

COVID-19's socio-economic impact on migrants and displaced populations – Perspectives from the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA)

A webinar series jointly organised by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Economic Research Forum (ERF)

Webinar dates: 8th to 11th November 2021

Background

The Middle East and North Africa region is witness to complex and diverse mobility patterns – including labour migration, forced displacement and large-scale mixed migration flows in the Gulf of Aden and in North Africa, often characterized by high numbers of irregular migrants. The Arab world alone hosts about 23 million skilled and semi-skilled labour migrants in various sectors including construction, maintenance, retail and domestic services.^[1] Concurrently, protracted crisis situations and conflict have resulted in an estimated 12.5 million people living in internal displacement^[2] and more than 8 million people living in cross border displacement.^[3] Displacement can result in reducing available resources and assets, increasing the risk of impoverishment, abuse, and exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities.

In different ways, migrants and displaced populations are highly vulnerable to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. A growing body of evidence outlines the ways that the socio-economic outcomes of mobile and displaced populations are negatively affected by the pandemic, including experiencing xenophobic attacks due to perceived links between migration and disease transmission, being unable to access health services or national social protection, being unable to send or receive remittances; being stranded in host country and experiencing increased violence as a result of lockdowns and restrictions on movement.

Against this backdrop, IOM's Regional Office for the MENA developed a research tool aiming to systematically study how and to what extent COVID-19 affects the socio-economic outcomes of migrants and displaced populations in the region. Building on the United Nations' (UN) framework for the socio-economic impact of COVID-19,^[4] IOM conducted several assessments to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on six key pillars, namely (1) Health services and systems during the crisis; (2) Access to social protection and basic services; (3) Economic response and recovery; (4) Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration; (5) Social cohesion and community resilience; and (6) Mobility.

Building on these assessments, IOM and ERF are jointly organising a webinar series aiming to showcase the work of other UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and academics throughout the MENA region. The aim of the webinar series is threefold:

- (1) Reflect upon methodological challenges when conducting research with mobile populations in times of COVID-19;

- (2) Take stock of existing data related to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on mobile populations in the region & advocate for future data collection initiatives on relevant topics;
- (3) Propose and discuss recommendations to improve future policy and programming for mobile populations in the region.

The webinar series will take place over 4 days from the 8th to the 11th November 2021, as detailed in the following paragraphs:

Agenda

November 8th 2021 – 4PM Cairo Time

Session 1 – Impact of COVID-19 on migrants and displaced populations’ health (8th November 2021) – Register [here!](#)

- 16:00-16:10** Welcoming remarks, Ibrahim Elbadawi (Economic Research Forum)
Welcoming remarks, Mayada Serageldin (IOM Regional Office MENA)
- 16:10-16:25** Migrants’ access to healthcare and opinions on COVID-19 vaccination in Libya and Sudan, Joris Jourdain (IOM Regional Office MENA)
- 16:25-16:35** Lead Commentator, Abdelhadi El Tahir (Senior Health, Reproductive Health, and Women’s Rights Expert)
- 16:35-16:55** Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis, Impact of COVID-19 on mobile and displaced populations Samuel Oketch (IOM Regional Office MENA) and Ali Ardan (World Health Organisation)
- 16:55-17:10** Lead commentator; Maia Sieverding (Assistant Professor of Public Health Practice at the American University of Beirut)
- 17:10-17:30** Open Discussion

November 9th 2021 – 4PM Cairo Time

Session 2 – Economic impact of COVID-19 on migrants and displaced populations (9th November 2021) – Register [here!](#)

- 16:00-16:05** Welcoming remarks (Joris Jourdain, IOM Regional Office MENA)
- 16:05-16:20** Impact of COVID-19 on business environment – Impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in Iraq, Ms Erin Neale and Mr Diego Martin (IOM Iraq)
- 16:20-16:25** Lead commentator, Chahir Zaki (Associate Professor of Economics and Director of the French section, Cairo University)
- 16:25-16:40** Migrant remittances during Armed Conflict and Pandemic in Libya, Asfand Waqar and Tassilo Teppert (IOM Libya)
- 16:40-16:45** Lead commentator; Georges Naufal (Associate Research Scientist, Public Policy Research Institute)
- 16:45-17:05** Compounding Misfortunes – Changes in Poverty since the onset of COVID-19 on Syria Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, Bilal Malaeb (World Bank) and Alexander Tyler (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
- 17:05-17:10** Lead commentator, Jad Chaaban (INSEAD and Paris-Dauphine PSL University)

17:10-17:30 Open Discussion

November 10th 2021 – 4PM Cairo Time

Session 3 - Social Protection for migrants and displaced populations in times of COVID-19 (10th November 2021) – Register [here!](#)

16:00-16:10 Welcoming remarks, Tanja Dedovic (Regional Thematic Specialist, Labour Migrant and Human Development, IOM Regional Office MENA)

16:10-16:25 Social Protection – An operational tool for the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus – Displacement contexts and beyond, Marius Olivier (Honorary Professor, Nelson Mandela University) and Gift Dafuleya (Lecturer at University of Venda).

16:25-16:35 Lead commentator; Caroline Krafft (Associate Professor of Economics, St. Catherine University)

16:35-16:55 Social Protection and COVID-19: Inclusive Responses for International Migrants and Forcibly Displaced Persons in the MENA region, Maya Hammad and Lucas Freschi Sato (International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth)

16:55-17:05 Lead commentator, Jackline Whaba (Professor of Economics, University of Southampton, UK)

17:05-17:30 Open Discussion

November 11th 2021 – 4PM Cairo Time

Session 4: Impact of COVID-19 on migrants and displaced populations' mobility dynamics from and to the MENA region (11th November 2021) – Register [here!](#)

16:00-16:10 Welcoming remarks from Ayman Zohry (American University of Cairo)

16:10-16:25 COVID-19 Restrictions and Smuggling of Migrants in North Africa: Findings and Policy Implications, Claire Healy (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Research Officer, Research and Trend Analysis Branch).

16:25-16:35 Lead Commentator, Mesbah Sharaf (Full Professor, Department of Economics, University of Alberta, Canada)

16.35-16.55: Mobility trends in the MENA region since the onset of the pandemic – Data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Points of Entry Analysis, Dr Raffaele Bertini (IOM Regional Office MENA)

16:55-17:05 Lead Commentator, Mohamed Ali Marouani (Associate Professor, Université Paris I-Panthéon-Sorbonne)

17:15-17:30 Open Discussion

17:30-17:45 Concluding remarks for the webinar series, Carmela Godeau (IOM Regional Director for the MENA region)

^[1] ILO, 'Labour Migration in the Arab States', 2017, https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/labour-migration/WCMS_514910/lang-en/index.htm.

^[2] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'GRID 2020: Global Report on Internal Displacement - Middle East and North Africa', 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/downloads/2020-IDMC-GRID-middle-east-north-africa.pdf>.

^[3] UNHCR, 'Regional Summaries - Middle East and North Africa', 2019, https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2019/pdf/Chapter_MENA.pdf.

^[4] UNDP, 'A UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19', 2020, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/UN-framework-for-the-immediate-socio-economic-response-to-COVID-19.pdf>.