



IOM's global focus includes the protection of labour migrants and their families through the promotion of planned and managed mobility and economic alternatives to irregular migration.

In the West and Central Africa region, the organization and its member state partners are working to unlock the development potential of migration by fostering local and national authorities' understanding of the Migration and Development nexus, supporting relevant policy initiatives, advocating for the advantages of migration, and protecting and empowering migrants, especially youths, women, and vulnerable groups. IOM also encourages the entrepreneurial spirit of youth, by assisting the diaspora to transfer expertise knowledge and skills to local youths, especially in remote areas, and by working in the policy arena to build bridges between labour pools and markets.

Youth – Employment – Migration

Chronic unemployment, underemployment, and lack of professional opportunities are key challenges facing many youths across West and Central Africa. These have now become undeniable drivers of irregular migration. IOM has adopted the understanding that the promotion of local alternatives for employment can shift youth interest away from irregular migration. If given the right tools and training, many young people could benefit from an increased access to economic opportunities, satisfying livelihood needs in their communities of origin. This would inevitably reduce their vulnerability and increase origin communities' resilience to irregular migration and its causes.

Key Projects

IOM's projects in Niger, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Guinea are geared towards promoting entrepreneurship among youth at risk of migrating irregularly in search of work.

Niger

In Niger, the project “*Initiatives for the Enterprise Development*” (IDEE) provides integrated support to 40 microenterprises and 40 start-ups and gives 360 young laureates the opportunity to finalize bankable business plans. In addition, the IDEE sensitization campaign contributes to government efforts of changing youth mentality in regards to the private sector through the promotion of local employment and entrepreneurship opportunities as alternatives to migration.

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, the project “*Strengthening youth employability and entrepreneurship to reduce the risk of irregular migration in the central east region*” contributes to socio-economic development and aims to curb irregular migration to industrialized countries. It also aims to reduce poverty and unemployment, by setting up financial and technical mechanisms to strengthen the economy, employability and entrepreneurial skills of youth in the Central East region.

Guinea

The regional project “*Bridging together youth, diaspora and local authorities for an integrated approach to promote employment and address irregular migration*” implemented in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia, aims to promote alternatives to youth irregular migration by fostering youth agency and employment in communities of origin. It also facilitates diaspora engagement strategies to create job opportunities, promote skill transfer programs, and foster local development.



“Festival on Safe and Informed Migration” in Agadez, Niger. © IOM/Amanda Nero 2016

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

| PROJECT | KEY PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS |
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| <p>IDEE - Initiatives for Enterprise Development</p> <p>Niger</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Nigerians have access to more economic opportunities responding to their stakes, needs and realities, thus fighting against irregular migration; • Youth under 30 years old with new or existing enterprises can access capacity building and training in entrepreneurship; • 3 enterprise incubators have been created in Niamey, Zinder and Tahoua; • An information and awareness campaign was conducted on the dangers of irregular migration and alternatives to irregular migration. The campaign has affected around 360,000 people and indirectly impacted over 8,764 beneficiaries so far. |
| <p>“Strengthening youth employability and entrepreneurship to reduce the risk of irregular migration in the central east region”</p> <p>Burkina Faso</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until now, 750 youths have benefitted from business development and technical trainings to strengthen their capacities in business creation (i.e. setting up business plans) and the management of micro-companies; • Young people have access to information and are gaining skills needed to increase their employability in their communities of origin; • A study was conducted on niche markets of the region for youth investment orientation; • Youth interest in local work as an alternative to irregular migration is increasing; • So far, 375 project beneficiaries have gained access to credit for the implementation of IGAs; • Awareness campaigns on the dangers of irregular migration and alternatives to irregular migration are being conducted; • A network has been set up between youth and diaspora members. |
| <p>“Bridging together youth, diaspora and local authorities for an integrated approach to promote employment and address irregular migration”</p> <p>The Gambia, Guinea and Guinea Bissau</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe migration and alternatives to irregular migration of youth are being promoted by fostering youth agencies and employment opportunities in communities of origin; • Thus far, 12 M&D trainings and capacity building workshops, have equipped national and local authorities and CSO’s with knowledge and tools on how best to integrate migration into local development planning; • Youth in origin communities are being empowered to achieve their livelihood expectations and aspirations while promoting their access to viable jobs locally; • Diaspora engagement through skills transfer is contributing to youth empowerment and promoted local alternatives to irregular migration in countries of origin; • Vocational training and support for 600 youths is facilitating the implementation of 16 community based projects; • Until now, income generating activities have been created for 100 youths in Guinea and for 200 in Guinea Bissau, while microcredit support and private sector partnerships are being created for youths in The Gambia; • Diaspora mentorship programs are being created, fostering engagement with youth and diaspora members both online and face-to-face. |