



October 2021

Background

This Impact Story looks at the experiences of three participants from the e-learning course on “**Entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees**” which was launched in March 2020 as a joint initiative of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). The course is part of a series of e-learning courses developed by UNCTAD and UNITAR, and contributes to UNITAR’s strategic objective of promoting social inclusion and the empowerment of groups that have been marginalized and are vulnerable.

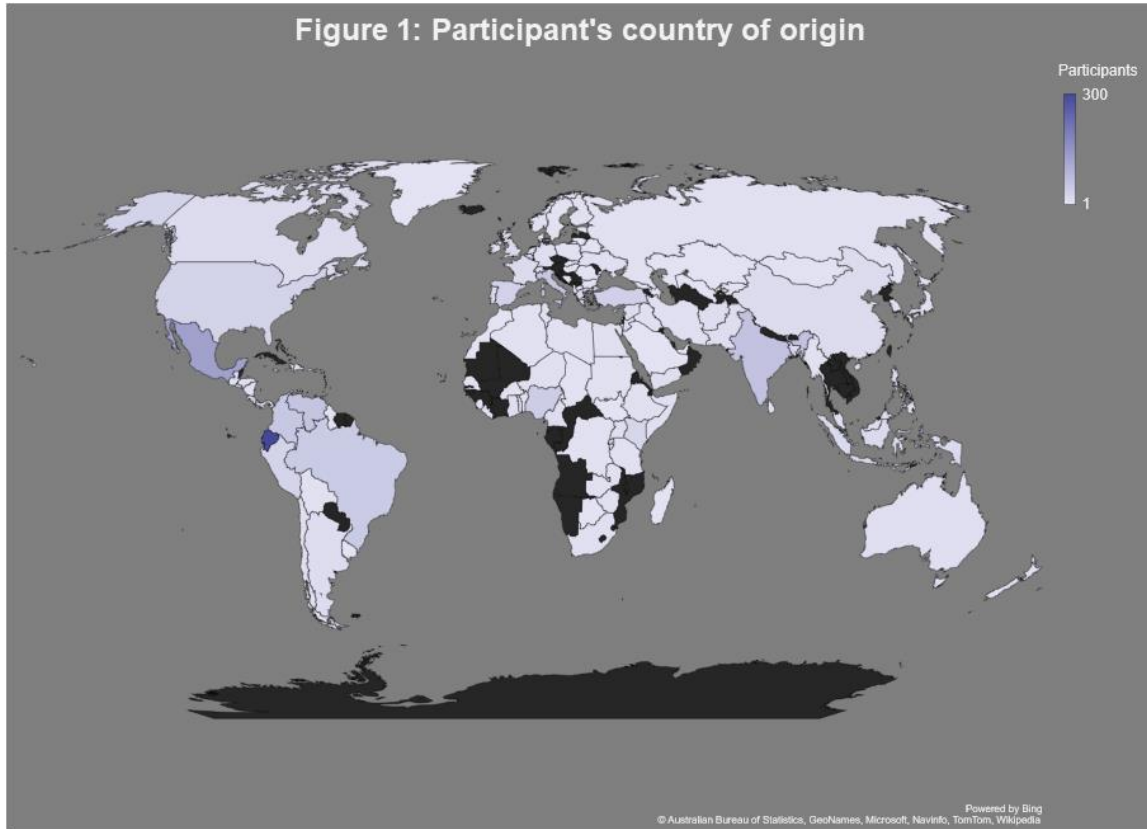
The course aims at strengthening the competences of professionals working on human mobility and entrepreneurship issues for overcoming more efficiently some of the challenges on economic and social inclusion for migrants and refugees by promoting entrepreneurship. The course welcomed participants from different backgrounds, including public officers, NGO officers, entrepreneurs (some of them were migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers), students and people working in academia. The course content highlighted the potential contribution of migrant and refugee entrepreneurship in their countries of origin and host countries, barriers and challenges of migrant/refugee entrepreneurship, formulation of policy strategies and settlement of a regulatory environment.

To date, the course has completed ten iterations in four languages: English (5 iterations), Spanish (3 iterations), French (1 iteration) and Arabic (2 iterations). From these, 4 editions were launched in 2020 and 7 in 2021. This Impact Story collects feedback from participants enrolled in the first four course iterations of 2020 (three in English and one in Spanish), with a cumulative total of 1,681 participants. They came from 124 countries, as illustrated in Figure 1 below,¹ including Ecuador, Mexico and India with the highest numbers of participants, respectively. Nine hundred and fifteen participants were female (57 per cent), 617 male (38 per cent) and 82 (5 per cent) identified with other genders. Moreover, 28 per cent received a certificate of completion and 29 per cent received certificates of participation. Certification figures are presented in Box 1.

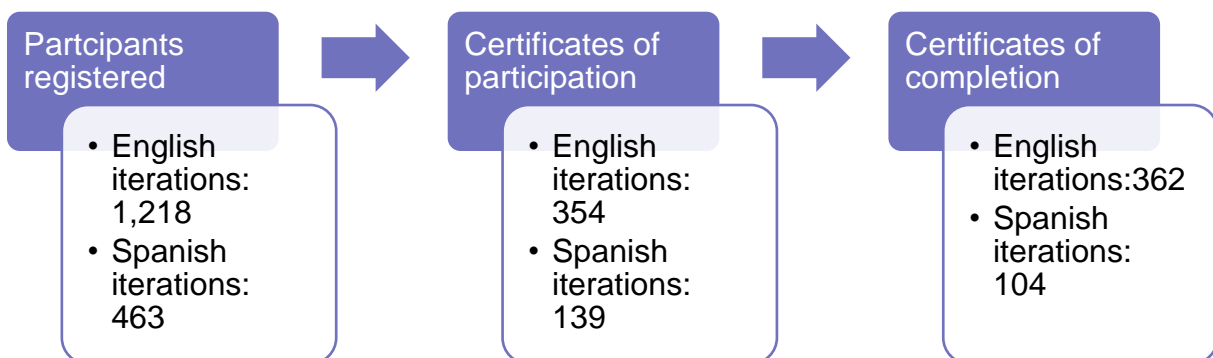
A previous self-evaluation conducted after the course completion reveals that most participants found the course useful and relevant to their jobs. Moreover, 97 per cent, on average, intended to use the knowledge from the course in their jobs. To confirm the application of knowledge and skills from the e-learning course, this Impact Story uses data from an online multilingual survey (English

¹ Countries filled in black represent zero participations.

and Spanish), which received 192 responses (11 per cent response rate), and three semi-structured interviews conducted between June and August 2021, six months after the course completion.



Box 1: Course registrations, participations and certifications



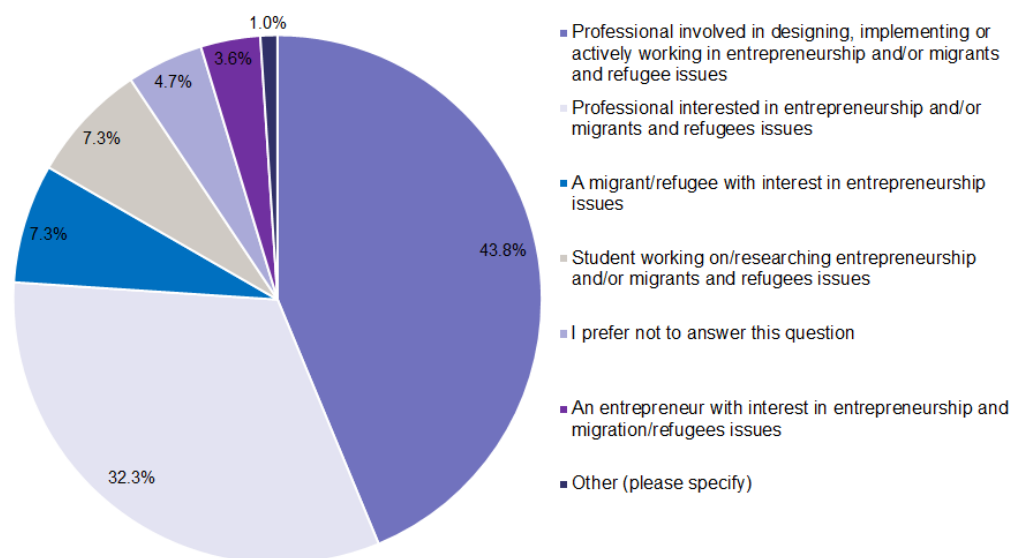
Application of knowledge and skills from the e-learning course

Thirty-five per cent of survey respondents participated in the Spanish edition of the course, while the remaining participated in any of the three English iterations. This section describes whether and how survey respondents have applied knowledge and skills from the course to their professional, academic or personal lives.

In line with the beneficiary profile targeted by the course, most of the survey respondents were professionals involved in designing, implementing or actively working in entrepreneurship and/or migrants and refugee issues (44 per cent) or with interest in migration and/or entrepreneurship (32 per cent). However, the e-learning course could also reach the final beneficiaries group, which are migrant and refugee entrepreneurs or interested in entrepreneurship (7 per cent). Figure 2 illustrates the profile of survey respondents, who were primarily (40 per cent) young professionals working in government, international organizations or local NGOs. Students represent a considerable group of the total participants (7 per cent). Contrarily, respondents coming from the corporate sector were the smallest group (2 per cent).

The overall application rate from survey respondents was 80 per cent. Participant's engagement in the topics covered by the course could have led to the high application rate identified for this course. Notably, professionals and students directly working in migration and refugee issues, entrepreneurs and migrants and refugees themselves presented the highest application rates, all above 85 per cent. Respondents also acknowledged the importance of the course for their

Figure 2: Profile of survey respondents



professional or academic success. Eighty-one per cent of respondents found the course to be important for their job or academic success.

Survey respondents applied the different topics of the course differently. The topics with higher application rates correspond to the barriers and challenges of migrant and refugee

entrepreneurship, strategies on migrant and refugee entrepreneurship, legal framework to support entrepreneurship among migrants and refugees and the contributions of migrants and refugees in host and countries of origin. These can be illustrated by the interviews below and examples of applications described by respondents, where legal framework and strategies to support projects from migrant people were highlighted.

Most respondents indicated impactful applications derived from the e-learning course, which go beyond daily job tasks, many reaching policy-making levels, as shown in Box 2. Applications range from academic research (from students and staff researchers) to public policy guidance from participants and improved entrepreneurship experiences from migrants and refugees participating in the course.

Furthermore, survey respondents attributed, on average, 68 per cent of their changed behaviour to the e-learning course.

While the application rate of the course was high, participants still faced some challenges to further this application. These correspond to the availability of funds at their offices to strengthen their work with migrants and refugees, hierarchies at the workplace and time availability. Interestingly, only a few participants indicated not having the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills. This can be expected given the profile of the course participants. Comments from the survey respondents indicated that although participants felt motivated to apply the new knowledge and confirmed having the space and opportunity to do it, they sometimes faced barriers to take their ideas further.

These challenges are also reflected in the survey where respondents indicated the need to promote the course in government institutions and include more experiences from practitioners from NGOs and independent consultants in the course content. Having recorded videos from experts was also mentioned as a recommendation for future editions and, at least, one interactive or live session at the end of the course.

Box 2. Examples of applications from participants

“I have improved the interview for refugee applicants [He mejorado la entrevista a los candidatos a solicitudes de refugio]”, *government officer from Mexico*

“I have transferred the knowledge gained from this course to different local NGOs in the implementation of different projects related to IDPs and refugees”, *officer in international organization from DRC.*

“I advised an international organization in Colombia in the design of an entrepreneurship program for Venezuelan migrants [Asesoré a una organización internacional en Colombia en el diseño de un programa de emprendimiento para migrantes venezolanos]”, *Independent consultant from Colombia.*

“We developed a management model for an entrepreneurship promotion center, which took into account the elements mentioned in the course [Elaboramos un modelo de gestión para un centro de promoción del emprendimiento, que tomó en cuenta los elementos mencionados en el curso]”, *NGO officer from Ecuador.*



William Ramírez

Project manager in an NGO

Creating entrepreneurship and managerial skills

San José, Costa Rica. William is a businessman from Nicaragua but has lived in Costa Rica for the last three years. William has used his business and entrepreneurship skills to help Nicaraguan migrants and asylum seekers in Costa Rica to design and develop project proposals that help them improve their livelihood strategies through a local humanitarian NGO. The e-learning course helped William better understand the international framework related to migrant entrepreneurship and improve his functions in his organization. Until now, William has coordinated several projects and capacity building sessions to develop their business plans.

As a well prepared professional himself, when William arrived in Costa Rica three years ago, he wanted to work towards shifting the idea of asylum seekers as professionally and academically unskilled (or victims) to people with economic potential for the benefit of the host country and migrants themselves, and present to organizations and government institutions the capabilities that asylum seekers were bringing with them to the country. He also noted that it was difficult for many new asylum seekers to adapt economically and socially to their new country. Although asylum seekers received support from UNHCR for the first three months, many of them faced some barriers to continuing settling, such as restricted access to the financial market. William decided to use his business experience to help others to improve their livelihood strategies and started working in a humanitarian NGO supporting migrant people to create their business plans and, in some cases, provide seed funding and mental health support.

Shifting his career from a business vision to a social approach required William to look for new knowledge and skills. The e-learning course was one of the resources he looked into to prepare himself for this new journey. The course gave William the “formal” tools to back him up in the work he was intuitively doing, particularly the existence of an international legal framework promoting migrant (and refugee) entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the course motivated William to shift his focus from supporting and developing entrepreneurship skills to influence, or at least provide insights into public policies decision-making. Through his organization, William participates in a multi actor working group focused on capacity building for Nicaraguan migrants.

So far, William has coordinated three entrepreneurship projects, covering some 50 business plans. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only 10 of them are in mature stage, but they have plans to continue supporting all business plans and expanding the projects. The COVID-19 new realities also required transforming the technical assistance sessions to online formats, which was a challenge considering that most beneficiaries live in the border or rural areas, where the internet connection is unreliable (or inaccessible). Fortunately, they were able to create “technology classrooms” (aulas tecnológicas, in Spanish) where they provided a space with IT equipment to continue the training sessions.

The policy focus of the course was key for William's participation in the working group. However, he considers that sometimes public officers lack knowledge of international frameworks, which makes it difficult to improve migrant conditions and overcome barriers at the national level. William would like to continue learning formally about the topic, especially the NGOs approach to migration, which was not covered in the e-learning course.



Chayan Chakraborty

Faculty Member / PhD scholar – Sarsuna Law College

Transferring knowledge on migration issues to college students

Kolkata, India. Chayan is a faculty member at Sarsuna Law College and a PhD scholar at the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (WBNUJS). His research at WBNUJS focuses on climate change and human migration (displacement) in India from a legal perspective at the national policy level. As a lecturer, he facilitates the courses of International Law and Jurisprudence. According to Chayan, the entrepreneurship course was an eye-opening opportunity to relate his two areas of expertise, especially when sharing with his students.

As part of his lectures in international law, Chayan incorporates insights from international environmental law in the courses. After taking the UNITAR-UNCTAD course, he realized the opportunity to go beyond this topic and include a session on the nexus of climate change and human migration. When this conversation took place, Chayan had not yet conducted this session but had already included it into his planning for the academic year starting in late September 2021. Moreover, he has not missed the opportunity to encourage students to register for the course either. His advice has also been followed by some of his students. Chayan plans to follow-up with them during this academic year, in case they are interested in further developing their work on migration issues.

Moreover, the online course helped Chayan to expand his knowledge in other areas of migration he had not looked into and that he now considers as having enriched his research. For example, he has redefined the concepts of climate migrants and climate refugees in his research work and have better knowledge on how to contrast on analysing the current policies in India. Understanding policy implications and structure on migration has also helped him to structure his research. According to Chayan “the legal framework for refugees is not only on protection but to secure livelihood strategies” and the UNITAR-UNCTAD course is clear on that link.

Chayan valued the course design and layout and said it motivated him to finish the course. He would also love to see some follow-up courses incorporating the issue of climate migration.



Eleutherius Michaelides

Entrepreneur – Owner of a start-up

Strengthening entrepreneurship skills

Madrid, Spain. Eleutherius is an entrepreneur with extensive experience in apparel manufacturing and audiovisual production (film, music and photography). His two companies are the evolution of the family businesses, a longstanding family tradition in the audiovisual sector and textile sector, which started with his grandparents in the 1950s. For Eleutherius, continuing and supporting the family is one of the most powerful drivers of building a business for every immigrant person.

He has lived in Spain for the last three years and decided to enroll in the course as part of his integration plan in the Spanish business ecosystem. Besides the UNITAR-UNCTAD course, Eleutherius has participated in many other learning opportunities, including the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme. Although having a large professional experience, Eleutherius considers the course helped him take the necessary steps to consolidate his business in a new country and **finally achieving his objective of rebuilding and modernizing the family businesses, updating everything to the 21st century global markets.**

When moving to Spain, Eleutherius was looking for capacity building programmes that could help him understand broader business integration frameworks for migrant people. Currently, Eleutherius' enterprise is integrated and managed by one of the best social cooperatives in Madrid, ² aligned with the UN SDGs and with focus in sustainable garment manufacturing. The course provided Eleutherius with a broader view of the potential financial instruments he could be able to access to sustain and promote his business. Now, as a member of a cooperative, he can access financial services without having a large employment record in the country, as the institution can serve as a guarantee intermediary. Information and confidence on financial issues are not derived from the course alone, since Eleutherius has also received financial consulting support previously. Even though, module 3: "Improving access to finance" was the most impactful section for Eleutherius. He has also shared information from the course informally with women in the cooperative and encouraged them to sign in future editions.

² <https://www.familias.org/contacta/>

Eleutherius would like to learn more about management from an entrepreneurship perspective, such as SWOT analysis and legal support for entrepreneurs.



Conclusion

The UNITAR-UNCTAD series of e-learning courses received participants from different backgrounds, with learners working directly in fields related to migrant and refugee entrepreneurship. Although the courses' key target audience was policymakers, the course received participants from NGOs and migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers entrepreneurs, who expressed having benefited from knowledge from the course and showed a high application rate, as highlighted in the interviews and examples of application. Participants demonstrated a high level of attribution of their changed behaviour to the course, but, in some cases, they found it difficult to apply new knowledge further due to hierarchies and restrictions at work.

Particularly, many of the experiences of application from this course expressed in the survey go beyond improved tasks at work, mentioning action points for improving the conditions of migrant entrepreneurship (results).

Participants repeatedly mentioned promoting the course in government institutions. As practitioners, they found that many public officers were not aware of the challenges and opportunities related to migrant entrepreneurship, and many ignore the international treaties and legal frameworks available in this regard.

Apparently, there is a demand for topics related to migration and entrepreneurship. Survey respondents indicated some topics they would like to continue learning in follow-up editions, including climate migration, managerial skills for migrant entrepreneurs, sustainability of their business plans, and more local experiences (good practices).