

SUCCESS STORY


Building dreams in Cairo: starting a small business over irregular migration






EU Trust Fund for Africa - North of Africa

T05.59 - Addressing unsafe mixed migration from Egypt



 **EUTF PARTNER:**
Save the Children.

 **COUNTRY:** EGYPT  **BUDGET:** EUR 1M  From **09/2017** to **06/2020**

Objective of the project

Children and youth at risk of unsafe mixed migration from Egypt benefit from increased access to safe economic and educational alternatives¹.

Key successes

- > 400 refugee youth have been provided with hands on support and mentoring.
- > 630 refugee youth have been supported to develop income-generating activities and local small businesses
- > 20 local institutions and small businesses have been provided with business skills.

The story of transforming lives

Amar, a young man from Sudan, left his homeland with nothing but a dream to reach Europe. He had heard that the journey was perilous, and the only way was through irregular means via Egypt. His lucky day came when he was invited to join the Save the Children programme supporting young refugees. Initially sceptical, Amar accepted, seeking a glimmer of hope. The project opened doors he could never have imagined. Thanks to workshops and mentoring, Amar discovered his strengths and potential. He had a natural talent for design, especially working with African fabrics. With newfound confidence, Amar decided to start his own business. *“He poured his heart into creating unique, vibrant designs that tell the story of his heritage”*, says his mentor. He started buying fabrics from his allowance savings and spent nights sewing every single piece of clothing himself. Slowly but surely, his business began to thrive. The colourful fabrics drew attention, and soon, Amar was running a successful small business.

Sara² is another refugee who came to Cairo from Sudan after many years of life in refugee camps in Sudan. Eager to start a new life, she joined the Save the Children program with determination. Persistence and hard work were the keys to her success, walking from home to training for two hours every day to save her allowance. Her dream is to one day have her own



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bakery. However, for now, helping others is so rewarding that she continues to work with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Cairo to help other refugees find their feet. *“There are so many impressive life stories that we see as community mentors, and we would be so happy if the donors and the public knew about them as a reward for the efforts made. This will create trust for future actions”*, says Sara.

Thanks to the EU Africa Trust Fund, Amar and Sara are now living better lives in Cairo, and their plans to migrate to Europe are in the past. Their journeys, marked by resilience and determination, took them from facing dangerous paths to becoming a successful entrepreneur and a community mentor. They realised that sometimes, the path we dream of is not the one we are destined to take. Instead of Europe, they found their future in Cairo.



How did the EUTF help?

Entrepreneurship training programme. This was a key support measure ensuring that youth who selected the entrepreneurship pathway were provided with essential business skills training as well as life skills such as decision-making, goal setting and communication. Participants learnt how to draft a full business plan and how to submit a budget for their respective projects. Besides the training, field visits were conducted to further assess business places and their suitability for establishing a micro-business.

Targeted coaching. Mini support groups of coaching in beauty and sewing sectors were developed aiming at encouraging collaboration between the young business owners as well as creating a supportive community for them after the project closure. The participants in the coaching groups had discussions about techniques they used and shared their knowledge. They discussed and engaged in partnerships to jointly access new markets.

Emotional support. Community mentors provided emotional support to young refugees from Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen and Syria, who needed help to learn life skills and overcome emotional traumas of leaving their families.

Keys to Success

Involvement of community mentors. The mentors share a similar cultural background and experiences with the refugees, allowing them to build trust and rapport more effectively. Their incredible life stories, transitioning from desperate situations to stable lives dedicated to assisting others, are truly inspiring. By fostering a sense of belonging and community, mentors help refugees develop resilience, confidence, and self-sufficiency.

Providing the right mix of support services. Transforming the mindset of refugees from seeking irregular migration to building a new life based on their potential is a challenging task. Increasing awareness about real risks, helping them discover their potential, and instilling belief in their strength to build a new life are the key ingredients of success shared by the community mentors. The use of videos and

testimonials from other refugees has proven to be the most persuasive tool in this endeavour.

Ensuring a favourable environment for refugees. The project created an equally supportive environment, including access to training, counselling, allowances, and support for employment and entrepreneurship to all youth refugees. This holistic approach was instrumental in helping these young refugees rebuild their lives with dignity and hope instead of taking the risks associated with irregular migration.

Building on Success

Prioritising community mentors as a valuable resource. Community mentors, particularly those who are former refugees, have proven to be highly effective due to their deep personal experience and commitment to serving their communities. Continuing to leverage the strength of community mentors is key to sustaining impact and long-term success.

Empowering mentees to follow their own paths. Ensure that mentees are supported in pursuing their own aspirations, such as starting a business, moving on to new opportunities, or connecting with other NGOs that work with refugees. This empowerment fosters independence and encourages them to take charge of their futures, aligning with their unique goals and needs.

Providing ongoing support. Maintain continuous support for newly arrived youth refugees in Egypt by offering allowances and opportunities to develop their potential through workshops and mentoring. This ongoing assistance is vital for helping them realize their dreams, whether by starting a business or uncovering hidden talents, ensuring lasting impact and integration into the community.



EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

1. The contract's objective was broadly defined to include goals such as increased community participation, cohesion, improved practices, and access to quality protection services. However, this document specifically focuses on the parts of the objective that pertain to children and youth.
2. Real name replaced with pseudonym to protect privacy.

Disclaimer

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