



Migration Profile

EGYPT

A. Executive Summary

Egypt was one of the main civilisations of the ancient Middle East and the site of one of the world's earliest urban and literate societies. Egypt is the most densely populated area in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regionⁱ. Due to its centrality within MENA, Egypt is a country of origin, destination, and transit for migrants, and has been hosting refugees coming mostly from Syria and South Sudan. As a transit country, it is considered a preferred route by many North Africans going via the Mediterranean to Europe.

Egypt has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.707, and it is ranked at 116 out of 189 countriesⁱⁱ. Agriculture is the biggest income source, providing 11.3% of the Gross Domestic Product and 28% of all jobs available in the country, as well as over 55% of employment in Upper Egyptⁱⁱⁱ. Even though the unemployment rate dropped from 9.6% during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic to 7.3% in 2021, labour force participation and employment rates remain below potential at 41.9% and 39% of the working population^{iv}. Due to limited education and economic opportunity, 30% of people in Egypt are living below the poverty line^v. Regarding gender equality, Egypt is ranked 129 out of 153 countries on the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index. In 2019, young people not involved in education, employment, or training (NEET) were about 27.2%^{vi}. The NEET rate disproportionately affects women, particularly rural women (39.7% compared to 19.4% men)^{vii}. Overall, 5.2% of the population experience multidimensional forms of poverty^{viii}.

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

Egypt was one of the main civilisations of the ancient Middle East and was the site of one of the world's earliest urban and literate societies. Located in the northern and eastern hemispheres, Egypt is bordered by Sudan to the south, Libya to the west, while Israel and the Gaza strip lie in the northeast. To the north, Egypt has a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea, while to the east it is bordered by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. It has a total surface area of 1,001,450 sq km and a population of over 100 million people. Arabic is the official language, and English and French are widely understood by educated and professional people^{ix}. Egyptian is the main ethnic group (99.7%), and others are only 0.3% of the whole population^x. Egypt is a Muslim country. The religious demographics are as follows: Muslim are

predominantly Sunni (90%), while the Christian majority is Coptic orthodox, and other Christians include Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, Maronite, Orthodox, and Anglican (10%)^{xi}.

II. International and Internal Migrants

By 2019, Egypt had over 100 million people, with 57% of the population living in rural areas. At 8% compared to a world average of 15%, Egypt is considered one of the countries with the lowest internal migration rate in the world^{xii}. Egyptian urbanisation, which is one of the main drivers of internal migration, in 2018 stood at 43% in 2018, which was the lowest urbanisation rate among other neighbouring North African countries including Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco at 70%^{xiii}. Not only rural-urban migration has remained very low, but over time it has witnessed a decline. For example, in the 1998–2006 period this phenomenon stood at 2.6%, in 2006–2012 at 1.7%, and in 2012–2018 at 1.2%^{xiv}. Urban-rural migration also experienced a steady decline during the same periods, from 2.4% to 1.3%, and reaching finally 0.9%^{xv}. Though a quarter of the population in Egypt lives in Cairo, the capital city, Alexandria, Canal Cities, and Rural Upper Egypt experienced a 15% and 16% in-migration, and 7% and 24% out-migration respectively; however, in 2018 the patterns of internal mobility between regions were fairly stable^{xvi}.

There were approximately 544,000 international migrants in Egypt in 2020, and the 5 top countries of origin were the State of Palestine (135,932), Syria (125,673), Sudan (60,066), Somalia (20,501), and Iraq (20,042)^{xvii}.

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

Egypt is considered the largest migrant-sending country within MENA and the largest supplier of emigrant labour in the Middle East (oil-producing countries)^{xviii}. Egyptians are very mobile. In 2018, almost 9% of working age Egyptians had an international migration experience, and 11% of all Egyptian households had or still have a migrant member^{xix}. Second and third-generation Egyptians have created vibrant diaspora communities in Europe, North America, and Australia. In 2018, international migration in Egypt represented 2% of all individuals aged 15 to 59, while returnees were 7%.^{xx} Emigration in Egypt is male dominant (almost 98%). With a decline in oil prices and in the Libyan economy that attracted a lot of unskilled migrants from Egypt, the recent trend of international migrants seems to be involving more educated Egyptians. For example, despite the shortage of physicians in Egypt, with a physician-patient ratio of 1:12,285, almost 90% of physician students indicated their desire to leave the country upon completion of their studies^{xxi}. The top 5 destination countries for Egyptians include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, the United States of America, and Qatar^{xxii}.

IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and refugees, climate displaced people)

The strategic geographical location of Egypt makes it a key player in humanitarian crises within the MENA region. As such, the country has a long history of being both a transit and destination country for forcibly displaced persons and children on the move. In 2021, Egypt

hosted 265,393 refugees and asylum seekers from 63 different countries, with more than half of them arriving from Syria^{xxiii}. Egypt does not have an encampment policy, and most refugees and asylum seekers are located in urban areas of Greater Cairo and on the North Coast. More than half of them live in Greater Cairo (186,103), Alexandria (24,502), Sharkia (11,054), Domietta (8,957), and Monofiya (2,477)^{xxiv}. The top 5 countries of origin of refugees and asylum seekers are Syria (133,856), Sudan (50,759), South Sudan (20,245), Ethiopia (15,532), and Eritrea (13,947)^{xxv}.

Some of the challenges refugees and asylum seekers are faced with in Egypt include inadequate accommodation, linguistic barriers, harassment, and discrimination (especially refugees from Africa)^{xxvi}. A vulnerability assessment conducted by UNHCR before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic indicated that 8 out of 10 refugees in Egypt were unable to meet their basic needs^{xxvii}. These challenges have been compounded with the outbreak of Covid-19, as most refugees and asylum seekers have lost their source of livelihood.

The main causes of internal displacement in Egypt are natural disasters. For example, in March 2020 rains and floods triggered the displacement of 8,400 people, who were sheltered in 19 evacuation centres in Cairo, Giza, Beni Suef, and Faiyum^{xxviii}. Conflict and violence also contributed largely to internal displacement in Egypt, affecting in 2020 3,200 people as a result of the demolition of houses and attacks carried out by ISIL affiliate in North Sinai^{xxix}.

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

Egypt is a Tier 2 country and does not entirely meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, despite efforts to do so. The main key driver of human trafficking in Egypt is poverty. Egypt is also a transit route to Europe for irregular migrants coming from the Horn of Africa. In an attempt to supplement income, family members, including parents, husbands, and siblings force women, girls, and children into sex trafficking and begging in the streets of Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, and Europe^{xxx}. Child sex tourism occurs primarily in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor^{xxxi}. In some cases, family members rape women and girls to coerce them into prostitution. With the complicity of their parents and assistance from marriage brokers, some people from the Arabian Gulf, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates purchase Egyptian women and girls for “temporary” or “summer marriages” for commercial sex, sex trafficking, and forced labour^{xxxii}.

Foreign domestic workers from Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, and Sri Lanka are not covered under Egyptian labour law and are vulnerable to labour and sexual exploitation^{xxxiii}. Unaccompanied and irregular migrants from Africa en route to Europe are increasingly at risk of human trafficking in Egypt. In 2020, the government reported 519 potential trafficking victims (362 were Egyptian, 3 foreign nationals), of whom 123 were adults (81 men and 42 women), and 242 were children (148 boys and 94 girls)^{xxxiv}.

In November 2020 a special shelter was inaugurated in Cairo staffed with female psychologists, social workers, and doctors, that could accommodate up to 30 women and girls. However, foreign victims were prevented from accessing the place^{xxxv}.

VI. National Legal Framework

Several laws deal with migration-related issues in Egypt. For example, law No. 140 of 2019 amending law No. 89 of 1960 handles entry and residency permits of foreigners in Egypt, while law No. 26 of 1975 is related to Egyptian nationality^{xxxvi}. Law No. 73 of 2018 establishes “deposit residency” which grants foreigners who deposit a minimum of 7 million Egyptian pounds in local Egyptian banks a five-year residency permit and the opportunity to apply for Egyptian citizenship. Law No. 76 of 2016 amends law No. 231 of 1996 regarding Egyptians who intend to work abroad, and imposes fees on permits for highly skilled intended Egyptian emigrants. Egypt adopted law No. 82 of 2016 on combatting illegal migration and smuggling of migrants to complement law No. 64 of 2010 on combatting human trafficking. These laws are crafted to put an end to human trafficking, protecting the rights of victims, including their rights to livelihoods, humane treatment, mental and physical well-being.

Egypt is a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), whose central objective is to attain economic prosperity through regional integration by way of trade and the development of natural and human resources for mutual benefit for all people in the region.

Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 AU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugees Problems in Africa. Egypt is also a signatory to the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

VII. Main Actors

The State

Egypt has established a body of governmental entities in charge of migration-related concerns, and it includes the Ministry of State for Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates Affairs (MoSEEA) which is in charge of engaging with Egyptian expatriates.

The National Coordinating Committee for the Combating and Preventing of Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Person (NCCPIM TIP) is responsible for coordinating policies, plans, and programmes to combat and prevent illegal migration and trafficking. The Migration Data Analysis in CAPMAS enhances the acquisition of accurate migration data, the Migration Affairs Inter-Ministerial Committee ensures policy coherence and the effective implementation of the national strategy that will realise long term sustainable development gains for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and their host communities. The Migration Research Unit in Cairo University promotes knowledge on migration, mobility, human development, and policies.

At the request and on behalf of the Egyptian government, UNHCR conducts asylum activities in the country, including reception, registration, documentation, and refugee status determination^{xxxvii}.

International Organisations

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) are the key international agencies dealing with migration-related issues in Egypt. UNHCR and IOM, in partnership with other stakeholders, deliver multi-sector assistance to refugees.

UNHCR ensures that asylum seekers can apply for and gain access to protection, health, and educational services, raising awareness and advocating for the rights of refugees.

IOM is involved in several areas related to migration, including labour mobility and human development, counter-trafficking, migration governance, return and reintegration, resettlement to a third country, immigration, and border management.

The World Food Programme (WFP) provides food assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. Save the Children offers quality education, improving maternal, neonatal, infant, and school children's health and nutrition. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in partnership with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, seeks to provide inclusive social protection for refugees and asylum seekers.

NGOs and Other Organisation

The Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights (EFRR) is a non-governmental organisation that provides legal assistance to refugees and migrants, who are in detention or are victims of crime through legal representation, legal advice, and the provision of legal documents.

St Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) is a locally-based NGO offering information, counseling, referral, representation, and advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers. They are also involved in the UNHCR processes of refugee status determination, protection, and resettlement.

Refugee Egypt is an NGO that provides humanitarian assistance, spiritual guidance, encourages and motivates self-sufficiency amongst refugees, asylum seekers for repatriation, integration, or resettlement.

The Catholic Church

Despite being a predominantly Muslim country, the presence of the Catholic Church with its humanitarian organisations makes a difference in the lives of so many people living in Egypt, especially the most vulnerable.

Caritas provides counselling and medical services, vocational training, monthly subsistence allowance, and emergency grants to refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. For example, in an 18-month vocational training programme called "Learn and free yourself", participants are taught how to read and write. Additional skills on healthcare and hygiene are also provided^{xxxviii}. Caritas also runs 5 medical and social centres in Cairo including clinics, crèches, pre-schools, and vocational centres for women. One of the centres provides a mother and child protection service that includes a program to fight malnutrition^{xxxix}.

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Egypt empowers refugees and vulnerable community members, especially women, through different programmes. For example, CRS, through its Accelerated Learning Programme, gives basic English, Arabic, and maths classes for beginners and life orientation skills (stress management, time management, and budgeting)^{xi}. CRS also offers scholarships to refugees to continue their education at the tertiary level, and through this programme so many refugees have gained access to tertiary education in Egypt. Because of the often precarious situation of women, as a consequence of war, who often find themselves as the sole supporter of their families, CRS offers livelihood grants to women. The programme also provides training on legal issues, finances, and marketing that will help expand their businesses. Through this programme, many refugee women and vulnerable members of their host communities can own personal businesses and provide for their families.

In the academic and training *milieu*, the Salesian training and vocational centres, funded by the United States Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) in Cairo offer formation programmes by equipping refugees and Egyptians with the necessary skills for their employment or self-employment. In 2020, 629 individuals were registered for technical and vocational courses and 60 for the micro-enterprise part of the project^{xii}. Every year, the Don Bosco Salesian Church in Zaitoun provides exchange programmes between Sudanese and Egyptian youth, setting up recreational and educational activities involving 200 Sudanese and 220 Egyptians. The participants benefit from psychological counselling and sustainable livelihood opportunities. In 2020, the Salesian Missionaries executed several projects mostly benefiting migrants, refugees, and members of the host communities. One of these projects was “The Sunrise Project for Cairo’s Urban Refugees”, which provided vocational training, psychological support to refugees, hygiene and self-care support, nutrition, and medical support^{xiii}. By 2021, the Salesian Technical and Vocational Training Centre in Cairo had already supported at least 3,000 refugees coming from Syria and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as many vulnerable Egyptians^{xiiii}.

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D. Endnotes

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