilitate the alignment of migration, economic, labour market, agriculture and other sectoral policies in view of steering efforts towards concerted and mutually shared objectives. To improve coherence and enhance coordination between migration and rural development policies at national and regional levels, governments should strive to ensure the integration of migration into the local and national development planning agendas and regional frameworks. Complementarily, development considerations (including a focus on rural areas) should be integrated into national and regional policies on migration.

Despite the general lack of connection between migration and rural development, there are some initiatives addressing the latter in North African countries that have a lot of potential and can be considered as a source of good practices. In this line, in the next section, some lessons learnt from experiences in the context of Tunisia and Morocco will be presented as examples of how positive links between migration and rural development can be fostered through the reintegration of returnees and the engagement of diaspora, by supporting their productive investment in agricultural and rural activities. These two cases were chosen because even if in different ways, they are both aimed at enhancing the positive impact of migration by creating employment and promoting local development, including through the mobilisation of individual and collective contributions of migrants.

Despite being middle-income countries with good endowment of resources and skills, Tunisia and Morocco present similar characteristics of high rural outmigration, important share of their population living abroad, and double-digit youth unemployment, together with a very young population. However, they have also marked differences. Tunisia has experienced years of political instability whose effects are still felt in the labour market and migration dynamics. Migration has spiked after the 2011 revolution and today it concerns especially highly educated youth, and increasingly women. Morocco is enjoying sustained economic growth pushed by targeted investments, including in agriculture. However, inequalities persist, especially between rural and urban areas. Migration rates have gone down, while returns of skilled migrants from Europe have become a trend of increasingly economic importance.

Lessons learned from initiatives in Tunisia and Morocco

Tunisia has remained stuck in low economic performance (World Bank, 2014). Economic growth has been low, while the country suffers one of the highest unemployment levels worldwide (15.5% in 2017) despite low labour force participation (50%, mainly due to weak participation rate of women which is estimated at 28%). While most of the unemployed are low skilled, it is university graduates that have the highest unemployment rate (estimated at 31% in 2017). Unemployment rates are also much higher among women and in interior regions (World Bank, 2018). In addition, one young Tunisian out of three is out of education or employment (NEET) and youth unemployment rate is estimated at 35.5% (ILO, 2017), one of the highest in the world. The situation of youth is of particular concern because of the demographic profile of the country: about 47% of the population is under 30 years of age (World Bank, 2017). As migration can be considered a security-valve to regulate unemployment pressure on the labour market (David and Marouani, 2017), it is not surprising that rural outmigration rates towards richer areas of the country or abroad are on the increase. Internal migration is a widespread livelihoods strategy, especially considering the differences in terms of development between coastal and internal areas, and interests mainly youth (70% of internal migrants are youth). While internal migration is often a preparatory step for international migration, important differences emerge, as internal migrants are more prone to remit and to return to areas of origin than international migrants (Zuccotti *et al.*, 2018). Agriculture represents 10.5% of the GDP and accounts for 15.3% of employment (World Bank, 2017). Rural households increasingly recur to internal and international migration to integrate meagre agricultural incomes, caused by the limited added value of a stagnant agricultural sector. In line with global trends, Tunisia's outmigration, especially from rural areas, has among its main drivers the limited opportunities for full-time and well-remunerated employment and income generating opportunities (David and Marouani, 2017). However migrants are increasingly highly educated, with expected positive impact on their capacity to remit or to have productive re-integration upon return. According to Carolina Viviana Zuccotti and her colleagues (2018), in Tunisia, 60% of international migrants declared their intentions to return, and an important share (51% of internal and 39% of those having migrated to Italy) are keen to work in agriculture upon return. In recent years, Tunisia is also increasingly becoming a country of destination and transit for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb, which further complicates the context in which rural migration takes place.

In Morocco, young adults (aged 15-29 years) make up almost 26% of the total population. Youth unemployment is at 18% (ILO, 2017), as the country does not manage to create employment opportunities for the new entrants in the labour market. Most youth who have a job, work in the informal sector with little security or benefits (CIA, 2018). Despite Morocco's economic progress and the ongoing structural transformation of agriculture, the country suffers from high unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy, particularly in rural areas. With rural people

accounting for 40% of the population but for three quarters of the poor, poverty is essentially a rural phenomenon in Morocco: about 4 million people live below the national poverty line, and 3 million of them live in rural areas (IFAD, 2016). Agriculture and fisheries contribute more than 14% of gross domestic product (GDP). Providing 80% of income, these sectors are the main employers in rural areas. However, as many rural people have access only to non-irrigated arable land, with low agricultural productivity, the returns from agriculture are not sufficient to overcome poverty (IFAD, 2016). Unemployment and rural poverty have been and continue to be among the main drivers of migration: Moroccans living abroad account for 15% of the population (more than 4.5 million people). This community is relatively young, as nearly 70% of them are under 45, and about 20% were born abroad. The migrant profile evolved over time: while in the 1960s it was dominated by unskilled male migrants of rural origin, over time, migrants are increasingly skilled and educated: the emigration of highly skilled Moroccans (16%) to OECD countries is among the highest in the world, representing one of the largest shares of remittances to a national economy in the world. The dynamics of migration are rapidly evolving, as Morocco is increasingly becoming a country of destination for migrants coming from sub-Saharan Africa, also thanks to its economic development opportunities compared to other countries in the region. Similarly, the return of Moroccans after migration is an increasing trend (Benhaddad and Hammouda, 2015).

Against this backdrop, three main challenges emerge concerning the drivers and impact of migration in Tunisia and Morocco, which could also be extended to other southern Mediterranean countries. The first is rural youth unemployment as one of the main drivers of migration. The productive potential of youth in rural contexts is hindered by limited access to land, finance, equipment, information and skills. In addition, youth often feel discouraged from engaging in agriculture due to these constraints, and dream of urban jobs and lifestyles. The second challenge is that despite a significant percentage of the population living abroad, and the importance of remittances and direct investments from the diaspora in Tunisia and in Morocco, the agricultural sector still does not benefit much from these direct investments. The rural development potential of migration is still largely untapped. A third important challenge is that of return, in the sense of making productive reinsertion in agriculture a viable option and thus catalyse migrants' skills and capital for rural development. There is therefore a great potential for policy and productive reinsertion or reinvestment. Both Tunisia and Morocco have started to address these challenges, to enhance the positive contribution of migration to rural development.

Agricultural enterprises as an alternative to migration in Tunisia

In Tunisia, in order to respond to the dramatic youth unemployment challenges, especially in rural areas with high outmigration rates, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture, through the Rural Youth Mobility (RYM) project, implemented an innovative mechanism

for the creation of rural employment². This mechanism was set up to address the barriers and constraints that hinder the productive work of youth in agriculture. Innovative agricultural projects ideas, with significant developmental and employment potential were identified through a call for proposals, administered in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the regional incubators of agricultural enterprises. The evaluation and selection of these project ideas was done based on criteria to assess the project's potential in terms of innovation, creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities, environmental impact, gender equality, and the contribution of migration to the development of areas of origin. Acknowledging that educated youth in rural areas in Tunisia (as in the rest of North Africa) are among the categories with the highest unemployment rate, the initiative targeted educated rural youth, enhancing their potential in becoming entrepreneurs.

After selection, the projects were provided with the targeted support by “agricultural coaches” (*accompagnateurs agricoles*), in line with the priorities for agricultural development set by the government and the incentives provided by the recent Investment Law (2016). They were assisted in addressing the main constraints to finding productive employment and establishing enterprises in agriculture in Tunisia – such as access to equipment, finance, and information – through a co-funding mechanism (consisting of self-financing and of diaspora individual contributions), a small start-up in-kind contribution, and capacity building consisting in tailored technical training and coaching. Members of the diaspora (either individually through personal connections or through organisations) were solicited to become partners in the agricultural enterprises, already at the stage of formulation of the agricultural project idea, and their contribution later formalised through specific partnering agreements. The engagement of the diaspora occurred through different stages, from the selection of project ideas (additional points were attributed to projects with a diaspora contribution), through implementation support (through the formalisation on partnerships and co-funding agreements) (see Figure 3). To ensure sustainability of the engagement of the diaspora, collaboration agreements and expected contributions were formalised, while success stories of Tunisian migrants contributing to the development of their rural areas of origin were celebrated and disseminated through Diaspora Days.

Figure 3 - The steps of the diaspora engagement process in agricultural enterprise projects



Source: Adapted from Termine and Castagnone (2018).

2 - This section is based on the experience of the FAO project GCP/INT/240/ITA: “Youth mobility, food security and rural poverty reduction: Fostering rural diversification through enhanced youth employment and better labour mobility” (in short RYM), funded by the Italian Development Cooperation and implemented in Tunisia and Ethiopia in close collaboration with the Ministries of Agriculture. The main objectives of the project GCP/INT/240/ITA were to enhance the positive impact of rural out-migration of youth on food security and agricultural/rural development in rural areas of origin, by promoting and supporting investments of diaspora and returnees in the agriculture sector in countries of origin, while mitigating its negative impacts and addressing the root drivers of migration.

Building on lessons learned from previous experiences, the initiative has highlighted the vulnerability of microenterprise farming in the post creation phase which is often the most critical. Thus, to compensate for the lack of marketing knowledge and to guarantee sufficient resources to enhance the value of agricultural products, the skills of young entrepreneurs have been reinforced through personalised support throughout the implementation of their project, including in the market access phase. The coaching covers all phases of the creation of an agricultural enterprise: from transforming the initial idea to a feasible project and business plan, to the management of the enterprise (including post-creation and marketing) to fulfil the full potential of the agricultural enterprises.

Capacity building played a key role under the patronage of the agricultural enterprises incubators (of the Ministry of Agriculture) and the reinforcement of the process of “agricultural coaching” (*accompagnement agricole*), a profession which in Tunisia, unlike in other countries in the region, is not yet systematised and certified, while it has the potential to fill an important gap in the agricultural extension system, offering specific technical support to small agricultural entrepreneurship in rural areas. The *accompagnateurs agricoles* provide both technical guidance in agricultural techniques, and motivational coaching and encouragement, which is fundamental to build the confidence and self-esteem to succeed as an entrepreneur. They have a very important role as agents of change facilitating connections between rural youth, local communities, state and private institutions including banks and markets, and they can play a fundamental role in engaging the diaspora in agricultural development.

Partnerships between local authorities and diaspora organisations for local development in Morocco

The Moroccan sizeable diaspora estimated at 15% of its population, is concentrated in OECD countries, and mainly in Europe (OECD, 2017)³. It is a well-organised diaspora, with associations of Moroccans abroad increasingly concerned with the development of the areas of origin. This development has been very fast, and reflects on the one hand, a better integration into the destination country, while on the other hand it continues to reinforce a positive perception of migration in both destination and origin countries (Lacroix 2013). A case of interest is that of *Migrations et Développement* (M&D), an NGO established in 1986 in France as an *Organisation de Solidarité Internationale Issue des Migrations* (OSIM), that operates between Morocco and diaspora networks in France.

M&D promotes a modality of operation that puts at the core a “Community of Solidarity Development”, which is a local development collective structured as an association including diaspora members originating from the community and members of the community of origin, nurtured through dialogues, meetings and virtual networks. The local development association provides a co-financing and in-kind

3 - This section is based on the experience of *Migrations et Développement* (M&D), an International Solidarity Organisation originated from migration. M&D was established in France and brings together Moroccan diaspora, communities of the areas of origin, and development cooperation organisations. More information is available at the website www.migdev.org

(technical and labour) contribution to the implementation of development projects, especially with a focus on rural areas and contribution to revitalise the rural economy, for example through eco-tourism, or provide essential services (such as local health centres) (Balizet *et al.*, 2017). Since its establishment, the association has continued to develop its collaboration with donors and international organisations, becoming a key player at the interface of local development, diaspora and development cooperation in rural areas in Morocco.

Close consultation and partnership between local communities, migrants, associations, local development groups, and decentralised state authorities, are behind the development and implementation of the initiatives. The main principles underlying M&D's action are to mobilise migrants through participatory processes, to promote local initiatives through partnerships, supporting local population through a dynamic of exchange, and channel resources through the solidarity principle. These initiatives translate in a spatial impact on the rural areas which are the origin of migration, both in terms of providing incentives and support to a bottom-up democratisation and political participation process, and in terms of the promotion of integrated rural development and direct or indirect employment opportunities (Lacroix, 2013).

Loyal to its roots, which saw the creation of M&D when the crisis hit France in the 1980s and Moroccan migrant workers were provided incentives to repatriate, one of the organisation's programme addresses the issues that returnees face upon their return, including that of socio-economic reintegration. Considering that an increasing number of returnees to Morocco are youth and that many of them are highly skilled and establish enterprises upon return (OECD, 2017), there is an important potential in further mobilising the diaspora developmental action towards facilitating the productive return of migrants.

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Based on the experience in Tunisia and Morocco, the following are some reflections that could inform further upscaling of policies and interventions addressing migration and rural development. With regards to addressing the constraints of potential migrants, households and communities, it is important to stress the importance of building on the specificities of the local context, needs and policy opportunities, as evidenced both in Tunisia through the action of the *accompagnateurs agricoles* and in Morocco through the partnership between local communities, decentralised government and diaspora associations for the identification and co-funding of development projects.

Regarding the enhancement of the contribution of migrants to rural development, one key success factor was creating capacity in addressing the dimension of migration as part of agricultural development policies and programmes. In the case of Tunisia, the engagement of the diaspora was possible thanks to targeted awareness-raising, building on an enabling regulatory environment – but which is not fully operational which provides incentives for Tunisians living abroad.

Although this is an area still requiring further experience, the main lessons learned from the productive insertion of returnees, concern the promotion of productive projects tailored according to the interests, skills and potential contributions of returnees. Better understanding the changing profiles of migrant and returnees, as well as the increasingly complex dynamics of migrations, especially for the highly skilled, is a pre-requisite for better targeting programmes aimed at enhancing and providing incentives to the contributions of returnees.

Conclusions and recommendations

The dynamics of outmigration from the Maghreb countries are complex and can be articulated around three main axes: 1) The role of youth, its demographic importance, and the challenges faced especially by rural youth with regards to accessing employment and income generating opportunities; 2) The context of the economies of rural areas, centred on processes of agricultural transformation or stagnation, as main provider of livelihoods opportunities for the poor and its comparison with (potential) areas of destination; 3) The role of the diaspora, both as contributor of finances and of technical know-how for local development, and as potential future returnees with capital and skills endowments (and specific support needs). Only through the interaction of these dimensions, can the direction and intensity of the effects of migration on areas of origin and of destination and on the migrants themselves be unravelled.

In this respect, policies and interventions should adopt a multi-pronged approach to address the social and economic space in which migration takes place, especially addressing the role of agriculture in generating productive employment for rural youth, and in enhancing the agency of migrants, either as individuals or through collective organisations, in contributing to development and empowerment processes in their areas of origin. Adverse economic and political conditions in the main areas of destination foresee an increase in the trend of return migration, including thanks to the incentives offered by destination countries to go back to the countries of origin. These considerations urge countries of origin to implement policies ensuring that returnees can contribute at their full potential to entrepreneurship, innovation and investments in the rural economy, while removing existing barriers (for example to accessing land and establishing enterprises, and ensuring continuity of social protection coverage).

The category still least covered by policy and regulations, both in terms of their labour contracts and as agent of development, is that of internal migrants, which can be analysed with respect to the same three axes mentioned above. There is a need to better understand who returns and why and how to maximise positive impact of return of internal and international migrants. National and international attention continues to focus on the contribution of international migration, through diaspora and remittances, while internal migrants, who are often the most numerous, and at the same time the poorest and most vulnerable, do not receive adequate attention, are often not covered by migration policies, normally falling under the responsibility of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and seldom the target of specific intervention.

On the basis of the analysis and case studies presented, we propose the following policy recommendations.

- Generating data and knowledge: Completing the profiling of migration in the Mediterranean by collecting data on the drivers and impacts of migration including on intentions of return, with a specific attention given to internal migration.
- Investing in rural livelihoods: Identifying and addressing the main constraints and challenges faced by youth in finding productive and gainful employment in specific contexts, as well as the institutional and policy frameworks that can be used as entry points to address these challenges and promote rural employment and agriculture-based entrepreneurship; Recognising the importance of a rural space development to aliment a virtuous cycle to make migration a choice and to ensure that migration can benefit all. Ensuring that the capacity reinforcement needs of Ministries of Agriculture, local development, foreign affairs, diaspora and employment in addressing in an integrated and coherent way the dimensions of rural migration are met through tailored capacity building programmes.
- Enhancing policy coherence: Strengthening institutional responsibilities to the issue of internal migration and mobility to provide an interface representative of the interests of internal migrants, and find different instruments to understand, monitor and leverage the positive contribution of internal migrants to development; Promoting south-south cooperation and intraregional exchange on lessons learned and policy experiences in engaging diaspora and migrant associations to contribute to local and rural development and acting as an agent of change and socio-economic continuity in the migrant community.

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