

# #25

## Urban Migration: Strengthening Cooperation with Civil Society

UCLG Peer Learning – MC2CM  
Sfax – Tunisia, June 2019

**MC2CM**  
SUPPORTING  
URBAN MIGRATION  
GOVERNANCE

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## **Credits**

### **Coordination**

City of Sfax  
International Centre for Migration Policy Development  
(ICMPD)  
Mediterranean City to City Migration (MC2CM)  
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)  
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### **Edit**

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# Foreword

**When I took on the mandate as the mayor of Sfax Tunisia, the city was already a very active member of international networks like Medcities, United Cities and Local Governments, and the Arab Town Organization, to name a few. We see the Mediterranean basin as a joint treasure that allowed the economic, and in particular cultural, inspiration that characterizes us for over 3 thousand years.**

However, most of the city to city collaboration was focusing on strategic development applying lessons of urban and environmental management of other Mediterranean cities.

In the last years, following the conflict in Syria and Libya and the difficult economic situation in certain Sub Saharan African countries, we have experienced a major influx of migrants coming to our city, so this theme became a priority for our international work, that spans also to the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration.

To address this challenge locally, we have to listen and cooperate with projects spearheaded by civil society. With Terre d'Asile and the Tunisian Human Rights League we have been able to mitigate the pain and suffering of children, women, men and the elderly who arrived to our city. However, the situation met us unprepared and we need to build capacities and joint governance with the national government and with the other Mediterranean actors as well.

This peer-learning event in Sfax, that was enabled by the MC2CM project and UCLG, was a unique opportunity for local government, civil society and international institutions to come together and discuss the opportunities, challenges and possibilities for a better

articulation between local governments and civil society around the topic of migration governance.

This peer learning note introduces some of the main issues discussed, while showcasing case studies that can serve as inspiration for other cities that are seeking to work better with civil society organizations and overcome some of the gaps that they are confronting.

The Mediterranean is a reference for unity and openness, and cannot be divided in two. Migration is part of cultural and urban evolution, and we need to look into responses of other cities and nations in order to learn, connect and build better services for our communities.



**Mr. Mounir Elloumi**

Mayor of Sfax

# Introduction

On the 25th and 26th of June 2019, UCLG's Learning team collaborated with UCLG's Migration team, UCLG's Committee on Social Inclusion, Participative Democracy and Human Rights, ICMPD and UN-Habitat, to coordinate a workshop and peer learning event focusing on "Building trust through strengthened cooperation: the role of civil society in the urban governance of migration". The event, which was part of the second phase of the Mediterranean City to City Migration (MC2CM) project, was hosted by the city of Sfax, Tunisia and counted with the participation of over 60 representatives from local governments, civil society organizations, and international institutions, from the Mediterranean and beyond.



While migration is often seen as a national issue, and most of the mandate around immigration, refugees and asylum falls to the central government, it is often cities and local governments that have to directly deal and address the needs of newly arrived migrants, and the inclusion of long-term migrant residents. As we have seen since the beginning of the conflict in Syria or the crisis in Venezuela, cities are often at the forefront of welcoming and delivering assistance to newcomers, but often lack the resources, training, networks and capacity to address the challenges of migration, particularly when flows are sudden or unexpected.

At the same time, civil society organizations (CSOs) have taken an increasingly important role in supporting migrants by undertaking initiatives that raise awareness, facilitate access to basic services, advocate for their rights and strengthen social inclusion. The role of CSOs as key partners for local authorities in the governance of migration and other urban governance issues is widely recognized, but it is not always clear how to articulate these partnerships and coordinate efforts while securing the autonomy of these organizations and avoiding potential tensions or conflicts of interest.

The peer-learning event included a field visit to a local NGO, and counted with the contributions of local government and civil society groups representatives from the cities of Malaga, Brital, Douala and Meknes, among others. The interactive learning tools helped to create a dynamic conversation, characterized by active listening and solidarity. Participants felt that local government and civil society organizations often share the same objectives, and can work together to achieve these, supporting each other's services, policies and advocacy work.

## Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project



Mediterranean City to City Migration (MC2CM) is a project led by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in partnership with UN-Habitat and UCLG, with funding from the European Commission and co-funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Implemented since 2015, the project brings together experts and cities on both sides of the Mediterranean to **contribute to improved migration governance at city level, including migrants' access to basic services and human rights**. The network is composed by Amman, Beirut, Lisbon, Lyon, Madrid, Tangier, Turin, Tunis and Vienna. Additional cities including Casablanca, Napoli, Sfax and Sousse have joined the network for the second phase (2018-2020) of the project.

In addition to peer-learning events and the exchange of knowledge and experience among cities, the project aims to implement pilot projects and develop city migration profiles to better understand the local migration context in partner cities, as well as future priorities to address.

# The Role of Civil Society in the Urban Governance of Migration

## Urban Governance of Migration

Migration is a defining feature of urbanization. Cities are places where people come together to live, work and find opportunities. It is also the setting in which the reality of social and economic accommodation of newcomers and their interaction with the host community takes place.

As such, cities have played a major role in contributing to global debates on migrant reception and hosting, through the continued exchanges of experiences and advocacy done by networks such as UCLG. The New Urban Agenda, adopted in the context of the Habitat III Conference in 2016, commits national governments to supporting host cities and ensuring the respect of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants' rights. This rights-based approach aligns with that of the Global Charter Agenda for Human Rights in the City (2011), the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City (2000), as well as the Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City (2014).

This commitment is further incorporated in the 2030 Agenda. Migration is considered a cross-cutting issue throughout all Sustainable Development Goals, with SDG 10.7 specifically calling for nations to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The Global Compact for Migration, in which UCLG has actively given voice and continues to advocate for local governments, further provides a framework for comprehensive international cooperation and actions towards this end.

While these global agendas recognize the social, economic and cultural contribution of migrants to urban life, they also acknowledged

\*This note has been elaborated based on the discussions of the event and the background document elaborated by Camille Le Coz for MC2CM



the challenges governments confront. Municipalities often lack the resources, training, networks and capacity to respond to the challenges faced by migrants, particularly when flows are sudden and unexpected.

As such, CSOs tend to be key partners of local authorities to implement projects on the ground, playing a growing part in supporting migrants by undertaking initiatives that raise awareness, facilitate access to basic services, strengthen local inclusion, and reach vulnerable and isolated groups.

## Concepts associated with Organized Civil Society

The graph illustrates participants' understanding of organized civil society, its role and the expectations of local governments towards them.



**Keywords:** Structured / Nonprofit / Independent / Agent of Change / Public Life / Committed

**Role:** Source of proposition / Counter-power / Oversight / Advocacy / Bridging gaps / Building trust / Service provision / Outreach / Data / Assistance

**Expectations:** Support new migrants / Facilitate access to rights / Link with communities / Advocate for better policies / Awareness raising / Coordination & Cooperation / Partnership / Help with integration

## Civil Society's contributions to migration

Civil Society Organizations have been increasingly seen as a key partner for urban governance and the promotion of inclusive, safe and resilient cities. While CSOs vary greatly in terms of size, status, mandate, interests and objectives, as well as in the activities they carry out, their sources of funding and degree of professionalism, they play an important role in enhancing migrants' inclusion and their access to rights and services. Some of the key contributions of civil society organizations to the urban governance of migration include:

### Advocacy and Awareness Raising

Many CSOs focus on providing information to migrants on their rights and the services they have at their disposal, raising awareness of relevant stakeholders, or monitoring how national and local authorities meet their responsibilities towards migrants, in terms of protecting their rights and providing access to basic services. This can take the shape of capacity building workshops targeted to institutions dealing with migrants, legal counselling for migrants, or advocacy campaigns to push for better policies and support mechanisms.

### Access to basic services

CSOs are also active in improving migrants' access to services, by either linking them to dedicated support mechanisms or complementing the provision of basic services by the government. They do this through the provision of information on how to access medical assistance, free meals or clothes; assisting them with school registration and other bureaucratic procedures; partnering with the city to provide basic goods and assistance to migrants, such as emergency healthcare or shelter; or providing these services independently with their own funding streams.

### Social inclusion

Civil society actors also support migrant's inclusion in host communities and help to highlight the benefits of diversity to the city. CSO initiatives often go beyond basic service delivery, and can include assistance with

language, labour market integration or skills development, often open to all public beyond migrants. Their flexibility to foster integration through various forms of dialogues, cultural events and consultation, as well as their existing local networks, contribute to bringing migrants and host communities closer to each other. Faith-based organizations can also pave the way for more intercultural dialogues between communities through common celebrations or awareness raising activities.

### Local knowledge

Through their work with migrants and host communities, CSOs often have a better understanding of the day to day situation of migrants in the city, particularly regarding vulnerable and hard to reach groups such as unaccompanied minors or migrants in an irregular situation. This represents an important asset for municipalities interested in facilitating migrants' inclusion and access to the city, as it provides valuable information for assessing needs and evaluating the impact of local and national policies in their communities. It can also provide communication channels to reach migrant populations, if done with care to maintain the CSOs' independence and the trust they have earned from these communities.

Sfax, Tunisia:  
The locals in  
the traditional  
busy arabic souq  
(market) located  
just outside the  
Bab Jebli gates.  
Photo by: efesenko



## **The Methodology of Storytelling: An approach to create empathy**

**“We are all migrants” – so we can feel your story and sketch it up!**

*As part of the peer-learning event’s introduction to a rights centered approach towards migration, UCLG facilitated a group exercise using storytelling to help participants put individual stories at the center of their reflections. Discussions around urban policies and migration dynamics tend to focus on numbers, laws and statistics, overshadowing the people that are affected by these issues. This exercise allowed participants to reconnect to the stories of migration that they have seen, heard or experienced themselves, and, through them, reflect on the way individuals exercise their right to the city as they interact with local governments, organized civil society and other actors in the city.*

*Each group was invited to create the story of an individual following a set of assigned characteristics regarding their age, gender, family structure, education level, time of arrival and vulnerability. The stories had to illustrate a possible outcome of a better articulation between local governments and civil society, previously discussed and agreed within each group. As each group shared the story of their character with other participants, the entities, institutions, organizations and urban spaces they perceived as most relevant were drawn in a large paper sheet. The resulting illustration, together with the key elements of each character, clearly showcased how coordination among the different actors that support and interact with migrants can facilitate their inclusion, their access to basic services and their right to the city.*



## Mechanisms for articulation

Many municipalities recognize the importance and the benefits of working with CSOs, particularly around the issue of migration. However, it is not always clear how to articulate these partnerships and coordinate efforts while securing the autonomy of these organizations and avoiding potential friction or conflicts of interest. Three general mechanisms are introduced here, with specific examples of each of them further explained in the case studies that follow.



### Coordination and info sharing

It is often the case, particularly in response to sudden flows, that different actors, including government, CSOs, volunteer initiatives and even the private sector, mobilize their resources to assist migrants. However, this can easily lead to confusion over which actors are in place, what services are available, and who is being reached or not. This can create redundancies and misinformation among migrants. In response, cities such as Brital have taken the initiative to set up coordination centers, which gather grassroots, national and international organizations, as well as municipal agencies, in order to keep track of all local initiatives.

Beyond coordination, better linkages between cities and CSOs can foster information sharing which facilitates a better assessment of needs and gaps, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the actions implemented. This is the case of the examples of Sfax and Meknes, where the municipalities have benefitted from the insights and knowledge of local CSOs. A continuous dialogue among them has also helped to create an understanding of the needs and limitations of each other, and identify ways of complementing each other's actions.



### Policy Development

CSOs can also play a concrete role in improving policies and project design. Several cities have worked towards formalizing these communication channels by setting up consultative platforms, where CSOs can share

their insights and hands-on knowledge of the local situation, propose solutions and provide feedback and recommendations on future policies and programs. These platforms or forums can be set up as regular consultative spaces, or with specific objectives and time frames.

Cities such as Athens or Berlin have created councils including representatives from migrant communities and CSOs which meet regularly to assess migrants' needs and adequate service provision. These mechanisms are sometimes created by initiative of the civil society sector. In Douala, the CSO Caritas has taken the initiative to work with the local government on housing policies. In the case of Tunisia, the Human Rights League has created a platform that works with local governments and other stakeholders to develop and deliver policy proposals on migration to the central government.

While these initiatives are participatory and allow CSOs and local communities to convey messages to local (or national) officials, some issues remain. Very often, these councils only have an advisory role and are not properly integrated into decision-making processes. In addition, participating organizations might not be systematically selected according to their degree of representation, with larger CSO and NGOs, or special interest groups, often being favoured. A lack of resources, and a lack of understanding about the municipal mandate and limitations, can also raise frustrations from all parties when demands do not receive an appropriate response. Transparency and clear communication strategies are therefore very important for these mechanisms to be effective.



### **Implementation and joint service provision**

In many countries, CSOs are already recognized as a valuable implementation partner, with local governments capitalizing on their flexibility, local networks and specific expertise. Some municipalities delegate and contract the delivery of specific services to NGOs who directly provide basic goods and assistance to migrants. Others provide grants or municipal funding to improve vocational and professional skills for the city's most vulnerable residents, including migrants. In the case of Malaga, the city provides funds to an organization composed

primarily of migrants to coordinate a citizenship and cohabitation program in the city center, recognizing their important role in the city's public sphere.

Working with CSOs to provide services and implement programs allows municipalities to benefit from CSO's know-how, and allows for extra flexibility in responding to the changing needs and circumstances. On the other hand, it can threaten an organization's perceived autonomy and its role as a counter-power or advocate. This can ultimately have an adverse effect on the program's impact and its sustainability. It is therefore crucial to respect CSOs independent position and autonomy, moving beyond the outsourcing of service provision to engage CSOs in needs identification, program design and impact evaluation processes.



# Case Studies: Illustrating challenges and answers of the peer cities

**The cases presented here provide some examples of mechanisms, tools and ways in which local governments can work with civil society organizations to improve a city's capacity to welcome and host migrants. They also highlight some of the challenges that remain over the nature of this cooperation.**

On the first place, many countries still give limited jurisprudence to cities in regards to migration governance. Poor decentralization progress means many local governments have limited capacity and lack the resources necessary to move from immediate response, often dependent on external funding and agencies, to longer term sustainable policies. This, on the other hand, means cities and CSOs can be creative and innovative to go beyond their administrative and organizational role to take advantage of the ongoing decentralization process and act at their local level.

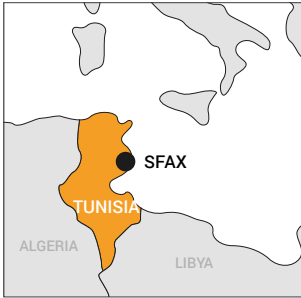
The role of CSOs in monitoring and advocacy often puts them at odds with local governments. Open dialogue and close coordination is thus very important to build trust and mechanisms that guarantee their independence and flexibility vis-à-vis the local authorities. Transparency and accountability from all parties involved is necessary to contribute to a better coordination, open to critical views which should not be affected by conflicts of interests or fear of retaliation.



## 1. Sfax, Tunisia



Cooperating with CSO networks to fill local and national gaps



The Peer-learning event included a field visit to Caritas in Sfax, as well as presentations from two other CSOs active in Tunisia, Terre d'Asile and the Tunisian Human Rights League. Their work is characterized by a strong coordination among different civil society organizations, actively looking for opportunities to work with local governments in a national ecosystem

characterized by a low level of decentralization, lack of legislative framework around migration, and limited resources and competences at the local level.

Caritas has been active in Tunisia for 40 years, but it only started working in Sfax 3 years ago. Operating within the Christian church, Caritas benefits from a 1964 convention between the Tunisian state and the church, which enables it to access some state support and free spaces for its activities.

At the moment, it provides assistance for up to 120 migrants, through an array of activities including an open community space, weekly lunch with migrant communities, support for undocumented migrants and unaccompanied minors, identification and burial of deceased migrants (one of the few areas in which the municipality has a legal mandate in regards to migrants), and the co-organization of the festival "A Week in Africa" which has led to the creation of new associations and better coordination among existing CSOs.

*"Guiding migrants to the right service provider is very important. Information is crucial"*

**Caritas, Sfax, Tunisia**



In recent years, the number of organizations providing some kind of service or activity targeting migrants in the city has increased from 4 to 40. Together with Caritas, Terre d'Asile, and the Tunisian Human Rights League, local CSOs have established a secure reference mechanism which allows CSOs and local service providers to share private information that facilitates service provision and referral of migrants to relevant services. It has allowed for better coordination and a better understanding of the migrants' situation, while also making sure migrants are informed of their rights and the services available. As such, it complements word of mouth and community channels which had been the main source of information for migrants before.

This mechanism has not been shared with the municipality, because of privacy concerns, particularly regarding the migration status of the different individuals assisted by the organizations. However, other kind of coordination has been possible thanks to a greater understanding and flexibility on the part of the local government, which understand the gap that Caritas and other CSOs in the city are filling. Authorization to reform one of Caritas' houses into a temporary residence hall is currently being discussed with the municipality, and the city has worked with the Human Rights League to build the capacity and knowledge of city officials around asylum issues, and participate in the organization's advocacy efforts to enact a national law on asylum.



## In summary:

### **Challenge:**

Lack of local governments' mandate

### **Strategy:**

Active dialogue and coordination with all actors

### **Lessons:**

- Lack of national legal frameworks on migration do not prevent the city to work with CSOs on these issues.
- Importance of understanding each other's needs and limitations.
- Local municipalities can benefit from CSO filling the gaps on legal mandate or advocating for reform at the central level.

## 2. Malaga, Spain



Sharing leadership with migrants association to foster active citizenship

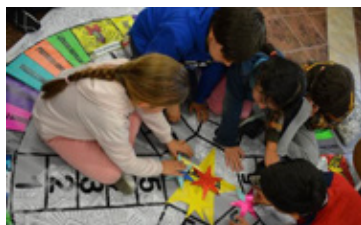


The city of Malaga, in the south of Spain, is often a city of transit, but it is also host to many migrants. As part of its efforts to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of its urban center neighborhoods, the city has promoted the Escuela de Ciudadanía y Convivencia [Citizenship and Cohabitation Academy] since 2007 with funding from the European Union.

The Citizenship and Cohabitation Academy is implemented through partnerships with three local NGOs. The Moroccan Association for the Integration of Migrants is one of these partners, together with Incide (an organization focused on fostering citizenship participation, civic education, diversity and inclusion), and Arrabal (an association aiming to support the social and labor inclusion of all people).

Originally founded by Moroccan migrants studying in Spain, the association now works in several cities of the Andalusia province to support the integration of newly arrived migrants. As part of its engagement in this project, it tries to move beyond the perceived division between migrants and the notion of “citizenship”, by looking at migrants as creators of “citizenship”.

The association works with all residents of the city’s center, regardless of their origin, to improve and activate local citizenship, social entities, volunteer activities and multicultural coexistence through education, research, dialogue and social encounters. Its activities are planned through a steering committee composed of several community based organizations and local residents, which analyzes the needs and decides on the type of activities, methodologies and implementation.



The activities carried until now include: training regarding NGO management, social entities and youth issues; awareness raising about migration, racism, environment and other topics; and active citizenship participation through photo contests, theater, neighborhood agents, human library, and many other activities.

The collaboration between different social entities in the city has improved their performance and impact, through the creation of positive working synergies. It has also provided a mechanism for further collaboration between public and social entities within the city center, including through the use of public spaces, collaboration with public libraries, etc

Throughout the project the commitment from the local authorities has been acknowledged, recognizing its willingness to work with a migrant-led organization in issues of active citizenship, diversity and social inclusion. The previous existence of a heterogeneous, committed associative movement in the city has also facilitated the success of this project, with members of the steering committee willing to work together, without prevalence of one entity or individual over others.

## In summary:

**Challenge:**

Social integration of migrants

**Strategy:**

Acknowledge migrants as active citizens

**Lessons:**

- Integration needs to include both “local” and “migrant” population
- Acknowledge the wisdom, experience, and knowledge that all individuals in a community can share
- Regular steering committee meetings create opportunities for coordination among social actors and the local government

### 3. Brital, Lebanon



Taking the lead to coordinate arrival and reception services



Brital is a Lebanese city located in the border with Syria, with a population of 25,000. During the Syrian crisis, the city experienced a flow of 85,000 refugees, mostly women and children, with no foreseeable plan or vision from the central government to address their needs. The city had to face the issue singlehandedly, without knowing the repercussions or the duration of the crisis.

Basing its response on Lebanese municipal law which gives municipalities the right to address all local-community related issues, the city decided to take on an important role as a reference point for both refugees and the host community, providing guidance, and mediating and coordinating with relevant civil society and international organizations to provide services and information. The approach taken by the municipality can be divided into two: internal coordination and external coordination.

Internally, the city established a point of arrival for refugees to provide information, welcoming services, accommodation support and basic necessities. It also launched a dialogue with residents to host refugees where feasible and provide in-kind donations. The city made an effort to organize the distribution of refugees in an adequate manner, ensuring most of the first arrivals could be hosted in existing buildings, and coordinating the establishment of camps with international organizations following an increase in the number of arrivals.



In order to coordinate with international organizations and other civil society organizations, the city created committees to clarify needs and priorities, including representatives of both the local community and refugees. It coordinated with international organizations to create a center of support and assistance, enabling organizations to offer food and accommodation, access to education, health and safe spaces to refugees, while also implementing projects targeting the host community.

As a border city, Brital faced security issues during the early stages, with the community fearing the conflict could spill into its territory. As such, the city worked with relevant actors to prevent the establishment of camps in border areas. It also prevented the depletion of local infrastructure and public services through an ongoing dialogue with international organizations, as well as by encouraging new arrivals to work without competing with the local manpower.

The process in the city of Brital demonstrates how a small city has the capacity to regulate and organize a rapid flow of migrants into its territory. Some of the components necessary for a similar strategy to work include: willingness to host arrivals, dialogue with locals, coordinating capacity, assistance from other actors, and inclusion of migrant community in its own assessment. The host community is one of the main factors that can make or break the process of hosting refugees. Therefore, coordinating with local civil society is key at all stages, and additional services and projects should be implemented in parallel to projects for the host community to avoid social tensions.

## In summary:

**Challenge:**

Sudden arrival of refugees

**Strategy:**

Active dialogue and coordination with all actors

**Lessons:**

- Small local governments have the capacity to regulate and organize asylum matters in their cities
- Coordination is key through all stages
- The host community should not be overlooked

## 4. Douala, Cameroon



CSOs' contribution to housing policy evaluation and development



The city of Douala is the economic and commercial capital of Cameroon with close to 2,800,000 inhabitants. Its economic opportunities, together with climate impact and natural disasters in the rural areas of the country, and conflicts affecting neighboring countries, have led to an unprecedented influx of migrants to the city in the last decades.

Recent development and infrastructure projects in the city have increased the number of evictions and intra-urban displacement, affecting both locals and foreign residents who have settled in the city. In order to confront this phenomenon, the organization Caritas Douala has led a project to support the improvement of public policies in Cameroon in respect to decent housing. Its main objective is to ensure the legal security and respect for the rights of families threatened with forced eviction, and advocate for the revision and adoption of policies governing the right to decent housing, land and property rights.

Aware of the importance of collaborating with civil society and local authorities, the organization has followed three lines of action: mobilizing affected community, raising awareness among the public, and proposing policies. Identifying a gap between international law, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, and the local legislative framework, the organization has carried out a study of the economic and social impact of the evictions perpetrated during the last 30 years.





In doing so, it has established the situation of families directly affected by evictions, analyzed the impact of these evictions on the local economy, and proposed actions and alternatives ways in which families affected by evictions can be supported, or future relocations used to improve the living conditions of the families directly affected.

Cooperation with the government (local and central) has not always gone well, and the project has confronted different issues including conflict of interests among government actors, administrative inflexibility, and demobilization. But through perseverance, networking and capacity building efforts, the project has managed to raise awareness of the issue within the local government, and grouped and organized victims and potential victims of forced evictions facilitating the dialogue with authorities.

In this process it has managed to find mutual ground with the local government in regards to the need for more effective decentralization, and more resources and decision making capacity at the local level. The studies carried out can also facilitate the development of policies that take into account the negative social and economic effects of forced evictions in the city, allowing for a more inclusive and sustainable development in accordance to the SDGs.

## In summary:

**Challenge:**

Forced evictions of vulnerable population

**Strategy:**

Research and awareness raising of local authorities

**Lessons:**

- Forced evictions affect both local and migrant populations
- Studies of the social and economic effects of policies can facilitate dialogue between civil society and local authorities
- Mutual interest in effective decentralization and local decision-making

## 5. Meknes, Morocco



Empowering foreign students as local and international ambassadors

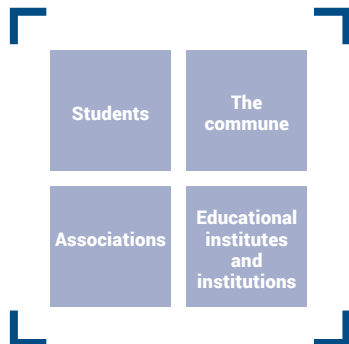


Morocco has been and continues to be a country of transit for many migrants hoping to reach Europe. The situation has been changing in recent years, however, with many migrants choosing to extend their stay. On the other side, Morocco has been a destination country for students from other African countries for many years, with up to 15,000 African students and trainees in the country today.

The city of Meknes is home to 1500 students from 25 nationalities, associated through the Meknes branch of the Confederations of African Students and Interns in Morocco (CESAM). Aiming to include these students further into the city and recognizing the potential of working with them to reach out and provide basic services to migrants with an irregular status in the region, the city has established communication and cooperation mechanisms with CESAM, educational institutions and other associations.

The city started to work with CESAM in previous years, providing it with logistic support for its activities, and is now in the process of signing a partnership agreement. Through it the city hopes to reach the foreign students and interns in its territory, implementing an integral annual program to empower them as residents of the city, develop their skills and talents, and become ambassadors for Morocco.

At the same time, and taking into account the lack of competence at the local level to deal with migrants in an irregular situation, and the lack of reception institutions and clear governmental vision or strategy, this partnership is one of many the city aims to develop with local associations in order to support them in continuing and further developing their activities to support this population.





While this program is still in its early stages, communication and cooperation between the city and CESAM has contributed greatly in building trust and strengthening relations, paving the way towards more specific plans and projects.

## In summary:

### **Challenge:**

From transit to hosting community

### **Strategy:**

Empower foreign students and trainees in the city

### **Lessons:**

- Foreign students and their associations can support efforts to connect to, as well as provide, basic services to other migrants in the city
- Educational institutions as partners to empower migrant populations
- Foreign students and trainees can become strong ambassadors for the city

# Key Learnings & Recommendations

Cooperation and trust can be built on the momentum of previous experiences. Capitalize on successful practices, systematizing them on the basis of up to date information, data and feedback from the field.

## Move from 'migrants vs nationals' issues to inhabitants/residents (right to the city)

Recognizing every resident as an active citizen, and their inherent right to the city, can help local governments move beyond a position of hosting to more strategic planning and policies that take advantage of the diversity, flows and connections that migration provides.

## Open channels for the co-development of policies

It is crucial to move beyond service delivery to engage CSOs in information sharing, policy design and evaluation mechanisms. This will allow for the inclusion of insights from the field and a more complete picture including vulnerable and isolated groups.

## **Work with CSOs to advocate for better legislative frameworks at the national level**

Civil society organizations can be strong partners in the call for greater decentralization, which will give more capacity, autonomy and flexibility to local governments to respond to local needs.

## **Define/understand your civil society**

Each country and territory has a very different civil society environment, with different legal frameworks, characteristics (faith-based, labour, etc.), capacity, funding mechanisms, level of professionalization, and areas of action. Defining and understanding organized civil society in your territory is the first step for a better articulation.

## **CSOs can provide important data, knowledge and experience**

Civil society organizations have valuable knowledge, experience and insights into the day to day of migrants' realities. Engaging them while respecting their reservations to share specific data on vulnerable migrant communities can contribute to better assessment of needs and policy design.

## **Building trust is a long process**

There is no magic mechanism to facilitate coordination and cooperation. Given the various interests of local actors and the different positions, it takes time to build trust and overcome fears that remain between civil society and government institutions.

## **Define relevant cooperation and coordination mechanisms**

Relevant and effective cooperation and coordination mechanisms should be selected, designed and developed based on the local realities, legal frameworks, particular objectives and available resources and capacities.

## **Capitalize on good practices**

Cooperation and trust can be built on the momentum of previous experiences. Capitalize on successful practices, systematizing them on the basis of up to date information, data and feedback from the field.

## Build synergies, create bridges and share resources

While competition for funding can hinder cooperation, it is important to continuously look for opportunities to build synergies among existing programs, create bridges between them, and share resources that can increase their effectiveness, reach and impact.



## Partners

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