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A photograph of a woman wearing a brown headscarf and a patterned long-sleeved shirt, working in a field. She is bent over, tending to the soil. To her left, a young girl in a white sweater and pink pants stands looking towards the camera. The background shows a rural landscape with some buildings and a clear blue sky. A large orange rectangular box is overlaid on the lower part of the image, containing the title text.

Rural migration in the Near East and North Africa

REGIONAL TRENDS

Cover photograph

A woman tending a herd of sheep in Safh Al Jabal on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

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REGIONAL TRENDS

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ARD	Agriculture and Rural Development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GMG	Global Migration Group
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LAS	League of Arab States
NENA	Near East and North Africa
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia

Typologies of migration

concepts and definitions

Circular migration: Circular migration designates a temporary but repetitive movement between the place of origin and a destination area undertaken by the same person.

Economic migrant: Movement from one locality to another to access employment opportunities or higher standards of living. Often used interchangeably with the term labour migrant.

Environmental migrant: Individuals driven to leave their place of residence as a result of sudden or gradual changes in environmental conditions such as sea-level rise, extreme weather events or water scarcity.

Internal migration: Movement of people from one area to another area within the same country, including migration that is: rural to urban, rural to rural, urban to rural, and urban to urban.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs): When people are forced to flee their home, but remain within the border of their country of origin.

International migration: Movement of persons across an international border from a country of origin or residence to another to establish themselves, permanently or temporarily (IOM, 2011).

Mixed migration: Flows characterised by their irregular nature, the multiplicity of driving factors, and the differentiated needs and profiles of the persons involved. Refugees, labour migrants, environmental migrants and victims of trafficking, among others, may form part of a mixed flow.

Permanent migration: Permanent migration covers movements of people considered to be settling and remaining in the destination area or host community.

Refugees and asylum seekers: According to the 1951 United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, refugees are persons who have fled because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Returnees: Individuals or migrants who return to a country or territory of origin after a period of absence.

Rural migration: Any form of migration taking place to, from or between rural areas.

Seasonal migration: Seasonal migration relates to an individual who leaves for a short period of time annually to perform work which depends on seasonal conditions.

Temporary migration: Temporary migration is limited to a single back and forth movement, with a limited stay in the area of destination.

Voluntary migration: Migration undertaken on the migrant's own initiative (without coercion) to engage in paid activities or when individuals or families perceive no other option to survive with dignity.

Key messages

- » Migration flows, including those to, from and between rural areas, have long shaped - and been shaped - by the NENA region's complex socio-economic and political landscape. Demographic shifts and the mismatch between labour supply and demand have created common migration routes within and between NENA countries, as well as globally.
- » Around 28 million international migrants left NENA countries in 2017 and the number of internal migrants is likely to be far more (UNDESA, 2017). On the other hand, the NENA region hosts 40.6 million migrants, including 13.5 million from within the region (intra-regional migrants) and the rest coming from sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Specific data on rural migration is less available.
- » The absence of rural transformation in tandem with broader structural transformation of NENA economies is contributing to widening disparities between rural and urban areas and continued rural outmigration. The region's rural population, as a percentage of the total population, has been declining steadily over the last 50 years, dropping from just over 60 percent in 1970 to 38 percent in 2017.
- » Without greater efforts to implement multi-sectoral territorial development approaches, rural communities will continue to be left behind by lopsided growth, while demographic pressures from rural-urban migration jeopardize urban standards of living. Rural-urban migration, driven by income inequality and low levels of rural development, can have negative effects on food security and agriculture, as well as poverty, in both rural and urban areas.
- » Limited land and water resources will continue to fuel rural outmigration. Water scarcity, expected to impact 80-100 million people in the region by 2025, and land degradation will be intensified with the onset of climate change (Verner, 2012). Changing weather patterns could have potentially devastating impacts on fisheries, livestock, forests and agriculture - especially rain-fed - and the rural communities that depend on them. More data is needed to understand the magnitude and exact nature of climate change impacts on rural migration.
- » The three main drivers of rural migration in the NENA region - rural-urban disparities, conflict and environmental stress - do not exist in isolation and are closely interlinked. Economic growth and employment in rural areas are strongly linked to the performance of the agriculture sector but are also heavily impacted by climatic factors and conflict.
- » Men are more likely than women to migrate. As a result, rural women left behind are playing a bigger role in agriculture. The percentage of women who are economically active in agriculture has risen from 35 percent in 1980 to 50 percent in 2010. While this greater productive role has brought with it certain benefits for women, the absence of men in the communities leaves women feeling more vulnerable. Men also face specific vulnerabilities as migrants, both during their journey and in their host countries.
- » Conflict and food insecurity are critical drivers of migration in the NENA region and have forced more than 7.7 million refugees to flee NENA countries in 2017 in addition to forcing around 14 million to relocate within their countries. (The latter are known as internally displaced persons, or IDPs). The majority of forced migrants relocate to camps, border

hotspots or large cities where they are more likely to find assistance. However, large numbers are also fleeing to rural areas. These families and individuals need special support to be able to access and participate in the production and food systems of already resource-scarce and underserved rural host communities.

- » Dedicated efforts to rebuild the agriculture sector in conflict and crisis zones are a critical priority to allow returnees to re-establish livelihoods and food systems in their rural home towns. FAO is supporting returnees in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and the Sudan and assisting in the post-conflict reconstruction of severely damaged agriculture infrastructure.
- » More and more rural youth are aspiring to migrate abroad or to urban centres. With limited employment opportunities in rural areas, rural youth remain unemployed or work as unskilled agricultural labourers, often in part-time, seasonal, low-paying and precarious jobs. The decision to migrate among rural youth is not always informed nor voluntary. In many cases, migration is perceived as the only alternative to improve their living conditions and life prospects.
- » Economic migration can have mixed outcomes for rural and agricultural development and food security. Better management can help mitigate negative consequences and ensure that outcomes are decidedly positive. This includes i) facilitating the transfer and productive use of remittances in rural areas, ii) engaging diaspora communities and iii) facilitating human mobility, in addition to addressing the adverse drivers of migration.

Introduction



A shepherd herding goats through a forest.
©FAO/Giulio Napolitano



The Near East and North Africa region has always been affected and in many ways shaped by high levels of human mobility. However, rural migration (migration to, from and between rural areas) is often overlooked, despite its important ramifications for food security, agriculture, rural development and regional disparities. In the next decade, persistent poverty, climatic threats and increasing competition for natural resources may fuel greater levels of migration across NENA countries. It is important to distinguish between two main types of rural migration in the region: **1) migration due to socio-economic factors, to some extent as an adaptive tool for income diversification and 2) forced migration as a response to an immediate threat such as conflict or environmental disaster.** Both types of migration are intimately linked to FAO's goals of fighting hunger and achieving food security, reducing rural poverty and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. Addressing migration issues is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in NENA countries and the global imperative to "leave no one behind."

At the international level, FAO actively supported the development of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, both adopted in December 2018, advocating the importance of agriculture and rural development in addressing current migratory flows. FAO is a member of the Global Migration Group (GMG) and was co-chair of the GMG along with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for 2018. At the regional level, FAO is part of the inter-agency Working Group on Migration in the Arab Region, co-chaired by the League of Arab States (LAS), IOM and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UNESCWA). The aim of the working group is to support countries in the region to address migration issues in an efficient, sustainable and inclusive way that supports the achievement of the SDGs.

Together with its partners, FAO commits to further expand its work towards strengthening the positive contribution that migrants, refugees and internally displaced people can bring to poverty reduction, food and nutrition security and resilience in rural households, in addition to its long-standing role addressing the drivers of migration. Specifically, FAO is striving to ensure that **i) migration from, to or between rural areas is a voluntary and informed choice, not an act of desperation; ii) people in rural areas have resilient and sustainable livelihoods that allow them stay in their communities of origin if they wish; iii) when migration occurs, rural populations have access to safe and regular means of travel; and iv) rural communities of origin are supported to maximize the benefits and mitigate any negative impacts of migration; and finally v) migrants and rural host communities are enabled to contribute to agriculture and food systems.**

This report was designed to provide policy makers, practitioners and development partners with an overview of the main challenges and opportunities of rural migration in the NENA region, including the following 19 countries: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Egypt, the Sudan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. It gives a glimpse into regional and sub-regional dynamics and presents some illustrative cases at country level.

This report is based on secondary data analysis complemented with semi-structured interviews with regional experts and representatives of international organisations including IOM, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and ILO regional offices in Cairo; the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); the American University in Cairo and the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development.

Data gaps on migration in the NENA region

The main limitations of the report are related to the availability and accuracy of statistical data. Reliable data is key to better understanding and governance and to ensuring informed policies and countering misperceptions and myths around migration. Attention to the accuracy of statistical data constitutes a major step in the elaboration of evidence-based policies. Unreliable statistical data may result in more harmful consequences than those resulting from the lack of statistical information.

Apart from few countries in the NENA region, most countries do not collect data on migration in their population censuses. But some data is collected and reported. An important example is data on conflict-driven IDPs, which is available namely through the Global Internal Displacement Database (GIDD). The IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) fills data gaps by tracking and monitoring displacement and population mobility directly. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) also provide reliable estimates of refugee populations and migrant stocks, respectively.

Some efforts are being made to include the migration dimension into population surveys and improve data collection on migration in the region. For instance, the Eurostat program MED-HIMS (Households International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean Countries) is a regional programme of coordinated international migration surveys requested by the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of most of the countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) – South Region. The aim of the project is to provide analysts, policy makers and other stakeholders with detailed information on the determinants and consequences of migration, so as to help them better target migration policy and development assistance.

International migration (especially that of refugees who have been the main recent concern) has been a central focus of most studies and data collection efforts, while internal migration has been largely overlooked in such studies. Internal migration is often difficult to trace, as there is usually no systematic data collection of internal movements. Temporal or seasonal migration is even less visible despite its importance in the agriculture sector, particularly in pastoral communities. This is partly explained by the difficulty of keeping accurate information on internal movements as they do not always imply a change of residency and hence would not appear in systematic population censuses. Another challenge in geographic disaggregation is the lack of clarity in defining rural and urban populations. Each country has its own way of defining rural and urban spaces based on various criteria such as population size, population density, type of economic activity and physical characteristics, among others (UNDESA, 2017). This is especially problematic when it comes to peri-urban geographies and the urbanization of rural spaces which further blur the lines between what is traditionally considered rural or urban (Zohry, 2009; Mahmoudian, 2014).

Finally, while a number of studies (Mahmoudian and Ghassemi-Ardahaee, 2014; Zohry, 2009; Abdelali-Martini and Hamza, 2012) have attempted to disentangle various drivers of migration, especially at national and subnational levels, the limited availability of systematically and uniformly collected data across NENA countries makes it difficult to conduct rigorous assessments. Generating extensive sex- and age-disaggregated data on rural migration, as well as its drivers and impacts, is essential to support informed strategies.



Avian wildlife near the Thyna salt extraction site in the Biodiversity Conservation Natural Resources Park.
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Rural migration in the NENA region



FAO and the Syrian Veterinary Medical Association launched the animal treatment campaign to the local community by explaining the objectives of the campaign.

©FAO/Hasan Belal

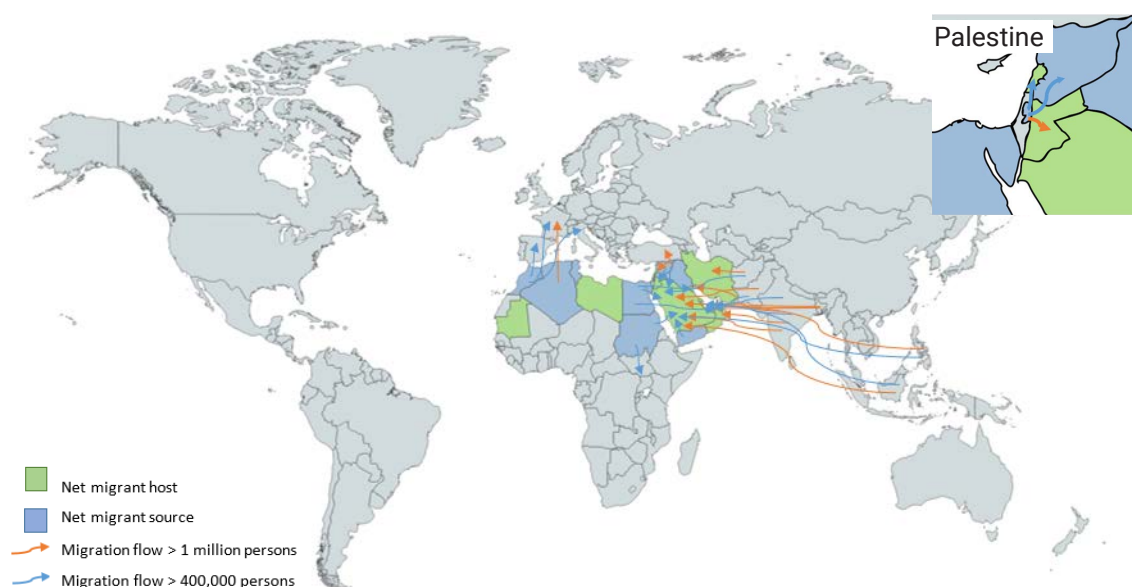


Human mobility has always existed as part the region's socio-economic and political landscape. During the nineteenth century, North Africa witnessed a significant influx of migrants from Europe and the Ottoman Empire as a result of colonial occupation. This trend was reversed after the First World War but left long-standing social, economic and political consequences for host countries, such as the introduction of English and French languages, foreign-owned companies and new agricultural practices (Clancy-Smith, 2016). Subsequent migration movements in the region were closely related to the creation of the State of Israel (which forced many Palestinians to leave their homes), the Lebanese civil war from 1975 to 1990, the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the first Gulf War in the 1980s.

Population dynamics have also played an important role in migratory trends in the second half of the twentieth century. After the Second World War, the region's population tripled, from 111 million in 1960 to 340 million in 2000. In populous countries like Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Morocco, Algeria and the Sudan, the notable growth in the labour force and in the demand for jobs led to increased migration flows: internally, from rural to urban areas; regionally, to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and, to a lesser extent, to Libya; and globally, to Europe and North America. These regional migration trends continued well into the twenty-first century due to several factors, including the mismatch between labour supply and demand within and across NENA countries as well as the economic growth of the northern Mediterranean countries.

The NENA countries share a common cultural and historical heritage. However, the region is very diverse in terms of development, wealth, political and social frameworks and environmental characteristics. For this reason, particular attention must be paid to sub-regional dynamics. A distinction can be made between the core Maghreb countries, which are connected with the European Union (the EU/Mediterranean system), and the Mashreq countries, which are relatively more connected with the Gulf (Gulf migration system) (Raleigh, 2011). The Gulf countries primarily host temporary labour migrants. They are the main destination for migrant labour originating from non-oil producing countries (especially Egypt), and from Asian countries including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Philippines. Saudi Arabia alone hosts 30 percent of all migrants in the NENA region (Table 1). The majority of the international migration taking place in the region, however, is between the Maghreb countries and Europe, with France, Spain and Italy being major destinations. Maghreb countries are also an important point of transit for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa on their way to Europe.

Figure 1: Map of major migration flows in the NENA region, 2017



Source: UNDESA, 2017; Author's representation

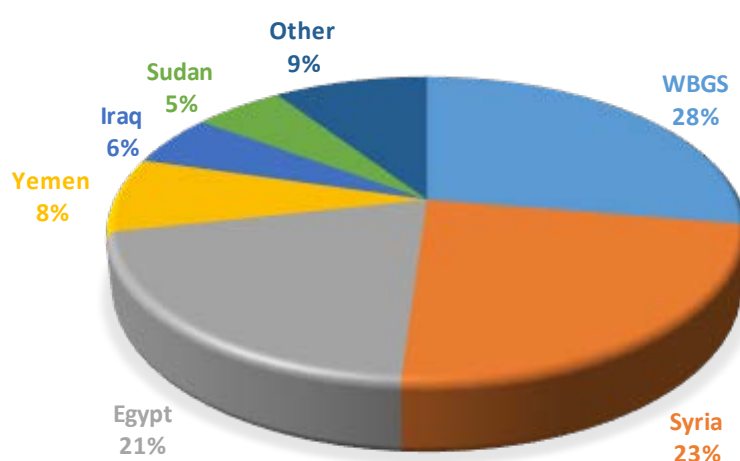
The total migrant stock in the NENA region is 40.6 million (Table 1), with about 13.5 million migrants originating from within the region (intra-regional migrants). Together, the Syrian Arab Republic and Palestine account for about 38 percent of these intra-regional migrants, followed by Egypt at 12 percent (Figure 2). The countries hosting the largest intra-regional migrant populations are Jordan (23 percent), Saudi Arabia (23 percent) and Lebanon (14 percent) (Figure 3). Data on total migrant stock in the NENA region by country can be found in Annex 1.

Conflict has become a key hallmark of the NENA region, with continued outbreaks of violence occurring in at least six countries. The region had over 14 million IDPs in 2017, in addition to 7.7 million refugees fleeing NENA countries in 2017. Nearly 96 percent of refugees originating from the region come from the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan and Iraq (Figure 4). The Syrian Arab Republic alone accounts for 82 percent of refugees fleeing NENA countries.

On the other hand, the region hosts about 10 million refugees. As shown in Figure 5, Jordan and Lebanon host about 43 percent of refugees in the region and Palestine hosts the refugees displaced by the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and their descendants. The region also hosts refugees from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. For example, Iran (Islamic Republic of) is a major host country in the region (hosting 10 percent of refugees) due to the influx of Afghan refugees.

Table 1: Migrants, refugees and IDPs in NENA	
Total migrant stock in the NENA region (2017)	40 602 044
Global migrant stock originally from the NENA region (UNDESA, 2017)	28 109 678
Total intra-regional migrant stock (UNDESA, 2017)	13 543 348
Total refugee population in the NENA region (WDI, 2017)	10 003 979
Global refugee population originally from the NENA region (WDI, 2017)	7 696 224
Internally Displaced Persons in the NENA region (IDMC, 2017)	14 039 000

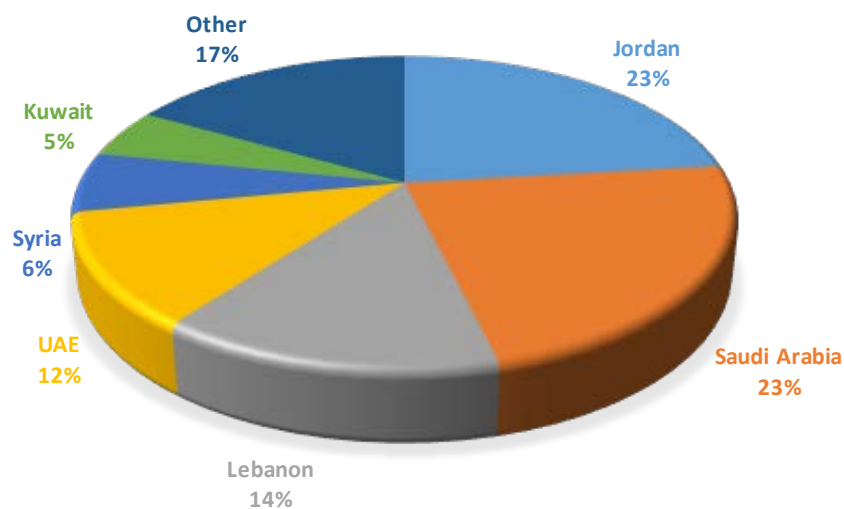
Figure 2: Intra-regional migrant stock by country or territory of origin, 2017



Total intra-regional migrant stock: **13 543 348 persons**

Source: UNDESA 2017

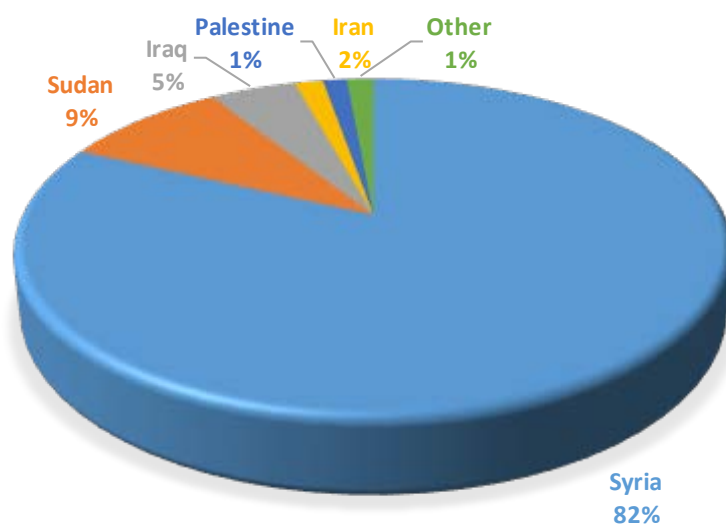
Figure 3: Intra-regional migrant stock by NENA country of destination, 2017



Total intra-regional migrant stock: **13 543 348 persons**

Source: UNDESA, 2017

Figure 4: Refugee population by country or territory of origin in the NENA region, 2017



Total refugee population in the NENA region: **10 003 979 persons**

Source: WDI, 2017¹

¹ Data was taken from the World Development Indicators based on UNHCR Statistics Database, complemented with statistics on Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the UNRWA.

Figure 5: Refugee population by country or territory of asylum in the NENA region, 2017



Total refugee population in the NENA region: **10 003 979 persons**

Source: WDI, 2017

Rural-urban migration

A central migration trend across the NENA region is the movement of people away from rural areas toward urban centres. The percentage of the region's total rural population has been declining steadily since the 1960s, and in 1986 the size of the urban population surpassed the rural population for the first time (Figure 6). Today only three countries (Egypt, the Sudan and Yemen) stand out as exceptions and still have a rural population that surpasses the urban population.

Gulf countries have experienced the highest rate of urbanization, with Qatar being the single most urbanized country in the region. Migration, both internal and international, has contributed to the rapid urban expansion. The shift away from nomadic pastoralism, coastal fishing and pearling in the Gulf sub-region happened quite suddenly with the discovery of oil. Yet, despite the high rates of economic development, the almost complete reliance on food imports to feed massive urban populations threatens food security in the Gulf (Ramadan, 2015).

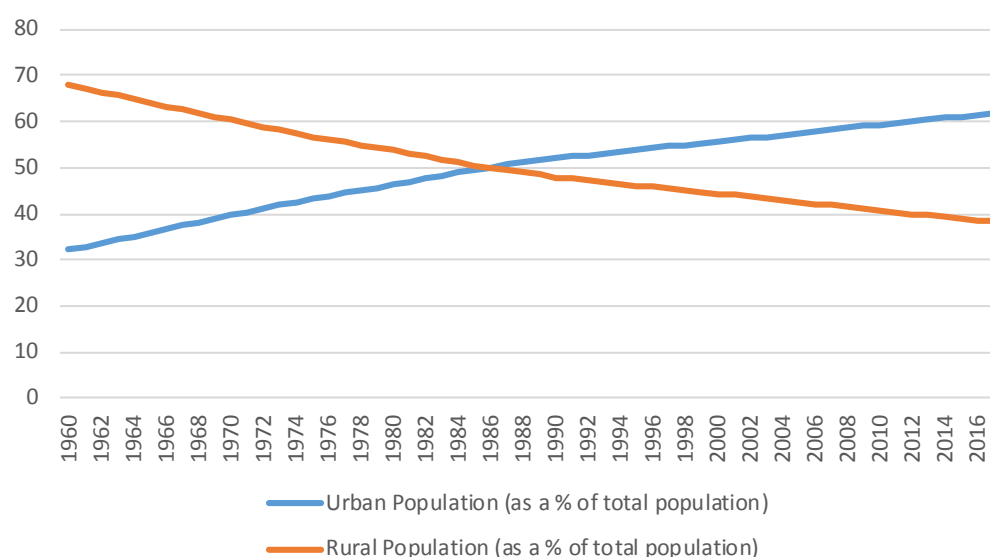
Rural-urban migration does not necessarily take place in one definitive movement. For example, temporary migration to oil-exporting countries in the region frequently precedes more permanent rural to urban migration. It is not uncommon for migrants from Egypt and Morocco heading to the Gulf to go directly from rural areas, then upon return, choose to settle in urban cities rather than their rural home towns (Al Ali, 2004). Alternatively, a process of stepwise migration has also been documented in which migrants move internally before migrating internationally (ibid).

High rates of rural-urban migration have positive and negative consequences for both cities and rural areas in the region. In broad terms, migration has made cities more vibrant and contributed

to urban economic growth, but it has also exacerbated problems of informal employment, slum expansion, environmental deterioration public health risks associated with overcrowding, inadequate solid waste management, and pressure on physical infrastructure and on health and education services. In rural areas, outmigration can be an important source of income through remittances, it can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and can provide a livelihood strategy for families. However, this may come at a cost of labour availability and loss of agricultural know-how.

It is important to consider that urbanization has not been solely driven by rural outmigration. The growth of urban centres (sometime called secondary cities, medium-sized towns and non-farm activity centres) within previously rural areas also accounts for the declining share of the population classified as rural (De Haas, 2005; Khachani, 2010). This urbanization of rural areas, together with the ongoing process of urban sprawl and expansion of peri-urban spaces, is blurring the boundaries between rural and urban localities. Urbanization is also driven by the natural growth of cities. However, the extent to which urban population growth is driven by migration trends, population growth or rural reclassification is not clear and varies spatially and temporally.

Figure 6: Percentage of the population residing in rural or urban areas, 2017



Source: World Development Indicators, 2017

Seasonal migration and migrant agriculture workers

Because of the seasonal nature of agricultural cycles, it is common for agricultural workers to temporarily migrate to rural areas during times of peak labour demand and, conversely, migrate to cities and towns during the low season. In a survey of labour migrants in Egypt, about one-fifth of respondents reported periodically returning to their rural places of origin to help cultivate the land held by their families (Grant, Burger and Wodon, 2014).

This type of migration can take place both within and across borders. For example, the demands of seasonal agriculture in Egypt have typically attracted migrants from the Sudan. Similarly, Jordan and Lebanon have been receiving seasonal agricultural workers from the Syrian Arab Republic well before the outbreak of conflict. Immigration to Libya has historically included seasonal migrants, mainly from Chad, Niger and the Sudan, who leave at the end of the short agricultural season in their countries, to work in Libyan farms near the border and return at the beginning of the following season. The agricultural sector in Libya relies heavily on these migrant workers to maintain agricultural production and agribusiness (IOM, 2014).

Migrant agricultural workers are especially vulnerable as they tend to accept low wages and are employed in the informal sector, characterized by long hours and unsafe or unhealthy conditions. They tend to be among the poorest and lowest educated and are drawn to the agriculture sector precisely because of its informal nature. The vast majority are unprotected by labour laws and are not covered by social protection schemes – leaving them exposed to potential exploitation (see Box 1). Discrimination in the form of differential pay or benefits for similar work is common, especially for migrant women in agricultural work. Moreover, female agricultural workers who have migrated either alone or with their husbands are more likely to experience gender-based violence and sexual harassment (Sala, 2018).

Migrant profiles: Who is migrating?

Migration, like other demographic events, is a selective process and is often related to major life-cycle events such as marriage (or divorce), retirement, leaving school and entering the labour market. Even if there are differences in migrants' profiles between and within countries in the NENA region, there are still quite systematic patterns at given ages and by sex. These can be summarized as follows:

- » Labour migrants are usually young men (see Figure 7).
- » Rural women tend to migrate more for the purposes of reunification with spouses or family and less in pursuit of employment.
- » Because migration requires resources, the poorest of the poor are not the most likely to migrate and when they do are more likely to be seasonal or circular migrants.
- » Refugees and forced migrant populations tend to be more heterogeneous with a larger share of women and children than economic migrants.
- »

Box 1**Migrant workers in Jordan**

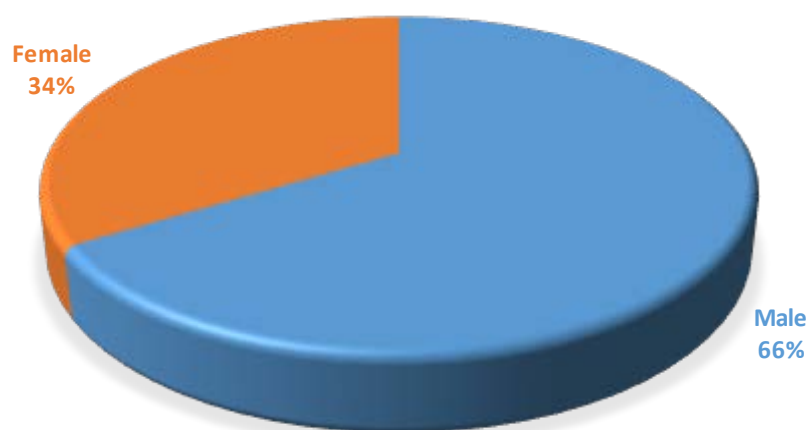
Historically, investment in irrigated agriculture in the Jordan uplands has led to an influx of migrants, mainly from Egypt and to a lesser extent from the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, to work as agricultural labourers. According to government statistics, 68 percent of hired labour in the uplands are non-Jordanian nationals. Nearly 66 percent of them are casual workers.

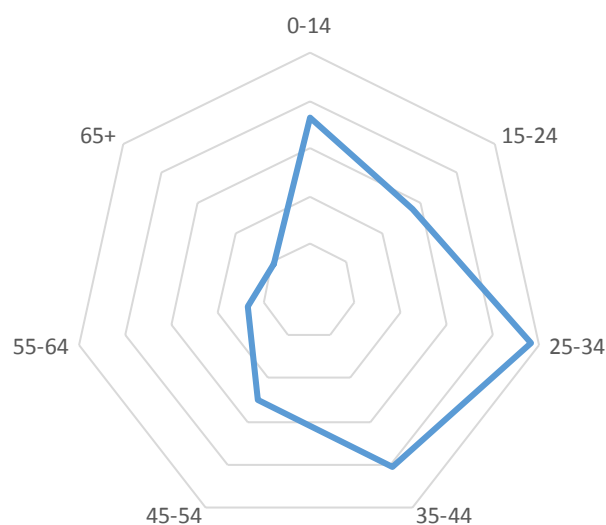
Migrant workers are known to endure conditions considered unacceptable by most Jordanians, including inadequate shelter, no access to clean water, 10- to 12-hour workdays and verbal abuse from employers. Labour exploitation is well documented by local human rights groups. There have been numerous cases of employers confiscating migrant workers' passports (a form of forced labour) and withholding wages for several months at a time. Many of these abuses are documented by labour rights organizations. A report issued by Tamkeen Center, a local human rights NGO, estimated that migrant workers are paid a quarter of the wages earned by their Jordanian counterparts.

The Jordanian government now carries out inspection programs to identify illegal recruitment practices, but there is still a long way to go in ensuring the protection of migrant workers. For example, Jordan has yet to grant freedom of association for migrant workers, including the right to form their own unions, and has not extended the scope of labour laws to include national and non-national agricultural workers.

Source: ILO 'Protecting Migrant Workers' Rights in Jordan'; Tamkeen Fields for Aid

Figure 7: Migrant stock in the NENA region by sex and age, 2017





Source: UNDESA Database, 2017

Evidence from the NENA region shows that young people tend to migrate more, particularly in patterns of rural-urban migration and temporary migration (Khawaja, 2002). This is due in part to the disparity between youth aspirations and available opportunities in the rural economy in many parts of the region (Fargues, 2008). In addition, internal labour migration has traditionally been regarded as largely undertaken by men and is still mainly male-dominated in the NENA region (Abdelali Martini, 2011). Nevertheless, growing female participation in the labour market is also changing migration patterns (IOM, 2005). Today, women are playing a more active role in migration processes. As shown in Fleury (2016) women historically tended to migrate primarily for marriage or family reunification, both internationally and internally, but many now migrate to pursue economic opportunities or education.

Poverty status also affects migrants' destinations and capabilities to move. Migration has a cost and the poorest share of the rural population might not have the resources to migrate. Globally, evidence suggests the poverty status of individuals or of households will partly determine the temporality and spatiality of migration (IOM, 2005; World Bank, 2011b). Poorer people generally migrate internally or to neighbouring countries and across smaller distances. They are also more likely to undertake temporary, seasonal or circular migration. Conversely, ownership of assets such as land, livestock and machinery, beyond a certain point, can reduce migration as individuals remain in their home towns to manage holdings (Berhanu, 2012; Kok *et al.*, 2006).

The level of education also impacts migration. Improved education and access to information increase the capabilities and aspirations to migrate. Migrants tend to be of relatively higher educational and occupational background than their counterparts at the point of origin, even if this status is reversed at the place of destination. People in rural areas in the NENA region are likely to be less educated than their urban counterparts and will most probably be categorized as low-skilled labour. At the same time, the more educated and skilled individuals are, as compared to local peers, the more likely they will be to aspire to migrate. Using the Gallup survey in the region, Silatech (2009) shows that "the most likely individuals to express a desire to migrate

permanently are those who are the most educated, are already employed and aspire to start their own business” (Silatech, 2009).

In many cases, the decision to migrate corresponds to a household strategy rather than an individual one. In this perspective, the household joins forces in order to improve the general income of the family. This corresponds to the concept of ‘multi-active households’ (Krokkfors, 1995 in de Haan, 1999) where migrants and household members act collectively to maximise and diversify their income. They share both the costs and the benefits of migration, albeit not equally. The bigger the family size, the higher the likelihood to migrate, as enough family members remain available to work in agriculture while one moves to the city to work in a non-agricultural sector (ibid).

A 2017 study by the World Food Programme found that different motivations for migration can have different implications on the number of household members that relocate. For example, the survey showed that migrants who flee conflict are more likely to do so as a family (WFP, 2017). On the other hand, migrants who travel primarily for work tend to be young men who migrate alone without the intention that other family members join them.




Migrants and Refugees walk on the field to makeshift camp of Idomeni near the Greek-Macedonian border north of Greece.

©FAO/Giuseppe Carotenuto

Drivers of rural migration in the NENA region



Refugees from Ghana, Bangladesh and Somalia, workers in Libya during the Gheddafi regime.
©FAO/Giuseppe Carotenuto



The drivers of migration in the NENA region are intertwined and interconnected. Migration is often the result of a combination of factors, which together determine the type of movements, their size, length and impacts. The following chapters will focus on three overarching drivers of rural migration prevalent in the NENA region: rural development gaps, conflict and environmental stress. Although these forces do not act in isolation and are themselves closely linked, each merits a more distinct and detailed analysis.

Rural-urban disparities

A trajectory of inclusive growth and narrowed rural-urban gaps is produced when processes of structural transformation at the national level progress in tandem with rural transformation. Conversely, without concurrent rural transformation, structural transformation can lead to the exclusion of rural inhabitants from the benefits of economic growth and widening inequality along geographic divides. NENA countries are very much characterized by the latter and the resultant inequities are the most important driver of migration from agriculture-based rural economies toward urban centres and cities, in pursuit of jobs in other sectors (IFAD, 2016).

The agriculture sector's contribution to employment has declined sharply over the last five decades. The percentage of labour employed in agriculture, averaged across NENA countries, stood at 18 percent in 2016, compared to 45 percent in 1970. This is lower than regional averages in South Asia (43 percent), sub-Saharan Africa (57 percent), East Asia (21 percent) and the global average of 26 percent. The decline is closely related to an economic shift away from agriculture and toward industrial, extractive and service sectors. This phenomenon has been especially marked in oil-exporting Gulf countries, where oil production has propelled rapid economic growth, but is also noticeable in countries like Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.

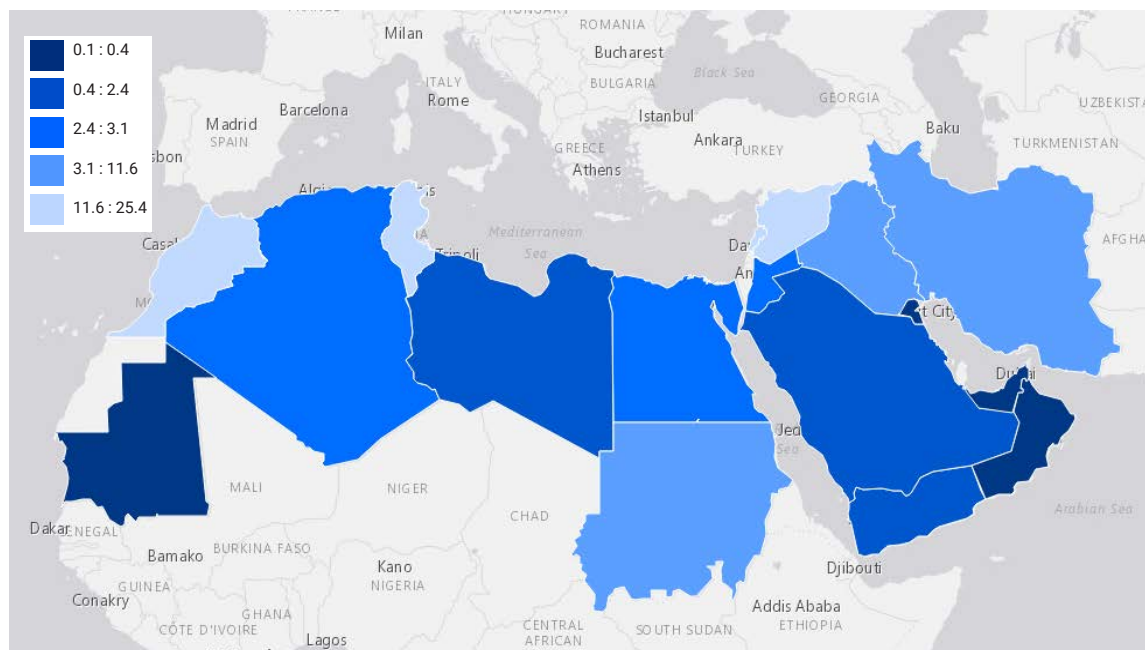
Not only has the share of agriculture in employment decreased, but evidence suggests that agricultural wages are also lower than wages in other sectors. In 2015, the share of gross domestic product (GDP) originating from agriculture was around 5 percent in the NENA region, whereas the sector's share in employment was 18 percent indicating low levels of labour productivity. In the same year, the average agricultural worker in the NENA region produced about USD 3 400 worth of products - close to one-third the value produced by an average worker outside of agriculture (FAO, 2018b). The large discrepancy in labour productivity suggests that average wages for agriculture workers are likely to be far lower than wages in industry or service sectors.

Several factors are responsible for low agricultural productivity compared to other sectors in the region and the generally decelerated process of rural transformation. In Gulf countries, the discovery of oil led governments to investment almost exclusively in extractive industries, to the exclusion of agriculture. As discussed below, in other parts of the region, agricultural productivity and profitability has been constrained by a number of resource, policy and investment challenges, ultimately contributing to rural outmigration.

A lack of cultivable land in rural areas is one of the major factors influencing migration. As shown in Figure 8, the majority of NENA countries have less than 10 percent arable land. Population growth and environmental changes are exacerbating the shortage of arable land, as more people compete for less land. In addition, land degradation caused by unsustainable farming practices, such as overgrazing, excessive chemical use and water-logging, is further diminishing the

productivity and fertility of available agricultural land (FAO, 2018a). Issues of access and tenure are also becoming more acute. Rural women and youth face significant challenges in terms of access to and control over land. Women contribute more than 50 percent of agriculture labour in the NENA region but own less than 10 percent of farmland (Abdelali-Martini, 2011).

Figure 8: Arable land (percentage of total land area), 2016



Source: World Development Indicators, 2018

Low levels of technology uptake and mechanisation are also key limitations. Mechanisation can significantly reduce workload and improve productivity for small-scale family farmers, however small holdings and land fragmentation can limit the use of machines and modern technologies. In some instances, for example in Egypt, farmers are able to share irrigation pumps and other equipment, but this requires strong coordination mechanisms and social cohesion (Richards, 1981). The modernization of agriculture also requires training in new agricultural techniques. However, access to education and training is often lower in rural areas, and the public sector does not invest sufficiently in the provision of extension and advisory services to help farmers improve productivity and income (FAO, 2016c).

Transportation infrastructure essential for marketing and selling goods is lacking. Inadequate roads and limited access to ports, airports and transport systems affect the profitability of the agricultural sector and make it difficult for farmers to acquire inputs and deliver agricultural produce to buyers. Infrastructure is also an essential prerequisite for private sector investment in rural areas, helping to attract businesses, industries and commercial establishments that can provide jobs and services. Finally, low access to markets, particularly international markets, constrains the profitability of agriculture (FAO, 2016c). In most NENA countries cooperatives and rural institutions that can facilitate market access for small-scale producers remain weak, and food safety standards and certification mechanisms needed for export and trade are scarce.

Standards of living and employment

It is not just the insufficient number of agricultural jobs that is driving rural populations to leave. The agriculture sector is fraught with decent work deficits that make it increasingly unattractive, especially for rural youth. With the exception of Algeria, Iran (the Islamic Republic of), Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia, most NENA countries' labour laws do not cover agricultural workers. Where protection for farmers exists, enforcement is a challenge, due to the high level of informality and to the lack of administrative oversight and law enforcement in rural areas. Agricultural workers are known to work long and irregular hours doing arduous work. Heat exposure, pesticide poisoning, vehicle and machinery accidents and musculoskeletal injuries are just a few of the common hazards to which farmers are regularly exposed. Remuneration is low, with few or no employment benefits.

Quality of life in rural areas is affected by low levels of public spending. Public spending and services in the NENA region tend to be skewed toward urban areas where populations and constituencies are larger. A main finding of the 2017 Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report, was that large disparities in human development continue to prevail across rural and urban divides. Data² showed that access to seven essential services, including education, health, electricity, sanitation, drinking water and flooring, was consistently lower in rural areas, ranging from 3 to 20 times lower than access to those services urban areas in the sample countries. ³The region's rural population (less than half the total population) accounts for 83 percent of the acutely poor population and 67 percent of the poor population.

Although poverty is higher in rural areas, access to social protection is lower. Social protection is an instrument of risk-mitigation that ensures rural households are able to withstand temporary shocks such as a bad cropping season or an economic downturn without falling into extreme poverty. Without access to some form of safety net, rural households are often forced into non-sustainable coping mechanisms such as selling their assets, shifting to less risky but lower-yielding crops or removing their children from school to work (Lorenzon, 2016). In other words, social protection can reduce rural poverty and mitigate some of the adverse drivers of migration.



The abandoned town of Beni Bahdel.

©FAO/Laurent Sazy

² Based on a sample of nine NENA countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

³ Based on a sample of nine NENA countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

Territorial development and off-farm employment

Moving forward, achieving rural transformation will depend on multi-sectoral territorial development approaches that focus on bridging the divide between rural and urban areas by fostering tangible and intangible productive investments in things like social services, education and training, infrastructure, agriculture and agribusiness. An important aspect of this is livelihood diversification and the creation of off-farm employment. Currently, only 20 percent of agriculture production undergoes any form of processing or value addition, and NENA countries continue to rely heavily on food imports (FAO, 2018b). With appropriate policies and incentives, rural communities, and especially youth, can benefit from more and higher-paying jobs in agricultural value chains. This transition will be key to addressing one of the main drivers of rural outmigration and fostering more geographically balanced economic development.

Box 2

FAO's Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Family Farming (RI SSFF)

The work of the RI SSFF addresses some of the major adverse drivers of migration in rural areas. Directly working with government, smallholders, cooperatives, formal and informal rural institutions and producer's organizations across the NENA region, the Initiative addresses challenges to the development of small-scale agriculture in the region and advances policy options to sustainably improve productivity, quality and value addition. It also supports countries to reduce rural poverty and close the rural-urban gaps in development that are driving migration in rural areas. In particular, the priorities of the initiative are to:

1. Advance sustainable and innovative practices developed to boost the agricultural productivity of small-scale family farmers and their associations;
2. Increase decent rural employment opportunities and complementary social protection mechanisms for small-scale family farmers;
3. Strengthen the capacities of rural organizations and institutions to improve small-scale family farmers' access to rural services and markets.

The Initiative implements an integrated approach and places particular emphasis on the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups, especially women and youth.



Karsaneh Harvesting.
©FAO/Omar Sanadiki

Conflict

Conflict continues to be one of the primary drivers of migration in the region. As of 2017 there were a total of 10 million refugees residing in the NENA region, in addition to 14 million IDPs. About 7.7 million of the world's refugees come from the NENA region. In 2017, the majority of the region's refugees and migrants originated from the Syrian Arab Republic. Conflict is a major driver of forced migration (IDPs and refugees), but it can also be a cause of economic migration from towns or localities that may not have been directly affected by violence but have suffered the impacts of conflict, including reduced food security and loss of livelihoods.

Mobility is commonly used as a coping strategy to negotiate life in conflict zones. "Although each protracted crisis is different, underlying causes can include some combination of conflict, occupation, terrorism, man-made and natural disasters, natural resource pressures, climate change, inequalities, prevalence of poverty, and governance factors" (CFS, FFA, 2015). In other words, conflicts themselves are hardly a singular phenomenon causing migration. Instead, they can be an interplay of a number of complex factors resulting in violence or crisis.

Conflicts affect both rural and urban geographies. Globally, most forced migrants opt to settle in cities and urban centres due to better service provision (Serageldin *et al.*, 2014). However, rural areas also receive large numbers of IDPs and refugees (up to 40 percent). Displaced populations living in rural areas make their living from activities related to agriculture. Thus, supporting engagement in food production and the diversification of agricultural livelihoods is key to encouraging self-reliance and can contribute to conflict prevention and stability, including by helping to mitigate pressures on host communities.

Host governments and local authorities are often challenged by the sudden arrival of large numbers of migrants who need different types of assistance and access to services. This can put pressure on the quality of public services but also on the labour market and on natural resources in general. This can sometimes jeopardize livelihoods of already fragile rural host communities by reducing wages, negatively impacting working conditions, increasing unemployment, affecting the local environment and natural resource availability and ultimately threatening food security (FAO, 2016b). These factors can lead to tensions (and possibly conflict) between host and displaced communities. On the other hand, IDPs and refugees can also contribute to the development of host communities, contributing to the labour market and bringing in new skills and investments. Migrants can bring considerable expertise and knowledge and participate in the development of the agriculture sector.

The Syrian crisis had a significant impact on neighbouring countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, affecting their socio-economic equilibrium and access to and quality of infrastructure and services. This is partly due to the fact that the host countries and specific localities receiving significant numbers of refugees were already vulnerable before the crisis occurred. Prior to the arrival of Syrian refugees, these localities were deprived of infrastructure, services, food stability, employment and housing. The same consequences can occur in communities located near refugee camps. Social tensions and subsequent conflicts can emerge from these situations (FAO, 2016; MPC, 2013). Lebanon hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees in the region, which has put enormous pressure on housing, labour markets and the quality and availability of public services. Syrian refugees account for 30 percent of Lebanon's population, the highest

concentration per capita of refugees in the world. Seventy percent live below the poverty line compared to 40 percent of the Lebanese population (Schlein, 2016). Jordan hosts the second highest number of refugees per 1,000 inhabitants in the world (UNHCR, 2017).

Massive international assistance and funds have been allocated to these countries in response to the influx of migrants, including FAO's own work to strengthen the resilience and support livelihoods in rural host communities. Adequate livelihood and social support, including food assistance, must be provided to both displaced populations and their host communities which over time develop their own vulnerabilities due to overburdened infrastructure and services – especially rural host communities. This can help reduce animosity and conflict between host communities and displaced populations and improve social cohesion.

An important subgroup of migrants in conflict contexts are returnees.⁴ While returnees often return home once conditions are more stable, some migrants return to their country or place of origin due to the emergence of unrest in their host country. This was the case of Tunisian and Egyptian migrants in Libya who returned during the 2011 Libyan crisis. In rural regions of Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Sudan, where conflict or crisis has destroyed agricultural infrastructure, a tremendous amount of support is needed to help returnees rebuild their livelihoods and communities to prevent permanent displacement, for example to urban centres where displaced persons are more likely to find medical treatment or assistance. Internal and international migration of Lebanese has been heavily impacted by conflicts, as several waves of forced migration occurred since the 1970s, causing both temporary and permanent displacements (NRC, 2004). Many of the displaced were able to return to their place of origin before the end of the war as relative peace was restored. Currently, studies estimate that around 20 percent of IDPs remain in host communities.



A farmer working in a wheat field in the targeted area supported by FAO.

©FAO/Soliman Ahmed

⁴ Return migration is also a significant trend in non-conflict or crisis settings. See definitions on page 4.

Impact of conflict on agriculture and food security

In crisis and post crisis contexts, strengthening the agricultural sector is crucial to advance towards durable solutions. The Syrian war greatly impacted the agriculture sector leading to massive losses. Sustained conflict diminished employment opportunities in agriculture and access to markets, leading to overall conditions of food insecurity (WFP, 2017). However, agriculture remains an important sector of the economy (26 percent of GDP) and is the source of livelihoods for 6.7 million Syrians, including IDPs. Similarly, protracted conflict in Iraq has particularly impacted rural communities, resulting in the loss of the workforce and reduced agricultural productivity. Continued unrest has led to the loss of crops and assets, further aggravating food and nutrition security for those who remain.

Rebuilding agriculture is central to post-conflict reconstruction, helping to improve food security and re-establish livelihoods. Programs supporting the reconstruction of agricultural infrastructure and re-engaging people in productive activities are a way to provide stable incomes for displaced populations, returnees and remainder populations. These groups can in turn contribute to the development of conflict-affected rural areas and constitute an important labour force to work on the reconstruction of the agriculture sector.

The Palestinian refugee crisis

The long-standing conflict in Palestine is a particular case that has led to the long-term and protracted displacement of Palestinians across the region and further (Faath and Mattes in Bommers *et al.*, 2014). It has also led to the emergence of both Palestinian IDPs and refugees living within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are those populations displaced as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and their decedents. In 2017, the West Bank and Gaza Strip hosted an estimated 2.2 million refugees in addition to 231 000 IDPs (IDMC, 2017).

Displaced Palestinians living in rural areas struggle to make a living. The agricultural sector faces significant constraints as a result of occupation. Access to water and land is severely limited and the high cost of agriculture inputs, including fertilizer and animal feed, threaten profitability and raise market prices for agricultural products. Many farmers are forced to rely on expensive water from tankers for irrigation and watering.

According to statistics from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), more than 2.17 million registered Palestine refugees live in Jordan, making it the largest host country for Palestinian refugees in the region. (The number of Palestinian refugees increased especially after the conflict in Syria led many refugees to relocate to Jordan.) Research conducted by Fafo Foundation shows that among Palestinian refugees in Jordan, only 1 percent of those living outside camps work in agriculture, compared to 2.4 percent of those living in camps (Tiltne and Zhang, 2013). Palestinian refugees - alongside other Jordanians - compete for agriculture jobs with low-salaried Syrian and Egyptian labourers, a competition which may have become tougher due to worsening economic conditions. The refugees working in agriculture tend to be the least educated and lowest skilled and receive the lowest wages.

Box 3**FAO's Regional Initiative on Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition (RI-FSN)**

The work of the RI FSN directly addresses the issue of forced displacement, especially in the context of protracted crises – where migration is rarely an informed choice but rather a necessity. It supports NENA countries in the implementation of activities that build resilience to shocks. By doing this, the RI-FSN contributes to reducing forced displacement by providing vulnerable farming communities with the means to cope with the three key factors of displacement; conflict, climate impact/dwindling natural resources, and political instability/lack of services. Interventions target both affected and host communities as well as returnees in post-crisis contexts.

The initiative focuses on four key elements: improving governance through resilience-based policies, legal frameworks and investment programmes; improved information systems for better decision making; prevention and risk reduction at local levels and timely response to agricultural threats and emergencies. It is committed to increasing capacity to withstand shocks that largely cause forced displacement, in line with FAO's global commitment to ensure that interventions in protracted crises address immediate needs while providing long-term durable solutions.



A herd of sheep grazing in an abandoned greenhouse.

©FAO/Marco Longari

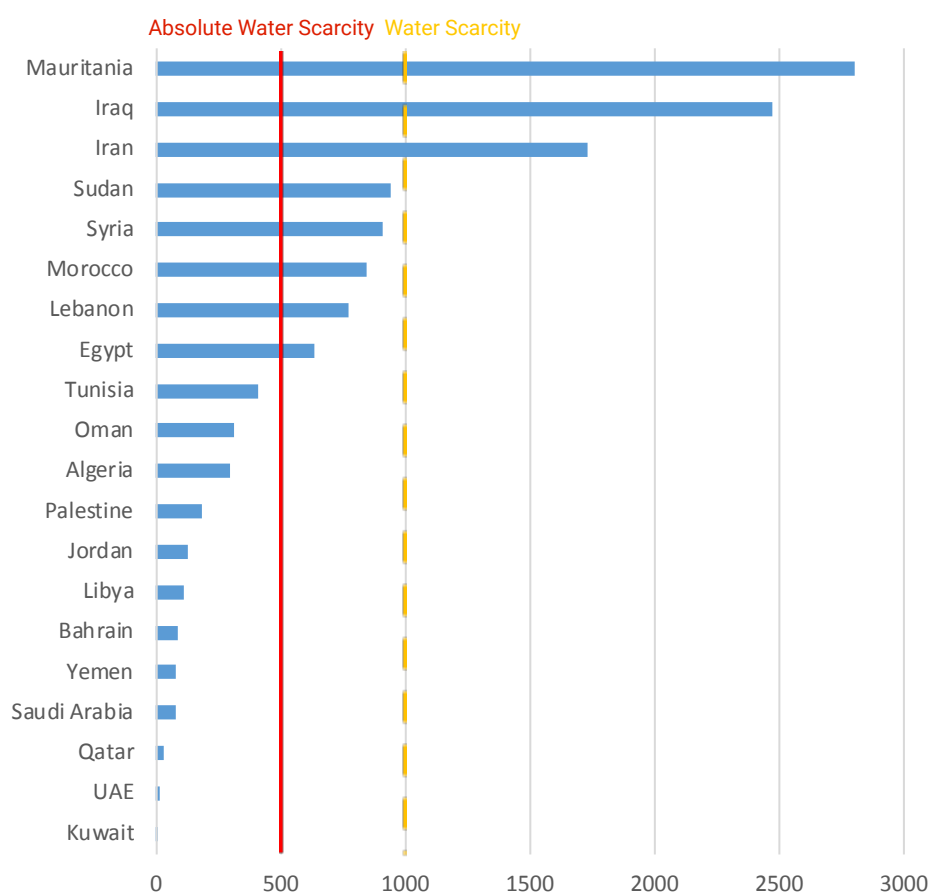
Climate change

Globally, studies have shown that setbacks to agricultural productivity caused by changing weather patterns brought about by climate change will significantly increase migration in middle and lower income countries (Falco *et al.*, 2018). In the NENA region, although the importance of climate change effects are widely acknowledged, there are very few studies on their linkages with migration. In this regard, the NENA region is under-studied in comparison with other regions of the world. One study that sought to fill this gap found that socioeconomic factors play a larger role than climatic factors today, but environmental changes still heavily influence the decision to migrate (Wodon and Liverani, 2014). The study, based on a sample of five NENA countries, estimated that climate events account for about 10 to 20 percent of migration. However, the role of environmental factors is likely to increase in the future as climatic conditions deteriorate further.

Rural populations that depend heavily on agriculture are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Temperature increases and estimated lower precipitation levels are expected to adversely impact crop productivity, increase livestock deaths, cripple rain-fed agriculture, diminish surface and ground water available for irrigation, reduce fisheries production and fish quality and intensify land degradation. Extreme weather events, particularly droughts, will increase in frequency and severity, as will their destructive effects on farming systems (UNESCWA, 2017; Lewis *et al.*, 2018). Rural communities also have lower adaptive capacity due to compounding factors such as weak institutions, lower access to public services and higher poverty rates.

Among the multi-faceted impacts that climate change will have on agriculture and food systems, water scarcity is expected to be among the most significant for the NENA region. Already the most water-scarce region of the world, changes in rainfall patterns could mean faster rates of desertification and even less water available for irrigation. As shown in Figure 9, per capita renewable freshwater resources fall below the absolute water scarcity threshold of 500 cubic meters in 12 of the region's twenty countries. This will be especially disruptive for communities dependent upon rain-fed agriculture.

Figure 9: Total renewable water resources per capita, 2014



Source: FAO AQUASTAT (accessed 21 March 2018)

Increased incidence of drought will have catastrophic effects on rural populations. Mass migration from rural areas due to drought took place notably in Mauritania in the 1970s and 1980s (Smale, 1982) and is also well documented in the Syrian Arab Republic, more recently in 2006. The multi-year drought in the Syrian Arab Republic is estimated to have led to the migration of about one million people to informal settlements around the major cities (World Bank, 2011). Approximately 28 percent of the residents of Arab countries live in areas vulnerable to drought (Erian *et al.*, 2010).

The effects of climate change on rural migration will vary significantly by country. In the Sudan, floods are a major cause of rural displacement. According to a report from the Famine Early Warning System, published in August 2018, flooding induced by torrential rain across the Sudan has displaced more than 50 000 people since mid-July. At least 23 fatalities were reported, with many more injuries. Damage to crops and livestock deaths from flooding occurred in localized areas of West Kordofan, Kassala and Darfur States. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) has reported that flood-related disasters in the Sudan have made arable land unsuitable for cultivation and displaced more than 600 000 people between 2013 and 2018. The frequency and intensity of such droughts is expected to increase as a result of climate change.

In Yemen, 55 percent of the population is employed in agriculture and 84 percent of the rural

poor are dependent on rain-fed subsistence agriculture. These populations are among the most vulnerable to climate change. Reduced rainfall in this context is likely to worsen the already severe conditions of poverty in rural Yemen, lead to increased migration toward urban centres and the capital of Sana'a and potentially aggravate existing conflicts and tensions in the fragile country (Mohamed *et al.*, 2017). In Egypt, sea level rise is causing increasing levels of salinity in the Nile Delta. The Delta region is among the most agriculturally productive and fertile zones in the country. It occupies less than 2.5 percent of the country's land area but is responsible for more than 50 percent of total agricultural output. Saltwater intrusion and soil salinisation in the Delta will threaten the livelihoods of thousands of farmers and are expected to lead to massive population movements (Warner, 2009). In addition to these examples, climate change poses a serious risk to sensitive agro-ecological zones, such as the Iraqi marshlands and Moroccan oases, as well as the rural communities that depend on them.

Two types of migration drivers are expected to become increasingly common in the NENA region. The first is migration brought about by slow-onset environmental factors, such as increasingly limited water supplies and subsequent land degradation or sea level rise and soil salinisation. These factors have adverse impacts on livelihoods, health and assets that can further trigger migration or even undermine seasonal movements, depriving people of traditional coping strategies. Climate change can magnify their impact and, in turn, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. The second is displacement caused by rapid-onset events whose links with migration are easier to identify. In fact, droughts and other long-term changes in rainfall patterns or temperatures may lead to gradual migration movements and changes in migration patterns (i.e. from temporary to longer-term migration) which are more difficult to disentangle. Tackling the challenges of the environment-migration nexus requires a more concerted effort to improve the resilience and adaptive capacity of small-scale family farmers including women and youth. This includes supporting the adoption of climate smart agriculture practices in vulnerable regions, promoting livelihood diversification and establishing social safety nets.



©FAO/Yemen

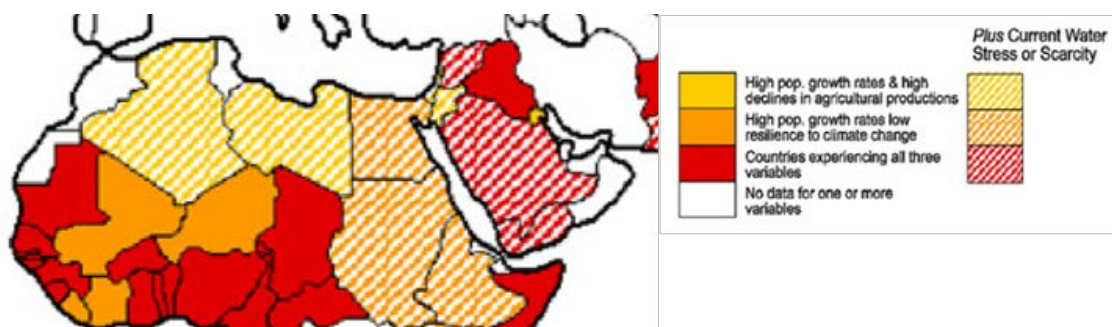
Strengthening empirical knowledge and understanding of environmental migration in the NENA region is a primary step toward adapted governances and actions. It is also essential for the formulation of effective disaster risk management plans that will improve response to extreme weather events and to mitigating potential resource conflicts. Research should focus on identifying and mapping potential hotspots of climate vulnerability in the NENA region and on understanding how climate and environmental changes influence migration patterns and whether (and how) migration affects adaptation and adaptive capacity in rural areas of origin. Figure 10 below shows countries that are experiencing high population growth and declining agricultural production, low resilience to climate change and water stress. Further multi-level analysis which allows for monitoring migration trends over longer periods of time is an effective tool for research analysis, especially in the context of slow-onset climate change. Current studies of environmental migration are usually snapshots that fail to capture long-term migration dynamics.

Climate change and conflict

One way climate change could influence migration trends in the region is by prolonging, exacerbating and contributing to the emergence of conflict. As natural resources, particularly land and water, become increasingly scarce, the number and magnitude of disputes can be expected to intensify. Fragile states and communities with a history of conflict are the most vulnerable, particularly in the absence of strong systems of resource governance. Some observers have gone so far as to link the present war in the Syrian Arab Republic with conditions of drought brought about by climate change (Gleick, 2014).

Until now, research has not been able to show a clear and direct relationship between climate change and violent conflict, but it is becoming increasingly accepted that growing tensions over land and water, under conditions of food insecurity, could contribute to or worsen conflict (SIDA, 2018). In order to manage this risk, more sustainable and inclusive systems of natural resource governance – including mechanisms for dispute settlement and the responsible governance of tenure – must be put in place at local, national and regional levels.

Figure 10: Climate change hot spots in the MENA region



Source: Population and climate change hotspots. www.populationaction.org/Publications, accessed on 1 December 2018

Box 4**FAO's Water Scarcity Initiative**

Launched in 2013 to address one of the NENA region's biggest challenges, the Water Scarcity Initiative is striving to transform the way water resources are managed, specifically the 85 percent of water resources used in agriculture. Sustainable water use in the agriculture sector can help farmers in the region cope with resource limitations and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts. Drought and water stress are already directly and indirectly influencing human mobility and are expected to become increasingly significant drivers of displacement as temperatures rise, precipitation declines and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events increase.

The initiative is helping to combat non-voluntary migration and increase the resilience of rural communities dependent on agriculture by: strengthening water accounting systems, improving water efficiency and productivity through sustainable practices and technologies, reducing the likelihood of conflict through inclusive and participatory water governance (including of transboundary water bodies), supporting risk management associated with drought and desertification, promoting non-conventional water use, and ensuring safe boundaries for water use based on a water-food-climate-ecosystems nexus approach.



Buclis Ghenadie in the greenhouse with cucumbers.

©FAO/Buletin Dorin Goian

Cross-cutting themes



A farmer working in a wheat field in the targeted area supported by FAO.
©FAO/Soliman Ahmed



Gender dimensions of rural migration

The majority of migrants in the NENA region are male. Due to conservative social values regarding gender roles, it has been uncommon for women to migrate on their own. However, this is changing in the region as more and more women are migrating independently, internally and internationally, and not just as accompanying spouses, in pursuit of employment and education (De Haas and Van Rooij, 2010; IOM, 2005).

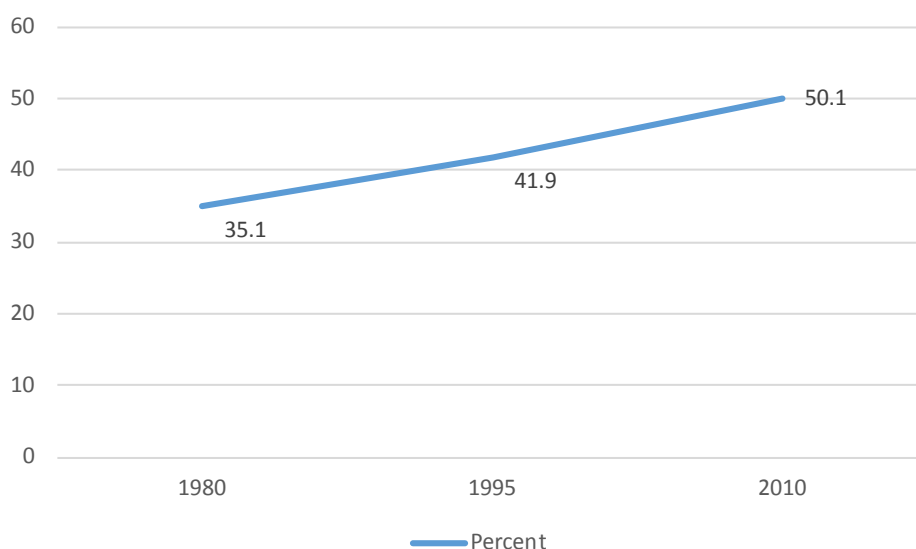
The migration behaviour of men and women is affected differently by the level of rural development, networks, asset ownership and by the type of migration (internal or international). Moreover, gender is juxtaposed to other differential factors such as age and marital status, which directly and indirectly influence mobility and migration (Mendola, 2006). The “household strategies” approach to gendered migration draws attention to the behavioural analyses that underpin men’s and women’s responses to changing socio-economic and environmental conditions. It looks at how the division of labour and power within the household affects the tendency and freedom to engage in outmigration. This contrasts with the idealised vision of the unified household where members are all equal and collaborate for a common interest. Power relations are such that women and children are more vulnerable and have less freedom of decision (Chant, 1998).

Migration is also a factor impacting the distribution of labour between men and women. Labour migration to the Gulf had great social impacts on sending countries in terms of household structure. As the majority of migrants were men, the number of female-headed households increased (Al-Ali, 2004). In the absence of their husbands, women often have greater decision-making authority. However, they also have to shoulder additional responsibilities and chores typically carried out by men. In migration-prone rural areas, women often play a larger role in agricultural production.

Zohry (2002) underlines in his study on Egypt that women’s participation in agriculture is common, but the absence of a male family member increases this participation. Women are becoming more active in farming and gain more responsibility and control in the absence of their husbands. However, women’s labour continues to be less visible and often not remunerated. Women tend to work for very long hours as they are in charge of domestic responsibilities in addition to their agricultural work. The percentage of women who are economically active in agriculture in NENA countries has risen from 35 percent in 1980 to 50 percent in 2010 (Figure 11).

De Haas and Van Rooij (2010) note that the nature of the migration undertaken influences outcomes for women. Men who migrate internationally, for example to Gulf countries, tend to remit more money than men who migrate internally to urban centres. When remittances are higher, rural women benefit from higher standards of living and they are not compelled to increase their work burden to compensate for the departure of male members of the households.

Figure 11: Percent of females among those economically active in agriculture (1980 - 2010)



Source: Sofa 2011, Data tables, *excluding GCC

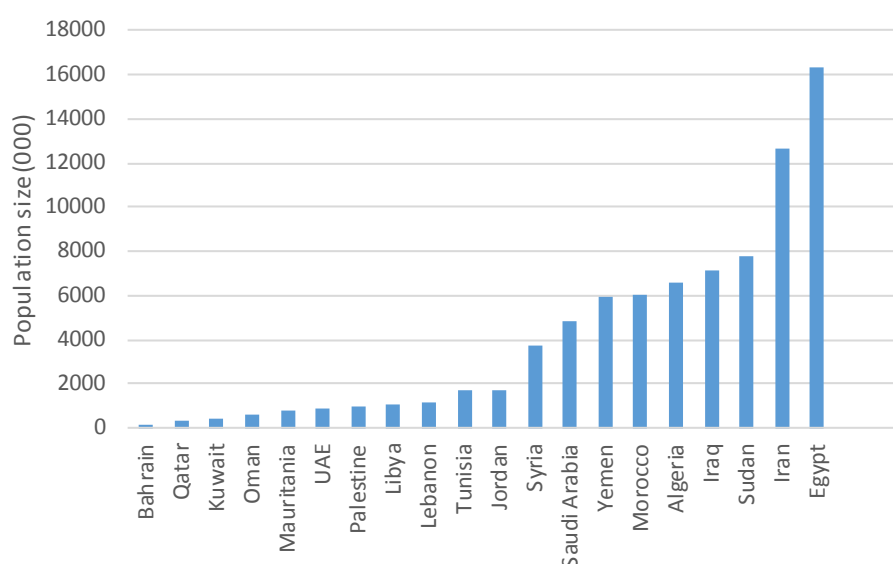
Gender considerations of migration go beyond a focus only on women. They can have potentially negative ramifications for other members of the households. For instance, male and female migration can negatively affect children's education. In the context of NENA, where migration is prevalently male-dominated, children sometimes compensate for the increased workload created by the migration of their fathers or brothers by dropping out of school to work in agriculture along with other family members. This is even more prevalent in households which own their land. Men also face specific vulnerabilities as migrants both during their journey and in their host country. Migrants frequently face exploitation abuse as foreign labour. Weak protection of migrant labour rights is well documented in Gulf countries.

In the NENA region women tend to migrate primarily for the purpose of family reunification or as forced migrants in areas of conflict. However, they are also increasingly migrating for the purposes of employment or education, albeit more common in urban contexts. When women do migrate they face specific vulnerabilities as they are more likely to face discrimination as well as gender-based violence and harassment. It has been noted that female refugees and IDPs tend to access labour markets in the host community more easily, as they often work in private and informal settings, for example as domestic workers (Serageldin *et al.*, 2014). However, these types of employment are frequently fraught with exploitative or abusive conditions.

Rural youth migration

The NENA region has the world's third highest share of youth, after sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.⁵ An estimated 18 percent of the NENA population is between the ages of 15 and 24, compared to 20 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, 19 percent in South Asia, 17 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 14 percent in East Asia and 16 percent globally. Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and the Sudan have the region's largest youth populations (Figure 12). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the region's youth bulge has now passed. The share of young people in the population, illustrated in Figure 13, peaked in 2005 and is expected to continue declining over the next decades.

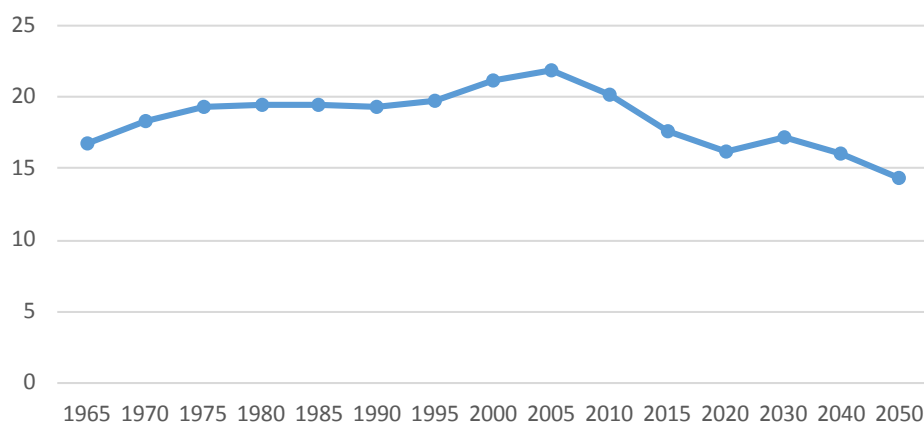
Figure 12: Number of youth aged 15-24, in thousands, 2015



Source: UNDESA World Population Prospects, the 2017 Revision

⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision

Figure 13: Share of NENA youth (15-24) of the total population, 1960-2050



Source: UNDESA World Population Prospects, the 2017 Revision (estimates based on a medium fertility assumption)

Unemployment among NENA youth aged between 15 and 24 reached 24 percent in 2017, close to double the global average of 13 percent and well more than double the region's overall unemployment rate of 10 percent. Rural youth are even less likely to find work. With limited job opportunities and lacking experience and education, young people in rural areas remain unemployed or work as unskilled farm labourers, often in part-time, seasonal, low-paying and precarious jobs. They also face challenges in starting their own agribusiness or agricultural entrepreneurial activities, as they possess insufficient economic assets, savings and social capital. A large portion of rural youth, especially those with tertiary education, aspire to migrate abroad or to urban centres.



A Telefood Rabbit Project beneficiary gathering fodder for goats bought with income earned from the project.
©FAO/Ami Vitale

The decision to migrate is a function of several factors, including education and wealth which are closely correlated to both aspirations and ability to migrate. In his study of rural migration in Egypt, Zohry (2002) observes that most of the young people migrating out of rural areas are educated, while most of the older migrants are not. Migration also requires some resources, and the poorest are thus often unable to migrate.

Household structure has a strong bearing on migration decisions. For example, in rural households where family members are needed to carry out farm labour or look after land or other assets, young people will be discouraged by their families to migrate (FAO, 2016e). On the contrary, in female-headed households or households with sick or disabled members, the need for additional income may drive younger family members to search for higher-paying jobs that will allow them to send home remittances.

As noted by Schielke (2008) in his article on young men in rural Egypt, young people in the region frequently confront high levels of intrusion from family and society in their personal lives as a result of customs and culture. In this regard, migration to the city is also perceived as a means of emancipation from the control of the family and community. Cities are perceived as places of freedom and independence, even if life there is more expensive or difficult.

The decision to migrate among rural youth is not always informed and completely voluntary. In many cases, migration is perceived as the only alternative to improve their living conditions and life prospects (FAO, 2016e). Given the NENA region's economic and political context, young people in both rural and urban areas commonly feel marginalised in social dialogue and are underrepresented among trade unions and cooperatives. The agricultural sector is not perceived by youth as an attractive field. The arduousness of the work, the low wages and the social status associated with it are discouraging. Young women are even more disadvantaged than young men. They experience higher unemployment rates, higher restrictions due to cultural norms and lower access to education.

A recent study conducted by Altai Consulting for the Embassy of the Netherlands in Libya, found that youth unemployment is a key factor fuelling organized crime and militarisation in Libya, especially in the least developed regions. The research suggests that creating more work and educational opportunities is key to reducing the attractiveness of fast money derived from smuggling and trafficking, and of empowerment derived from joining armed groups. Small-scale agricultural production and fishing in particular represent an opportunity, especially if complemented by efforts to improve social cohesion, address local conflicts and ensure inclusivity of decision making at the local level (Altai Consulting, 2017).

Technical and vocational education and training for young men and women in migration-prone rural areas should be accompanied by specific measures to better integrate them into food systems, through improved access and control over natural resources, finance and agricultural market information, and youth agribusiness programmes. FAO Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools programs in the NENA region are an innovative way to reach rural youth, build their capacities in agriculture and facilitate their development of important life skills. Finally, advocating at the policy level for better recognition, remuneration and protection of agricultural workers will be key to retaining youth in the sector.

Social protection and rural migration

In the current context of political and economic instability in the NENA region, establishing social protection mechanisms is vital to overcoming rural poverty and strengthening resilience to shocks. Social protection programs in the NENA region are important in addressing poverty and food insecurity. However, general coverage still does not reach the people who are most in need. Just 16 percent of the poorest share of the region's population receives any form of social protection (Lorenzon, 2016). In addition, the political economy of social protection often influences its delicate framework: as revenues come from national governments, the creation or even expansion of social protection depends on the willingness of the governments.

It is known that social protection can influence rural migration patterns in several ways, as it addresses the multidimensional nature of poverty, one of the main drivers of migration. Social protection comprises instruments of risk-mitigation for rural households, especially poor households. Without these safety-net mechanisms, financially struggling rural households may be forced into non-sustainable coping mechanisms such as selling their assets, shifting to less risky but lower yielding crops or removing their children from school to work (Lorenzon, 2016). In the context of climate change, temporal mechanisms like shock-responsive social protection can also help avoid negative coping strategies as environmental deterioration, natural resource scarcity and extreme weather events threaten agricultural livelihoods. Because it provides a minimal stipend, social protection can allow rural households to engage in "risky" activities that will improve income and resilience, such as seeking credit to start a business or investing in new agricultural technologies or techniques. By buffering loss of income, social protection can reduce the need to migrate in pursuit of new livelihoods.

It is important to acknowledge that the impacts of social protection on migration are mixed, and findings from the relevant literature are not consistent. By allowing individuals and families to fulfil their basic needs and augmenting their ability and aspirations to migrate, social protection may increase migration driven by the desire of rural inhabitants to further improve their standards of living. This form of migration – as an informed choice – is less likely to have a negative impact for areas of origin or destination. Portable social protection systems can enable migration and mobility across sectors (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003).

As mentioned before, national social protection systems are funded by their governments. Therefore, irregular migrants, including forced migrants, are rarely eligible for them. Asylum seekers, refugees and IDPs tend to rely on safety nets provided by humanitarian and development organizations. This is the case in Jordan and Lebanon, for example, where Syrian refugees largely depend on social safety nets provided by the international community. Social protection systems in fragile contexts can help provide immediate improvements in food security and living conditions as well as support longer-term livelihoods and social inclusion of affected populations. In some cases, the international organizations fund social protection that is implemented through the governments. This modality of implementation is most effective in reaching more people in need and is an important link between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development support. Countries in the NENA region are more willing to use their national programs for both displaced populations and rural host communities as long as funding can be outsourced internationally.

Migrant agricultural workers can constitute another vulnerable group that would greatly benefit from forms of social protection. Still, migrant agricultural workers are often excluded from

even basic coverage in social protection instruments and schemes, in particular those who are undocumented. Promoting extension of coverage to this group is important, not only to ensure their rights to social security but also because social protection can help them overcome economic or socio-cultural barriers, promoting effective integration and allowing migrants to contribute more effectively to local development and food systems.

Migrants have different vulnerabilities and needs at different stages of the migration process (as potential migrants or family at source, as migrant in transit, as migrant at destination, and as returned migrant). The determinants of vulnerabilities can be spatial/environmental, socio-political and socio-cultural. The types of vulnerabilities vary at the different stages of the migration process and necessitate different social protection mechanisms. Needs will also vary significantly depending on the migrants' profiles and characteristics (regular/irregular, internal/international, temporary/permanent, refugees, asylum seekers). Thus, there are at least four types of social protection in the context of migration (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003):

- » Social protection for rural communities to build resilience and mitigate the adverse drivers of migration;
- » Social protection for migrant agricultural workers or forced migrants in destination areas;
- » Social protection for returnees to facilitate their reintegration;
- » Social protection for households in rural communities of origin where one or more of the household members have migrated.



A woman tending a herd of sheep in Safh Al Jabal on the outskirts of Jerusalem.
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Harnessing migration potential



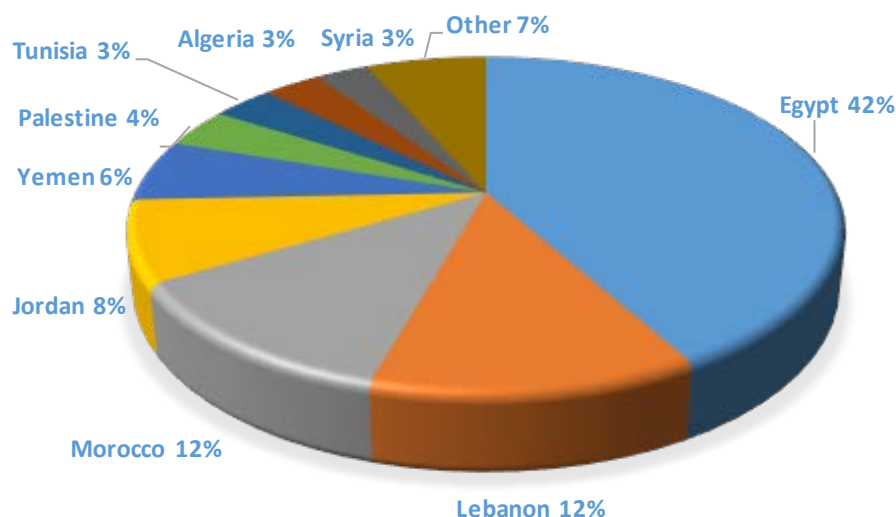
Scenes from a refugee camp located between the town of Ben Gardane and the border with Libya.
©FAO/Giuseppe Carotenuto

Rural remittances

Remittances represent an important financial resource for many households residing in rural areas in the NENA region. In addition, remittances can be a crucial source for investment and rural development finance. Globally, evidence shows that remittances are quite stable over time and that they even increase in times of crisis (Lubambu, 2014; World Bank, 2017; Mohapatra *et al.*, 2010, UNESCAP, 2007; Grabel, 2008). They constitute, as a result, an important financial basis and a safety net for many households and local communities of origin. Target 10.C of the SDGs is to “reduce to less than 3 percent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 percent.”

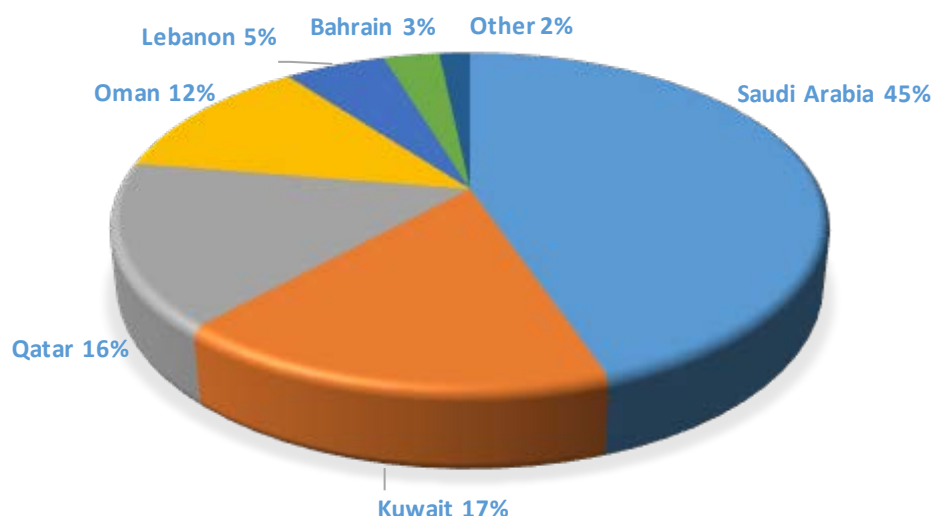
There are few formal estimations of internal remittances, whereas international remittances can be more easily traced. Even then, these figures are likely to be highly underestimated as only formal flows of remittances are being systematically captured. As shown in Figure 14 below, the NENA countries receiving the largest share of regional remittances are Egypt, followed by Lebanon and Morocco. Egypt alone receives 42 percent of remittances flowing to the region. Unsurprisingly, the biggest payers of remittances in the region are Gulf countries, specifically Saudi Arabia (accounting for 45 percent of regional remittances paid), followed by Kuwait (Figure 15).

Figure 14: Total personal remittances received (Current USD), 2017



Source: World Development Indicators (accessed 1 January 2019)

Figure 15: Total personal remittances paid (Current USD), 2017



Source: World Development Indicators (accessed 1 January 2019)

The impact of remittances on local development can vary significantly depending on the size of the diaspora, the amount of remittances and the extent to which remittances are used for productive investments (Mendola, 2006). Remittances sent from migrants who have migrated internationally, for example to Gulf countries or Europe, are more impactful than remittances sent by internal migrants, since migrants who migrate internationally tend to earn more and are thus able to send more money back home (Al Ali 2004). These remittances can potentially be invested to hire labour or buy technology, tools, crop treatments and machinery that can improve productivity and yield. Financial inclusion and literacy for migrants and their families can then enable them to maximize the full investment potential of remittances by helping them increase savings and invest in sustainable livelihoods strategies.

The Egyptian government has been looking at emigration as a development tool since the 1970s, encouraging migration abroad through scholarships and fellowships as a strategy to release the pressure on the labour market and increase remittances. Remittances are among the largest sources of foreign currency in the country (Zohry, 2002). Remittances can give recipient families a regular and stable income. However, remittances linked to internal migration from Upper Egypt to Cairo may be less beneficial than international remittances. Zohry observes that Upper Egyptian migrants in Cairo face economic, social and cultural constraints that hinder their integration and ultimately their ability to generate income. As a result, the amount of money they are able to send home is not likely to be large enough to lift their families out of poverty or contribute to the development of their home towns in Upper Egypt.

In their studies on remittances in drylands in the Syrian Arab Republic, Abdelali-Martini and Hamza (2012, 2016) note that the size of remittances is influenced by individual determinants such as age, education, sex and land ownership. For example, contrary to the conventional belief that those with higher education work in higher paying jobs and thus remit more, the authors observed that migrants with lower education levels sent higher remittances. This was because, among their sample, educated rural migrants tended to move internally to work in non-agriculture sectors whereas migrants with little education tended to migrate internationally to neighbouring countries (Lebanon and Jordan) where they made more money working in activities that require no formal qualifications but specific skills such as painting and construction. Migrant rural women tended to find employment in low-paying manual agricultural jobs and thus had lower remittances. It was also observed that migrants from households that owned land were more likely to invest remittances in improving their agricultural assets and that rural households receiving remittances have higher efficiency and productivity of natural resources due to additional inputs and better management practices. While these findings cannot be generalized, they show that specific contexts and characteristics of migrants will influence remittance flows.

Interestingly, while remittances can help improve standards of living for rural households, they can also contribute to rural outmigration. In Morocco, international migrant households have contributed to the growth of cities due to urban-oriented consumption and investments of remittances (De Haas, 2005). Indeed, households with members who migrated internationally are, in turn, migrating internally because they are better off, thanks to the remittances, and can now afford to move from their area of origin to urban centres. Similar observations have been made in Egypt, where people are migrating directly from rural areas internationally and facilitating internal migration among their families to secondary cities through the remittances they send (Zohry, 2002).



Emergency support to crop and livestock production and strengthening the Whole of Syria Food Security and Agriculture sector coordination.

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The impact of remittances on rural development is not always unequivocally positive. Remittances can create disparities and inequalities between recipient and non-recipient households. As the poorest share of a community is not typically the one migrating, this further accentuates existing patterns of inequalities (Acosta *et al.*, 2008). In addition, case studies in rural Morocco have shown how remittances can form a disincentive to engage in productive activities, resulting in remittance dependency. This happens when recipients decide to live off remittances instead of pursuing employment or farm work (De Haas, 2005).

In several countries of the NENA region, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of remittances and the need to reduce obstacles to their transfer and investment. This is particularly true in Morocco and Tunisia where important efforts are made to facilitate investments (including simplifying regulations, reducing taxes and promoting safer channels to send money) and to restore the confidence of migrants in their state (De Haas, 2005; Bilgili and Weyel, 2009). The transaction costs involved in sending remittances from abroad is a concern for migrants remitting money to rural areas (Ellis, 2003; IFAD, 2017). The availability of financial services including banks, money transfer companies and ICT solutions has improved over the last decade, but there is still relatively lower access to these services in rural and remote areas. In some cases, money is carried back by migrants themselves or sent through trusted friends and relatives. Sudanese migrant workers in Libya remit money and/or goods back to their families using the hawala system. This system is based on a network of hawaladar, or local financial intermediaries. It is available to those who want to send remittances to people living in the main towns in Darfur (Young, Osman, Dale, 2007). Improved channels for remittances, for example via post offices, could ideally reduce the cost, delays and risks of sending money within a country.

In addition to improved sending channels, there is the need to improve data on rural remittances in order to foster effective management of remittances and realize potential gains in rural and agricultural development. This will depend on strengthening the capacities of public authorities



Emergency Assistance (Agriculture and Livestock) to vulnerable households in Darfur and support to the sustainable reintegration of returnees in the war-affected areas of South Sudan

©FAO/Jose Cendon

to implement standardised measurement and reporting protocols for remittance flows. Sharing best practices in data collection, particularly methods to measure internal and informal flows which are difficult to track, and the developing strategic national remittance plans can help achieve this.

Engaging diaspora communities

Returns of migration do not only take the form of financial remittances but can also take the form of skills transfers or social remittances. Social remittances are the ideas and behaviours that migrants transmit from the host community to the community of origin. In the case of rural to urban migration, this is often described as the transposition of urban behaviour to the rural areas, which can impact, for instance, gender relations in local communities. Diaspora engagement can help reduce the negative impacts of “brain drain” or the loss of skills and talent due to migration. Brain drain can take place internally as rural regions of outmigration lose human capital, as well as internationally.

In countries with large communities living abroad, such as Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt, the diaspora can become powerful actors of development. Specific programs targeting rural and agricultural development, involving the diaspora, are interesting paths for development projects. Diasporas can contribute to building - or rebuilding after a crisis or conflict - the economy in their countries of origin through remittances, skills transfer, direct investments such as diaspora entrepreneurship, heritage tourism and nostalgia trade, philanthropy, volunteerism and advocacy. A recent World Bank survey of diaspora members from the region showed that 85 percent of respondents considered giving back to their country of origin to be a priority. About 68 percent were willing to invest capital and trade with their country of origin, while 87 percent were willing to provide mentoring for individuals from their country (Malouche *et al.*, 2016). In the complex political context of the NENA region and after the Arab Spring, establishing trusting relations with the diaspora is a prerequisite to fully mobilize their skills and assets for the development of their countries and communities of origin (IOM, LAS, 2012).

It is important to map the diaspora and establish programmes to enable diaspora members to connect with people in their countries and communities of origin. For example, Tunisia created the Ministry of Development of Information Technologies in 2012 and developed a five-year national digital strategy to allow for better connectivity with partners abroad and especially with the Tunisian diaspora. Since the revolution, Tunisia has worked in the direction of building and reinforcing ties with their diaspora through various initiatives. The demands of Tunisians abroad for rights to participate in politics at high levels (the right to become representatives in the Assembly; the right for a Tunisian with dual-nationality citizenship to become President) were ratified in January 2014 (Pouessel, 2014).

Facilitating mobility

Migration can be an important livelihood strategy to improve the resilience and standards of living for rural communities of origin. Many agricultural workers commute daily to towns and villages close to where they live to earn additional income. Paid jobs in enterprises, petty trade and services, handicraft, construction and public works, fishing or even the informal sector enable agricultural families to earn “external” revenue that ensures the survival of many rural households or allows them to acquire farm equipment.

While there is a lack of data about return migration, one study used panel data from nationally representative labour-market surveys in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia to examine the effect of return migration on individuals and their households. It was found that, in general, “returning migrants bring new skills and capital allowing them to obtain better occupations or self-employment. This affects not only migrants’ short-term welfare, but particularly their lifelong occupational and social mobility” (Hlasny and Al Azzawi, 2018).

Thus, while it is important to reduce the adverse drivers of rural migration, facilitating mobility and ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration for those who chose or are forced to leave is also key to maximizing the benefits of migration. This is specifically addressed by SDG 10.7 which calls for the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.



Biological poultry farming (not yet certified), including egg production and incubation.

©Nikos Economopoulos/Magnum Phot



Syrians at the Boynuyogun Red Crescent refugee camp in the Altinozu district of Hatay, on the Turkish border.

©FAO/Giuseppe Carotenuto

Vital to this is ensuring the protection of migrant worker rights, including employment that meets decent work standards. Migrant workers, including those originally from rural areas and those working in the agriculture sector of host countries, are vulnerable to a range of abuses, discrimination, hazardous work, exploitation and even violence. In line with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, decent working and living conditions can ensure that the economic opportunities offered by labour mobility are reaped while the human cost is kept at a minimum.

Programs to inform potential migrants about the risks of unsafe migration can enable them to make more informed decisions on where and how to migrate. Providing safer and more efficient means of transport to, from and between rural areas needs to be a priority for governments in the region. Poor transportation infrastructure in rural areas hinders transfer of skills, income and ideas. Finally, social protection can constitute an obstacle to mobility when its access is dependent on the location. Portable social protection systems, however, can facilitate migration and mobility across sectors, geographies and countries (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003).

Conclusions and recommendations



A Palestinian farmer woman and FAO Project beneficiary tending sheep inside a shelter built for them.

©FAO/Marco Longari

This report has underlined the main features and characteristics as well as key concerns of rural migration in the NENA region. The combination of conflicts, environmental risks and agriculture challenges in the region have significantly shaped rural migration trends. In this context, mobility is in many cases a strategy of resilience, adaptation and development. With a majority of migrants being young men, there are also important gender and age-related vulnerabilities that must be recognized and addressed.

The debate on migration at the governmental level focuses too often on whether migration should be encouraged or not. Migration is inherent to the process of structural transformation and part of the development process. However, it should be an informed and voluntary choice, not an act of desperation.

Forced migration is a critical concern for the NENA region. Ongoing conflicts in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, the Sudan and Palestine have led to a refugee crisis in the region. Refugees and IDPs in rural areas require special assistance along with their host communities, many of which were already suffering from weak public services, infrastructure and economic performance.

Ultimately, the impact of migration on rural development and food security will depend on the ability to establish strong mechanisms for migration management and governance, including better use of remittances, engagement of the diaspora and facilitation of mobility. NENA governments have a role to play in reducing the adverse drivers of migration and ensuring that migration movements contribute to reducing rural poverty, food insecurity and rural–urban inequalities. This requires an integrated multi-sectoral approach that recognizes that the biggest drivers of migration in the region are in fact closely interlinked and do not exist in isolation. Rural migration should be addressed within a broad-based development framework grounded in the SDGs and the imperative of leaving no one behind.

The following recommendations highlight the most important policy and programmatic responses needed to sustainably manage rural migration in the NENA region.

Improved migration governance

» **Supporting initiatives for the improved coherence and consistency of statistical data, analytical tools and evidence base regarding rural migration**

Existing data on internal migration often does not illustrate the magnitude, drivers, and processes accurately. Indeed, several countries in the region are lacking effective data collection mechanisms which would enable them to accurately assess internal migration phenomena. Some data is available through censuses, but most of the information relies on case studies. Only a limited number of countries have developed specific surveys on migrant households and on the measurement of remittances. Specialized research projects on internal migration are necessary to fill data gaps on internal migration, including from rural areas and circular/seasonal migration. These should include essential disaggregated data on migrants' characteristics (age, gender, rural or urban location, occupations and skills, working conditions and wages, and social protection.) Detailed aspects of the drivers of migration should be examined, including the linkages between environmental forces and climate change, conflict and migration. Improved evidence on the impacts of migration and

on the extent of international and national remittances and their use is also needed. It is important to strengthen coherence and consistency of data collection and analysis tools among the countries in the NENA region to allow for comparison and better planning of migration interventions at the regional level.

» **Advocating for better integration of rural migration into national development strategies**

The capacities of governments and relevant stakeholders to systematically integrate the migration dimension into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of rural development strategies and sectoral policies and programs should be enhanced. Coherence between migration governance and policies on agriculture and rural development, food security and nutrition, natural resource management, employment and disaster risk reduction, among others, is essential to addressing the drivers of rural migration and enhancing its potential, especially in terms of food security and poverty reduction. Greater policy coherence demands multi-stakeholder engagement at national, regional and local levels, including ministries of agriculture and rural development, environment, youth, social protection, labour and planning, as well as farmers' groups, various relevant civil society groups, and private sector actors, among others.

Rural transformation

» **Adopting multi-sectoral territorial development approaches**

Rural–urban inequalities are interconnected and together shape rural migration patterns. Policies and development plans should adopt a territorial approach that ensures that populations in rural and urban areas alike benefit from socio-economic development across different sectors. This entails improving the provision of public services, including primary education, social protection and infrastructure in rural areas as well as fostering rural-urban connectivity and more integrated food systems. Adopting a territorial approach requires stronger linkages between rural and urban areas across key areas of development planning, including infrastructure investment, land-use planning, urban design and public and private procurement policies to reduce the adverse drivers of migration in rural areas.

» **Creating jobs in rural areas to mitigate outmigration and promote sustainable migration**

Lack of employment is one of the main drivers of migration, especially for rural youth. Creating and improving livelihood opportunities in the areas of origin will require agricultural transformation, greater investments in agribusiness and value chains and the support of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This in turn depends on policies and incentives that encourage private sector engagement, innovation and technology adoption, paired with special support to women and youth to access rural value chains. Incubation, credit facilities and entrepreneurship training are all important tools for inclusive and sustainable growth.

» **Improving job quality and the implementation of labour standards in rural areas**

It is insufficient to increase the quantity of jobs without also ensuring a qualitative improvement in the conditions of employment. The agriculture sector has been fraught with decent work deficits, and labour laws are not in place or not enforceable in rural areas. NENA governments should make significant progress in rural areas in the application of labour

laws that govern remuneration, working hours, health and safety standards, child labour, discrimination and freedom of association. The protection of labour rights must also extend to migrant labourers who are especially vulnerable to decent work deficits.

» **Encouraging training and extension to improve agricultural productivity**

The modernization of agriculture requires training in new agricultural techniques, processing and marketing of products. However, access to education and training is often low in rural areas and the public sector does not invest sufficiently in the development of new agricultural technologies. This impedes the improvement of agricultural productivity. Knowledge is therefore a key component to improving rural livelihoods, and it is particularly important for smallholders and landless farmers who cannot make a livelihood from farming.



Production of organic honey in Djerba by a Societe Mutuelle de Services Agricoles (type of cooperative) composed by rural women.

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Forced migration and returnees

» Enhancing the integration of refugees and IDPs in rural host communities and the provision of food security and livelihood support

Supporting food security and nutrition during crises and in post-crisis contexts for the benefit of IDPs, refugees, host communities and those left behind, in a conflict-sensitive manner, can contribute to conflict prevention and stability, including by helping to mitigate pressures on host communities. Large movements of people, compounded with pre-existing fragilities, may intensify conflict stressors, for example around natural resource access and use. The socio-economic changes brought about by migrant inflows could also have an impact on the social cohesion of host communities. Migrants can contribute to the building of infrastructure; they can bring new skills and knowledge and participate in the development of the agriculture sector. Encouraging host communities to reinforce infrastructure and services to absorb new influx of population can improve social cohesion and mitigate risk of tensions.

» Rehabilitating damaged infrastructure, communal assets and equipment in rural areas to restore rural livelihoods and income-generating activities in protracted crises and in post-crisis contexts

For people to be able to return, interventions should be implemented to address the needs of the returning population. The rehabilitation of basic infrastructure, the provision of production inputs and the management of natural resources (land, soil and water) are essential to restarting agricultural production in places that have suffered severe degradation.

» Foster inclusive and participatory governance of natural resources in order to mitigate pressure and potential conflict

Reducing competition or grievances related to resource use may increase social cohesion and alleviate tension between migrants and host communities, thereby contributing to sustaining peace.



Biological poultry farming (not yet certified), including egg production and incubation.
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Climate change response

» **Developing an empirically grounded approach to environmental migration**

Research should focus on identifying and mapping migration and climate change hotspots in the NENA region, monitoring changing conditions and understanding the environment-migration nexus. Multi-level analysis which allows for the monitoring of migration trends over longer periods of time is an effective tool for research analysis. Current studies of environmental migration are usually snapshots that fail to capture long-term migration dynamics, especially in the context of slow-onset climate events. Holistic approaches are needed to disentangle the complex linkages between migration and environmental change in the NENA region and to investigate the potential of migration for climate change adaptation.

» **Enhancing resilience and adaptive capacity in rural areas vulnerable to climate change**

The migration patterns created by rapid or slow-onset events require different responses at institutional and policy levels. Resilience and adaptive capacity depend largely on the capacity of governments to support populations living in climate hotspots through investment in adapted agricultural technologies and in non-agricultural industries (Hugo, 2011; Warner, 2009; Pigué *et al.*, 2010). Enforcing climate change policies is also decisive for future impacts of climate change on human displacement. Climate change adaptation plans should integrate the migration dimension and foster the potential of migration for resilience building in areas of origin. This can take place through the investment of remittances in climate-resilient livelihoods or diaspora engagement and transfer of skills and knowledge in sustainable development practices such as water management and sustainable technologies.

Gender dynamics

» **Addressing gender-differentiated vulnerabilities**

Migration is a gendered phenomenon requiring responses that consider the different needs and capacities of women and men. For example, labour saving technologies for rural women left behind can help reduce their workload and prevent negative coping mechanisms. The elimination of violence against women migrant agricultural workers is another critical priority for lawmakers, requiring public awareness and stronger legal redress mechanisms.

Youth engagement

» **Encouraging the social and political integration of rural youth**

In addition to the creation of employment opportunities for youth, young people in rural areas also need to be recognized as stakeholders in their communities and need platforms where their voices can be heard on issues that directly concern them. The social factors and constraints pushing young people out of their areas of origin can also be addressed by including them in community debates and decisions.

Improved access to social protection

» **Expanding social protection to cover migrants and their families in sending areas, as well as refugees and IDPs**

Appropriate and adapted social protection mechanisms in both sending and receiving areas is an efficient instrument to mitigate outmigration and to ensure healthy migration and accompanying measures for migrants. Social protection programs can support adaptation to agricultural challenges and climate change, urbanization and food security. Shock responsive social protection tools for refugees and IDPs are also very important in the context of protracted conflict in the NENA region which will likely continue to displace people in the future. Displaced people are at high risk of food insecurity and require particular attention and assistance.

» **Moving toward portable social protection**

It will take time for NENA countries to establish portable social protection mechanisms, but steps must be taken to foster understanding of the importance and implementation modalities of these schemes, both within countries and across borders. In particular, strengthening regional coordination is critical to addressing shared challenges in establishing portability and to developing joint solutions that can enable migrants and their families to access social protection in areas of destination.

Harnessing the positive impacts of migration

» **Facilitating transfer of rural remittances and their productive investment**

Governments are responsible for putting in place the legislative and legal frameworks needed to facilitate investment. Improved channels for internal remittances, via post offices for example, could ideally reduce the cost, delays and risks of sending money within a country.

» **Involving diaspora communities in agriculture and rural development**

Diasporas are powerful actors of development. Diasporas can contribute to build (or rebuild after a crisis or conflict) the economy in countries of origin through: remittances, skills transfer, direct investments such as diaspora entrepreneurship, heritage tourism and nostalgia trade, philanthropy, volunteerism and advocacy. Migrants also bring skills and social remittances to their destinations. The potential in terms of skills transfer can benefit both sending and receiving areas. However, several barriers limit the impact that diaspora and migrant associations can have on the development of countries of origin. Trusted relationships and information channels must be established to motivate the diaspora to become involved in regional and inter-regional development and to inform diaspora organizations about local needs and priorities. The involvement of the diaspora must also be stimulated by the creation of an institutionalized mode of political participation through which the diaspora could express its link to the homeland.

» **Facilitating mobility through safe and regular channels**

Providing safer and more efficient means of transport to, from and between rural areas needs to be a priority for governments in the region. Not only is better transportation infrastructure necessary for the flow of people and the transfer of skills, income and ideas, it can also attract investment to remote rural areas. Another way to ensure safe and orderly migration is to implement programs that advise potential migrants of travel risks, legal processes, places of destination and other important aspects that can help them make informed decisions.



A young girl feeding goats.
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Annex 1:

Select migration data

	Migrant stock by destination, 2017	Migrant stock by origin, 2017	Refugees by destination, 2016	Refugees by origin, 2016	Personal remittances paid (Current USD), 2016	Personal remittances received (Current USD), 2016	Personal remittances, received (% of GDP), 2017
Algeria	248 624	1 792 712	94 220	3 726	58 970 228	277 355 529	1.2
Bahrain	722 649	57 749	270	462	2 391 489 362		
Egypt	478 310	3 412 957	213 500	19 796	352 200 000	18 699 300 000	9.6
Iran	2 699 155	1 170 491	979 435	93 760		1 330 000 000	0.3
Iraq	366 568	1 679 040	261 882	307 986	349 600 000	986 400 000	0.5
Jordan	3 233 553	744 582	2 860 669	1 933	570 000 000	4 374 647 887	11.1
Kuwait	3 123 431	207 920	930	1 021	15 287 570 250	3 992 523	0.0
Lebanon	1 939 212	822 300	1 476 618	4 740	4 170 870 500	7 605 729 645	15.3
Libya	788 419	158 795	9 301	8 836	755 800 000		
Mauritania	168 438	120 433	74 117	36 266			1.5
Morocco	95 835	2 898 721	4 737	2 262	123 873 865	7 087 744 186	6.3
Oman	2 073 292	20 688	316	38	10 278 283 485	39 011 704	0.1
Qatar	1 721 392	24 025	176	29	11 981 868 132	378 571 429	0.4
Saudi Arabia	12 185 284	278 912	136	936	37 843 205 333	307 521 867	0.0

Sudan	735 821	1 951 705	421 454	646 036	112 042 591	153 411 466	0.2
Syria	1 013 818	6 864 445	562 811	5 500 448		1 622 538 750	
Tunisia	57 663	767 155	636	1 700	27 420 431	1 821 247 343	4.7
UAE	8,312,524	143,150	888	112			
WBGS	253 735	3 803 893	2 158 274	97 796	31 892 283	2 095 486 752	14.8
Yemen	384 321	1 190 005	269 763	18 452		3 350 500 096	18.4
NENA Total	40 602 044	28 109 678	9 390 133	6 746 335	84 335 086 460	50 133 459 177	

Source: World Development Indicators and UNDESA Statistical Database



A view of the Arabic neighborhood of East Jerusalem called Shuafat refugee camp, in the distance.
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Back cover photograph

Palestinian farmers and FAO Project beneficiaries tending their backyard garden.

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