

Economics Graduate Student Project II

Project Summary

Egypt has been home to a number of refugees from different nationalities, especially from Africa, for the past decades. Moreover, with the eruption of the Syrian crisis, a number of Syrian refugees are currently living in Egypt. This situation has been also shared with other countries in the MENA region. The project aims at studying the degree of economic integration of refugees into the economies of the hosting countries. A comparative study would highlight differences in the extent of economic integration and would, therefore, allow the study of the impact of this integration on the economies of the hosting countries. The methodology involved in this project is a situational analysis of the refugees in different countries in the MENA region.

Introduction

The issue of refugees and their impact on the labour markets of the hosting country has been a continuous topic of debate, especially in the MENA region, with the eruption of the Syrian crisis. Secondary desk review of literature and data has only been talking about the economic contribution of the refugees and specifically Syrian refugees to the labour markets of the hosting countries. The concern has always been on the competition with the natives over the available job opportunities. However, this project will provide a situation analysis of the level of economic activity of the refugees, Syrians and others, and would, therefore, inform on the degree of economic integration. This integration is what plays a role in understanding the effects of refugees (positive and negative) on the host countries' labour markets.

Problem Statement

This problem is the right problem to be addressed now due to the significant increase in the number of refugees around the world of different nationalities and the attention different countries have been giving to studying the level of integration of refugees. Moreover, the efforts of countries of the west have now been moving towards improving the livelihoods of refugees in their countries of transit (current hosting countries) as a strategy towards reducing the flows of irregular migration to their countries.

Background

The civil strife in Syria since 2011 has generated millions of refugees. Lebanon and Jordan are the main hosting countries to Syrian refugees, with Egypt hosting a couple of hundred thousand. In addition to Syrian refugees, Egypt has been hosting refugees from Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea among other African countries. Among these refugees are thousands of workers. This fresh supply of labour has necessarily affected the functioning of the labour markets of hosting countries. It is expected that demand for labour, the terms and conditions of employment have been affected by the growth in labour supply and the low wages and long hours of work accepted by refugee workers out of necessity.

Significance

The issue of integration of refugees is on the agenda of countries of different regions of the world, in terms of labour market integration, education, housing, healthcare, contact with the society and cultural orientations (including attitudes towards refugees). Although there is a growing sense of awareness on the need for refugee integration, there has been only little research to and evaluation of actual strategies to address this need for refugee integration.

Project Description

The main objective of this project is to map and analyze how selected Arab/ MENA countries have addressed the issue of refugee integration. It seeks to find out whether and how countries have adopted any specific measures or adjusted existing arrangements to serve the purpose of refugee integration. Also, distinguishing between different facets of (labour market, educational, socio- cultural, housing, health care) integration, it seeks to find out what approach seems most appropriate and most effective under specific circumstances.

Objective 1: To understand the composition and history of refugees in Egypt and other MENA countries

Objective 2: To understand the livelihoods of refugees in the host countries

Objective 3: To investigate the adoption of any specific measures or arrangements to serve the purpose of refugee integration

Objective 4: Assess the economic impact of refugees integration or lack thereof

The duration of the project is 12 months. The first 9 months will be for the graduate student to conduct the research work and the following 3 months will be for finalizing the thesis document.

The Advancement of Scientific Knowledge and Broader Impact

This project sets out to find examples of policy innovation in selected countries. We aim to find out what policy innovations have emerged and whether they have been effective or not in specific settings. This ‘comparative analysis’ of integration policies is important to understand what integration measures work best by analyzing the impact of this economic integration on the host countries’ economic outcomes at large and labour market outcomes in specific.

Many ‘best practices’ in specific cases do not turn out to be the best practices at all in other cases. Therefore, we will identify policy innovations. In other words, we will look at the effectiveness of economic integration policies and tools.

Biographical Sketches

Dr Abdel Fattah has graduated from The American University in Cairo in 2008 and completed her master and PhD at the University of Sussex, UK. Additionally, Dina is a migration consultant at the Egyptian Society for Migration Studies. Her current research interests are in labor economics and migration studies. In this respect, she has been working for almost a decade on migration research from an economic perspective. She has been lately working on a project evaluating the livelihoods of the unaccompanied minor refugees in Egypt.

Leveraging Resources

The extensive network of the Co-PI within this field of research would represent a valuable resource for the achievement of the project. The network includes NGOs and international organizations such as Care, Save the children, IOM, and UNHCR, as well as the Center for Migration and Refugees Studies, (CMRS), AUC.

Deliverables

Deliverables include a master thesis deposited at the Digital Archive and Research (DAR) Repository of the American University in Cairo, publically accessible. In addition, the results of the research project will be disseminated through recognized venues in the field, such as international conferences, journals, and/or policy briefs.

Professional Development and Mentoring Plan

The Co-PIs will be committed to the close mentoring of the graduate student through thesis research supervision, in order to have him/her develop the required skills for successfully

carrying out the research, in addition to mentoring, support and guidance for results dissemination at local and international venues of relevance.

References

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