

# Warda's path to empowerment



## EU Trust Fund for Africa - North of Africa

### T05.61 Tackling root causes of irregular migration and supporting integrated communities in Upper Egypt



 **EUTF PARTNER:**  
Plan International UK

 **COUNTRY:** EGYPT  **BUDGET:** EUR 0.970 M  **From 01/2021 to 12/2024**

## The story of transforming lives

Warda, a young woman from Upper Egypt, faced a series of challenges that seemed insurmountable. Her husband worked as a daily labourer, and life was already difficult when he attempted to migrate irregularly to Libya. An accident left him with fractures in his pelvis and arm, and he returned home unable to work. The family's financial struggles deepened, and to make matters worse, Warda's brother remained imprisoned in Libya. As she put it, "*Gangs frequently harassed him, and they forced him to work for free*". For months, Warda felt trapped in a cycle of uncertainty and fear, watching her family struggle to survive.

Even in those hard moments, a small sign of hope emerged when Warda heard from her neighbours about the "Enterprise Your Life" sessions offered through Plan International as part of a project funded by the European Union. The training provided guidance on starting small businesses, from identifying an idea and researching the market, to developing feasibility studies and creating a detailed budget. "*Everyone praised the desserts I made for neighbours*", she explains, recalling the moment she realized that her passion for baking could become the foundation of a small business. With determination, she enrolled in the sessions, learned the fundamentals of project management, and began to envision a new life for her family.

## Objective of the project

Opportunities for youth to earn their livelihoods are created to counter irregular migration.

## Key successes

- 1091 young women and men assisted to develop income-generating activities.
- 70 young women and men who received job placement.
- 291 seed funds disbursed.



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After completing the training and preparing a business plan, Warda received a cash grant that allowed her to purchase a refrigerator and other essential equipment for a small dessert shop. To ensure the sustainability of her business, Warda began offering made-to-order desserts for special occasions such as birthdays and weddings, while also diversifying her products to include items like soda water, local butter, and other refrigerated goods.

The business has steadily improved the family's financial situation, giving them hope and a sense of security. "*I hope my project grows more and more, and expands with branches for the shop. I also wish for my daughters to receive a good education*" she says.



With improved financial stability, her husband was able to legally travel to Libya for work after the family's attitudes towards irregular migration changed due to their participation in the "Tackling Irregular Migration" project. Warda now manages the shop with support from family members. Her continued commitment and entrepreneurial spirit reflect the lasting impact of the initiative.

## How did the EUTF help?

**Entrepreneurship and skills development.** In Upper Egypt, the EUTF project gave young people and community members access to business training that was practical and easy to apply. Through the Enterprise Your Life sessions, participants learned how to spot market opportunities, prepare budgets, and turn ideas into business plans. For Warda, this meant realising that her desserts could become the basis of a small business.

**Start-up support.** After the training, participants with solid business plans received small grants to buy the equipment and materials they needed to get started. For Warda, this was the refrigerator and tools that made her dessert shop possible. This start-up support created immediate opportunities for people to earn their own income.

**Guidance and follow-up.** Beyond training and grants, participants were not left on their own. They received coaching, mentoring, and opportunities to showcase products at local fairs. This guidance helped new businesses overcome early challenges and gave participants encouragement to keep going.

## Keys to Success

**Community motivation.** Many young people and families joined the project because they wanted a better future at home and safer alternatives to irregular migration. This motivation kept them engaged through training sessions and the effort of preparing business plans.

**Training plus finance.** The combination of business skills and small grants proved crucial. Training gave participants the knowledge, while the grants gave them the means to act. Together, they created a practical pathway to self-employment.

**Ongoing support.** Regular mentoring and follow-up visits gave new entrepreneurs the confidence to sustain their projects. This continuity not only helped individual businesses survive but also created a sense of shared success in the communities involved.

## Building on Success

**Safer alternatives.** While not everyone changed their plans, many families now see that there are real options at home. Skills training and new business opportunities showed young people that education, local jobs, and entrepreneurship can be a path forward, reducing the appeal of irregular migration.

**Women's empowerment.** Supporting women-led businesses has had ripple effects. Women like Warda have become role models in their communities, showing that women can run successful businesses and contribute to family income. Her story inspired other women to ask about the training and grants, encouraging wider participation and shifting perceptions about women entrepreneurs.

**Community structures.** The project also invested in lasting structures such as career centres and partnerships with local organisations. These centres now act as entry points where young people and women can continue to receive guidance, training, and support for employment and entrepreneurship.



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