

POLICY BRIEF

BOOSTING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA, SAHEL, AND LAKE CHAD: INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EUTF EVALUATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) has been an instrument seeking to address the root causes of irregular migration, forced displacement, and instability in Africa. This policy brief presents the findings of an evaluation of EUTF-funded projects in the Horn of Africa (HoA) and Sahel and Lake Chad (SLC) regions, with a focus on their effectiveness in stimulating employment, improving livelihoods, and reducing irregular migration.

The purpose of this policy brief is to provide an overview of the findings of the evaluation of EUTF-funded projects in these regions and provide recommendations to improve future EU programming and policies with similar targets as the EUTF.

It is intended for policymakers, development practitioners, and researchers who are interested in the EUTF and its impact on employment and livelihoods.

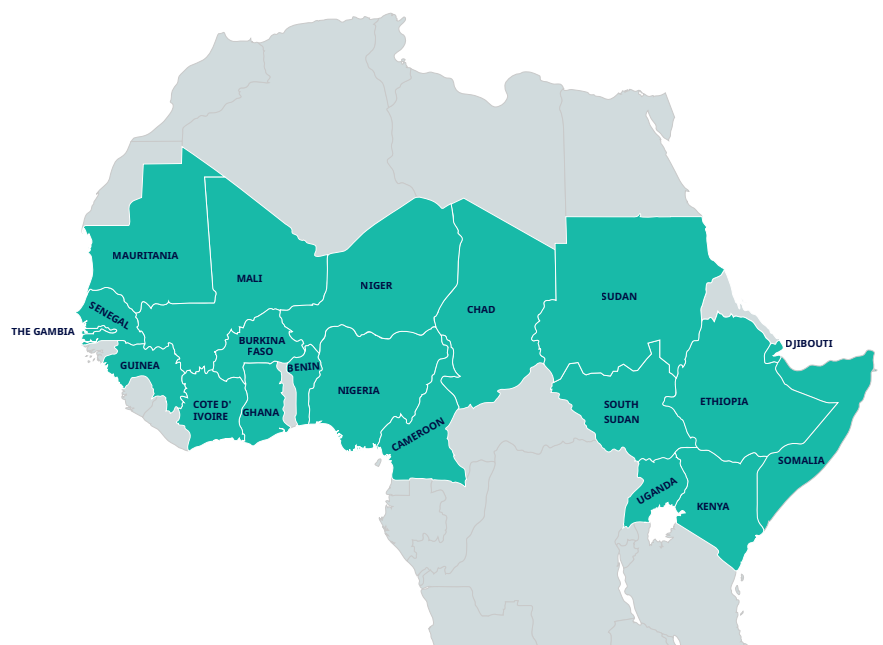
BACKGROUND

EUTF was established in 2015 and the funding cycle ended in 2024. Over this period, EUTF disbursed 3,125 million € across 154 projects in HoA and SLC.

Under its first Strategic Objective (out of four), the fund aimed to address root causes of irregular migration by supporting projects seeking to enhance economic opportunities and promote job creation among vulnerable groups, particularly youth, women, refugees, and returning migrants. Projects included activities such as trainings, financial support, institutional capacity building and information campaigns.

This policy brief is based on the *portfolio evaluation report*.

Countries hosting EUTF-funded projects



KEY FINDINGS

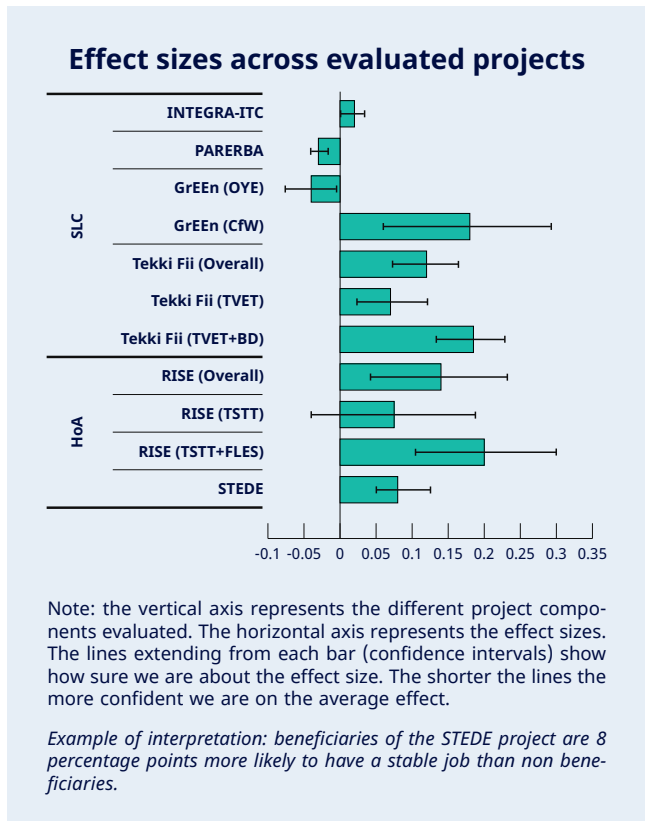


1. PROJECTS HAD POSITIVE IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT

EUTF-funded projects positively impacted stable employment. Impacts varied across projects but on average, beneficiaries are almost 3 percentage points more likely to have a stable job than individuals that did not benefit from a EUTF-funded project. While these impacts seem modest in absolute terms, they are similar to the levels found in other similar evaluated projects non financed by EUTF.

These impacts have the following particularities:

- ▶ Impacts often take more than one year to materialise.
- ▶ If they can, youth tend to open their business instead of finding a job in a business.
- ▶ Impacts are larger when the support combines technical training and (financial) support to develop a business.
- ▶ Impacts on employment quality are limited among women and refugees in comparison to less vulnerable populations such as men and host community members.



2. PROJECT PARTICIPANTS FACED SIMILAR BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

The main reasons found for the nuanced impacts on employment are:

- ▶ Misalignment of the projects offered to the needs of the beneficiaries, especially returning migrants, refugees and women.
- ▶ The limited hiring capacity of the private sector.
- ▶ The inadequate access to capital to start or develop business.

3. PROJECTS DID NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIMINISH MIGRATION INTENTIONS



EUTF-supported projects did not significantly diminish participants' migration intentions and revealed the complex relationship between economic opportunities and migration decisions. In some cases, the promotion of skills and em-

ployability increased the intentions to migrate. Also, factors such as local conflicts and limited job prospects often outweighed the perceived benefits of the projects.

4. PROJECTS FACED CHALLENGES TARGETING PEOPLE WITH MIGRATION INTENTIONS & RETURNING MIGRANTS



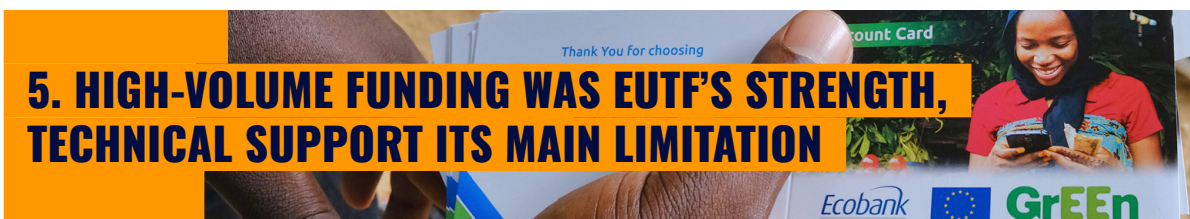
Only about one out of four projects was explicitly aimed at reducing intentions to migrate by promoting employment, suggesting a disconnect between EUTF's overarching goal and project-specific goals. In projects aiming to reduce intentions to migrate, a vast majority of the targeted populations did not intend to migrate irregularly to Europe before the start of the activities. This demonstrates the challenges to identify potential migrants and anticipate future waves of irregular migration.

The projects successfully targeted youth, women and refugees (in HoA). However, in SLC, where the goal was to support returning migrants, pro-

jects faced challenges in enrolling them due to:

- ▶ The projects' lengthy duration and limited financial support for training costs did not address this urgent need for income.
- ▶ Returning migrants were more likely to experience mental health issues, hindering their ability to engage in (long) trainings that do not provide psychosocial support services.
- ▶ Returning migrants often did not meet eligibility criteria such as have identification documents, be aged below 35 years old and have minimum educational levels.

5. HIGH-VOLUME FUNDING WAS EUTF'S STRENGTH, TECHNICAL SUPPORT ITS MAIN LIMITATION



The substantial funding level and wide regional scope of the EUTF allowed for a more holistic approach and added value that could generally not be created by individual member state projects.

The main limitation was the limited technical support compared to other bilateral country funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To continue EUTF's work and maximize the effects of funded projects in the future, EU programme managers and project implementers should consider the following recommendations:

ALIGN PROGRAMME AND PROJECT-SPECIFIC GOALS



PRIORITY: HIGH

To ensure that resources will be allocated to reach the overarching goals, the proposals must be selected based on their explicit alignment to at least one of the overarching goal, their strategic approach, and their quality of the intervention.

Example: If the programme's goal is to reduce irregular migration, make sure the Description of the Action of the project describes explicitly how it plans to reach the same objective.

CONDUCT AND USE THOROUGH MARKET AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS



PRIORITY: HIGH

Systematically conduct thorough labour market assessments and assess specific needs of the targeted populations, especially for women, returning migrants and refugees. Use insights from market assessments to design the project to ensure that all training projects respond to local and regional labour market demands.

Example : Returnees need to generate an income quickly. Therefore, the training should be of up to 2 weeks, be part time and/or provide a kit to start an income generating activity (e.g. equipment for starting delivery services).

BEYOND PROMOTING SKILLS, CONNECT AND SUPPORT THE PRIVATE SECTOR



PRIORITY: HIGH

Collaborate with local employers to facilitate their hiring capacity for newly trained individuals through financial hiring incentives and human resources management training projects.

Promote financial support projects for (future) entrepreneurs that offer microloans, grants, and training in financial management. This often implies partnering with microfinance institutions and support entrepreneurs in developing financial business plans.

Support mentoring approaches to provide guidance and support as they launch their businesses.

Example: Offer a combination of technical training and business development support as in the Tekki Fii and RISE projects.

PROMOTE / IMPLEMENT A HOLISTIC GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH



PRIORITY: HIGH

Provide regular training and workshops for project staff on gender sensitivity to ensure that they understand and can implement gender-sensitive practices effectively throughout the project life-cycle.

Enforce the use of comprehensive and concrete gender-sensitive guidelines for both the design and implementation phases of projects.

Example: Monitoring the number of women enrolled is not enough. Provide support services such as childcare, hygiene supplies, adapt timing of activities to both genders' household duties in the local context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SYSTEMATISE THE USE OF MONITORING TOOLS

PRIORITY: MEDIUM



Each project should set up a centralised and digitalised monitoring system before the start of the activities to follow in real time the implementation of the planned activities. The project team can use tools such as KoboCollect, Enketo or Survey CTO.

This will help promptly detecting implementation challenges and reacting efficiently. Monitoring systems will also facilitate the reporting on outcomes using reliable sources of information.

Example: Set up a digital registration process and have trainers checking attendance using digital sheets that list all beneficiaries.

ADAPT PROGRAMMES TO THE DURATION NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT & MEASUREMENT OF SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

PRIORITY: MEDIUM



As impacts on livelihoods and resilience take time to materialise, especially among the most vulnerable populations, the funding programmes require longer timelines. This would allow projects to propose more comprehensive approaches when needed and the evaluations to capture the full impacts.

Example: expand the duration of programmes aiming to improve livelihoods and resilience to 6-10 years.

PROMOTE MORE COORDINATED INTERVENTIONS BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS

PRIORITY: HIGH



Promote more coordinated interventions such as Team Europe initiatives. This could increase financial capacity without hindering the member states' technical expertise, provide comprehensive approaches and create synergies.

Actively collaborate with institutions dealing with - and representing - vulnerable populations (returning migrants or refugees).

Example: Collaborate with the International Organisation for Migration to identify returnees, better understand their specific needs and consider other ongoing interventions targeting the same population.



FURTHER INFORMATION

PROJECT-SPECIFIC EUTF EVALUATIONS

Further information on individual projects can be found in the following reports:

- ▶ Impact evaluation of the second component of the RISE project (Uganda)
- ▶ Impact evaluation of the VSLA intervention of the STEDE project (Ethiopia)
- ▶ Impact evaluation of the Tekki Fii project implemented by GIZ (The Gambia)
- ▶ Impact evaluation of the GrEEn project (Ghana)
- ▶ Impact evaluation of the PARERBA project (Senegal)
- ▶ Impact evaluation of the PVP activities of the INTEGRA project (Guinea)
- ▶ Evaluation of Promopêche (Mauritania)
- ▶ Evaluation of PECOBAT (Mauritania)

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