

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Recognize migrants' agency:** Migrants from West and North Africa adopt flexible mobility-based strategies to contribute to their own and their communities' resilience and development. They also contribute to national development. They mostly move within their countries, regions and continent, and for job-, family- and study-related reasons. Migrants' contributions to development are receiving increasing policy recognition in their countries and regions of origin. This needs to be better recognized in policies of countries and regions of destination, as well as in policy dialogues between African and European countries.
- 2. Address inequalities in migration:** Migrants adapt their mobility-based strategies to changing policies, labour market opportunities, border controls and risks. However, their ability to do so and to contribute to economic, social and environmental resilience and to national development depends on their socioeconomic characteristics and migration status. Evidence on such inequalities needs to be improved, and corrective measures – such as more equal access to regular migration pathways – need to be mainstreamed in bilateral and multilateral agreements on migration.
- 3. Understand linkages between migrants' profiles and circumstances, and exposure to risks and their ability to cope with them:** Migrants' socioeconomic profiles and legal status influence their degree of vulnerability to risks in countries of transit and destination. Overall vulnerability to risks appears to have been exacerbated by increasingly selective migration policies adopted in Europe. Evidence on the relationship between migration, vulnerability and risks needs to be improved and used to inform effective protection and assistance programmes, as well as national and transnational policies.
- 4. Ensure the basic rights of migrants irrespective of their legal status:** Irregular entry or stay is frequent along the Central Mediterranean Route. Migrants in irregular situation breach the law of their transit or destination countries, but they are not criminals. Excessive penalization of irregular migration too often amounts to denying migrants their basic rights. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which the vast majority of States in North and West Africa have endorsed, is about rights that apply to all migrants, irrespective of their legal status. Implementing principles contained in the Global Compact should become a priority on policy agendas.
- 5. Recognize the complexity of migrant smuggling:** Migrants who do not have access to regular migration opportunities often employ smugglers to overcome migration barriers. By doing so, they may often expose themselves to abuse and exploitation. Meanwhile, smuggling can also be a long-standing livelihood strategy for communities in key countries of transit, and a service provided to migrants. Policies to counter

smuggling and irregular migration need to acknowledge this complexity to be ultimately effective and minimize adverse consequences on migrants and economically fragile communities in transit countries. In addition, migrant smuggling and human trafficking should not be conflated, and should be addressed differently.

6. **Deconstruct misconceptions and fears about African migration:** According to some polls in North and West Africa, close to one third of adults would have a desire to migrate permanently out of their countries. Hasty extrapolation seems to suggest that many tens of millions of people would migrate if they could. Such a conclusion serves only to fuel the fear of invasion in European media and political spheres. Facts, however, tell just the opposite: over a lifetime, a small share of individuals actually migrate, of which those destined for Europe are a minority. One has to conclude that intentions to migrate measured by polls are in no way predictors of acts or facts.
7. **Support policies informed by evidence and monitor their impact:** Evidence on migration trends within, between and from West and North Africa is improving, but is still insufficient. This hinders the adoption of comprehensive and effective policies and programmes. In addition, more evidence and data are needed on how national and transnational policies shape migration trends, the risks to which migrants are exposed, and their ability to contribute to transnational resilience and development. National and regional efforts to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of data are needed. Importantly, the perspectives of migrants and their home communities need to be regularly included in the production of evidence.
8. **Produce and analyse administrative data to inform opinions and governments:** The lack of reliable and accessible data on migration and migrants makes the way free for all kinds of misjudgements that are detrimental to sound governance and social cohesion. The mass of information public administrations in North and West Africa routinely collect must be processed in order to build statistical knowledge on migrant flows and stocks, and their economic and social dimensions at local and national levels.