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PROSPECTS

► REVIEW OF NATIONAL
POLICY FRAMEWORKS
AND PRACTICE



► **Review of national policy,
legislative and regulatory
frameworks and practice
in Egypt**

A baseline study on the access of refugees
and asylum seekers to the labour market



Kingdom of the Netherlands



**The American
University in Cairo**

School of Global Affairs
and Public Policy

Center for Migration and
Refugee Studies

► **Review of national policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and practice in Egypt**

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► Foreword

Egypt has a long history of being both a transit and a destination country for refugees. It hosts an estimated 288,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Half of the refugee population are Syrians who have been forced to flee their country. There are no refugee camps in Egypt, and the refugees and asylum seekers live alongside their host communities, mainly concentrated in and around the urban areas of Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta and several towns on the north coast.

Against this background, the PROSPECTS Partnership, which includes the ILO, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the World Bank, aims to support refugees, asylum seekers and host communities by improving access to education and training, expanding socio-economic opportunities and access to decent work, and mainstreaming protection interventions. Within this Partnership, the ILO plays a key role in the promotion of decent work and focuses on strengthening local economic development and improving employability by equipping refugees and host communities with better and relevant skills to enter local labour markets and to access enterprise development opportunities.

The present report is undertaken as part of a global exercise in conjunction with similar reviews drawn up in Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Iraq, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia under the PROSPECTS Partnership. It aims to provide an understanding of the current policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and practice in relation to the access of refugees to the labour markets, employment, livelihood and training opportunities, including self-employment and business development, rights at work, social protection and freedom of association. This provides PROSPECTS with a clear understanding of the current status of these frameworks and how they are being applied or not. The analytical framework for this assessment was developed jointly by IMPACT Initiatives and ILO PROSPECTS through the contributions of a number of key technical specialists from various ILO technical departments.

The report reviewed national legislature, policy documents, data sets and grey literature to establish the legal basis for refugees' access to work and their rights at work. Data collection took place between November 2021 and January 2022. Findings from the literature review were verified and triangulated with fieldwork to establish how the laws are understood and implemented in practice. Key informant interviews were conducted with authorities in Greater Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta, while focus group discussions with refugees and host community members were conducted in Giza, Alexandria and Damietta.

I would like to thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands for its generous support of this assessment and the production of this report, undertaken in the context of the PROSPECTS Partnership. I would particularly like to thank the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo for their excellent work in conducting the assessment, ILO PROSPECTS colleagues in HQ, Regional Office for Africa, and Egypt for their technical backstopping of this exercise, and the UNHCR colleagues for their review, valuable input and continuous collaboration with the ILO. We hope that this report will inform policy dialogue on the access of refugees to the labour markets, and that its recommendations feed into the design of integrated interventions that promote decent work for refugees and host communities in Egypt.



Eric Oechslin

Director

ILO Country Office for Egypt and Eritrea, and Decent Work Team for North Africa

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This review was conducted on behalf of the ILO by Sarah Yousry and Salma Abou Hussein from the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) at the American University in Cairo (AUC) under the guidance of Dr Ibrahim Awad and Maysa Ayoub, between September 2021 and August 2022.

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► Abbreviations

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan	MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics	MoM	Ministry of Manpower
CMRS	Center for Migration and Refugee Studies	MoIT	Ministry of Industry and Trade
CRS	Catholic Relief Services	MoU	Memorandum of understanding
FEI	Egyptian Federation of Industries	MSME	Micro, small and medium enterprise
EFRR	Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights	NGO	Non-governmental organization
EGP	Egyptian pound	PVTD	Productivity and Vocational Training Department
ERP	Egyptian Response Plan	QDB	Qualifications Development Bank
ETUF	Egyptian Trade Union Federation	RSD	Refugee status determination
FGD	Focus group discussion	StARS	Saint Andrew's Refugee Services
GDP	Gross domestic product	TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
IFC	International Finance Corporation	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration	USD	United States dollar
KII	Key informant interview	VTC	Vocational training centre
MoETE	Ministry of Education and Technical Education		
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education		

► Executive summary

The conflicts in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa forced citizens from countries such as Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq and Yemen to cross borders and seek protection elsewhere. Many arrived in Egypt. Egypt remains a preferred destination country for refugees owing to the lower cost of living and the favourable protection environment. As of August 2022, 288,701 refugees and asylum seekers living in Egypt were registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).¹ However, given the prevalence of the informal labour market in a developing country like Egypt, accessing formal employment opportunities remains a problem both for refugees and host communities. The refugees face challenges in accessing the labour market, training and education, rights at work, and naturalization and social integration, which are fundamental to their well-being while in Egypt.

The ILO, under the PROSPECTS Partnership between the Government of Netherlands, the International Finance Corporation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities, seeks to establish a baseline understanding of access to the labour markets, access to training and education, rights at work, and naturalization and social integration through the national policy, legislative, and regulatory frameworks and practice review. Therefore, this report is designed to examine national legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks, the implementation of these policies, and identify legal and implementation gaps. It consists of desk research and qualitative field research on entitlements, and the actual enjoyment of them as they relate to access to the labour market. It aims to provide the basis for policy, advocacy and capacity building programmes to the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as members of the host community.

This research was conducted in conjunction with similar baselines done in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia. The Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) has conducted this work in Egypt, in close collaboration with and under the technical supervision of the ILO and IMPACT Initiatives, which is synthesizing the findings from all eight baseline assessments into a comprehensive global overview.

The findings from the desk research were verified and triangulated with fieldwork to establish how the laws are understood and implemented in practice. The fieldwork was conducted in three Egyptian governorates, namely Giza, Alexandria and Damietta, where refugee populations are currently concentrated. Data collection took place between November 2021 and January 2022. The field research used qualitative research techniques including focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) to address the aforementioned research objectives. The findings of field research cannot be generalized or considered representative of refugee experiences in Egypt, because they are based on small qualitative samples. The diversity of refugee contexts and nationalities in Egypt requires further comprehensive assessment of their access to the labour market to reach generalizable conclusions. However, we hope this report will contribute towards further research and improvements to the livelihood and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt.

¹ UNHCR Egypt Monthly Statistical Report, August 2022: https://www.unhcr.org/eg/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2022/09/Monthly-statistical-Report_August_2022.pdf.

Main findings

The study findings show that refugees in Egypt face major challenges in accessing the labour market. The main challenge is related to the absence of specific asylum law and policies that govern access of refugees and asylum seekers to formal employment. In the absence of a specific law, refugees are treated as non-nationals because of the lack of differentiation between non-nationals on the one hand, and refugees and asylum seekers on the other, and the unique legal and procedural circumstances faced by refugees are not taken into account. The study uncovers different frameworks regulating access to the labour market for non-nationals in general. However, there is no specific national legislative framework that regulates refugees' access to the labour market. The main findings are summarized in each sub-topic below.

Access to the labour market

With informality being widespread in Egypt, formal employment opportunities are scarce, and few work permits are provided to non-nationals, leading to the de facto exclusion of refugees from formal employment. As it appears from the secondary literature, the FGDs and KIIs, the primary obstacle for refugees is the ability to secure an offer of formal employment. The second obstacle is procedural and is summarized by the refugees' lack of a valid passport to apply for a work permit. This procedural requirement affects many other entitlements, including the issuance of work permits (for wage employment) and business licences (for self-employment), as well as access to financial services. It limits the access to finance for refugees as they are unable to open bank accounts and would only obtain limited financing from NGOs for their businesses. The requirement of a valid passport by refugees is not one they are normally able to fulfil because of their flight from their home countries, their legal status, and the risks associated with engaging with the embassies of their countries of origin.

Refugees and asylum seekers are treated the same as non-nationals in terms of access to employment services. However, these services target the formal labour market, while both refugees and host communities are mainly working informally. Private recruitment services may cater to the informal labour market; however, they can also leave refugees and asylum seekers vulnerable to exploitative conditions. Also, the study presents evidence of the importance of social connections in influencing the entry of refugees to the labour market. It acknowledges the role of social networks as resources, especially in times of crisis. Access to a large social network of previously established refugees was helpful in transmitting information and distributing job opportunities among refugees.

Access to training and education

The enjoyment of the right to education for refugees, asylum seekers, and rejected asylum seekers remains limited to refugees of certain nationalities – Syrians, Yemenis, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Libyans – and only these nationalities have access to the public education system, which includes technical education. It was also clear that the application process was confusing, and therefore not many refugees pursued it. A unifying law is needed to clarify and grant access to education for all refugees and asylum seekers.

Regarding vocational training, multiple actors (governmental and non-governmental) in Egypt work actively to support the access of refugees to the labour market by providing entrepreneurial and vocational training, as well as start-up grants to enable them to start micro-enterprises or small income-generating activities that provide means of livelihood and lead to self-reliance. Moreover, many of these activities and training bring together refugees and host communities, fostering further social inclusion and integration. However, benefits from such training are short-lived, and training programmes can sometimes be redundant in topic and skill level.

Rights at work

All workers in Egypt are entitled to rights at work, regardless of nationality. However, certain rights are only retained within the formal labour market. These include just and favourable working conditions, social security, and occupational safety and health. With such impediments at play, informal workers are not subject to national labour legislation or entitled to social protection and/or any employment benefits. Hence, this compromises their well-being and subjects them to precarious work conditions. In terms of social security, recent reforms have extended provisions to some informal workers, including coverage for work injuries. In terms of other forms of protection, some refugee groups are excluded from the Egyptian labour laws. For instance, the Egyptian labour code does not apply to Egyptian and foreign domestic workers and thus excludes them. Refugees and asylum seekers have limited ability to exercise their rights to freedom of association, and there are also structural difficulties in the ability to access justice and grievance mechanisms.

Naturalization and social integration

Laws related to naturalization are highly restrictive in Egypt. Although the law states that those who have been residents for ten years may apply for Egyptian citizenship, it is unclear how this is applied and whether any refugees have been successful in becoming naturalized through this pathway. It may be useful to consider creating pathways to naturalization specifically for refugees, aimed at their overall social integration.

▶ 1

Overview

▶ Introduction

Egypt is increasingly becoming a destination for many refugees and asylum seekers. Although some of them may initially consider it to be a country of transit, hoping to on to Europe or elsewhere, others may be waiting for the situation in their countries of origin to improve, allowing them to return. With resettlement becoming rare, and protracted conflicts in their home countries, resettlement and repatriation are neither accessible nor desirable for many refugees and asylum seekers, and they stay in Egypt voluntarily or, of necessity, indefinitely. As Egypt does not have an encampment policy, refugees and asylum seekers benefit from the chance to live in urban settings alongside the host community, where they have access to services and opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable; furthermore, newly arrived asylum seekers can benefit from the social networks of the long-established communities from their countries of origin. However, in a lower-middle income country such as Egypt, accessing the formal labour market is a challenge for refugees and Egyptians alike, and the vast majority of refugees must resort to working in the informal economy to survive. Under these circumstances, the state of their rights at work is unclear, as is their access to education and training to improve their labour market prospects. This also has implications for their overall social integration. Egyptian national policies, and the regional and international laws to which Egypt is party, grant refugees legal entitlements, including access to the labour market. However, research has found discrepancies between the legal entitlements of refugees and asylum seekers and the actual exercise of these entitlements. Therefore, understanding these discrepancies is critical to improving the well-being of refugees and asylum seekers. In many cases, some of the challenges that they face also apply to the host community.

The ILO, under the PROSPECTS Partnership between the Government of Netherlands, IFC, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank, seeks to establish a baseline understanding of access to the labour market, access to training and education, rights at work, naturalization and social integration through a review of the national legislation, policy, regulatory frameworks and practice. This will provide the basis for policy, advocacy and capacity-building programmes for the benefit of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as for members of the host community.

The objective of this review is to assess national legislation, policy and regulatory frameworks concerning the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, to examine the implementation of these policies, and to identify policy and implementation gaps. The review will support the work of PROSPECTS on policy advocacy and government efforts to draft or reform frameworks on access to the labour market, employment, livelihood and training opportunities, and social integration. Any existing discrepancies between policy and practice will also provide PROSPECTS with an understanding of government capacity and ability to implement policy. The review will help inform future capacity-building activities and interventions. Lastly, this review should aid the Egyptian government in implementing the policies it has already formulated.

► Methodology

This review consists of desk and field research that examines legislation, policy and regulatory frameworks and the gaps between entitlements and actual enjoyment of these entitlements as they relate to access to the labour market, access to training and education, rights at work, naturalization and social integration.

The following research questions guided the methodology for the desk research and field research.

1. What are the relevant legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks concerning the access of refugees to the labour market, access to training and education, rights at work and naturalization and social integration?
 - a. What are the relevant legal entitlements related to access of refugees to the labour market, especially concerning the following:
 - i. legal identity and registration
 - ii. freedom of movement
 - iii. employment
 - iv. self-employment
 - v. access to finance
 - vi. employment services
 - vii. cooperatives
 - b. What are the relevant legal entitlements related to refugee access to training and education, especially concerning the following:
 - i. technical education
 - ii. vocational training and guidance
 - iii. recognition of qualifications
 - c. What are the relevant legal entitlements related to refugee rights at work, especially concerning the following:
 - i. working conditions
 - ii. social security
 - iii. occupational safety and health
 - iv. freedom of association
 - v. access to justice and grievance mechanisms
 - d. What are the relevant legal entitlements related to refugee naturalization and social integration?

2. What are the current gaps within the new relevant legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks concerning the access of refugees to the labour market, access to training and education, rights at work, and naturalization and social integration in Egypt? (See above sub-questions.)
3. What is the current practice and implementation with regard to the new legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks in relation to the access of refugees to the labour market, access to training and education, rights at work, and naturalization and social integration in Egypt? (See above sub-questions.)
4. What recommendations could be developed to address current gaps in legal entitlements and their implementation in relation to the access of refugees to the labour market, access to training and education, rights at work, and naturalization and social integration in Egypt? (See above sub questions.)

Desk research

The first major component of this assignment was desk research. It covered published literature including policies, legislation, journal articles, books, reports, newspaper articles and statistics in Arabic and in English. The search for this material covered resources from relevant ministries, UN agencies, academic journals and public databases.

Field research

The research used qualitative techniques including focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) in three governorates (Giza, Alexandria and Damietta) to answer the aforementioned questions, as well as the rigorous desk research. Data collection took place between November 2021 and January 2022. Findings from the desk research were triangulated and complemented with the qualitative data analysis.

Data collection activities included the following:

- ▶ FGDs with refugee and host community members at and over the age of consent;¹
- ▶ KIIs with individuals specifically selected to provide insight on employment, self-employment, vocational training, access to finance, working conditions, social security, freedom of association and access to justice, among others, in the refugee and host communities residing in the selected governorates.

Methods

Primary qualitative data collection tools were designed collaboratively by the CMRS and ILO. All interview guides were semi-structured, and the research team received adequate training in the use of the study instruments.

Population and study site

The study was conducted in areas with a high concentration of refugees, namely Greater Cairo (specifically Giza), Alexandria and Damietta. Greater Cairo consists of Cairo, Giza, and two cities in Qalyubia. For the purpose of this review, Giza is the focus of the field research in Cairo. Giza is considered partially urban and is home to the biggest community of Syrian refugees, particularly in 6th of October City, with the highest concentration in the industrial zone. This is now the hub for Syrian culinary merchandise and restaurants. It also hosts a large community of refugees of African nationalities, namely Sudanese, South Sudanese, Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians. They mainly reside in Ard El Lewa and Faisal. Unlike Giza, Alexandria and Damietta are both located on the Mediterranean Sea. Alexandria, Egypt's second largest city, is a modern commercial hub as well as a tourist destination, with a strong economy and less expensive living costs than Cairo. It attracts mainly Syrian refugees who can rely on the social networks set up by the existing refugee community. Damietta is largely rural but hosts Syrian refugees in its urban centres such as Damietta City. Its furniture, leather, textile and sweets industries make it an attractive place to settle for Syrians who exercised these professions in their home country.

1 18 years old.

Sample size

A total of 12 FGDs (eight to ten participants per group) and 16 KIIs were conducted. Table 1 describes the sample size for each data collection method.

► **Table 1. Sample Size**

	Focus Group Discussions		Key Informant Interviews
Study Population	1. Men in refugee communities 2. Men in host community 3. Women in refugee communities 4. Women in host community		1. Representatives of government institutions and researchers 2. Heads of trade unions 3. NGO representatives working on refugee livelihoods 4. Employers 5. UN agencies
	Refugees	Host Community	
Women	1 in each of the 3 research locations	1 in each of the 3 research locations	16 policymakers and NGO representatives
Men	1 in each of the 3 research locations	1 in each of the 3 research locations	
Number of participants	57	54	16
Total number of participants	127		

It is worth describing some of the characteristics of the refugee sample. In total, 29 women and 28 men participated in the FGDs. All the participants in the FGDs in Alexandria and Damietta were Syrians, whereas the participants in the FGDs in Giza were of different African nationalities, predominantly Eritreans. The selection of nationalities based on governorates was intentional, as refugees of African nationalities are centralized in Greater Cairo, while there is a Syrian presence in other governorates, primarily Alexandria and Damietta. Thus, in order to include as many different perspectives from different refugee populations as possible, engagement with Syrian refugees was limited to Alexandria and Damietta. Having refugees from the same communities in one FGD as opposed to having refugees from different countries of origin in the same FGD is also meant to promote a safer space for discussion and encourage active engagement.

Another important characteristic of the refugee sample concerns employment. Among the refugee participants, 19 were in wage employment in the informal economy, 11 were self-employed, also in the informal economy, 8 were on voluntary employment schemes (to be discussed in the sections that follow) and 19 were unemployed. Unemployment was especially evident among men in Giza (Eritreans) and Alexandria (Syrians). For more information on the participants in the focus group discussions, see [Annex 3](#).

Regarding the host community participants, 27 women and 27 men took part in the FGDs; 28 were in wage employment, 4 were self-employed, and 22 were unemployed. Of those in wage employment, only 3 men and 5 women were formally employed.

As shown in table 1, a series of KIIs were conducted in Greater Cairo to verify findings from the desk research and to address gaps. The KIIs included interviews with representatives of government institutions, social partners, NGOs working on refugee livelihoods, researchers and private sector representatives. The interviews were conducted with representatives from the following entities: the Ministry of Manpower (MoM); the Egyptian Federation of Industries (FEI); the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF); the Union of Maritime Workers; Capitol Factory; the Network for Employment Promotion; CMRS; CARITAS; Catholic Relief Services (CRS); Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights (EFRR); Save the Children; International Finance Corporation (IFC); ILO; UNHCR; United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); and an undisclosed key informant.²

² The name of the interviewee and the organization are anonymous for confidentiality, as per their request.

Study procedures

This study used a purposive sampling method. Regarding the FGDs, the databases of Etijah and Soryana safe spaces were used as a starting point to identify refugee and host community participants who were previously beneficiaries of different services provided by UN agencies,³ and who fulfil the eligibility criteria. These criteria are that participants are 18 or over, are wage-employees, self-employed or unemployed, have been in Egypt for at least six months, and have participated or not in any interventions, or have had minimal contact with NGO services. Once participants were identified, they were contacted by the data collection team, who confirmed their eligibility to participate in the research. They were then invited to participate in the FGDs at the NGO venues. The snowball technique was also applied to identify additional individuals who fit the eligibility criteria among men and women in the refugee and host communities in the three locations.

To mitigate potential selection bias arising from the snowballing technique, other sources of evidence, such as KIIs and the desk research, were sought to corroborate insight generated from the FGDs. At the beginning of each FGD, a script describing the informed consent process was read to them, explaining the study, risks and confidentiality, and that participation is strictly voluntary.

The key informants were also selected on a purposive sampling basis. As a starting point, several experts were identified and contacted by the data collection team. Appointments were scheduled and virtual and in-person visits were made to conduct the interviews.

The FGDs were held at the safe space or NGO in rooms that guaranteed sound and visual privacy, and the KIIs were held virtually or at the office of the participant. All participants were given the choice of skipping any questions that make them feel uncomfortable or terminating the interview altogether. Interviews with key informants did not last longer than 90 minutes. FGDs did not last longer than two hours.

3 Etijah and Soryana are local NGOs, which were supported by UN agencies to carry out interventions targeting refugees as well as host community members.

▶ 2

Main findings

▶ 2.1 Socio-economic context

Labour market situation

As of 2020, the Egyptian labour force stood at 27,870,211 people, with a participation rate of 41.54 per cent. In the same year, women made up 18.7 per cent of the labour force, down from 24.7 per cent in 2017 and 21.3 per cent in 2018 (World Bank Data 2022). According to the Egyptian Labour Force Survey conducted by CAPMAS, Egyptians aged 15 years and above are primarily employed in agriculture (21.7 per cent), trade (14.1 per cent), manufacturing (13.4 per cent), construction (12.9 per cent), transportation (7.9 per cent), education (7 per cent), and public administration (5.5 per cent). All other sectors account for less than 5 per cent of total employment (CAPMAS 2020). As of 2020, 44.5 per cent of the labour force was employed informally, with 46.8 per cent male workers and 32.2 per cent female workers (CAPMAS 2020). The official unemployment rate in 2021 stood at 7.4 per cent (Egypt Independent 2022).

In the 1960s, the Egyptian government guaranteed employment to all secondary, technical institute, and university graduates by law, as a means of promoting education and as part of a state-led development programme (Wahba and Assaad 2016). However, this led to the public sector being the primary creator of employment between the 1960s and the 1980s, which in turn led to the sector being overstaffed. Most new entrants to the labour market prefer public sector jobs, in part because the labour laws at the time had strict job protection provisions (Wahba and Assaad 2016). The public sector is still preferred by young people because of the short working hours, job security and benefits such as access to paid leave (Barsoum and Abdalla 2020). Economic reforms in the 1990s aimed at shrinking the public sector as state-owned enterprises were privatized, which caused increasing unemployment for new entrants to the labour market. During this time, the private sector continued to play a very limited role in job creation. Informal employment increased in part because of the curbed public sector, but also because the private sector bypassed restrictive employment laws by not providing workers with work contracts or reporting them to the social insurance administration (Wahba and Assaad 2016). Informal employment continued to grow, although it is more concentrated in rural areas; 70 per cent of rural workers are informally

employed compared with 43 per cent of urban workers (Angel-Urdinola and Tanabe 2012). Nonetheless, in urban areas, the private sector, despite its high level of informality, remains the primary absorbent of new labour market entrants, who are mostly educated youth (Abdelfattah 2019).

There are persistent gender differences in the Egyptian labour market. Men with families enjoy having social priority in obtaining available jobs over younger, unmarried men (Bruni 2017). Studies have found that young women are five times more likely to be unemployed than young men (Barsoum, Ramadan, and Mostafa 2014). Women's labour force participation is declining, partly owing to reforms in public sector hiring for tertiary education graduates, which has disproportionately affected women as they are more likely to work in this sector. This decrease in public employment for women did not result in increased private sector hiring for women, but rather in withdrawal from the labour market altogether (Fedi, Amer, and Rashad 2019).

Besides women, unemployment also primarily affects young people and those with higher educational attainment, though the Egyptian labour force is becoming increasingly educated (Fedi, Amer, and Rashad 2019). One study found that the rate of economic growth required to absorb new entrants to the labour market is unattainable. In fact, out-migration for work and other reasons is common in Egypt. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more than 10 million Egyptians were living abroad as of 2017, the majority, more than 7 million, in the Arab countries (CAPMAS 2018). A noteworthy and relevant pattern in Egyptian migration is the migration of highly skilled workers, particularly physicians (Kabbash et al. 2021). Meanwhile, as will be discussed in the sections that follow, Egypt's restrictive employment laws do not allow non-nationals, including refugees, to satisfy the local demand for physicians.

The vast majority of Egyptian workers experience degradation of working conditions. As of the end of 2019, only 40.4 per cent of workers were enrolled in social security, and only 34.8 per cent had health insurance. Furthermore, only 35.9 per cent of Egyptian workers had a work contract (CAPMAS 2020). A study on precarious working conditions was conducted by the ILO in 2019. They are characterized by working poverty, time-related underemployment, irregular employment, and being unprotected by law or collective agreements. The study found a 30 per cent increase in precariousness between 2015 and 2017. It also found that while there has been a degradation in job quality, the same years witnessed annual economic growth at 4 to 5 per cent. While 69 per cent of men are more likely to have precarious jobs and 49 per cent of women, women have experienced more job degradation. As previously discussed, this is partially due to gendered differences in the labour market. Male-dominated sectors such as construction, transportation and storage are growing, while female-dominated sectors like agriculture and public administration are shrinking. In addition, research has shown that such gaps in working conditions often affect marginalized communities disproportionately, making them more vulnerable to falling prey to exploitative practices (Fedi, Amer, and Rashad 2019).

The pandemic has undoubtedly had an effect on the Egyptian labour market. According to the World Bank, the unemployment rate in 2020 was 10.45 per cent compared with 9.43 per cent in 2019 (World Bank Data). Wage workers, especially informal workers, experienced layoffs, reduced hours and lower earnings during the pandemic, although Egypt had the least restrictive pandemic-related closure in the region and recorded a GDP growth rate of 3.6 per cent in 2020 (Krafft, Assaad, and Marouani 2021). Nonetheless, this does not translate into economic stability for all Egyptian workers. In response to the pandemic, the government announced stimulus policies including a 14 per cent increase in pension payments, an increase in support provided through social assistance and cash transfer programmes for households enrolled in Takaful and Karama,⁴ and temporary cash assistance for 1.6 million irregular workers consisting of six instalments of 500 Egyptian pounds (US\$26) (Krafft, Assaad, and Marouani 2021). However, social safety net coverage and assistance was not well targeted, and assistance only reached a fraction of those impacted (Krafft, Assaad, and Marouani 2021). Beyond the impact of the pandemic, with nearly half of Egyptian workers in the informal economy and with many engaging in precarious work, it is doubtlessly a challenge for refugees and asylum seekers to enter the Egyptian labour market under these conditions.

4 Takaful and Karama are social safety net programmes that were launched in 2015. Takaful is a conditional cash transfer programme for families. Karama is an unconditional cash transfer programme for the elderly, persons with disabilities or illnesses, and orphans.

Refugee context

Since the early 1900s, Egypt has hosted several groups of refugees from Europe, including Russians after the Bolshevik revolution, Armenians fleeing genocide, and other European refugees as a result of the two world wars. Starting in the 1930s and with larger waves in 1948, 1967 and 1990, Palestinian refugees arrived in Egypt and were its largest displaced population until the 1980s, when other refugee populations started arriving (El-Abed 2004). In the early 2000s, refugees came from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, with smaller numbers from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Burundi (Zohry and Harrell-Bond 2003). At the same time, conflicts in the Middle East displaced other groups of refugees from Iraq and Yemen, followed by refugees from Libya and Syria. The refugee population in Egypt has grown significantly since the year 2000. The number of forcibly displaced persons who arrived in Egypt increased more than 18 times between 2000 and 2019. Between 2012 and 2013 alone, the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt doubled as a result of the Syrian Civil War following the Arab Spring (Andrade et al. 2021).

As of August 2022, Egypt hosted 288,701 registered refugees and asylum seekers, with the majority from Syria (144,167), Sudan (58,579), South Sudan (23,042), Eritrea (22,352) and Ethiopia (16,147) (UNHCR 2022). However, the total number of refugees is estimated to be higher, as the above numbers fail to include several categories of displaced persons, including individuals who qualify for refugee or asylum-seeker status but are not registered with the UNHCR, as well as those who received a negative refugee status determination (RSD), or rejected asylum seekers (Abdel Aziz 2017; Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). For example, very few Libyan refugees approach the UNHCR, although there are an estimated 350,000 to 820,000 living in governorates on the north coast, in Alexandria and Marsa Matrouh. The UNCHR's number of registered refugees does not include Palestinians, since Palestinian refugees are excluded from UNHCR's mandate, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) does not operate in Egypt. The estimated number of Palestinians in Egypt as of the early 2000s, is 70,000 (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). There are no recent studies on the Palestinian refugee community in Egypt and consequently no current estimates.

More than half of refugees globally live in urban areas, and there is a shift in research and policy to focus on urban refugees, rather than only on refugees who live on campsites (Norman 2021). Refugees who self-settle in urban areas are better able to access services and, though informally, are able to participate in economic and social life (Norman 2021). As Egypt does not have an encampment policy, the majority of refugees and asylum seekers are self-settled in urban areas, mainly in Greater Cairo (224,995), Alexandria (25,667), and Damietta (9,528) (UNHCR 2022). Very few refugees live in rural areas.⁵

Refugees in Egypt live under difficult socio-economic conditions, in many ways similar to the 29.7 per cent of Egyptians who live below the national poverty line (State Information Service 2021). Refugees in wage employment tend to work as maids, nannies, security guards, interpreters, NGO workers and factory workers (Feinstein International Center 2012). Refugees who are self-employed tend to work in trading and selling goods from home, car repairs, restaurants, tailoring, tutoring and producing handicrafts (Feinstein International Center 2012). The vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt work informally, similarly to Egyptians. Egyptian labour law does not address refugees and asylum seekers in particular, meaning that they are treated the same as other non-nationals before the law, and Egyptian labour laws restrict the entry of non-nationals to the Egyptian labour market in part to protect the domestic labour force (Jureidini 2009). In 2017, the total number of work permits issued to non-nationals was 14,601, with 13,469 working in the private and investment sectors and 1,132 in the public sector (CAPMAS 2019). In terms of non-nationals working in the private and investment sectors, the most common countries of origin were India (11 per cent), Bangladesh (10.9 per cent), Palestine (9 per cent), Syria (6.7 per cent), Philippines (5.7 per cent) and China (5.2 per cent) (CAPMAS 2019). Thus, refugees are forced to work informally, partly because of the scarcity of formal employment in the Egyptian labour market in general, but also owing to the restrictive procedures for securing formal employment specifically for refugees and asylum seekers (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). In spite of these challenges, many refugees

⁵ For more information on the geographic distribution of registered refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt, see UNHCR Egypt's Monthly Statistical report, August 2022.

have been able to create opportunities for their communities in Egypt. For example, Syrian refugees were able to take advantage of Egypt's large market and the existing Syrian business community to establish businesses, which contributed an estimated US\$800 million to the economy (UNDP, ILO and WFP 2017).

The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt are influenced by their racial and ethnic background as well as their ability to understand Arabic. Although all refugees and asylum seekers face challenges in securing their livelihoods, finding adequate housing, enrolling their children in education, accessing health services and navigating their legal identity, those who speak Arabic fare better than those who don't in many ways. Syrians, for example, have gained a reputation for offering high-quality services in food and beverages, repairs, textile and construction sectors (Zohry 2021). The UNHCR's Vulnerability Assessment found that Arabic-speaking refugees tended to fare better than non-Arabic speakers when it comes to housing, economic opportunities and overall welfare (UNHCR 2020). African refugees have expressed that they had experienced racially motivated discrimination (Miranda 2018).

Moreover, the outbreak of COVID-19 exacerbated the situation of refugees and asylum seekers. As a result of the pandemic, many refugees and asylum seekers lost their jobs and were unable to pay their rent (UNHCR Factsheet 2021). Unfortunately, no exact figures indicate the number of jobs lost among refugees during the pandemic. However, the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and asylum seekers has been found to have increased their vulnerabilities and their reliance on assistance from the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations. Since the emergence of the pandemic, the UNHCR has provided cash assistance to refugees and asylum seekers (ReliefWeb 2020), who also have access to public primary, secondary and emergency healthcare (UNHCR Factsheet 2021). Nevertheless, the insufficiency of services and equipment in the Egyptian health sector limited their enjoyment of these rights during the pandemic.

As a way of consolidating efforts across the various actors and responding efficiently to the needs of refugees in Egypt, many of the programmes for refugee protection and assistance in Egypt are being driven by regional and national response plans to alleviate the hardships that refugees face. Egypt, together with Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Jordan, launched the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in 2015. It is a strategic, coordination, planning, advocacy, fundraising and programming platform for humanitarian and development partners to respond to the Syria crisis (3RP 2020). On another front, and as part of the advocacy towards a "one refugee" approach in Egypt, a Response Plan for Refugees and Asylum Seekers from sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq and Yemen (ERP) was launched in 2018 and revised in 2019 by the UN and international and national NGOs in collaboration with the Government of Egypt (GoE) (UNHCR 2019a). Targeted sectors for interventions include education, protection, health, basic needs, cash assistance, livelihoods and food security. These efforts come as part of the GoE's sustained efforts to support refugees and asylum seekers from all nationalities in Egypt (Zohry 2021).

► 2.2 International and regional legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks

Egypt is party to a number of international conventions, detailed in Annex 2. For the purposes of this review, the 1954 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNHCR and Egypt, and Egypt's reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention, will be briefly discussed below.

In 1954, 27 years prior to ratifying the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, Egypt signed an MoU with the UNHCR. This legal statement of cooperation formalizes the presence of the UNHCR in Egypt, governs its activities and operations, and regulates the relationship between the UNHCR and the GoE, of which the most critical characteristic is Egypt's delegation of responsibility for the RSD process to the UNHCR. According to Article 2 of the MoU, the UNHCR performs the following functions in cooperation with the Egyptian government:

- a. conduct refugee status determination (RSD) for refugees under UNHCR's mandate and undertake their census;
- b. facilitate the durable solution of voluntary repatriation of refugees;
- c. facilitate and promote the resettlement of refugees in cooperation with the Egyptian government and international organizations concerned with migration issues;
- d. assist the most destitute refugees falling under UNHCR's mandate as the agency's funds allow;
- e. facilitate and coordinate the activities that welfare societies, authorized by the Egyptian government, undertake in favour of refugees.

Article 6 of the MoU stipulates that the Egyptian government is to issue residence permits for bona fide refugees. Article 7 stipulates that the Egyptian government is to issue travel documents with a return visa of a limited duration for refugees.

The main outcomes of the MoU were delegating the RSD process from the Egyptian government to the UNHCR, limiting the Egyptian state's responsibility to the issuance of residence permits and travel documents, authorizing non-governmental organizations to assist refugees, and removing the financial responsibility of the Egyptian state towards refugees. No reference was made to local integration in the MoU, and only voluntary repatriation and resettlement are explicitly mentioned in the agreement.

In 1980, Egypt ratified the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention. Shortly afterwards, in 1981, Egypt also ratified the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol by placing a number of reservations on the following articles: article 12(1) on personal status, article 20 on rationing, article 22(1) on access to primary education, article 23 on access to public relief and assistance, and article 24 on labour legislation and social security.

In May 1984, following the ratification of both conventions, a presidential decree (No. 188) calling for the establishment of a permanent refugee committee, with the purpose of conducting RSD as per the 1951 Convention, was passed. The committee was established and later incorporated into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Refugees, Migration and Human Trafficking (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). By virtue of Egypt ratifying the 1969 OAU Convention, the UNHCR began applying the OAU Convention's more expanded refugee definition in its RSD in 2003. This caused a clash with article 6(c) of the MoU concerning the resettlement of refugees. Given that none of the traditional resettlement states are party to the OAU Convention, refugees who are recognized based on the OAU refugee definition are ineligible for resettlement; only those who are recognized based on the persecution grounds of the 1951 Convention are eligible. Additionally, by expanding the refugee definition, the number of refugees being assisted by UNHCR in Egypt has significantly increased.

Despite these developments, the MoU was neither amended nor modified and continues to be the main legal document guiding the responsibilities of the UNHCR and the Egyptian state with regards to refugees. The UNHCR continues to be responsible for registering refugees, issuing their identity documents, and conducting RSD. Local integration also continues to be excluded from the durable solutions available for refugees in Egypt, although being party to the 1951 Convention means that the state accepts local integration as implied in the Convention. Moreover, the MoU lacks an article clearly stating that refugees have the right to enjoy all their entitlements under all refugee conventions to which Egypt is party, which results in their inability to access their right to work (Badawy 2010). At the time of writing, a draft asylum law was in the process of being developed which presents an important opportunity, even though it remains unclear when this law will be enacted.

► 2.3 Current national legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks

This section will highlight current national legislation, policies, and regulatory frameworks for each of the four themes concerned in this review: 1. Access to the labour market; 2. Access to training and education; 3. Rights at work; 4. Naturalization and social integration. Under each theme is a summary of the topics covered, followed by a description of the national policies concerned.

Access to the labour market

The issue of access to the labour market covers a range of topics, examined in this section. Legal identity and registration concerns the legal status of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt as well as identification documents. Access to employment highlights the requirements and procedures set by Egyptian law that affect a refugee's access to formal employment. Access to self-employment will cover those wanting to open up a business, with a particular focus on small businesses. Access to finance will address the ability for individuals to access the banking system and financial services. Access to employment services will focus on services that facilitate the job search, including public and private services. The section on cooperatives will investigate the ability to join or establish a cooperative. Several means of generating household income were considered for this section, although some were found to be irrelevant to the Egyptian context. For example, in terms of land ownership, Law No. 124/1958 prohibits non-Egyptians from owning agricultural land; however, Law No. 15/1963 makes Palestinian refugees an exception, though very few Palestinian refugees live in rural areas, apart from those who have lived in Geziret Fadel in Sharqiya since 1948 (Othman 2016).

There is no national legislative framework that specifically regulates the access of refugees and asylum seekers to the labour market. Refugees and asylum seekers are treated like other non-nationals before the law. There are different frameworks that regulate access to the labour market for Egyptians and non-Egyptians, which will be detailed below.

Legal identity and registration

The Civil Status Law (No. 143/1994) grants all Egyptians aged 16 or older the right to receive national identity cards issued through the Civil Status Department (CSD) of Egypt's Ministry of Interior.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Egypt and the UNHCR in 1954 gives the UNHCR the responsibility to determine the legal status of refugees (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). Through the MoU, Egypt delegated the RSD process to the UNHCR, which applies the following procedures.

- Individuals who approach the UNHCR to apply for RSD, and those who are either awaiting their first appointment or failed to provide valid identification documents (such as passports, ID cards, military booklet, marriage certificate, birth certificates, medical reports if any, and so on) are only eligible to receive asylum-seeker certificates, which are known as white papers (UNHCR 2019c). White papers do not allow their holders to obtain residence permits but act as proof of an asylum application in Egypt (UNHCR 2019c).
- Those who have applied for RSD and provided valid identification documents are eligible to receive yellow cards at their first appointment, confirming their status as asylum seekers. Yellow cards are valid for 18 months and provide protection for asylum seekers from detention and deportation to the country of origin. Yellow cards allow their holders to obtain residence permits (UNHCR 2019c). Not all refugees undergo the RSD process, and prima facie refugees from Syria and Yemen can also obtain yellow cards.

- ▶ When the RSD process is completed successfully, the asylum seekers receive blue cards confirming their status as refugees (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). The cards are valid for three years and allow their holders to obtain residence permits, renewable every six months (UNHCR 2019c).

For holders of blue and yellow cards, residence permits are renewable as long as they remain a person of concern to the UNHCR in Egypt (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). In the case of rejected asylum seekers, they may submit an appeal to have their claim re-examined (Abdel Aziz 2018; Grabska 2005). However, failed asylum seekers who no longer have an appeal process available to them can no longer access services from the UNHCR (Abdel Aziz 2018). For a variety of reasons, these individuals are either unwilling or unable to return to their country of origin and hence remain in Egypt under precarious conditions, without any documentation regularizing permission for them to reside in the country (Grabska 2005).

According to Law No. 89/1960 on the Entry and Residence of Non-nationals in Egypt, and its amendment Law No. 88/2005, there are three different types of residence permits in Egypt: special, ordinary and temporary. Also, a new category of residence for non-nationals, called “deposit residence” was recently introduced in 2018 under Law No. 173, which amends Law No. 26 of 1975 on Citizenship and Law No. 89 of 1960 (Sadek 2018). Special residence is granted for ten years in particular circumstances, as with those born in Egypt before 1952, who have resided in Egypt for 20 years, or who have resided in Egypt for five years but carried out extraordinary works to the benefit of the national economy or the country (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). This applies to non-Egyptians, like Syrians, Palestinians and Sudanese, who have resided in Egypt for more than 20 years. Ordinary residence is granted for five years to those residing in Egypt for 15 years prior to 1952 (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). Deposit residence is granted for five years to those who deposit at least 7 million pounds into an Egyptian bank (Al Masry, Al Youm 2019). This encompasses Syrian businessmen and capital owners who have moved to Egypt after the start of the Syrian Civil War and invested mostly in real estate, land, factories, restaurants and shops. Members of this group are not considered refugees because of their stable residence status and lack of interest in receiving assistance from the UNHCR. All other residence permits are considered temporary residence (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). These include permits for educational purposes, which are granted for one year, and tourism, which are granted for six months (Karam Dewedar Legal 2022). As will appear in the “2.5 Current practice of relevant legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks” section, a number of refugees prefer relying on educational purposes or tourism registration rather than obtaining a UNHCR card, to circumvent some restrictions and limitations placed on holders of UNHCR cards. These residence permits are separate from the permits for which yellow and blue card holders are eligible, which are renewable every six months (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Palestinian refugees are granted durations for their residence permits based on when they arrived in Egypt (El-Abed 2009). Those who arrived in Egypt before or in 1948 received residency permits that were renewable every five years and could be renewed every ten years once they have been in Egypt for ten years. Palestinians who arrived in 1956, 1967, or after 1967 received residency permits that were renewable every three years (El-Abed 2009).

Within 15 days of receiving their yellow or blue cards, refugees and asylum seekers go to the Department of Refugees at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain a reference number (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). The reference number is then presented to the Residence Unit of the Immigration Department at the Ministry of Interior, where they also submit the application form, the original yellow or blue cards and a copy of them, the original passport plus a copy, and two passport-size photos (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). When the application is processed, asylum seekers receive a residence permit card with photo identification. As a result of an agreement between the UNHCR and the Egyptian government, the fees for refugees are 100 pounds (US\$5) as opposed to the 500 pounds (US\$26) renewal costs that are usually charged for non-nationals (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to residence permits that are renewable every three years, according to Ministerial Decree No. 8180/1996. However, the current procedures dictate that they renew their permits every six months (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Freedom of movement

Egypt does not have a policy of encampment. Refugees and asylum seekers self-settle in urban areas. They have the right to freedom of movement (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). It is worth mentioning that refugees and asylum seekers need to regularize their stay in Egypt through registration (that is, the renewable residence permit) which grants them freedom of movement across the country (UNHCR 2020). Freedom of movement for both Egyptians and non-Egyptians is limited in certain geographical locations, as stipulated in Presidential Decree 298/1995, which prohibits movement within 1500 m of the Egyptian-Israeli border between Taba and Raba'a, and Ministry of Defense Decree 176 which applies Decree 298 to those attempting to exit Egypt through what was once a popular migration route for those attempting to seek asylum in Israel.

Free cross-country movement is also guaranteed to refugees of certain nationalities. The Four Freedoms Agreement between Egypt and Sudan, which was signed in 2004, allows Egyptians and Sudanese the right of movement and residence in both countries. Moreover, the agreement stipulates that a monitoring committee shall be formed to ensure its proper implementation. This agreement could have eased the lives of Sudanese refugees in Egypt; however, Egypt neither ratified nor implemented it. The Agreement on Movement and Residency of Nationals was reached in May 2017 between the governments of Egypt and Sudan. The agreement addresses specific relations between the two countries, the most significant of which is granting a six-month visa free of charge to males who hold a regular passport. However, Sudan resumed the practice of requesting visas for Egyptian men under the age of 49 before entering Sudan (Ahrum Online 2017). This clearly illustrates how the lack of a unified asylum law could cause confusion among refugees themselves, owing to the constant changes in bilateral agreements between governments.

Employment

Although this section intends to cover employment in both the formal and the informal sectors, laws hereunder focus primarily on access to formal employment. Since informal employment takes place outside the scope of government regulation, informal workers are "by law or practice, not subject to national labour legislation or not entitled to social protection and employment benefits" (ILO 2013).

The MoU between the UNHCR and Egypt provides that holders of yellow and blue cards can obtain residence permits that are renewable every six months, although the cards are valid for 18 months and three years, respectively. The residence permits do not grant refugees and asylum seekers the right to work, meaning that they must obtain work permits to engage in formal employment.

The Egyptian Labour Law (No. 12/2003) prohibits non-nationals from exercising work if they have not obtained a work permit, renewable on an annual basis, from the relevant ministry. The law sets out the conditions for hiring non-national workers and issuing work permits, including a maximum quota for non-nationals in establishments, non-competition with Egyptian workers, proof of qualifications to match the work requirements, and proof of a minimum of three years of experience. The law restricts work in certain sectors. Non-nationals are prohibited from working in importing, exporting and customs, as well as from working as tour guides in the tourism sector.

Book 2 of the Egyptian Labour Law (No. 12/2003) regulates the work of non-Egyptians and explicitly stipulates that work entitlements for non-nationals are subject to the principle of reciprocity. This entails that non-nationals receive the same entitlements in Egypt that Egyptians receive in non-nationals' countries of origin. The law does not cover certain categories, such as domestic workers, as Article 4 of the law explicitly excludes them from its provisions. Additionally, the draft of the new Egyptian Labour Law, which was given preliminary approval by the Egyptian Senate on 2 January 2022, does not include domestic workers. However, there are promises that a new law targeting domestic workers will be passed (Ali 2022a).

Decree No. 485/2010 allows certain non-Egyptians to be exempted from the principle of non-competition with the Egyptian labour force. Article 19 of this decree defines the nationalities and categories of non-Egyptians who are exempt from the principle of non-competition with Egyptians: non-nationals who are married to Egyptians; persons without a specified nationality who are living and working in Egypt; individuals who were born and have been residing in Egypt for at least fifteen years; political refugees who were approved by the Political Refugees Office at the Presidency of the Republic; and Palestinians who have valid travel documents issued from the Palestinian National Authority and a non-tourism temporary residence permit, or a Jordanian passport valid for two years issued from Gaza, or Palestinians with travel documents issued from the Arab Republic of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria or Jordan.

Decree No. 305/2015 sets the rules for the measures related to issuing work permits for non-nationals and regulates their access to the Egyptian labour market. Article 1 stipulates that non-nationals obtain work permits from the Manpower and Migration Directorate. Article 4 restricts the number of non-nationals entering the labour market by requiring that no more than 10 per cent of non-Egyptian employees work in any given firm. Article 5 sets additional terms under which non-nationals may be granted work permits. To receive work permits the following requirements must be met.

1. Non-nationals' qualifications must fit the approved employment activities, and they must have at least three years' experience in the country and the workplace, proved by papers and recognized certificates.
2. Non-nationals should have professional licences to practise the professions they are hired for, in accordance with the rules and regulations of the country.
3. Non-nationals must not compete for job opportunities with Egyptians.
4. The employer hiring the non-national worker must assign at least two Egyptians to work as their assistants. Non-national work permit renewal is subject to conditions on training Egyptian workers and preparing reports on their performance. Preference is made to non-nationals born in and permanently residing in Egypt.

Lastly, Article 14 restricts the industries in which non-nationals can work. They are not permitted to work in import, export and customs clearance assistance. While the decree does not explicitly address refugees and asylum seekers, it exempts Sudanese, Palestinians, Lebanese, Greeks and Italians from work permit fees if they are staying in Egypt for no more than five years.

Decree No. 146/2019 stipulates that non-nationals are required to obtain work permits from the competent ministry and from the affiliated Manpower directorates, or from the offices established by the ministry for such purposes in other entities. Under the new decree, the total number of non-national workers in any establishment, even if it has several branches, may not exceed 10 per cent of the total number of insured Egyptian workers. Under the 2015 decree, the percentage was calculated from the total number of workers in general, and six conditions had to be observed for a non-national worker to receive a work permit, including the ownership of an occupational licence. Under the new decree, it has been specified that occupational licences are required only for professions that need a special licence for their performance (for example, doctors or pharmacists).

Decree No. 146/2019 also sets out the fees for the work permits as follows:

- ▶ a permit costs 5,000 pounds (US\$263) for the first year and an additional 1,000 pounds (US\$53) for every following year;
- ▶ in the fourth year, renewal fees are 10,000 pounds (US\$527) and an additional 1,000 pounds (US\$53) for every following year;
- ▶ in the seventh year, fees are 15,000 pounds (US\$791) and an additional 1,000 pounds (US\$53) for every following year;
- ▶ in the eleventh year, renewal fees are 20,000 pounds (US\$791) and an additional 2,000 pounds (US\$106) for every following year, with a maximum limit of 50,000 pounds (US\$2,638) for renewal fees;
- ▶ a 15,000 pound (US\$791) penalty is charged per year for every year spent in Egypt without a work permit, to be applied retroactively.

Residence permits do not grant refugees the right to work. Like all non-nationals, refugees and asylum seekers must obtain a work permit in order to become formally employed in Egypt. Several conditions must be met for the employment of non-nationals, including a quota in any given entity and non-competition with the domestic labour force, and fees are charged. Some nationalities are exempt from one, some or all conditions. In order to apply for a work permit, refugees and asylum seekers need to find an employer willing to sponsor them. The employer must submit an application, with the required documents, to the Central Administration of Employment at the Ministry of Manpower, as well as evidence of the potential employee's qualifications and a minimum of three years of experience that is notarized by either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Egyptian embassy in the country of origin (ILO 2021). Other required documentation includes the employee's valid passport, two copies of the employee's academic degrees and certificates, seven passport-size photos, two copies of the employer's incorporation contract, two copies of the employer's tax ID, a copy of the employer's commercial registration, a valid licence to practise the profession, if needed, a letter from the employer justifying the reasons for hiring the non-national, a negative HIV test, and the permit fees paid by the employer as detailed above.

Egypt is party to a number of regional and bilateral agreements that have implications on access to employment. The Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States, or the Casablanca Protocol, gives Palestinians the right to work under the same conditions as Egyptians. The Agreement on the Freedom of Movement, Residence, Work and Property between the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Government of the Republic of Sudan, or the Four Freedoms Agreement, gives Sudanese the right to work in Egypt under the same conditions as Egyptians. The extent to which these two agreements have been implemented is unclear, although Decree 485/2010 treats both Palestinians and Sudanese favourably. There are also bilateral agreements between Egypt and Greece as well as Egypt and Jordan. Greek nationals are exempted from work permit fees. Jordanian workers are also offered the same conditions as Egyptians, although they are not exempted from any of the procedures concerning securing a work permit. The two agreements are far more relevant for Egyptian migrant workers in Greece and Jordan than they are for potential Greek and Jordanian refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt, which is uncommon (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Self-employment

The laws listed in this section pertain to the procedures and requirements to open a business as a non-national in Egypt. Refugees and asylum seekers can set up a business, but valid passports are required. A residence permit is issued to business owners for the duration of their work in Egypt.

Investment Law No. 72/2017 regulates the establishment of a business for non-nationals, which includes refugees and asylum seekers even though they are not specifically mentioned. Any non-national who wishes to start a business must submit to the Ministry of Investment a valid passport, a copy of the business plan, a power of attorney for a lawyer, a security clearance and documents of identification for the applicant's representative. Thus, refugees without passports would not be able to apply. Once the application is accepted and security clearance is completed, a business licence⁶ is issued. A residence permit for the founder, shareholder, owner of an establishment or partner in a company can be issued for the duration of the project (at least one year), and can be renewed later for another period, based on the duration and seriousness of the project. The residence permit period cannot exceed five years, nor can it exceed the duration of the project (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Article 3 of the Investment Law (No. 72/2017) guarantees foreign investors the same treatment granted to Egyptians. However, it also grants preferential treatment for foreign investors based on the principle of reciprocity, meaning it is contingent on whether or not Egyptians are treated more favourably in the non-national's country of origin.

6 It is worth noting that a business licence is issued for self-employment, whereas a work permit is issued for wage employment.

Article 4 of the Executive Regulation to the Investment Law allows non-Egyptian investors to obtain residence as long as they meet the required conditions, including being a founder, shareholder or partner in a company or establishment owner, and living in Egypt for no less than a year.

The Trade Code or Law of Commerce (No. 17/1999) gives non-nationals equal rights to Egyptians when exercising trade. Article 11 of the law states that Egyptians or non-nationals can exercise trade as long as certain requirements are met, including the legal age requirement (21 years and above).

Law No. 159 of 1981 on Joint Stock Companies, Partnerships Limited by Shares and Limited Liability Companies allows non-nationals to set up joint companies and establish partnerships by following certain requirements, which include obtaining security clearance and providing passports and commercial registration, among others.

Law No. 152/2020 on the Development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) facilitates the starting of a business and allows total foreign ownership. However, the law does not mention guidance for refugees on processes and access to business services, and it is not clear if refugees can be assumed to be covered under this law.

Access to finance

Refugees and asylum seekers are allowed to open bank accounts and access financial services provided they have a valid passport, residence permit and proof of accommodation.

Law No. 141/2014, also known as Microfinance Law, is meant to regulate microcredit provided by non-banking financial service providers. Microcredit is defined as a loan for commercial purposes in the services, industrial, agricultural and other sectors. Law No. 201/2020 amends certain provisions in the law, including raising the microcredit loan limit to 200,000 pounds (US\$10,550).

Law No. 18/2019, also known as the E-Payments Law, requires state authorities and institutions to offer digital payment methods, and is part of a broader initiative to encourage cashless transactions.

There is no specific law prohibiting or allowing the access of refugees and asylum seekers to finance. They are treated like other non-nationals when it comes to the conditions that must be fulfilled to open a bank account; they must present a valid passport, proof of valid accommodation and a residence permit. UNHCR cards are not accepted in place of passports. Therefore, not only are refugees unable to open a bank account, but they are also unable to access any financial services through the banking system.

Employment services

Labour offices in Egypt are one of the main mechanisms that jobseekers use to find employment, generally matching supply and demand of labour in the private sector and providing vocational guidance. The country's public labour mediation is typically depicted as a widely used instrument, despite capacity constraints and it being largely a legacy of the past. With the resources of public employment offices being limited, the role of private recruitment agencies has increased.

The Ministry of Manpower is the main institution responsible for providing information about the labour market, available opportunities and employment services. The MoM has around 300 public employment offices across Egypt that are in charge of registering jobseekers, matching them with the available opportunities, and issuing work permits (ILO 2017b).

According to the Labour Law (No. 12/2003), Articles 12 through 15 stipulate that everyone able and willing to work can submit an application to register with the administrative labour office nearest their place of residence, indicating name, age, profession, qualifications and experience. The labour office shall register these applications in serial numbers and give the applicant a certificate of registration; no fee is charged. For workers in certain professions, specified by ministerial decision, the applicant should

attach a certificate or licence to the registration indicating skills level and grade. Employers are obliged to submit a detailed statement of their workforce, specifying the number of workers employed according to their qualifications, careers, experience, nationalities, gender and salaries. Employers are also obliged to register vacancies in the labour offices, and the offices are responsible for identifying suitable candidates for open positions. The law, however, does not mention refugees or non-nationals.

Regarding private employment services, Article 16 in Book 2 of the Labour Law (No. 12/2003) indicates that employing workers through third-party labour contractors or an entrepreneur is prohibited. Recruitment agencies must obtain a licence from the Ministry of Manpower before recruiting from within Egypt or abroad. According to Articles 22 and 23 of the law, obtaining the licence for a private recruitment agency is conditional on the founders and board members, as well as the directors concerned with the recruitment operations, having Egyptian nationality. The agency must also be wholly owned by Egyptians, and its licence should be valid for a period of five renewable years.

A 2013 World Bank study found that there are 54 licensed agencies in the country (World Bank 2013). Their numbers are expected to have increased since then, but there is no up-to-date information on the current situation.

Cooperatives

Law No. 316/1956 defines cooperatives and the principles that govern them. Refugees and asylum seekers, like other non-nationals, can become members of cooperatives, but only Egyptians can become members of the board of directors. The law on cooperatives is supplemented by other laws, including Law No. 267/1960 for public cooperation institutions and Law No. 109/1975 for consumer cooperatives.

Access to training and education

Egypt's technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system is one of the largest in the region, with more than 2,900 institutions and 2 million students. A large number of stakeholders make up the TVET system, including the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHE), the Ministry of Manpower (MoM), the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI), the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), the Ministry of Housing (MoH), and the Education Development Fund (EDF), in addition to a number of line ministries offering vocational programmes in their respective industries. The system offers a wide range of programmes at different levels, including pre-university, tertiary, formal and informal. The MoETE administers the largest technical education programme, with three- and five-year programmes (under the umbrella of secondary education in Egypt). This section will focus on technical education, vocational training and guidance, and the recognition of qualifications. It also explores legislation related to primary education and the Egyptian education system as a whole, as it has impacts on technical secondary education.

Technical education and vocational guidance and training

Egyptian law does not make specific provisions for non-national students seeking technical education or vocational training. However, access to public educational institutions is granted to certain nationalities on the same basis as Egyptians, including Sudanese, South Sudanese, Libyan, Syrian and Yemeni students.

The following laws and decrees lay out the practice of secondary education, which includes technical education, and access pertaining to refugees in Egypt, as well as the legislations regulating their access to vocational training.

Egyptian law contains contradicting provisions regarding access to education for non-nationals and refugees. According to the 2014 Constitution, the right to education is confined to citizens, similar to the provisions of Law No. 139/1981 on promulgating education. However, Egypt's Child Law No. 12/1996, Article 52, indicates that education is an entitlement owed to all children, regardless of nationality. This law applies to all under the age of 18, while the minimum age for employment is 15.

In 1992, Presidential Decree No. 24 was issued, giving Sudanese (and South Sudanese) and Libyan children of recognized refugees, as well as children who have received a scholarship from the UNHCR, access to public schools. The decree includes Palestinian children whose parents work in the public sector or the military, and the children of political refugees who were granted refugee status by the President Office under Article 53 of the former constitution. Similarly in 2012, after the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, a presidential decree was issued, giving Syrian refugees access to public education, as well as other subsidized services, on the same basis as Egyptians.

Despite the inclusive approach of the Child Law, the entitlement of non-nationals to education is limited by Decree No. 284/2014. It generally prohibits non-nationals from accessing the public school system but does allow access to private schools. Depending on their nationality, some non-nationals are allowed to enrol in public schools for an additional fee. The decree permits Sudanese and Libyan students, students enrolled in a scholarship from the UNHCR, and children of Palestinians who are employed in or retired from the government, the public sector or the armed forces in Egypt, to access public primary and secondary education; it does not address tertiary education.⁷

The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) issued a decree in 2016 allowing Syrian refugees who obtained their secondary school certificates from an Egyptian public school to access universities on the same basis as Egyptians. While Syrian refugee youth with a secondary school certificate from Syria will need to pay 50 per cent of the non-national students' fees, reaching more than US\$2,500 annually, all other Syrian youth with a secondary school certificate obtained outside Egypt or Syria will need to pay the full fees for non-national students. Palestinian students with a high school certificate from Palestine also receive a discount rate up to 50 per cent. However, Palestinian students with a high school certificate, obtained from outside Palestine or even from Egypt, pay the full fees (Cairo University 2017). With regard to Sudanese and South Sudanese students, the Office for Foreign Students' Affairs at Cairo University (2017) announced that as of 2002 they would receive a discount rate of up to 90 per cent on the tuition fees.

A 2018 Administrative Order from the Ministry of Education stipulates that Syrian and Yemeni students should be treated the same as Egyptian students when it comes to primary education. It allows Syrian and Yemeni students to access public primary and secondary schools, subject to the same fees and conditions as Egyptians. This was also indicated in a Presidential Decree in 2012.

Documented procedures for refugees to apply for technical education were not made available until 2019. MoETE, jointly with the UNHCR, published the Guidelines for Foreign Students, which is inclusive of refugees, to address the application process to educational institutions in Egypt. Based on these guidelines, the following steps were extracted from a previous ILO report (2021) to cover procedures for refugees applying for enrolment in technical education institutions.

To access the public education system in Egypt, the required documentation from refugees includes a government-issued residence permit, birth certificate, valid passport or national identity document, school certificate from the country of origin and a letter from UNHCR Egypt. A school certificate of previous education must have been delivered in the preceding two years. It has to be submitted to the education authorities, who will determine whether it is considered equivalent to the Egyptian school certificates or not. Refugees and asylum seekers who do not have a proof of academic certificates or skills, or those who do have academic certificates that are older than two years or who have not completed middle school, would need to receive recognition of prior learning in order to access the technical education system in Egypt (ILO 2021).

⁷ Jordanian and Saudi Arabian students also receive these rights under the same decree.

Obviously, it is difficult for refugees to provide the documentation required by education officials. To overcome this obstacle, the MoE established a levelling exam for prospective students with no documents (except for their UNHCR registration card) so that they could access school and receive a residency permit, based on their registration in school. This exam is conducted to determine the academic level of each applicant and to see whether their knowledge and skills meet the requirements. It is held twice a year under the responsibility of the General Administration for Examination, in collaboration with the Foreign Students Department (ILO 2021). Students can approach the Student Affairs and Examinations Section at the Educational Administrative Zone (*Idara Ta'alemeyya*) in their area of residence with a valid residence permit to arrange for the levelling exam, free of charge.

Given that several ministries have their own vocational training centres and are affiliated with certain technical education schools, there are differences in the rules and requirements for enrolment in each school. For example, the Productivity and Vocational Training Department (PVT) under the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) requires a health certificate confirming a negative HIV status for the student. Upon completion of the required documents, the student receives a letter of enrolment addressed to the school they intend to join (ILO 2021).

As mentioned previously, the Egyptian law does not make specific provisions for non-nationals seeking vocational guidance and training, although these are addressed in Book 3 of the Labour Law (No. 12/2003). It recognizes that individuals have the right to vocational training enabling them to acquire and develop the knowledge and skills required for the labour market. However, it does not mention non-nationals. This law also aims to regulate formal and informal apprenticeship.

Decree No. 175/2003, Article 1, issued by MoM, defines vocational apprenticeship as “engaging the apprentice with the employers for the purpose of learning a certain vocation during a specific time period according to an agreement to be concluded between the worker or his guardian and the employer for that purpose. It shall be prohibited to engage the apprentice in learning the vocations that children are prohibited to work therein, according to the ministerial decrees issued on this matter.”

Regarding age, Decree No. 414/2015 under MoM limits the age of apprenticeship to a minimum of 13 years and maximum of 17 years. It allows apprenticeship durations to range between one and three years, to be regulated under the ministry. It also decreased daily working hours for apprentices from eight to six hours, contrary to the stipulation in the Ministerial Decree No 230/2007.

Apart from apprenticeships, Decree No. 562 of 2014, under MoETE, establishes the “Oumal system” or “Lifelong-learning system” for workers of 18 years and over. Several short- and long-term vocational training centres are administered under or supervised by MoM, MoETE, MoTI (namely the PVT), Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Electricity and Power, Ministry of Petroleum, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Local Development, Ministry of Housing Utilities and Urban Communities. Some of them may be owned and managed by NGOs. In general, they focus on providing vocational training programmes and courses, targeting semi-skilled workers, the uneducated and unemployed, usually in the age range between 15 and 45 years (ILO 2021c; ETF 2020).

Recognition of qualifications and prior learning

Recognition of qualifications is generally referred to as the mechanisms that acknowledge the skills of workers and trainees, such as official degrees and certificates (ILO 2021c). To validate their skills, refugees and asylum seekers require recognition of: 1, their qualifications, whether obtained from Egypt or elsewhere in order to facilitate their entrance to the labour market; 2, prior learning, including the vocational training they have received, whether formal or informal, short or long term. Recognition of prior learning frameworks are not yet fully operational in Egypt.

Refugees and asylum seekers may benefit from having their qualifications recognized in a number of ways. Levelling exams, which only require a UNHCR card and a valid residence permit, are conducted twice a year, although Syrians can be exempted from this process. Sudanese refugees are also exempted, as their school certificates are recognized in Egypt. The degree equivalence process is far more complex and expensive and requires applicants to present a copy of their passport as well as an original copy of their degree.

Regarding recognition of educational qualifications, a placement exam is conducted according to age and academic level for non-nationals, including refugees who were unable to obtain proof of their previous studies, holders of certificates that have not been notarized, and holders of certificates that are older than two years. The General Administration for Examination, in collaboration with the Foreign Students Department under MoETE, administers the placement exams and organizes them twice a year (ILO 2021c). To qualify for a placement exam, refugee students need to apply to the Student Affairs and Examinations Section at the Educational Administrative Zone (*Idara Ta'lemeya*) in their area of residence, submitting a valid residency permit along with their UNHCR card. The department will arrange for placement exams accordingly (ILO 2021c); they are free of charge for all non-national students of all nationalities. Successful students receive a *Wafedeen* (migrants) letter stating that they passed the exam and the results are to be submitted to the school.

Certain exemptions to such levelling exams are given on the basis of nationality and effective bilateral agreements. In the case of Syrians, the MoHE issued a decree in 2016 allowing Syrian refugees who obtained their secondary school certificates from an Egyptian public school to access universities on the same basis as Egyptians. Syrian refugee youth with a secondary school certificate from Syria have to pay 50 per cent of the non-national students' fee, reaching approximately US\$2,500 annually (ILO 2021c). All other Syrian youth with a secondary school certificate obtained outside Egypt or Syria will need to pay the full fee for non-Egyptian students – in the range of US\$6,000–8,000 (Younes 2022).

Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt can access the Egyptian education system as a result of bilateral agreements between Egypt and Sudan, meaning that Sudanese students can enter Egyptian higher education with their Sudanese school certificate (Kurokawa 2021).

The procedures for degree equivalence established by the Supreme Council for Universities are as follows. The degree must be notarized by the institution responsible for accreditation and the Egyptian Cultural Affairs attaché in the country where the degree was received. It must then also be notarized by the embassy in Cairo of the country where the degree was received, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, before an application can be submitted with the required documentation, together with an official translation if the degree was not issued in English or Arabic, to the Supreme Council for Universities (Fares 2021). The application form and fee payment must both be completed online through the website of the Supreme Council for Universities (Fares 2021). Egyptians and non-Egyptians alike must submit a copy of their passport that includes a visa or other document proving their lawful residence in the country where they received their certificate. The application fees for non-Egyptians are 800 pounds (US\$42) for a bachelor's degree, 1,000 pounds (US\$53) for a master's degree, and 1,200 pounds for a doctoral degree, in addition to a 20 to 65 pound (US\$1 to 3.5) printing fee for the equivalence certificate, depending on the degree level.

Regarding training, the Egyptian Labour Law (No. 12/2003) Article 139 stipulates that “vocational training operations shall grant the trainee a certificate indicating that s/he successfully passed the training program held by it, and indicating the level s/he has reached”. The organization authorized to be the sole representative of City and Guilds for vocational qualifications is the Qualifications Development Bank (QDB), which was established as a non-profit organization in 2012. The QDB has certified more than 3,500 trainees or learners to international standards in collaboration with Egyptian TVET institutions and employer organizations. Of those learners, it has been documented that 80 per cent were able to move into the labour market. According to the QDB, a limited number of the certified learners were non-nationals living in Egypt (ILO 2021c). It is not clear if those certified non-nationals included refugees and asylum seekers.

In the case of recognition of prior learning (RPL), there is a policy that fosters the recognition of informal and non-formal training, but it does not specifically mention refugees. However, the alignment between RPL and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is yet to be fully operational in Egypt. One of the key aims of the Egyptian NQF is to facilitate the recognition of prior learning by establishing accreditation rules, including reference standards for qualification levels based on learning outcomes. However, the development of alignment of the RPL policy to the NQF has not yet started.

Rights at work

The issue of rights at work encompasses several obligations by governments and employers towards workers. First, working conditions include a wide range of issues such as working hours, rest periods, occupational safety and health as well as remuneration. Second, social security is broadly understood as a contribution-based health, pension, and unemployment protection, as well as providing tax-financed social assistance and benefits that include maternity and disability benefits, and healthcare. Access to healthcare will be addressed broadly under social security in this report. Third, occupational safety and health addresses the principle that workers are protected from illness, disease and injury in the workplace, and oversees the implementation of prevention and mitigation strategies. Fourth, freedom of association specifically addresses the rights of workers and employers to form and join associations and organizations, such as trade unions and employer's organizations, which can exercise and provide support for collective bargaining and open dialogue. Lastly, access to justice and grievance mechanisms refers to the ability for workers to have their grievances addressed by their employer, and if necessary, access courts when it comes to work-related disputes.

By and large, the rights at work defined above are largely dependent on the ability to secure formal employment, which is not the case for the majority of Egyptians, let alone refugees and asylum seekers living in Egypt. Many of these rights go unrecognized for those who have no choice but to work informally. The following sections will describe the regional and national laws, policies and regulatory frameworks that address the rights at work outlined above.

Working conditions

The Egyptian Labour Law (No. 12/2003) provides the most robust description of working conditions for workers in Egypt. The right to just and favourable working conditions is applicable to Egyptians and non-nationals alike; they include topics such as working hours (eight hours per day, 40 hours per week for a five-day work week, up to 48 hours per week for a six-day work week), remuneration, annual leave, sick leave and procedures for termination and dismissal. The Labour Law also prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of gender, race, language, religion, origin or personal beliefs. Women are granted the right to maternity leave for three months for up to three children, provided they made contributions to social insurance for a minimum of ten months. There are no provisions for paternity leave. Finally, the labour code explicitly excludes domestic workers.

The Egyptian Senate provided preliminary approval for a draft of the new labour law in January 2022. Provisions on working conditions remain the same but if the new law is adopted, they will extend to new categories of workers, including many types of informal workers. It will be worthwhile to revisit the law once it is passed to understand its potential impact on refugee and asylum seekers working informally in the same categories.

Social security

The 2014 Egyptian Constitution provides for social security.⁸ For those who do not have social security, social assistance is available to citizens in the event of their physical incapacity, old age or unemployment, and are unable to support themselves and their families. However, there is no reference to non-nationals.

Egypt had several laws governing social security, including No. 179/1975 on Social Insurance, No. 108/1976 on Social Insurance for Employers, No. 50/1978 on Social Insurance for Egyptians Working Abroad. In 2019, Egypt issued the new Social Insurance and Pension Law (No. 148/2019) that unifies all social security laws and includes insurance against old age, disability, death, employment injuries, temporary disability due to sickness or maternity, and unemployment (Youssef and Abouzekry 2019). The law extends to certain informal and seasonal workers and includes newspaper sellers, shoeshiners and some domestic

⁸ Egyptian law translated into English refers to social insurance, rather than social security. This section will use the term social security, except when referring to the laws, in which case the direct translation "social insurance" will be used.

workers such as chauffeurs, among others (Ghazal 2021). The law also outlines contribution rates for each category of workers, reducing the contribution rates from 26 to 12 per cent for employers and 14 to 9 per cent for workers, and calculates pensions based on the average monthly wage (Korashi 2020). Informal workers included under the law may register and pay 9 per cent of their monthly wages, matched by a treasury contribution of 12 per cent (Korashi 2020). They are required to be licensed in order to enrol (Korashi 2020), but it is unclear how or for what such a vast variety of informal workers can be licensed. There are no provisions that address refugees and asylum seekers in particular; however, the law applies to all workers covered by the law, whether Egyptian or non-nationals. The law makes the distinction between workers who work within a home, such as a maid or nanny, and domestic workers who work outside the home, for example as a chauffeur, and excludes domestic workers who work within a home.

Egypt has several bilateral social security agreements with Sudan, Greece, Cyprus, Tunisia, the Netherlands and Morocco. The most notable of these is Egypt's agreement with Sudan, since there is a sizable Sudanese community and very few or no refugees from the other five countries. Rather than benefit refugees, the agreements are meant to benefit Egyptian migrant workers in these countries. The agreement with Sudan has provisions for portability of benefits, or the transfer of contributions to the country of origin (ILO 2017a). However, they would only apply to Sudanese migrant workers intent on returning to Sudan and having their benefits transferred, rather than Sudanese refugees staying in Egypt.

In terms of social assistance, the Ministry of Social Solidarity is responsible for two cash transfer programmes, *Takaful* and *Karama*, conditional and unconditional, respectively. The programmes were established through Ministerial decrees nos. 230/2015 and 548/2015, which outlined the beneficiaries and the implementation of the programme. Non-nationals, including refugees and asylum seekers, are not eligible to benefit from these programmes.

In 2018, Egypt passed the Universal Health Insurance Law (No. 2/2018), which is concerned with extending universal health coverage, the purchasing and provision of health services, and financial protection to all Egyptians by 2032. The law is currently being implemented in phases starting with Port Said, Suez, Ismailia, North Sinai, South Sinai and Alexandria, and will expand geographically until full implementation when it comes to term. Greater Cairo will be the last area to implement the law, and until then, existing laws and regulations remain in place (Raslan 2019). It concerns Egyptians and non-nationals residing in Egypt on a permanent or temporary residence permit for work, tourism or education (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). The Executive Regulation of the law provides that authorities set up a programme that covers non-nationals in several categories, including permanent residents, those residing in Egypt for work, those entering Egypt for business, tourism or educational purposes, and refugees (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Law No. 23/2012 on Regulating Health Insurance for Working Women applies to unsupported women and their families and has provisions for medical and rehabilitation services in case of illness or accident. The law is not explicitly limited to nationals. Refugees and asylum seekers can benefit from this insurance if they are women who support themselves (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). Likewise, Law No. 99/1992 has provisions for health insurance for students between kindergarten and general or vocational secondary school; it does not exclude non-Egyptians and can apply to refugees and asylum seekers if they attend school (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Ministerial Decree No. 601/2012 outlines the work between the Ministry of Health and the UNHCR to provide preventative and curative healthcare to refugees in public health facilities. There is also the MoU that was signed in 2016 between Egypt and the UNHCR to collaborate on access to primary and referral care, including emergency services to refugees and asylum seekers (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). This includes improving access to mental health services in Abbasiya and Helwan in Cairo and in Ma'moura in Alexandria.

Ministerial Decree No. 239/1997 states that private hospitals may set prices for Egyptians and non-nationals which can be determined by each hospital's board of directors, unless other decrees dictate that certain non-nationals can receive medical treatment under the same pricing as Egyptians (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Occupational safety and health

Book 5 of the Labour Law (No. 12/2003) is devoted to occupational safety and health and the adequacy of the work environment and includes the agriculture, construction and service industries. Ministerial decrees nos. 126/2003, 134/2003 and 211/2003 outline the procedures and forms for the documentation and notification of work-related accidents, injuries, fatalities and illnesses, define the types of establishments covered and OSH institutions, and specify the conditions and precautions necessary for the provision of OSH measures, respectively (Abo El Ata and Nahmias 2005). Ministerial Decree No. 932/1969 established the National Institute of Industrial Security, which was later reformed through the Labour Law to become the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. The laws do not distinguish between Egyptians and non-nationals. Lastly, as previously mentioned, the new Social Insurance Law includes insurance against employment injuries for all the workers it covers.

Freedom of association

The Labour Law (No. 12/2003) devotes Book 4 to labour relations, including the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The right to freedom of association for workers is also included in the Trade Union Law (No. 213/2017) and applies to workers in the public and private sectors, including civil servants, workers in companies of the public sector, workers in the private and investment sectors, and agricultural and domestic service workers, and thus does not apply to informal workers. The law does not differentiate between Egyptians and non-nationals (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky, 2020). To join a trade union, a person must be at least 15 years old and be working in the profession of the trade union, not be an employer, and not be a member of another trade union of a similar nature (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky, 2020). Members of trade unions enjoy specific benefits such as taking educational courses, improving professional skills, improving their health and economic and social standing, and exercising the right to peaceful strikes (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky, 2020).

Law No. 142/2019 amends some provisions of the Trade Union Law, namely articles 11, 12, 67, 68 and 76. The amended articles changed the minimum requirements for establishing a trade union, general union, and federation, including reducing the minimum number of members needed to establish unions. The amended articles also outline the penalties for violation of the law, which are now only fines.

Access to justice and grievance mechanisms

Book 4 of the Egyptian Labour Law (No. 12/2003) is devoted to collective labour relations, including labour disputes and trade unions; the latter can act as a channel for worker grievances in the workplace. In case of legal disputes, the labour circuit of the Court of First Instance deals with complaints and cases between employers and workers. The law also outlines the procedures for investigating workers and imposing disciplinary penalties.

In general, refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to access the justice system on an equal footing to Egyptians, as there are no laws in place that distinguish between Egyptians and non-nationals (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky, 2020). However, refugees and asylum seekers who do not speak Arabic may experience difficulties in accessing the justice system.

Naturalization and social integration

There are few pathways to citizenship for refugees and asylum seekers. Apart from marrying an Egyptian or having at least one Egyptian parent, long-term residents can become naturalized. However, it remains to be seen whether this law applies in practice to refugees.

Nationality Law No. 26/1975 dictates how Egyptian nationality can be obtained. It considers the following to have Egyptian nationality:

- ▶ those with Egyptian fathers;
- ▶ those born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother but whose a father is stateless or of unknown nationality;
- ▶ those born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother but whose father is unknown;
- ▶ those born in Egypt but whose parents are unknown.

The law includes provisions for those born abroad to Egyptian mothers. Regarding the process of obtaining Egyptian citizenship by decree of the Minister of Interior, the law provides that:

- ▶ those born in Egypt of an Egyptian father can apply for Egyptian nationality considering they have retained residence in Egypt and are of legal age at the time of the application;
- ▶ those of Egyptian origin and have resided in Egypt for five years and are of legal age at the time of application;
- ▶ those born in Egypt of a non-Egyptian father who was also born in Egypt if the country of origin's primary language is Arabic or the applicant is Muslim;
- ▶ those born in Egypt and have maintained residence upon reaching legal age, considering they have mental stability and have no disabilities, have a good reputation and no criminal offences, speak Arabic, and are able to be gainfully employed;
- ▶ those who have been residents in Egypt for ten years and meet the conditions under the preceding item. Non-nationals may become citizens by presidential decree if they are considered to have provided exceptional and honourable service to Egypt.

The regulation of Egyptian nationality through marriage and birth is highly gendered. The Nationality Law was amended through Law No. 154/2004 to allow Egyptian women to pass their nationality to their children regardless of the father's status or place of birth. However, unlike Egyptian men, Egyptian women are not able to transmit nationality to their non-Egyptian spouse (Manby 2016). The law was amended once again through Law No. 173/2018 to include provisions for granting citizenship to non-nationals who deposit at least 7 million pounds in Egyptian banks and retain at least five years of residency at the time of their application (Al Masry, Al Youm 2019).

► 2.4 Current gaps in legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks

Overall, Egyptian national legislation makes little or no reference to refugees and asylum seekers, with the exception of Article 91 of the 2014 Constitution which states that Egypt will guarantee political asylum to non-nationals who have been persecuted for defending human rights, peace and justice, and prohibits the extradition of refugees. However, this provision has mostly been used to grant asylum to deposed heads of state and allied political figures (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). Otherwise, Egypt does not have national asylum legislation or procedures, rather delegating all responsibility over refugees and asylum seekers to the UNHCR through the MoU. Thus, many rights accorded to refugees are stronger under international and regional laws rather than national laws, for example, the right to seek asylum and protection from refoulement (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Generally, refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt are treated in the same way as other non-nationals before the law. In some cases, decrees are issued that provide preferential treatment to certain nationalities; however, this is made on a case-by-case basis and can often lead to confusion regarding the intended provisions of the law. Furthermore, refugee communities that are not being granted preferential treatment on a case-by-case basis can end up feeling excluded and neglected. The situation of refugees and asylum seekers would benefit from the development of a national asylum law, which sets out a domestic RSD process, procedures for obtaining residency and work permits, refugee rights to work, education, health and housing, among others, with pathways to social integration. Although a draft asylum law has been announced, its contents have not yet been disclosed (Sharafeldin 2020). As stated previously, other policies under discussion include a new labour law and a draft domestic worker's law. These can also improve the legal framework for the access of refugees and asylum seekers to the labour market.

Lastly, many of the barriers faced by refugees are characterized by the lack of documentation normally required of non-nationals in Egypt, the most important of which is a valid passport. This requirement is not one that refugees are normally able to fulfil, owing to their flight from their home countries, their legal status, and the risks associated with engaging with the embassies of their countries of origin. These barriers could be eased by drafting policies that allow UNHCR cards to serve as official forms of identification in lieu of passports across the public and private sectors.

Access to the labour market

Policies on access to the labour market are limited in that they only apply to formal employment, whereas the majority of refugees work in the informal economy. The existing labour law should cover all workers, in the formal or informal economy.

Legal identity and registration

Apart from the MoU between UNHCR and the Egyptian government, there are no national laws or documents specifically addressing the legal identity and registration of refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. The residence permits issued by the government do not give non-nationals the right to work, only the right to reside lawfully in Egypt. There are inconsistencies between the current validity of the yellow and blue cards (18 months and three years, respectively), the duration of the residence permits permitted by law (three years) and the current practice (six months) that may be useful to resolve by law. The law should clearly identify the rights and protections of refugees and asylum seekers and grant them longer-term residence permits that can allow them to benefit from other services such as livelihood, healthcare and education. Furthermore, residence permits issued by the Egyptian government could serve as identification documents in place of passports or UNHCR cards.

Freedom of movement

Refugees and asylum seekers have freedom of movement in Egypt. This freedom can be affected by the short-term duration of the residence permit, which is renewable every six months, putting refugees at risk if it expires during the process of renewal. As mentioned above, this could be resolved by prolonging the duration of the residence permit.

Employment

The legal framework makes access to employment for non-nationals extremely difficult. As set out in the Refugee Convention, the law does not make exceptions for refugees when it comes to restrictions placed on the employment of non-nationals, although some exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis, whether in exemptions from the principle of non-competition or from work permit fees. Furthermore, the current law requires non-nationals to present a valid passport in order to obtain a work permit. As has been mentioned, a new law recognizing UNHCR cards as valid forms of identification would be an important first step in easing refugee access to employment. The law should also codify the provisions of the 1951 Convention by lifting restrictions on refugees who have been in the country for three years or have a spouse or child with Egyptian nationality.

Self-employment

Given that the legal framework stipulates that any non-national who wishes to start a business must submit a valid passport to obtain a business licence and a security clearance, refugees without passports would be unable to apply. Establishing a business becomes difficult for refugees, given that their specific status is not recognized and is not differentiated from that of other non-nationals under the law.

Access to finance

There is no law that specifically prohibits or clarifies the access to finance of refugees and asylum seekers. Rather, the gap in the ability of refugees to access financial services is epitomized by the obstacles encountered in their legal status. Neither the blue nor the yellow UNHCR cards are recognized as sufficient identification documents. Other documentation that refugees need to open a bank account, such as proof of valid accommodation and an employer's letter, are difficult to obtain if they are renting or working without a contract. A law or policy indicating that UNHCR cards be accepted as a valid form of identification would facilitate the access of refugees and asylum seekers to finance and banking services. Once they are able to open a bank account, their access to loans and other services will improve.

Employment services

The Ministry of Manpower does not dedicate employment services or programming specifically to the refugee population, who are treated in the same way as non-nationals. Furthermore, employment services target the formal labour market, while refugees are currently working informally. Private recruitment services may cater to the informal labour market; however, they can also leave refugees and asylum seekers vulnerable to exploitative conditions.

Cooperatives

Refugees and asylum seekers can become members of cooperatives but cannot serve on the board of directors. An amendment that would allow this might encourage active engagement and interest in cooperatives.

Access to training and education

Technical education

A unifying law is needed to clarify the access of refugees and asylum seekers to education in general and technical education in particular. Policies must recognize the legal status of refugees when requesting paperwork, including, but not limited to, identification documents such as passports and proof of educational attainment. There should be alternative ways for refugees to complete the required paperwork, such as entrance exams and recognition of the UNHCR-issued blue and yellow cards as forms of identification.

Vocational training and guidance

Egyptian law does not make specific mention of non-nationals when it comes to vocational guidance and training. Refugees and asylum seekers are, in theory, able to access training opportunities.

Recognition of qualifications and prior learning

There is no policy that establishes a framework for recognition of prior learning. The procedures in place concern equivalence degrees for non-nationals in general. They present obstacles to refugees who may not have access to the paperwork required to complete the process, such as their original certificates or transcripts.

Rights at work

Working conditions

Domestic workers cannot enjoy the protection of the Labour Law and the provision of just and favourable working conditions because it explicitly excludes them. Informal workers lack a written contract, which means they are also unable to enjoy many of their rights at work and proper working conditions. The Egyptian Senate has given preliminary approval of a draft of the new labour law, which is likely to include certain categories of informal workers. Also, a draft domestic workers' law has been submitted to the Egyptian Parliament in 2021. There is an opportunity for existing and new laws to guarantee all workers a contract, thereby ensuring a mutual understanding of just and favourable working conditions.

Social security

In theory, social security, or social insurance, as it is referred to in Egyptian law, covers all workers, Egyptian and non-nationals. Refugees can access social security if they are formally employed, or if they are informally employed in the sectors covered. However, they face barriers in the registration process as they do not have the documentation required. In 2018, the Universal Health Insurance Law was passed: it includes informal workers as well as non-nationals living and working in Egypt.

Occupational safety and health

Occupational health and safety laws, institutions and systems are in place. In theory, refugees could benefit from these protections if they are formally employed. Informal workers are unable to benefit from the provisions of such a framework.

Freedom of association

The right to freedom of association is enshrined in the Egyptian Labour Law and the Trade Union Law (No. 213/2017) and its amendment (No. 142/2019) and applies to workers in the public and private sectors, in companies of the public sector, in the private and investment sector, and agricultural and domestic workers. It does not apply to informal workers. However, refugees can benefit from the provisions of the law if they work formally in the above sectors.

Access to justice and grievance mechanisms

Owing to the nature of their working conditions, it is unlikely that grievance mechanisms are in place for informal workers. In the case of employment disputes, refugees and asylum seekers are also unlikely to access justice because they are probably working without contracts. They are, however, legally entitled to admittance to the courts. Access to justice is granted to Egyptians and non-nationals alike, but those who do not speak Arabic face more difficulties than those who do. There is no legal gap concerning access to justice but could be improved by addressing implementation gaps.

Naturalization and social integration

Laws related to naturalization are highly restrictive in Egypt. It is difficult for refugees to acquire Egyptian nationality, unless they marry Egyptians. Although the law states that those who have been residents for ten years may apply for Egyptian citizenship, it is unclear whether this applies to those with renewed short-term, six-month, residency. It may be useful to consider creating pathways to naturalization for refugees, aimed at their overall social integration.

► 2.5 Current practice of relevant legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks

This section details the current practice with regard to the implementation of relevant legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks based on the data collected in Giza, Alexandria and Damietta, as well as in relevant literature. KIIs with stakeholders and FGDs with refugee men and women, as well as Egyptian men and women, were conducted to assess their access to the labour market, access to training and education, rights at work, naturalization and social integration.

Access to the labour market

Legal identity and registration

As indicated in the previous sections, refugees have the right to obtain residence permits in Egypt. However, according to the Egypt Vulnerability Assessment for Refugees (EVAR) 2018, a quantitative survey conducted by the UNHCR on the conditions of refugees and asylum seekers of various nationalities living in Egypt, only 37 per cent of the respondents had valid residence permits, with significant differences observed between different refugee groups. Particularly among Arabic-speaking refugees, the percentage of holders of valid residence permits reached 42 per cent, with the highest rates among Yemenis (62 per cent), Syrians (46 per cent) and Iraqis (44 per cent). The type of residence permits that refugees can obtain may differ, as indicated in the “2.3 Current national legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks” section. Out of those who held valid residence permits, 52 per cent had an education residence permit, followed by 28.5 per cent who had a UNHCR card and 8.7 per cent with a tourism residence permit. One of the reasons why refugees will often apply for education permits if they can, as indicated above, is that

they are valid for one year, as opposed to the six-month permits they obtain with their UNHCR cards or tourism permits, and do not require constant renewal. As tourism residence permits can only be obtained with valid passports, the number of refugees who are able to obtain them is limited, as indicated in the EVAR study percentages. According to the EVAR study, only 9 per cent had a valid passport while 62 per cent had an expired passport and 30 per cent had no passport at all (UNHCR 2018b).

Many, if not all, the refugee and asylum seekers who took part in the field research and the FGDs were holders of the UNHCR yellow and blue cards, which are tied to a six-month residence permit. Some of the refugees who did not or were unable to obtain UNHCR cards obtained a temporary tourism residence permit instead, in the hope that it might facilitate access to more services. Tourism residence permits can be obtained through the different branches of the Immigration Department under the Ministry of Interior, where the process is relatively fast and the fees are affordable, approximately 300 pounds (US\$16). The refugee participants, as well as some key informants, indicated that the process was decentralized and rapid, yet slightly more expensive than the residence permits associated with the UNHCR cards. It was also mentioned that the renewal of tourism residence permits may require the holder to leave and re-enter the country. It is worth noting that none of the FGD participants were unregistered; they all had either a UNHCR card or a tourism residence permit. However, some said that there was no significant difference between the two types of permits. On another front, some refugees thought that the residence permits associated with their blue or yellow UNHCR cards were more beneficial than the tourism residence permits (which are usually tied to passports), as they would receive cash assistance and work for money or food vouchers through their UNHCR registration cards.

In order to obtain or renew the residence permits associated with their UNHCR cards, refugees indicated that they needed to have their UNHCR cards, a copy of their passports, if available, passport-sized photos and their UNHCR reference number. Respondents explained that the process of renewal for this type of residence permit was long, hectic and unsustainable, since it had to be done every six months, during which time they are already preparing to renew their permits. It was also mentioned that the applications for residence permits are processed and issued only at the Passports and Immigration Administration in Abbasiya. Participants said that they have to appear in person to complete all the procedures, regardless of their place of residence in Egypt, and they found that travelling there was a distressing experience. However, it was noted that the fees for issuing and renewing the permits were nominal, approximately 100 pounds (US\$5).

Regarding the application and renewal of UNHCR cards, refugees said that the process was clear, though time-consuming. However, the majority of participants explained that they faced major challenges during the outbreak of COVID-19 because of interruptions in the UNHCR office operations, preventing them from receiving or renewing their cards, creating hurdles in many of the services, including delays in their children's school applications and entry. Without proper card issuance or renewals, their children had to miss considerable time at school, with some even having to drop out for the whole academic year. However, there was no mention of how this affected their employment, since the majority did not seek to access work permits because of the difficulty in obtaining them.

Freedom of movement

A residence permit or passport are the official documents required from a refugee to move freely within the country. With freedom of movement granted as indicated under the 1951 Convention, refugee participants did not consider it to be an issue or a challenge in Egypt. It was only viewed as restricted for workers who had their passports illegally confiscated by their employers, which is the case for some domestic workers. Movement was also sometimes restricted for refugees residing outside Cairo, particularly those living in Damietta, who intend to renew their residence permits. In order to commute to Cairo, where the renewal procedures are centralized, refugees were required to have valid residence permits in hand. Given that the procedures are lengthy to process, some refugees, mostly Syrians, said that they were afraid of commuting with expired permits as they could risk detainment if they were stopped along the road and interrogated by police officers. The current process may limit their freedom of movement. Approaches to avoiding such incidents are not made clear, and there is no mention of the need to issue alternative documents such as movement passes or a pass system to regulate the movement of refugees if their residence permit has expired and they are travelling to Cairo to renew it.

Employment

According to the 2019 EVAR study, 50 per cent of refugees aged 15 years and over joined the labour force (those who are employed and unemployed), with large disparities between strata. Almost 60 per cent of non-Arabic speakers participated in the labour force, while this percentage decreased to 42 per cent among Syrian refugees. Salaried employment dominates other categories for Syrian refugees, while temporary employment paid by the week, the hour, or according to productivity (occasional or daily workers) is the dominant category for other refugees. The EVAR study also showed that the percentage of unemployed refugees reached 45 per cent among non-Arabic speakers, and that this percentage decreased to 13 per cent among Syrian refugees compared with the previous year (UNHCR 2019b).

Many of the FGD respondents said that they had lost their jobs during the COVID-19 lockdown and they had been unable to re-enter the labour market since then. They also explained that employment is generally difficult for citizens within the context of Egypt, where poverty rates are already high, making it even more challenging and competitive for non-nationals to access the labour market. As previously stated, only 14,601 work permits were issued to non-nationals in 2019 (CAPMAS 2020).

Regarding wage employment, it is evident from primary and secondary research that refugees are largely unable to access the formal labour market owing to their inability to obtain work permits. Formal employment opportunities are scarce, and few work permits are provided to non-nationals, leading to the de facto exclusion of refugees from formal employment. As it appears from the secondary literature, the FGDs and the KIIs, the primary obstacle for refugees is the ability to secure an offer of formal employment. The second most important obstacle is procedural because of the lack of a valid passport to apply for a work permit. The MoM indicated that refugees do not receive special treatment and are required to follow the same laws that apply to non-nationals. Given that the law does not distinguish between non-nationals and refugees, the required documents are not fitting for the situation of refugees in Egypt. Another obstacle is work permit fees, which refugees said were too expensive, even though the employers are responsible for their payment. Consequently, all the refugee participants said that because of the many barriers, they did not consider pursuing work permits to access the formal labour market and preferred being employed informally instead. According to the 1951 Convention, refugees should be exempted from any restrictions placed on the employment of non-nationals, either those who have completed three years of residence in the host country or have a spouse or children possessing Egyptian nationality. While Egypt made no reservations to these provisions of the Convention, it did not enact a domestic law that can enable refugees to enjoy this right.

All participants were aware of the 10 per cent quota placed on non-nationals in the workplaces, as indicated in the Labour Law. However, some key informants said that those significant factors may contribute to hindering employers from employing refugees. Stereotypes of refugees as illiterate and low-skilled make employers reluctant to go through the process of hiring them, thinking they may not be fully productive. Perceived lack of skills, few opportunities for formal employment, and competition with Egyptian workers perpetuate the economic vulnerability of refugees (Abdel-Fattah 2020). As work permits are expensive, employers are not incentivized to cover the associated costs of hiring refugees. According to the MoM and other KIIs, the fees are approximately 5,000 pounds (US\$264) per year for the first year. The MoM, however, highlighted that this is mainly dependent on the nationality of the non-national, as there are bilateral agreements that may exempt some nationalities from the fee. This is in line with the amounts indicated in Ministerial Decree No. 146/2019, as discussed in the section on current legislation, including retroactive fines for those previously working without a work permit. It was also said that in some instances, employers would deduct the fees associated with issuing the work permit from the employee's salary, placing the burden on the worker instead. Hanan, a Syrian refugee in Alexandria explained that "to issue a work permit, my husband and I would be expected to pay 15,000 pounds (US\$791) per person as a fine, given we have not sought a permit from the beginning. And even though this should be covered by the employer, the burden is placed on us." There is also confusion regarding what the issuance of a work permit would mean for the status of the refugee. One of the key informants reported that when trying to hire a refugee, the UNHCR card was not accepted by the MoM. They were also told that in order to obtain a work permit, which grants the holder a residence permit, the refugee would have to cancel the residence permit acquired as a result of their refugee status and give up their UNHCR card. The refugee refused to give up their refugee status, which would put them at risk if their contract ended and their work permit expired.

MoM disclosed that upon their direct approval, certain exceptions can be granted regarding the non-national quota, which can reach 25 per cent for certain professions that are particularly rare within the Egyptian labour market. However, such exceptions can be hard to obtain. The ministry also mentioned that temporary work permits can be obtained while going through the process of obtaining a one-year work permit, if it can be proved that issuance of the work permit may be delayed, which could affect an individual's income generation and livelihood. However, none of the participants in other KIIs or in the FGDs were aware of the existence of temporary work permits. This unawareness signals a lack of alignment between law and practice.

Like their Egyptian counterparts, refugee participants explained that they have to resort to informal employment. With the lack of work permits, refugees said that in most cases, there is no contract between the refugee and the employer. This was also depicted as a common practice among host community members, given the high levels of formality in Egypt. Even though the right to work is granted to refugees, the lack of contracts between the employer and the employee, and their presence in the informal economy, give refugees the false impression that they do not have the right to work in Egypt. This was a recurring statement by the FGD participants. Mai, a refugee in Giza, said, "It is extremely difficult for us to land good opportunities in the absence of binding contracts. Employers manipulate us because of that. The work we occasionally find is usually unpaid or low-paid and the conditions are usually dire. It is as if we are not allowed to be resourceful, earn an income, and make ends meet just because we are refugees here." The interview with MoM further asserts these sentiments, as it was stated that UNHCR cards are not accepted as valid identification to issue work permits.

Partially addressing the issue of the lack of contracts that would ideally protect the labour rights of the refugee within the workplace, the EFRR conveyed that refugees can ask their employer to develop an indicative agreement (without a work permit) between the two parties, as a way to retain their rights in terms of salary, holidays, work conditions and/or work hours. Most refugees and other key informants, whether NGO volunteers or waged employees, were not aware of this option. When it was suggested to them, some mentioned that it would require significant expenses to hire a lawyer if the employer did not adhere to the terms of this indicative agreement. They also thought that the overall process of redeeming their rights through these contracts would not be worth the time and money invested, and that their rights would still be compromised. It was also mentioned during KIIs that employers might be reluctant to hire the refugee in the first place if they were to bring up such an agreement, as they would not want to make themselves vulnerable to legal action.

Several organizations provide job placement and/or job opportunities where refugees are hired on an informal basis. An example of this is Don Bosco,⁹ which was mentioned by some of the refugee participants. Don Bosco is subcontracted by multiple entities, including non-governmental organizations and companies, to train refugees who do not have a chance to enrol in formal education or who do not wish to continue in education. This short-term vocational training covers a wide range of skills including cooking, sewing, makeup, hospitality, hand weaving, car mechanics, welding, plastic waste management and hairdressing. Don Bosco also matches the trainees with job opportunities. However, it was noted that most of the vocational training programmes offered do not provide certification of skills recognition. It was also reported that the wages offered in job placements are usually very low. Mohamed, a Syrian refugee in Alexandria, said, "I was trained by Don Bosco to become an AC technician, a profession that is not very common among Syrian refugees here in Egypt. Luckily now because of that training, I work on a freelance basis."

On another front, some refugees make use of volunteer contracts, which are usually short term for work assignments and do not guarantee any benefits to refugees. They are first endorsed upon negotiation between the employing entity and the refugee to settle on agreeable terms. They usually last six months or a year, and are not associated with any employment benefits, including holidays. However, they are linked to social insurance if the workers and employers wish to make contributions voluntarily to provide

9 Don Bosco is a TVET school (one in Alexandria and one in Cairo), offering high quality Italian technical secondary schools with a three- or five-year technical education programme, where courses are tailored to the Italian higher education standards for technical training institutes, leading to a degree recognized by the Italian Ministry of Education, the European Community and the Egyptian government.

protection against various types of risks, such as income loss caused by livelihood shocks, or work injuries. These contracts are not to be considered formal employment contracts but are mainly provided to give the employee the right to social insurance. It is not clear how common they are among refugees, but many were provided through local and international NGOs. They were also occasionally mentioned during the FGDs in Giza and Alexandria, where refugees rely on wage employment rather than self-employment. Some refugee participants said that being hired on the terms of such contracts was considered relatively safe and has substantially preserved their rights. However, it was also mentioned that the contracts were usually for six months or one year, and would risk not being renewed.

Refugees use the same job-search strategies as their Egyptian counterparts, who are accustomed to navigating the informal economy. It was evident that the primary methods for searching for employment among refugees were the following: 1, word of mouth and referrals; 2, knocking on the doors of shops and restaurants to ask about vacancies; and 3, recruiting agencies and brokers. The first two methods are generally viewed as safe and commonly used approaches to accessing employment in Egypt. Syrians preferred the first two methods for these reasons and because they have access to a wider network of employers (whether Syrians or Egyptians) who are relevant to their job interests and their skills, which include the ability to speak Arabic. Unlike Syrian refugees, those of African nationalities resorted to recruitment agencies and brokers, since many among them search for domestic work and physically demanding labour, which can be found potentially through private recruitment agencies. However, it was clear that both Syrians and Africans relied heavily on social networks as an entry point for accessing information on work opportunities, regardless of which method they used later to search for employment.

Self-employment

Self-employment is more common among Syrian refugees than Africans as Syrians share similar social norms, language and religion to those of the host community, in addition to having access to more capital than refugees of African nationalities. However, some refugees said they were subjected to exploitation and fraud by their Egyptian partners, as the partnership would be carried out informally and as a consequence they would not retain their rights. Nevertheless, Syrian women explained that they could still start their own businesses without necessarily having an Egyptian partner, especially if the business is informal and small. Women mentioned engaging to a larger extent in home-based economic activities, where they feel safer. Some of the activities they spoke of were home catering and cooking, as well as producing handmade items and handicrafts.

The exact number of businesses established by refugees in Egypt is not documented. However, according to an article published by the American Chamber of Commerce (2019), it is believed that there are more than 3,300 Syrian-registered businesses, with more than 30,000 Syrian investors operating in Egypt since 2011, though they are not necessarily refugees. These businesses are mostly small and medium enterprises that employ tens of thousands of individuals. Also, according to the local *Al-Mal* newspaper, 818 Syrian companies were established in the first nine months of 2018, with investments exceeding 1.25 billion pounds (US\$66 million), accounting for a quarter of the number of companies founded by non-nationals in that year. Almost all refugee participants said that self-employment is generally preferred over wage employment within entities or companies. The reasons stated were related to having ownership over finances. They would also be avoiding potential exploitation by employers. As stated by Kabbani (2018), opportunities for self-employment are not always reliable and lucrative, but they do carry some non-monetary rewards that are preferred by refugee entrepreneurs. Out of necessity, and as a reaction to the disadvantages faced by refugees in wage employment, they seek self-employment opportunities for themselves even though they may still be low paid.

As previously mentioned in the “2.3 Current national legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks” section, there are national legal frameworks that regulate the ability of non-nationals to open businesses in Egypt. Nevertheless, these legal frameworks do not facilitate the procedures for refugees and asylum seekers, as discussed in the KIIs, as they still face barriers when setting up their businesses because of lengthy and complicated procedures that require obtaining security clearance and a business licence. The procedures and requirements differed according to the type and size of the business.¹⁰

¹⁰ The minimum budget to establish a business differs from one business type to the other.

Depending on the type, establishing a business requires significant financial capital, which is said to be a challenge for refugees. The KIIs explained that obtaining a business licence boils down to providing a copy of the individual's passport, something that cannot be fulfilled by most refugees. None of the interviewed self-employed refugees had obtained business licences because they were aware that they would need personal identification papers (that is, a passport). The issuance or renewal of a passport is an extremely expensive and risky process for some nationalities. The cost could reach up to US\$300 for a two-year passport (Syrians) and is impossible for other nationalities because of restrictions imposed by their embassies (CMRS and LSE Middle East Studies Center 2021). Many refugees and asylum seekers arrive in Egypt with no identity documents, and the vast majority lack a valid passport (Andrade et al. 2021). As a result, the refugees and asylum seekers who are able to secure the security clearance and business licence are considered an exception (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Therefore, refugees and asylum seekers choose to run their businesses without a licence, which could result in their closure if they were detected by the Egyptian authorities. Some refugee participants in the KIIs said they had resorted to working with an Egyptian business partner to facilitate the application process. However, this may result in tension between the refugee and the partner, as it has been reported that the Egyptian partners usually put little effort into running day-to-day business operations, while demanding a significant share of the profit (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Access to finance

Although a regulatory framework is in place to grant non-nationals access to finance, this is not feasible in practice, for reasons related to the documentation required for opening bank accounts. As mentioned in the "Current legislation" section, a valid passport is essential. UNHCR ID cards cannot be used as a replacement for a passport (Ayoub et al. 2012; CMRS and LSE Middle East Studies Center 2021). Other difficult requirements for refugees and asylum seekers to open a bank account, even if they do possess a valid passport, include a valid residence permit, registered rent contract or proof of ownership of the place of residence, and an employer's letter (ILO 2020). An IFC representative who was interviewed also said that a minimum deposit is required from non-nationals, and that the amount differs from one bank to the other. Across all the FGDs and KIIs, it was said that refugees have no proper access to banking services (including loans), for three reasons: 1, their bank accounts are contingent on the validity of their passports and their residence permits or accommodation; 2, some bank staff practise discriminatory behaviour; and 3, bank staff lack sufficient knowledge of the processes of providing services to refugees in Egypt and are usually wary of breaking the rules of the regulatory framework of the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE). Stemming from this fear, some banks have placed internal policies that exclude refugees. Samira, a Syrian refugee in Damietta, said, "I went to open a bank account for my son but the security at the gate did not even allow me in as he knew from my attire that I am Syrian. He said we do not offer banking services to Syrians here." There may also be language barriers to obtaining banking services for non-Arabic speakers. Overall, it was evident that contradictory statements were made by key informants, and there was overarching confusion regarding the information disseminated on refugee's access to financial services.

On another front, financial service providers (FSPs) register their MSME customers under iScore, the Egyptian Credit Bureau, which is responsible for maintaining a database of credit information for individuals and SMEs in Egypt (iScore 2018). They provide a score based on the customer's credit history. An IFC representative explained that this allows for screening potential customers for credit worthiness. Even though the commercial registry requires passports from non-nationals, iScore adds an additional layer of difficulty for financing MSMEs of refugees by requesting application forms that recognize only Egyptian identification documents. In this case, all non-nationals are excluded, not only refugees, and would mean it is an implementation issue rather than a policy loophole, as the law grants non-nationals access to finance.

Refugees and asylum seekers rely heavily on money transfers and transactions (ILO 2020). With the limitations placed on their access to banking services, they turn to their social networks and primarily their Egyptian counterparts in transferring money through banks and carrying out financial transactions using smart wallets (such as Vodafone Cash and Orange Cash). As a result, several organizations supporting

refugees and asylum seekers have been using alternative means to transfer financial assistance by using smart wallets, too (ILO 2020). This may further promote integration, despite the hurdles faced by refugees, as notions of trust and dialogue become further ingrained between refugees and host communities throughout this process. It can also expose refugees to further vulnerability and exploitation as they rely informally on third parties to transfer money. It was mentioned during the FGDs that the smallest financial transaction requires a valid proof of residence or official documents and thus, refugees, for example, depend on their Egyptian friends to register SIM cards for them. In other words, it also heavily affects refugees' digital inclusion, a resource for job searching, and widens the digital divide.

Even though bank loans are inaccessible to refugees, they can still obtain loans through various microfinance initiatives, administered by non-governmental organizations. A few refugees mentioned obtaining grants and microfinancing through NGOs such as CARITAS. To obtain grants, they had to attend an entrepreneurship workshop, acquire or strengthen a particular skill (sewing, knitting, cooking, and so on) and prepare a business plan as prerequisites. However, the refugee participants said that they were given small loans that could not sustain a successful business. It was suggested in the FGDs and KIIs that instead of NGOs granting loans to individuals, they could provide group lending and microfinancing for refugees so that the capital does not get depleted, while guaranteeing collective self-interest, vast information and capacity sharing, increased discipline, and the development of new social capital.

Employment services

Employment services include career guidance, job search support, skill certification, job placement, and matching services (ILO 2017). Access of refugees and asylum seekers to these services has been limited. A mismatch between the services provided and the needs of refugees and asylum seekers is often apparent (ILO and UNICEF 2021): despite possessing the appropriate credentials, refugees may still face difficulties being matched to suitable jobs. In order to improve the employment services available, the ILO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Manpower, implemented initiatives such as Career Guidance for Youth and Job Creation project (ILO 2017). The ILO has also been spearheading much of the job matching efforts, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, to mainstream the process at the level of Youth Centres and in partnership with the employers' organizations, a number of NGOs and other UN agencies. One of the more notable collaborations is that of the Federation of Egyptian Industries, which is handling an apprenticeship programme to match excelling refugees with job opportunities. Nevertheless, it is hard to determine the extent to which these services and initiatives are accessible to refugees and asylum seekers in practice.

A scattered and limited number of job opportunities within the private sector are offered to refugees. Many refugees rely on recruitment agencies and brokers to search for jobs within the informal economy, especially those of African nationalities and specifically those looking for domestic work and physically demanding jobs. However, many refugees and key informants said that recruitment agencies are not trained for or sensitive to dealing with refugees and matching their skills with the needs of the Egyptian labour market. It was also mentioned that refugees are often exploited by recruitment agencies, which charge fees on their services to refugees and sometimes subject them to fraud or deceit. An Eritrean refugee in Giza explained, "My friends and I paid a visit to a recruitment office to search for work. Even though all the jobs available were targeting Egyptians, the staff locked the doors and insisted we will not be leaving the place unless we paid a fee of 200 pounds (US\$11) each. If it were not for the supportive neighbours and the chaos we caused, we would have probably been forced to pay."

Employment services are few and far between for refugees and asylum seekers, with the primary issue being a gap in implementation. Those that do exist may not offer advice that is applicable to the needs of refugees or asylum seekers and may not recognize the fact that they have probably been working informally. They mostly target the formal labour market; their services might not be tailored specifically for the skills of refugees and asylum seekers and might not recognize how they differ from the host community. Refugees and asylum seekers may resort to private recruitment agencies, which are more tailored to providing jobs in the informal labour market. This may leave them vulnerable to exploitative conditions.

Cooperatives

Field research did not yield any data on the engagement of refugees and asylum seekers with cooperatives. It became clear from the KIIs that since cooperatives are not common among Egyptians, they are also uncommon among refugees. Cooperatives are more common in the agriculture sector, which will rarely apply to non-nationals.¹¹

Access to training and education

Technical education and vocational guidance and training

The interviews with key informants and refugee participants confirmed that currently, Syrian, Sudanese, South Sudanese, Palestinian and Yemeni nationals have access to the public education system on par with Egyptians, free of charge, on the basis of their nationality. Other nationalities do not have the same privilege, which obliges them to join private Egyptian schools, own a valid passport, have a valid residence permit and pay high tuition fees. These conditions may impede refugees from attaining formal education and indicate clear bias on the basis of nationality. According to the report of the Egypt Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers (2019), approximately 20 per cent of refugees had access to Egyptian public schools, with the majority coming from Syria and Yemen.

Access to the public education system includes technical education. None of the refugees participating in the FGDs knew whether technical education was accessible for refugees in general, though two male Eritrean respondents stated that it is accessible to refugees of certain nationalities but is not a common practice. According to the ILO's 2021 report entitled "Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) mapping for refugees, asylum seekers and host communities in Egypt", given the little data received from agencies supporting refugees, it could be concluded that the total number of non-national or refugee students enrolled in technical education is limited. It is not clear from the review whether the technical education system in Egypt has the capacity and the trainers to extend services to refugees.

Apart from the overcrowded classrooms and poor quality of the teaching, refugees do not participate in technical education for several reasons. First, the language barrier: non-Arabic speaking refugees such as South Sudanese are unable to access the technical schooling and information. Syrian respondents also noted that the difference between the Syrian and Egyptian dialects creates some adaptation challenges; they may speak the same language but instruction in the classrooms is colloquial Egyptian Arabic.

Second, few initiatives exist that encourage refugees to consider the Egyptian technical education sector as a viable option. Third, there is confusion and vagueness with regard to refugees' access to technical education, given that the opportunities are not regulated by laws but by ministerial decrees. Fourth, there is lack of awareness of the regulations and guidelines governing the enrolment of refugees and asylum seekers in technical schools. Finally, service providers and partners who support refugees focus their attention on short-term skills development and training (ILO 2021). This is mainly because refugees cannot afford to attend longer training courses if they are working. In addition, NGOs providing this training try to give as many opportunities as possible within their limited resources, which results in shorter courses.

Based on the primary and secondary research on refugees' access to vocational training, multiple actors (governmental and non-governmental) in Egypt work actively to support the integration of refugees into the labour market by offering entrepreneurial and vocational training, as well as start-up grants, to enable them to set up micro enterprises or small income-generating activities that provide means of livelihoods and lead to self-reliance. Moreover, many of these activities and training bring together refugees and host communities, reinforcing social cohesion and resulting in positive economic outcomes. It is worth noting that the 2018 EVAR study indicated that refugees who attained technical and vocational

¹¹ As previously mentioned in the "2.3 Current national legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks" section, foreign nationals are not allowed to own agricultural property in Egypt.

education had an employment rate of 82 per cent, compared with 59 per cent for those with primary and preparatory education, 69 per cent for those with secondary education, and 67 per cent for those with higher education (UNHCR 2018b).

Looking at the technical training programmes announced by the government, it was indicated that even though 10 to 20 per cent of places are dedicated to the recruitment of refugees, the number of refugees joining the training programmes is zero. The MoM representative clarified that this refugee inclusion process is relatively new and might not be well announced yet.

Various NGOs carry training programmes as well as apprenticeship programmes or in-house training within employing entities, administered by the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), and technical schools such as Don Bosco, or small workshops where refugees learn skills such as carpentry and car mechanics. They provide hands-on training in the fields of sewing, knitting, culinary arts, care machinery and general maintenance, which mainly target refugee women.

Multiple key informants said that there is a tendency for refugees to receive non-formal training on the same topic from many different organizations, which reveals that there is no coordination between them. Many of the organizations work in silos, repeating topics and depleting resources by giving out daily stipends with no significant outcome and causing much of the investment and support for refugee employment programmes to have limited results.

Recognition of qualifications and prior learning

Refugees who have obtained their degrees outside Egypt are required to take a levelling exam, apart from those who have earned their degrees from Sudanese educational entities. Sudanese refugees are connected to the Egyptian education system in accordance with the agreement between the two countries, meaning they can enter Egyptian higher education with the Sudanese school certificate. No other nationality enjoys this privilege, and non-Sudanese refugees have to sit a placement exam to determine their educational level, even if they have evidence or a certificate to prove their educational attainment. It is worth mentioning that none of the FGD participants or key informants were aware of this requirement to join technical education, signalling that refugees must be equally unaware that they could pursue this option.

Regardless of whether the refugees have obtained their degrees from Egypt or abroad, and even if they have a work permit, they are still not allowed to practise certain occupations formally unless they also have a specialized licence. These occupations include medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. Participants who earned their degrees in medicine and pharmacy, or have family members with university level science degrees, expressed extreme frustration at being unable to use their degrees because they do not have the special licences to practise their profession and formally join the labour market. Participants had to work in the informal market where they were faced with two scenarios: 1, continue to use their degrees with low pay and unstable work circumstances, providing services primarily within their community; or 2, leave the profession and search for work in Egypt. As indicated by a UNDP, ILO and WFP report (2017), Syrian medical professionals and teachers provide services informally to other Syrians in Egypt, as a way to circumvent the existing labour market restrictions.

From a vocational training standpoint, official certificates from public or private training entities are to be given to the trainees. Some of the entities providing these services, especially NGOs and the small workshops, do not offer recognized certificates. Those that are recognized were mainly obtained from training centres affiliated with a governmental entity. According to the KIIs and ILO's TVET Mapping Report (2021), these certificates are recognized by the Qualifications Development Bank (QDB), a non-profit organization. It is the only awarding body in Egypt serving the vocational sector and the sole authorized representative of City & Guilds for vocational qualifications. It was also said, however, that the number of refugees who obtained these recognized certificates were minimal.

Regarding recognition of prior learning, none of the respondents, whether key informants or refugee participants, were aware of the process for obtaining recognition of their prior learning. This could be attributed to the relatively recent introduction of the RPL policy to the Egyptian context.

Rights at work

Although Egyptian law sets out provisions for rights at work, most of them can only be realized by those formally employed, whether Egyptians or refugees and asylum seekers. Working informally means not benefiting from legal protection, as it concerns working conditions, social security and freedom of association. As previously stated, refugees and asylum seekers end up working in the informal economy, where their working hours are long and their pay is low (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). This is especially concerning in the case of domestic workers, as they are excluded from the current labour law. Other rights are restricted among the host community, refugees and asylum seekers, alike, such as freedom of association. Egyptians have difficulties in establishing and joining trade unions, as well as in exercising their right to strike (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted many discrepancies in rights at work, specifically in social security. In light of the pandemic, the Egyptian government announced plans to provide informal workers with health insurance and emergency aid in March 2021 and disbursed funds in the following six months (Farouk 2021). Refugees were not included in this assistance. And while refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt have legal entitlements to healthcare, the primary issue in their ability to access it is in financing (Habersky and Damir 2021). In addition, public hospitals are often overburdened, leaving many to seek care in private clinics, which are more expensive. However, the Egyptian government included refugees and asylum seekers in its plans to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. As of spring 2021, refugees and asylum seekers registered with the UNHCR were allowed to receive the vaccinations available at the time, AstraZeneca and Sinopharm (Habersky and Damir 2021).

Working conditions

Because refugees and asylum seekers work informally, their situation is often precarious as employers may refuse to pay them, significantly reduce their salary or change the nature and frequency of their work. According to the EVAR study, 35.8 per cent of the refugee respondents reported that acceptance of high-risk, exploitative temporary work by adults was a household coping strategy (UNHCR 2019b). This shows that exploitation is frequent, and refugees have been incapable of reporting or responding to it because 1, there are no formal pathways that would preserve their rights; 2, there is not sufficient legal support; and 3, they are afraid of being involved with the police as they don't want to risk being deported. Exploitation differs depending on the refugee's occupation, sector of activity, nationality and gender. For example, working conditions vary significantly within the informal economy between Syrian refugees and those of African nationalities. It was evident that Syrian refugees were better paid and received more benefits than their African counterparts. Other factors may include linguistic background, higher education levels, preferred skills and more access to capital. An Egyptian participant in Alexandria explained, "Syrians are well aware of their rights and have placed themselves as competitive peers to Egyptians. It is not easy to exploit a Syrian because they are well established here and they have backing from their community. But the Sudanese and Eritreans here are very vulnerable and are in desperate need for money so they become an easy target for theft and usury."

Refugees working informally are subject to long working hours, low pay, no paid sick leave or vacation time, and other benefits afforded to those that work formally. The gap is due primarily to their inability to access the formal labour market, which affects the host communities in the same way because of the size of the informal economy. It was shown from the interviews that working hours, commute allowance and vacations are usually decided with the employer on a friendly basis before the refugee starts on the job. Therefore, the process is highly subjective and very much dependent on the good will of the employer and the refugee's need for the job. Accordingly, there have been multiple accounts of refugee participants falling prey to fraud or exploitation, when the employer decides to give them extra work, reduces their pay or refuses to pay them altogether.

Given that the labour law does not protect or address the rights of domestic workers, many refugee participants and key informants said that this particular group, the majority of whom are African women, faces significant breaches in terms of working conditions. Key informants as well as literature maintain that refugee and migrant domestic workers are at risk of having their pay withheld and their legal documents confiscated by their employers, in addition to being at risk of trafficking and the denial of food and medicine by their employers (Department of State 2021).

Social security

As clarified in the “2.3 Current national legislation, policies and regulatory frameworks” section, social security is an entitlement for all workers, regardless of nationality. However, securing formal employment is an obstacle to realizing this right. The majority of refugees said that they have no access to social insurance or benefits to provide protection against work risks, given that they work in the informal economy. However, those who work under volunteer contracts, as mentioned earlier, have access to social security privileges, but they are not always aware of the terms. Some key informants clarified that they contribute to these volunteer schemes for the employed refugees to provide them with protection against job risks and work injuries.

Social security covers health-related items such as workplace injury. It was also mentioned by the KIIs and the refugee participants that refugees can access public healthcare facilities, a matter that was praised by multiple respondents. However, they may face issues pertaining to the acceptance and sensitivity of healthcare personnel within the public facilities towards refugees. A female Eritrean participant in Giza said, “We are sometimes denied healthcare services at public health clinics just because we are clearly not Egyptians. I showed them my yellow UNHCR card but still, they would not help me. So, we rely on private clinics where the quality is at least better depending on the cost.” Therefore, refugees also face issues in healthcare financing, as many are inclined to resort to private hospitals, which can be very costly. Another matter that was praised during the FGDs and KIIs was the free registration of refugees for the COVID-19 vaccine via the online portal of the MoHP, using their UNHCR registration cards as valid identification documents.

Occupational safety and health

Refugees are entitled to occupational safety and health coverage; however, like many Egyptians, they are not protected if they work in the informal economy. Refugees of African nationalities, in particular, said that they may be subjected to more hazards than those of other nationalities as they are usually given work that is more physically demanding and less safe. This statement was supported by respondents of Syrian and host communities. An Egyptian participant in Alexandria explained, “Africans generally are well built and thus capable of carrying out arduous physical labour, whereas Syrians, for example, are weak, so they are better suited to work in restaurants and shops.” This reveals the false stereotype of African refugees, perceived to be built to perform more physically demanding jobs than their Syrian counterparts.

Freedom of association

Even if non-nationals, though not specifically refugees and asylum seekers, have the right to join trade unions, the refugee communities are not aware of it. Trade unions are depicted as being suitable only for workers in the formal sector. They do not offer much protection or provide services for workers in the informal sector, which is where refugees are predominantly employed. A trade union representative explained, “Given that the labour law does not recognize refugees [as different from non-nationals] in the first place, no efforts are directed towards encouraging their membership into unions. The ILO is thus trying to sensitize union leaders and staff towards the inclusion of refugees into Egyptian unions and recognizing their presence and their role within the workforce.”

Some key informants working within the Egyptian unions were unaware of the status of refugees and the regulations surrounding their access to the labour market. They also said that they do not like to use the term “refugees” but would rather refer to them as non-nationals. One of these key informants noted, “We can no longer refer to Syrians residing in Egypt as refugees. These are people starting their own businesses, so they are technically investors. Also, Egypt does not differentiate between Egyptians and other nationalities in the labour market.” This, however, does not reflect the reality on the ground.

Access to justice and grievance mechanisms

Although refugees and asylum seekers are legally entitled to access courts of justice, many are reluctant to approach law enforcement for fear of encountering further conflict or, if they are irregular refugees, being deported. Referral pathways have been set in place by the UNHCR to give refugees access to judicial services, as mentioned by multiple key informants. Also, a number of NGOs and INGOs contribute to these referral pathways. In some instances, the UNHCR was said to put refugees in contact with lawyers who might help them gain access to justice. Indeed, one of the key informants mentioned that the UNHCR and some NGOs, such as CRS, provide free legal services. However, these free services are not available in all the referral pathways. It was also disclosed that some of the services provided by legal firms are inadequate and/or very expensive. Other refugees confirmed that instead of reporting community disputes or affairs of criminal justice and assault to the police, they would rather have them settled by community mediation. Ahlam, a Syrian refugee in Alexandria explained, “I was smuggled into Egypt and thus, I do not try to approach lawyers of any kind or resort to the police to attain my rights as I fear getting into trouble.”

Naturalization and social integration

There are few pathways to citizenship for a refugee or an asylum seeker beyond marrying an Egyptian. For example, Resolution 1547 of the League of Arab States in 1959 is a decision not to confer citizenship to Palestinian refugees in response to the Israeli occupation, which continues to have implications to this day. Social integration is an unlikely solution, as most refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt feel that they are unable to participate fully in the social and economic life (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). Rather, many consider their stay to be temporary. This is largely due to the current policies in place (Hetaba, McNally, & Habersky, 2020). Nonetheless, in 2006, thanks to reforms of the nationality law, 17,000 people, mostly those with Sudanese or Syrian fathers, were granted Egyptian citizenship (Manby 2016).

Some refugee participants, mainly Syrians, called for opening opportunities and pathways for naturalization. Some said they have no intention of returning to Syria, and that having lived in Egypt for a long time, it has become their home. A Syrian mother in Damietta suggested, “Give us the right to apply for Egyptian citizenship. We have been here for more than nine years; we are technically Egyptians now. It will make our lives so much better.” However, even when the requirements detailed in the nationality laws are satisfied, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior rarely grants Egyptian nationality to non-nationals (CMRS and LSE Middle East Studies Center 2021). Few migrants and refugees apply for Egyptian citizenship because there is no record of others in similar situations having been successful in obtaining it (CMRS and LSE Middle East Studies Center 2021).

On multiple occasions it has been mentioned by key informants that not having encampments in Egypt facilitates the process of refugee integration and promotes notions of social cohesion. However, refugee participants explained that the experience may vary, based on nationality. The perception of shared culture is strongly laid out by Ahmed, an Eritrean refugee in Giza who says, “Some refugees have it easier. Eritrea has a different language, different culture, so we have a harder time integrating. Learning Arabic could take us a lot of time. A year if not more. Unlike the case of the Sudanese and the Syrians.” Abdallah, also an Eritrean refugee, added, “Our culture is very different compared to Egyptians. Our social norms and communal practices here may subject us to many challenges.” Social networks in such instances act as safety nets and are important mechanisms for maintaining households through coping strategies and sharing scarce resources. They may eventually help in promoting integration further.

Indeed, language has had a strong impact on the integration of refugees and on their standard of living. According to the EVAR conducted by the UNHCR, the highest vulnerabilities were recorded among refugees who are non-Arabic speakers, with 53 per cent identified as severely vulnerable, compared with 37 per cent for Arabic-speaking refugees and 10 per cent for Syrians.

Refugees and asylum seekers are subject to the same restrictive naturalization laws as other non-nationals. However, with many refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt being subject to protracted displacement, naturalization is seen as a pathway to durable social integration.

▶ 2.6 Conclusion

The lack of differentiation in the national legislation between refugees and asylum seekers on the one hand and non-nationals on the other results in major challenges regarding the rights of refugees to work and their rights at work, which are constrained by the fact that legal frameworks applying to non-nationals also apply to refugees. This, by default, limits the integration of refugees into the labour market because work permits are granted under highly restrictive criteria. Their issuance imposes costs that may be difficult to afford and procedures that are cumbersome to both refugees and potential employers. On the other hand, refugees can participate in the informal economy in a way similar to their Egyptian counterparts, even though the absence of clear legal guidelines recognizing refugees and their rights make refugees subject to exploitative and discriminative working conditions as well as a lack of protection.

Many of the issues faced by refugees in the labour market reflect the requirement for papers, including identification documents such as passports or academic certificates, which most refugees do not possess because of the nature of their flight from their home countries. In addition, renewal at their embassies is associated with high fees; also they are wary of risks that might be incurred when engaging with their embassies. Easing the procedures that require paperwork or finding pathways for alternatives to such documents would greatly improve the status of refugees in Egypt (CMRS and LSE Middle East Studies Center 2021).

The findings emphasize that even though the legal right to work is necessary as the basis for access to work, it is rarely sufficient in itself, since access to the labour market is associated with other economic, social and political conditions. The study showed that labour market conditions have a significant impact on the entry of refugees into specific sectors, depending on their nationalities, skills and expertise. The study presents evidence on the importance of social networks in influencing the entry of refugees and asylum seekers to the labour market. Access to a large social network of previously established refugees and migrants was helpful in transmitting information about job opportunities. These social connections can also act as shelters against hostile environments and protection from differential treatment on the basis of nationality or gender. African refugees, as opposed to refugees of other nationalities, suffer the most because of discrimination, which impedes their access to the labour market and subjects them to more hostile working conditions. Therefore, they rely heavily on their social networks in finding safer work opportunities.

Finally, the analysis highlights that there is a need for policy advocacy and dialogue with the government to adopt inclusive policies for refugees and remove the barriers they face in the labour market. This will be critical, not only in facilitating the entry of more refugees into the labour market, but also in aiding their social integration in Egypt in the long term. This will improve their well-being and enrich the economic and social conditions of the host community. This study was conducted with hopes that new legislation will take these issues into account.

▶ 2.7 Recommendations

The study findings show that refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt face significant obstacles in accessing the labour market, training opportunities, setting up their businesses and accessing finance, because of the lack of a legal framework or inclusion in the national legal frameworks. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the development of inclusive policies and improve the design and implementation of programmes to enhance reach and impact. These efforts also need to be backed with evidence and investments in order to ensure effective implementation. To develop and improve delivery, reach, and impact, the following policy, programmatic and research recommendations are suggested.

- ▶ There is a vital need for legislation that recognizes refugees on wider grounds that reflect international standards. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework pertaining to the status of refugees presents a barrier to refugees accessing the labour market. The government and stakeholders should work together to develop a legislative agenda that recognizes, defines and protects the rights of refugees in Egypt, including their rights in the labour market. Many of the provisions accorded to refugees in the international conventions ratified by Egypt were not codified in domestic laws. For example, according to the Refugee Convention, refugees should be exempted from any employment restrictions imposed on non-nationals if they have completed three years of residence in the host country or have a spouse or children possessing the nationality of the host country. While Egypt made no reservations to these provisions of the convention, it did not enact a domestic law that can enable refugees to enjoy this right in practice. Therefore, there should be an asylum law that would govern access to the labour market for refugees and asylum seekers. Also, national legal frameworks governing the issues related to employment should be refugee-inclusive.
- ▶ Introducing such a law will also help remove all barriers placed on refugees by equating them with other non-nationals, especially regarding the availability of a valid passport. An alternative form of identification should be recognized, including UNHCR registration cards, to facilitate the access of refugees to the labour market.
- ▶ The ILO, UNHCR and other partners could advocate for alignment of the duration of residence permits with the same duration as the UNHCR registration cards (three years of validity for the blue card and 18 months for the yellow card). This would remove the inconsistencies regarding the duration of residence permits and would ease the refugees' receipt of services, specifically those related to their employment, training and mobility within the country.
- ▶ The ILO, UNHCR and other partners could initiate policy dialogue with the Government of Egypt to decentralize the residence permit procedures beyond Cairo, facilitating the mobility of refugees by extending the service to the governorates where they reside.
- ▶ The ILO should initiate a joint dialogue with the Central Bank to recognize the UNHCR registration cards explicitly as an official identification document for refugees to open bank accounts and have access to finance. Study findings highlight significant challenges posed by the lack of access to finance for refugees' self-employment. Therefore, iScore, the Egyptian Credit Bureau, needs to recognize UNHCR registration cards to allow the financing of refugee-led businesses.
- ▶ It is critical to support the Government of Egypt in closely regulating the activities of private employment services (that is, private recruitment agencies) and reducing the risk of fraud and manipulation of refugees and host community members.
- ▶ The current law excludes some refugees from accessing education, including technical education, in Egypt because of their nationality. Thus, the ILO and partners should support the government in amending the law to include all nationalities. Considering the multiple decrees that are causing confusion, the law needs to be unified, to clarify the access of refugees and asylum seekers to education and training. In parallel with the suggested law, an established, well publicized application process for refugees would allow for less confusion and an easier registration for all.

- ▶ The MoM should further promote their vocational training services among refugees in collaboration with UN and other agencies operating in this field. These services could be segregated, based on the skills of the refugees. Leveraging this type of segregation, by linking them to employment services and/or allowing for job matching, guarantees further refugee inclusion in the labour market.
- ▶ The ILO could advocate with government stakeholders for a policy that would provide alternative means of recognizing skills and qualifications, given that refugees in Egypt are not necessarily in possession of academic or other vocational certificates.
- ▶ The ILO, jointly with other partners, should support the government in extending social protection schemes to the informal sector, which may help create opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt. While refugees and asylum seekers end up engaging in the informal market, where they are usually unprotected by legal guarantees and at higher risk of abuse and exploitation, extending voluntary contributory schemes could be used for their protection in case of old age, employment injury, unemployment or disability. To inform this extension, the ILO and UNHCR should support the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) to conduct feasibility studies for extending coverage to the informal sector workers, including refugees.
- ▶ The ILO should help unions and employers' organizations to advocate for the removal of restrictions on freedom of association and establish clear guidance that permits refugees to join unions. These organizations can also contribute to the development of inclusive policies to promote decent employment for refugees.

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▶ 3

Annexes

▶ Annex 1: Summary of the legislation, policies, and frameworks reviewed, legal provisions specific to refugees, gaps in the legislation, and current practice

Category	Legislation, policy, or regulatory framework	Provisions	Legal gaps	Practice
Access to the Labour Market	Legal Identity & Registration Law 143/1994 (Civil Status Law) 1954 MoU between Egypt and UNHCR Law 89/1960 Law 173/2018 Decree 8180/1996	Yellow and blue card holders are permitted to obtain residence permits renewable every 6 months. Yellow and blue cards serve as identification documents.	A new law could solve inconsistencies regarding the duration of residence permits to refugees.	Residence permits renewable every 6 months take a long time to renew and do not include the right to work. There are other types of residence, such as education permits which are renewable every year.
	Freedom of Movement 2014 Constitution Decree 298/1995 Law 82/2016 Law 64/2010	Refugees and asylum-seekers have freedom of movement in Egypt. They may choose where to settle and are not encamped.	There is no legal gap regarding refugees' freedom of movement.	Freedom of movement can be affected for those who are in the process of renewing residence permits but live outside of Cairo.
	Employment 1954 MoU between Egypt and UNHCR Law 12/2003 (Labour Law) Decree 485/2010 Decree 305/2015 Decree 146/2019 Casablanca Protocol Four Freedoms Agreement	All non-nationals, including refugees and asylum-seekers, are prohibited from exercising work without a work permit. Certain nationalities are exempt from restrictions on entering the labour market, however, they still require a work permit.	Refugees would benefit from a law specifically addressing their right to employment, removing all barriers placed on them that equate them with non-nationals. A policy recognizing blue and yellow cards as official forms of identification would facilitate access to the labour market.	Due to the scarcity of formal jobs and high cost and difficulty associated with work permits, refugees and asylum-seekers primarily work in the informal economy.
	Self-Employment Law 159/1981 Law 17/1999 Law 72/2017 Law 152/2020	Non-nationals are allowed to establish a business in Egypt according to specific laws and regulations	UNHCR registration cards need to be recognized as identification documents for refugees who want to obtain business licenses and security clearances.	Refugees who are self-employed either open a business with an Egyptian partner or do so informally.
	Access to Finance Law 141/2019 Law 18/2019 Law 194/2020	Refugees and asylum-seekers face procedural obstacles when opening a bank account.	As above, a new policy recognizing blue and yellow cards as official identification documents would facilitate access to finance.	Some refugees are unable to open bank accounts due to the requirement they present their passport.
	Employment Services Law 12/2003 (Labour Law)	Refugees are entitled to employment services.	Laws should regulate private employment services to reduce the risk of fraud.	Social networks play a critical role for job seekers. Refugees who do resort to private employment services may be vulnerable to fraud.
	Cooperatives Law 316/1956 Law 267/1960 Law 109/1975	Refugees and asylum-seekers are entitled to join cooperatives but may not join the board of directors.	There is no legal gap regarding access to cooperatives.	Cooperatives are not common in areas where refugees live and work.

Category	Legislation, policy, or regulatory framework	Provisions	Legal gaps	Practice
Access to Training and Education	Technical Education 2014 Constitution Law 139/1981 Law 12/1996 Decree 24/1992 Decree 284/2014	Refugees and asylum-seekers have some education entitlements, depending on their nationality. However, laws are contradictory and unclear.	Law should extend refugee access to education, regardless of their nationality.	Access to technical education is limited and is especially challenging for non-Arabic speaking refugees. Refugees are reluctant because they fear bullying and discrimination.
	Vocational Guidance & Training 2014 Constitution Law 12/2003 (Labour Law) Decree 175/2003 Decree 414/2015 Decree 562/2014	There is no law restricting non-nationals access to vocational training and guidance.	There is no legal gap in terms of vocational guidance and training.	Refugees are only able to access training provided by NGOs. However, the training offered is repetitive and has limited results.
	Recognition of Qualifications Decree 496/1950 Decree 508/1954 Decree 345/1956 Decree 184/1958 Law 49/172	Equivalence procedures can be challenging for refugees and asylum-seekers if they do not have access to their original paperwork.	Policies should provide an alternative means of recognizing qualifications beyond equivalence. Equivalence procedures should also include pathways specific to refugees.	Only Sudanese refugees are able to have their degrees recognized. Other refugees struggle to access the labour market, such as those who have degrees in medicine and pharmacy.
Rights at Work	Working Conditions Law 12/2003 (Labour Law) Law 12/1996 (Child Law)	All workers are entitled to just and favourable working conditions, regardless of nationality.	There is no legal gap in terms of working conditions.	Refugees work in the informal economy without contracts in precarious working conditions.
	Social Security 2014 Constitution Law 2/2018 (Universal Health Insurance Law) Law 23/2012 Ministerial Decree 601/2012 Ministerial Decree 239/1997 Law 148/2019 (Social Insurance Law) Ministerial Decrees 230/2015 and 458/2015	Formal workers and certain categories of informal workers are entitled to social security under the new law. The law also applies to non-nationals. The new health insurance law includes non-nationals.	There is no legal gap in terms of social security.	Refugees are only able to access social security and health insurance if they work in sectors covered by the law. The majority of refugees don't have access to social security.
	Occupational Safety and Health Law 12/2003 (Labour Law) Ministerial Decree 126/2003 Ministerial Decree 134/2003 Ministerial Decree 211/2003 Ministerial Decree 932/1969	Formally employed workers in certain sectors are legally protected against occupational and health hazards. Those who work informally are not covered by the law.	There is no legal gap in terms of occupational safety and health.	Occupational safety and health is out of reach for refugees, who primarily work informally.
	Freedom of Association Law 12/2003 (Labour Code) Law 213/2017 (Trade Union Law) Law 142/2019	Non-nationals are legally entitled to join trade unions in the sectors specified in the law.	There is no legal gap as it concerns freedom of association.	Freedom of association is limited for Egyptian and non-nationals, alike.
	Access to Justice and Grievance Mechanisms Law 12/2003 (Labour Law) 2014 Constitution	All workers are entitled to access legal mediation for work disputes. Egyptians and foreign nationals have a right to access justice.	There is no legal gap in terms of access to justice and grievance mechanisms.	Grievance mechanisms are only applicable to formal workers. Refugees in informal work are reluctant to access the court system and would rather seek community mediation.
	Naturalization and Social Integration	Law 26/1975 (Nationality Law) Law 154/2004 Law 173/2018 League of Arab States' Resolution 1547	There are very few pathways to naturalization for non-nationals.	Pathways to naturalization for refugees should be considered.

► Annex 2: International and regional conventions

Egypt has ratified a number of international conventions relevant to the four areas covered in this research. There is a wealth of literature that has been written about these instruments and their applications globally and in Egypt. In the interest of specificity, relevant international instruments are summarized in the table below. It includes Egypt's ratification status for each convention as well as any notes on the instrument.

Name	Date ratified	Notes
1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees	22 May, 1981	Egypt made reservations to articles 20 (Rationing), 22 (Public Education), 23 (Public Relief), and 24 (labour Legislation and Social Security) because the articles consider the refugee as equal to the Egyptian national. Egypt will rather make decisions on these privileges on a case-by-case basis.
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	14 January, 1982	Egypt issued a declaration that it would apply the instrument provided that it does not conflict with the Sharia.
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	14 January, 1982	Egypt issued a declaration that it would apply the instrument provided that it does not conflict with the Sharia.
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	18 September, 1981	Egypt made reservations to article 2 in that the convention does not cause prejudice to Sharia, and specifically in article 16 concerning the equality of men and women in marriage. Egypt also made reservations to article 9 paragraph 2, regarding the nationality of women's children and article 29 paragraph 2 regarding submission to an arbitral body of dispute in interpreting or applying the convention.
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1 May, 1967	Egypt made a reservation to article 22 regarding referral of disputes to the International Court of Justice at the request of any party to the dispute. Egypt stated that it does not consider itself bound by the article and that consent of all parties is necessary for referring a dispute to the International Court of Justice.
Convention on the Rights of the Child	6 July, 1990	Egypt initially made a reservation to Articles 20 and 21 of the convention, but withdrew its reservation on 31 July, 2003.
UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education	Not ratified	
ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 No. 29	29 November, 1955	
ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 No. 87	6 November, 1957	
ILO Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 No. 98	3 July, 1954	
ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 No. 100	26 July, 1960	
ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 No. 111	10 May, 1960	

Name	Date ratified	Notes
ILO Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 No. 118	12 January, 1993	Egypt accepted branches A-H
ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 No. 138	9 June, 1999	
ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1975 No. 105	23 October, 1958	
ILO Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 No. 155	Not ratified	
ILO Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 No. 161	Not ratified	
ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 No. 182	6 May, 2002	
ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 No. 190	Not ratified	
ILO Guiding Principles: Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market	N/A	

Egypt is also party to a number of regional instruments, policies, and regulatory frameworks that address some of the entitlements that are the subject of this report. These are summarized in the table below.

Name	Category	Date ratified	Application
African Charter on Human and People's Rights	Access to the Labour Market, Rights at Work	1984	Article 15 grants every individual the right to work under equitable and satisfactory conditions. The Charter obliges parties to make employment accessible without discrimination. The Charter doesn't make specific mention to what these working conditions are beyond the principle of equal pay for equal work. While the Charter doesn't mention social security, Article 4 addresses the right to life and Article 16 the right to the best attainable state of physical and mental health.
African Youth Charter	Access to the Labour Market, Rights at Work	2015	Articles 1, 2, 3, and 15 grant every young person between the ages of 15 and 35 the right to paid employment that does not result in economic exploitation or put them at risk. The AYC also obliges states to ensure equal pay without discrimination.
League of Arab States' Resolution 1547	Social Integration and Naturalization	1959	In response to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the Arab League took a decision in 1959 not to confer citizenship to Palestinian refugees.
Protocol for the treatment of Palestinians in Arab States; or the "Casablanca Protocol"	Access to the Labour Market, Rights at Work	11 September, 1965	Grants Palestinians the right to work under the same conditions as nationals.

► Annex 3: Focus group participant information

FGD 1: Syrian women in Alexandria

Location: Alexandria

Date: 18/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	35	Vocational secondary education diploma	Unemployed	Married	8
2	20	High School Diploma	Volunteer	Single	8
3	21	Junior year college student	Wedding planner (Self-employed)	Married	8
4	29	Bachelor's in pharmacy	Business owner (Self-employed)	Married	9
5	20	Middle School Certificate	Volunteer at a school	Single	8
6	20	Junior year college student	Volunteer	Single	9
7	30	Bachelor's in business	Volunteer	Single	9
8	31	Middle School Certificate	Marketing (Employed informally)	Married	10
9	32	High School Diploma	Marketing (Employed informally)	Married	5
10	22	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Married	9

FGD 2: Syrian Men in Alexandria

Location: Alexandria

Date: 18/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	21	Junior year college student in IT	Unemployed	Single	9
2	21	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Single	9
3	33	PhD in HR	Unemployed	Married	8
4	27	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Married	10
5	40	University degree in Medicine	Volunteer/Self-employed	Single	2 months
6	22	Bachelor's in business	Mechanic (Self-employed)	Single	9
7	40	Bachelor's in education	Unemployed	Married	9
8	21	Primary Education	Restaurant Chef (Informally employed)	Single	4
9	23	High School Diploma	Hairdresser (Informally employed)	Single	9

FGD 3: Egyptian men in Alexandria

Location: Alexandria

Date: 19/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status
1	24	Higher institute degree in social services	Unemployed	Single
2	21	University degree in Law	Delivery person	Single
3	23	Junior year college student	French teacher	Single
4	22	Bachelor's in pharmacy	Delivery person	Single
5	22	Middle School Certificate	Delivery person	Single
6	32	Junior year college student	Health and safety officer	Married
7	25	Bachelor's in business	Hotel lobbyist	Married
8	25	Middle School Certificate	Accountant	Single
9	25	High School Diploma	Salesperson	Single
10	25	High School Diploma	Salesperson	Single

FGD 4: Egyptian women in Alexandria

Location: Alexandria

Date: 18/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status
1	22	Senior college student in social services	Unemployed	Single
2	22	Technical higher institute degree	Online Salesperson (Self-employed)	Single
3	21	Technical higher institute degree	Unemployed	Single
4	22	Technical higher institute degree	Online Salesperson (Self-employed)	Single
5	23	Technical higher institute degree	Class supervisor	Single
6	20	Freshman year college student in Education	Unemployed	Single
7	23	Bachelors in Sports Education	Gym instructor	Single
8	23	Bachelor's in social services	Nursery teacher	Single
9	20	Freshman year college student in Social Services	Unemployed	Single

FGD 5: Syrian men in Damietta

Location: Damietta

Date: 26/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	36	Bachelor's degree in Business	Carpenter (Self-Employed)	Married	9
2	23	Bachelor's degree in Natural Education	Home Decor (Self-Employed)	Single	9
3	22	High School Diploma	Upholstery (Employed informally)	Single	6
4	23	High School Diploma	Upholstery (Employed informally)	Single	9
5	18	High School Diploma	Upholstery (Employed informally)	Single	9
6	18	High School Diploma	Upholstery (Employed informally)	Single	10
7	22	Middle School Certificate	Upholstery (Employed informally)	Single	9
8	18	Middle School Certificate	Photography and Video Editing (Self-Employed)	Single	8
9	19	Primary Education	Electricity (Employed informally)	Single	9
10	48	Primary Education	Furniture (Self-Employed)	Married	9

FGD 6: Syrian women in Damietta

Location: Damietta

Date: 26/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	48	High School Diploma	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	8
2	41	Middle School Certificate	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	8
3	43	Bachelors in Translation	Translator (Self-employed)	Married	9
4	40	High School Diploma	Gym instructor (Employed informally)	Married	10
5	33	High School Diploma	Community worker (Employed informally)	Married	9
6	49	Higher institute degree	Primary teacher (Employed informally)	Married	9
7	32	Bachelor's in business	Crochet trainer (Self-employed)	Married	10
8	46	Middle School Certificate	Teacher (Employed informally)	Married	9
9	41	High School Diploma	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	6

FGD 7: Egyptian men in Damietta

Location: Damietta

Date: 26/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status
1	19	Tourism university student	Shop attendant	Single
2	18	Tourism university student	Shop attendant	Single
3	20	Business university student	Shop attendant	Single
4	18	Higher institute student	Unemployed	Single
5	19	Business university student	Furniture workshop worker/carpenter	Single
6	19	University student in Education	Unemployed	Single
7	20	Business university student	Unemployed	Single
8	20	Higher institute student	Swimming instructor	Single
9	22	Medical university student	Phone services	Single
10	19	Engineering university student	Unemployed	Single

FGD 8: Egyptian women in Damietta

Location: Damietta

Date: 26/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	48	High School Diploma	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	8
2	33	Bachelor's in business	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	8
3	40	Vocational secondary diploma in commerce	Housewife (Unemployed)	Divorced	9
4	41	Vocational secondary diploma in commerce	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	10
5	36	Bachelor's in business	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	9
6	37	Bachelor's in sciences	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	9
7	38	Vocational secondary diploma in commerce	Housewife (Unemployed)	Widow	10
8	40	Vocational secondary diploma in commerce	Online salesperson (Self-employed)	Married	9
9	40	Vocational secondary diploma in commerce	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	6

FGD 9: Eritrean women in Giza

Location: Giza

Date: 28/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Nationality	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	32	Eritrean	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Single	3
2	51	Eritrean	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Married	4
3	24	Sudanese	Bachelors in Midwifery	Unemployed	Married	5
4	36	Eritrean	High School Diploma	Manager in a CBO (Employed informally)	Married	3
5	43	Eritrean	Middle School Certificate	NGO Volunteer (Volunteer)	Single	2
6	36	Eritrean	High School Diploma	CBO community worker (Volunteer)	Single	2
7	40	Eritrean	Middle School Certificate	CBO community worker (Employed informally)	Single	4
8	23	Sudanese	Freshman year student in sciences	NGO coordinator (Volunteer)	Married	4
9	41	Eritrean	Vocational education diploma in education	Teacher (Employed informally)	Married	4
10	52	Eritrean	Bachelors in Islamic Legislation	Teacher (Employed informally)	Married	3

FGD 10: Eritrean men in Giza

Location: Giza

Date: 28/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	43	Bachelor's degree in Business	English and IT teacher (Employed informally)	Single	15
2	22	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Single	4
3	24	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Single	3
4	19	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Single	4
5	21	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Single	5
6	18	Middle School Certificate	Unemployed	Single	2
7	32	Middle School Certificate	Volunteer	Single	4
8	18	Primary Education	Unemployed	Single	3
9	31	Bachelor's degree in IT	Self-employed	Single	4

FGD 11: Egyptian men in Giza

Location: Giza

Date: 29/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status
1	20	Primary education	Shop attendant	Single
2	28	Bachelor's in social sciences	Shop attendant	Single
3	36	Bachelor's in law	Shop attendant	Single
4	38	Bachelors in IT	Unemployed	Married
5	33	Vocational secondary diploma in commerce	Furniture workshop worker/carpenter	Divorced
6	20	Bachelors in Arabic language	Unemployed	Single
7	27	PhD in Economics	Unemployed	Single

FGD 12: Egyptian women in Giza

Location: Giza

Date: 29/12/2021

Moderator: Salma Abou Hussein

Note Taker: Aisha Yousef

Participant No	Age	Educational Attainment	Employment	Marital Status	Years of stay in Egypt
1	50	Vocational secondary diploma in commerce	Shop attendant	Married	8
2	49	Bachelor's in social sciences	School teacher	Married	8
3	25	Vocational secondary diploma in agriculture	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	9
4	46	Vocational secondary diploma in agriculture	NGO community worker	Divorced	10
5	32	Bachelors in Antiquities	NGO community worker	Single	9
6	38	Bachelor's in business	NGO community worker	Divorced	9
7	35	Bachelor's in business	NGO project manager	Married	10
8	29	Bachelor's in business	Secretary	Single	9
9	55	Bachelor's in business	Housewife (Unemployed)	Married	6

► Annex 4: Data collection tools

FGD guide for refugees

Name	
Place of Employment	
Type of Employment	
Date of Interview	
Venue	

Background on PROSPECTS

“The National Policy, Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks and Practice Review”, aims to establish baseline situations in Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan, and Uganda, in the area of relevant policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and current practice in terms of implementation in relation to the access of refugees to the labour markets, employment, livelihood and training opportunities, including self-employment and business development. This will provide ILO PROSPECTS programme teams a clear understanding of the current status (or not) of these frameworks and how they are being applied (or not). The study also aims to also provide a comparison on national policies and legislation against what actually happens in practice thereby revealing the capacities and abilities of government ministries, institutions, social partners, and non-government actors to enact and implement and inform further capacity-building interventions.

FGD questions

Introduction

1. Please introduce yourself
2. How long have you been residing here in Egypt?
3. If you are currently employed, how long have you been working here in Egypt?
4. How do refugees generally learn of their rights to access the labour market or vocational training in Egypt?

Training

1. Are you aware of any organizations that offer training (vocational training, apprenticeship training or on-the-job training) to refugees? If you do, which organizations [13] [14]? And what kind of training?
 - a. Have you utilized any of their services? Please explain based on your experience or that of others
2. Which job sectors are refugees most interested in usually? And why?
3. Which job sectors do the available vocational training focus on? And why? And do they match the refugees’ interests? Why/why not?
4. How accessible are these training services for refugees?
5. How is the quality of the training being offered?
6. What challenges do you face in accessing training in Egypt?
7. What are the job matching services available for refugees in Egypt? What are the challenges faced here?
 - a. How does the training match you to these services and available jobs in the market?

Accessing employment

8. Which sectors welcome refugees' employment in Egypt? And what type of employment and why?
9. What job portals are available and you rely on for your job search? And why?
10. What qualifications are the most needed in the labour market for refugees?
11. What methods do refugees usually rely on to find work?
12. What challenges do refugees face in accessing the job market?

Job quality

13. Are you aware of your rights within the workplace? What are they?
 - a. What are the rights refugees have around work permits? And are you familiar with the process of obtaining them?
 - b. Do refugees have access to banking services? what kind (e.g. loans, bank account ...etc)?
 - c. How easy/difficult is it for refugees to set up businesses and sustain it? Why?
 - d. What kind of social protection is provided for refugees in the workplace?
 - e. Are refugees capable of joining unions or representative organizations? Why/why not?
 - f. To what extent are these rights and policies practiced?
14. What challenges in terms of the quality and type of employment do refugees face?
15. How do you deal with your Egyptian counterparts in the workplace?
16. In the event of a dispute within the workplace, how can the refugee report it? And what is the process?

Recommendations

17. How can the government and stakeholders improve refugees' access to the labour market?
18. How can the government and stakeholders improve the training services offered to refugees?

KII guide for policy makers and government officials at governorate level

Name	
Title	
Entity	
Date of Interview	
Venue	

Background on PROSPECTS

“The National Policy, Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks and Practice Review”, aims to establish baseline situations in Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda, in the area of relevant policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and current practice in terms of implementation in relation to the access of refugees to the labour markets, employment, livelihood and training opportunities, including self-employment and business development. This will provide ILO PROSPECTS programme teams a clear understanding of the current status (or not) of these frameworks and how they are being applied (or not). The study also aims to also provide a comparison on national policies and legislation against what actually happens in practice thereby revealing the capacities and abilities of government ministries, institutions, social partners and non-government actors to enact and implement and inform further capacity-building interventions.

Interview questions

Introduction

- ▶ Could you please introduce yourself and your role?
- ▶ Could you explain the scope of your work with refugees?

For Government officials and implementers: Projects and practices

- ▶ What are the main sectors that refugees from these nationalities work in? And why?
 - ▶ Are these sectors aligned with refugees' job interests? Why/why not?
- ▶ Which refugee populations do you target in your work? (nationalities/ages/gender)
 - ▶ In which places/governorate/neighbourhoods?
- ▶ Is there a specific focus on a certain group? If so, why?
- ▶ What do you provide to refugees within your programs?
- ▶ Do you coordinate with the central government and other governorates in order to implement your programs locally? Please explain.
- ▶ Do you cooperate/coordinate with civil society organizations in order to implement your work? And how? Could you tell us more about your partnerships with ILO?
- ▶ How do you reach the refugee populations that you work with?
- ▶ What are the results of the work you do on the ground so far?

Legislations and policies

- ▶ How do refugees learn on their rights in the workplace?
- ▶ What are the laws and regulations around refugees' access to the labour market?
 - ▶ How can they benefit from employment services?
 - ▶ What is the process for refugees to obtain work permits?
 - ▶ How can they establish businesses in Egypt?
 - ▶ How do refugees open bank accounts? How can they access loans?
 - ▶ Are refugees allowed to establish or join cooperatives?
 - ▶ How can they own or rent land?
 - ▶ To what extent do the laws relating to forming or joining a trade union or other collective bargaining mechanisms work in practice for refugees?
 - ▶ Are there any laws or policies to protect refugees within the workplace?
 - ▶ Examples; discrimination, enforcement, occupational safety and health, working conditions (including minimum wage and working hours)...etc?
 - ▶ Access to labour courts and grievance mechanisms
 - ▶ What social security benefits are refugees entitled to?
- ▶ How well are these current laws and regulations being implemented in the Egyptian labour market? In terms of the following:
 - ▶ Work permits
 - ▶ Employment services
 - ▶ Setting up businesses, accessing business development services
 - ▶ Forming or joining cooperatives
 - ▶ Access to loans and financial services
 - ▶ Banking services
 - ▶ Joining trade unions or other associations
 - ▶ Workplace protection laws and mechanisms
 - ▶ Social security benefits
 - ▶ Access to justice (for labour disputes) and grievance mechanisms
- ▶ Are[23] [24] you aware of any laws or policies that were being discussed currently about refugees' access to the labour market? What are they? And what have these discussions reached so far?
- ▶ What are the monitoring mechanisms put in place to ensure the implementation of the policies? And who is responsible of that?

Law enforcement challenges

- ▶ How do refugees overcome these previously mentioned challenges in terms of law enforcement/ implementation?
- ▶ What are some of the solutions different stakeholders (ex. Government, civil society,..etc.) offer to address these obstacles?

Training

- ▶ What are the laws and regulations governing refugees' access to training, apprenticeship programs and work-based learning programs?
- ▶ What are the entities that recognize the formal and informal qualifications of refugees? What is the process of recognition?
 - ▶ Which organizations provide access to training to refugees? And what access do they provide? And what kind of training
 - ▶ Which entities provide grants or allowances to support refugee skills development?
- ▶ Are there laws governing these entities? And how effective are they?
- ▶ Are you able to monitor refugees' access to training? What systems are in place?
- ▶ Which entities provide information to refugees about their rights' to training? And how?

Lessons learnt and recommendations

- ▶ What suggestions would you offer pertaining to refugee's access to the labour market and training?

KII guide for NGO representatives

Name	
Title	
Entity	
Date of Interview	
Venue	

Background on PROSPECTS

"The National Policy, Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks and Practice Review", aims to establish baseline situations in Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Sudan and Uganda, in the area of relevant policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks and current practice in terms of implementation in relation to the access of refugees to the labour markets, employment, livelihood and training opportunities, including self-employment and business development. This will provide ILO PROSPECTS programme teams a clear understanding of the current status (or not) of these frameworks and how they are being applied (or not). The study also aims to also provide a comparison on national policies and legislation against what actually happens in practice thereby revealing the capacities and abilities of government ministries, institutions, social partners and non-government actors to enact and implement and inform further capacity-building interventions.

Interview questions

Introduction

- ▶ Could you please introduce yourself and your role?
- ▶ Could you explain the scope of your work with refugees?

Projects and practices

- ▶ Which refugee populations do you target? (nationalities/ages/gender)

- ▶ In what governorates are these programs being implemented?
- ▶ What are the main sectors that refugees from these nationalities work in? And why?
- ▶ Which services do you offer to refugees?
- ▶ Do you know of other civil society actors that offer services to refugees, and which?
- ▶ What are the results of the work you do on the ground so far?
- ▶ Do you coordinate with the Egyptian government in order to implement your programs? Please explain.
- ▶ How do you cooperate/coordinate with any CBOs or other NGOs in order to implement your programs? Could you tell us more about your partnerships with ILO/ and any other UN agencies/entities that target refugee populations in Egypt?
- ▶ How do you reach the refugee populations that you work with?

Legislations and policies

- ▶ How do refugees usually learn about their rights in the workplace? Which entities?
- ▶ What are the laws and regulations around refugees' access to the labour market?
 - ▶ What is the process for refugees to obtain work permits?
 - ▶ How can they establish businesses in Egypt?
 - ▶ How do refugees open bank accounts?
 - ▶ To what extent do the laws relating to forming or joining a trade union or other collective bargaining mechanisms work in practice for refugees?
 - ▶ Are there any laws or policies to protect refugees within the workplace?
 - ▶ Examples; discrimination, enforcement, occupational safety and health, working conditions (including minimum wage and working hours)...etc?
 - ▶ Access to labour courts and grievance mechanisms.?
 - ▶ What social security benefits are refugees entitled to?[KF27] [SH28]
- ▶ How well are these current laws and regulations being implemented in the Egyptian labour market? In terms of the following:
 - ▶ Work permits
 - ▶ Employment services
 - ▶ Setting up businesses, accessing business development services
 - ▶ Forming or joining cooperatives
 - ▶ Access to loans and financial services
 - ▶ Banking services
 - ▶ Joining trade unions or other associations
 - ▶ Workplace protection laws and mechanisms
 - ▶ Social security benefits
 - ▶ Access to justice (for labour disputes) and grievance mechanisms
- ▶ Are you aware of any laws or policies that are being discussed currently about refugees' access to the labour market? What are they? And what have these discussions reached so far?

- ▶ What are the monitoring mechanisms put in place to ensure the implementation of the policies? And who is responsible of that?

Law enforcement challenges

- ▶ How do refugees overcome these previously mentioned challenges in terms of law enforcement/ implementation?
- ▶ What are some of the solutions different stakeholders (ex. Government, civil society,..etc.) offer to address these obstacles?

Training

- ▶ Which organizations provide access to training to refugees? And what access do they provide? And what kind of training?
- ▶ Which entities provide grants or allowances to support refugee skills development?
- ▶ Are you able to monitor refugees' access to training? What systems are in place?
- ▶ Which entities provide information to refugees about their rights' to training? And how?

Lessons learnt and recommendations

- ▶ What are the main lessons learned from the programs you are conducting in Egypt?
- ▶ What suggestions would you offer to policy makers pertaining to refugee's access to the labour market and training?

KII guide for employers

Name	
Title	
Entity	
Date of Interview	
Venue	

Background on PROSPECTS

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Interview questions

Introduction

- ▶ Could you please introduce yourself and your role?
- ▶ Could you explain the scope of your work with refugees?

Refugee employment

- ▶ How many refugees do you have currently employed? Of which nationalities?
- ▶ Why do you employ refugees?
- ▶ What kind of employment are you offering them? And why?
 - ▶ What kind of social security benefits do you offer?
 - ▶ Are there any laws or policies to protect refugees within your workplace?
 - ▶ Examples; discrimination, enforcement,...etc?
 - ▶ What are the processes of reporting within the workplace?
- ▶ What is the process to employ refugees formally? Have you gone through a work permit application process?
- ▶ What are the challenges employers face while employing refugees?
- ▶ Do organizations collaborate with you to promote refugee employment? Why/why not?

Refugee training

- ▶ What qualifications are needed by refugees to get employed?
- ▶ How do refugees get their qualifications recognized for employment?
- ▶ Do you provide training to the refugee employees you have in your company? Why/why not?
- ▶ Which organizations, that you know of, offer vocational training for refugees to get employed?

Lessons learnt and recommendations

- ▶ What are the main lessons learned from employing refugees in your workplace?
- ▶ What suggestions would you offer to policy makers pertaining to refugee's access to the labour market and training?

► Annex 5: Data collection privacy and risks

Privacy and personal identifying information

To protect participant privacy, no other individuals except for the lead researcher were present during the KIIs. In the FGDs, only the research team and the participants who consented to being interviewed were present. Some of the participants in the same focus group knew each other and thus the discussion was not anonymous. Participants, however, were told that no information discussed in the focus group will be attributed to them and they do not have to answer every question.

FGDs and KIIs were recorded. The recordings were used to support field notes to aid in the qualitative analysis, which was done manually. It is worth noting that the KIIs and FGDs were recorded after asking the participants for permission and clarifying to them that there would be no risks or repercussions in their current receipt of services in case they refused to record the interview. All recordings were kept on recording devices and stored in a locked cabinet or room until transcribed. No personal identifying information was included; quotes and experiences are reported by broad participant type only. Recordings were deleted once the qualitative analysis took place.

Risks of the study

The risks of participation in this study were anticipated to be minimal, given the topics discussed are not sensitive and do not pose a risk to the respondents. There was a burden of time on the participants, ranging from around 60 to 120 minutes for each participant. The research team made every effort to schedule research activities at the most convenient time for participants. Additionally, the research team disclosed that there may be a risk of breach of confidentiality in case information shared during FGDs was leaked. An identification form was circulated among participants to collect socio-demographic information; however, no personal identifiers were collected (neither full name of participant nor any other identifier such as home address or telephone number).



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