

Managing the costs and benefits of transit migration

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Background on the research project

Transit migration and development

- Transit migration affects **local, national and regional development** economically, socially and politically
 - Impacts remain **insufficiently** understood and **taken into account in the development of** local and regional **migration and development policies**
- the World Bank, OECD, UNDP and MMC partnered for a research project on this topic, focusing on LMICs



Methodology

Key research questions

- How does transit migration affect – positively or negatively – **local economies and social cohesion**? How do different types of transit migration affect transit hubs differently?
- Who are **the main actors** that benefit from / are negatively affected by transit migration?
- What are the implications of transit migration for **municipalities** (e.g., budget, infrastructure, public services, security)? How do they respond?
- How **coordinated are national and local responses** to the transit phenomenon?
- How can governments **maximise the economic and social benefits** of transit migration, while **minimising the abuse and exploitation of migrants**, and tension with local citizens?
- How can **transit migration be better incorporated** into local, national, regional and global migration and development policy processes?
- What are the **research gaps** and options going forward?

Methodology

Secondary research

- Desk review
- Expert meeting
- Scoping paper

Primary research

- Qualitative interviews in:
 - Esquipulas (Guatemala)
 - Van (Türkiye)
 - Medenine and Zarzis (Tunisia)
 - Obock (Djibouti)
- Quantitative data: analysis of relevant 4Mi data available (not for all locations)



Findings

Trends in transit migration

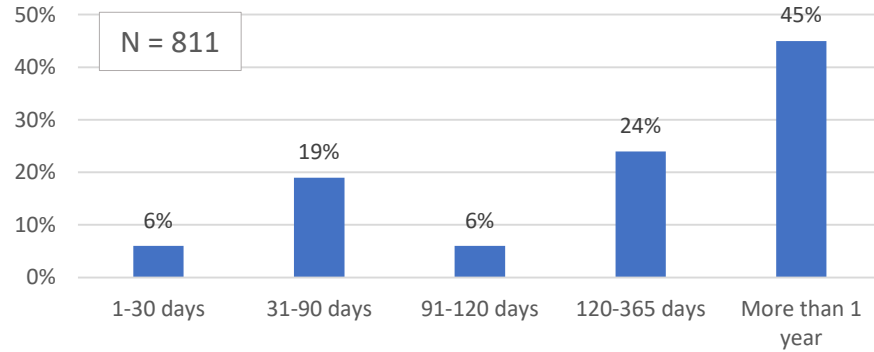
- Dynamics varied between locations, regarding:
 - **duration** of stay at the transit location
 - **visibility** of the transit flow
 - **profiles**
- Common feature: most migrants are in **irregular status** in the country of transit or at least enter irregularly
- Strong **gaps in official data** on transit migration trends and dynamics



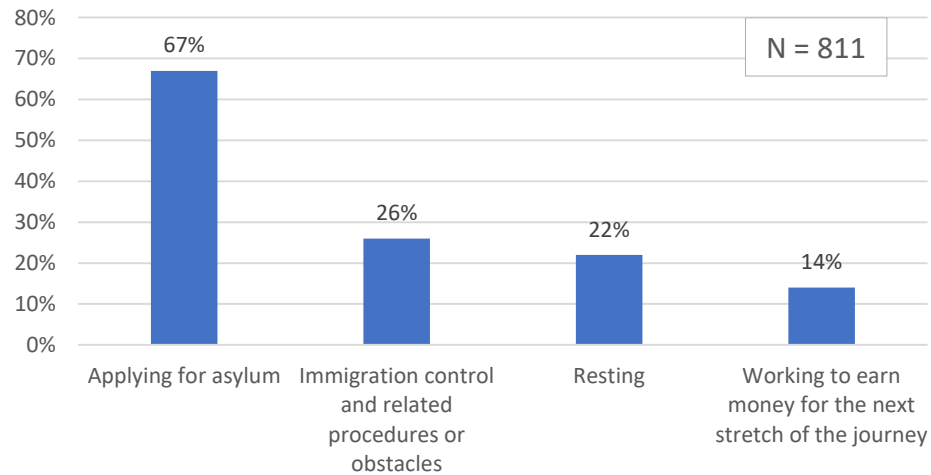
Findings

Trends in transit migration – 4Mi data from Medenine / Zarzis

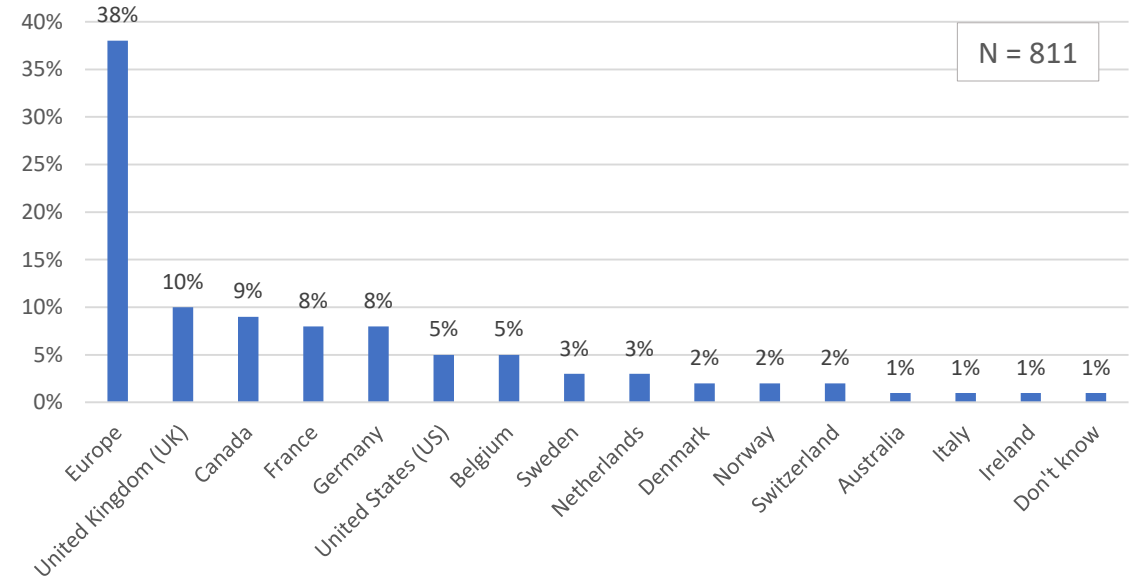
Duration of stay in Medenine / Zarzis from arrival until interview



Reason for stopping in Medenine / Zarzis



Preferred destination for 4Mi respondents in Medenine / Zarzis



Findings

Economic impacts

- **Some positive impact** on the local economy in most locations. **Exception:** the country with the most restrictive stance on migration
- The specific positive impacts **vary depending on the migration dynamics:** paying vs providing workforce
- **Facilitation of irregular movements as a source of livelihood** for the local community in all the fieldwork locations
- **Fears** among the local residents about an **increase in unemployment** or a **decrease in salaries**
- **Limited evidence** found regarding an additional **burden on public services**
- The positive economic impacts of transit migration often **do not translate into additional resources** for the local authorities:

Findings

Impact on security

- In most locations, **no concrete negative impact** of transit migration on security. Exception: clashes between ethnicities in Obock

HOWEVER many still mentioned a **vague sense of insecurity** connected to the unknown background of the migrants

- **Perceived threat** for local security: not transit migration per se, but **transnational networks** involved in the facilitation of irregular movements
- In one location, **contribution to police corruption**, in turn a security threat
- Insecurity caused by **operations aimed at countering the facilitation of irregular migration**

Findings

Perceptions among the local community

- Better perception of migrants who are **only in transit** compared to **those who decide to settle**
- **Generosity and solidarity** toward migrants in transit **often linked to** the local population's **own experience** of and connections with **emigration or displacement**
- **Instances of discrimination and rejection** were also mentioned, especially:
 - migrants who are perceived as more culturally distant
 - migrants accused of not respecting local customs

Findings

Response from the local authorities

- Local authorities **do not count with a formal migration department or unit, or with a local migration policy or a specific budget**

→ A proactive local migration response depends on **individual good will** by public officials

- **Lack of an adequate legal and policy framework on migration at the national level as a major obstacle** for adequate local response, as local policies are supposed to derive from national ones



Findings

Response from the national authorities

- **No specific legal or policy framework** for managing transit migration
- National authorities often limit their response to **border control and immigration enforcement**. Even this response is however perceived as partial and often jeopardized by corruption
- The **local perception** of the role of national authorities (or lack thereof) is **mostly negative**

Findings

Coordination between actors

- **Strong disconnection between national and local authorities** regarding migration response, and a **lack of involvement of local authorities in migration policy making** at the national level
- **Formal coordination mechanisms** between national and local authorities and between the authorities, civil society and UN agencies are either **lacking or ineffective**
- Rather than coordinating with civil society and UN agencies, **the authorities often delegate the response to transit migration** to these actors

Policy implications

- Data collection and analysis
 - Strong **need to improve data collection and analysis** on migration, especially transit migration, to be able to develop **evidence-based, well-informed policies**
- Economic development:
 - **Tension between the benefits** of the informal contribution of migrants and the migration “industry” to the local economy and the **losses connected to such informality** for local and national authorities
- Migration policy:
 - **Smuggling dynamics and immigration enforcement play a central role** in determining the impact of transit migration on local economies and societies
 - The **(limited) response** to transit migration seems to be **overwhelmingly focused on security**, border management and law enforcement → it **does not include a development perspective**. Vice versa, **local development plans do not adequately factor** in the role of transit migration



Policy implications

- Role of local authorities:
 - Despite being at the forefront of migration response, **local authorities have very limited human and financial resources, and usually no legal mandate** for migration response
- Coordination between different actors:
 - **Coordination mechanisms** mostly play the role of **mere platforms for information sharing**. Opportunities to make them a platform to develop comprehensive, harmonized and “development sensitive” migration responses are currently missed
 - Part of the **response** to transit migration is often **delegated to UN agencies and other actors** who should have a subsidiary rather than leading role in these areas. This **risk undermining the role of authorities**

THANK YOU



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