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New TRAFIG publication \ Starting up and starting over: Refugee entrepreneurs in East Africa

Entrepreneurship can be an important avenue for refugees to support themselves financially, and it can also boost their social and economic inclusion. A new policy brief, based on studies conducted by the EU Horizon 2020 research project TRAFIG in two refugee-hosting countries in Africa, Ethiopia and Tanzania, highlights the critical role that networks play in getting refugee businesses up and running. This paper illustrates how refugees are networking to create livelihood opportunities via entrepreneurship, and puts forth ideas for those seeking to scale up displaced people's access to it.

“While the findings from Ethiopia and Tanzania highlight the important role of individual-level support, they also point to a potential role for donors, investors and NGOs in strengthening networks and providing start-up capital to get more refugee ventures off the ground, thereby lifting refugees out of protracted displacement”, the authors conclude. In particular, the central findings and policy implications of TRAFIG policy brief no. 4, [“Starting up and starting over: How networking can enable refugee entrepreneurs to regain livelihoods in East Africa”](#) are:

- 1. Local and transnational networks are key to securing an income through entrepreneurship but are not always sufficient to enable refugees to build a secure livelihood.** Policies and practices that enable rather than hinder refugees from realising their ambitions and rebuilding their livelihoods in host countries, including the right to work, own a business, open a bank account, access finance and live outside of camps, are therefore critical to helping refugees find a path out of protracted displacement.
- 2. Good refugee–host relations can unlock livelihood opportunities, such as the provision of equipment and raw materials or creation of joint business ventures.** Humanitarian and development actors should work to foster positive interactions between refugee and host communities and involve both groups in entrepreneurial activities.
- 3. Transnational and local connections are important sources of support for launching businesses.** They can, for instance, help refugees to obtain start-up capital and access business licenses. By lowering remittance transfer costs; increasing collaboration between diaspora organisations and between diasporas and development agencies; and connecting remittances to other tools such as credit, support for refugee entrepreneurs can be scaled up.

4. **Information and communications technology (ICT) can enable refugees to engage in digital entrepreneurial activities, including social commerce.**
Donors, investors and implementers can help refugees leverage digital livelihood tools by facilitating their connectivity and offering training, mentoring and access to loans that can help them maximise this business opportunity.

You will find TRAFIG policy brief no. 4, [Starting up and starting over How networking can enable refugee entrepreneurs to regain livelihoods in East Africa](https://trafig.eu/output/policy-briefs/policy-brief-no-4/D048-TPB-Starting-up-and-starting-over-Katsiaficas-et-al-2021-v01p-2021-6-30.pdf), at:

<https://trafig.eu/output/policy-briefs/policy-brief-no-4/D048-TPB-Starting-up-and-starting-over-Katsiaficas-et-al-2021-v01p-2021-6-30.pdf>

TRAFIG Policy Brief 4 was published in the framework of the EU-funded Horizon 2020 research project “Transnational Figurations of Displacement” (TRAFIG), which investigates long-lasting displacement situations at multiple sites in Asia, Africa and Europe and analyses options to improve displaced people’s lives. To read more about TRAFIG, click here

Further information

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