

Migration in West Africa: Patterns, Issues and Challenges

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Introduction

West Africa has a long history of population mobility, both regionally and internationally. Linked with factors as diverse as long-distance trade, the search for pasture, urbanisation and the growth of administrative centres, the demands of mining, industrial production and plantation agriculture, armed conflict, land degradation, drought and rural poverty; migration has played a major part in shaping settlement patterns in the region (DFID 2004). Census based estimates by the United Nations Population Division suggest that West Africa has the largest absolute international immigrant stock (based on place of birth data) in Africa. It is also the only part of sub-Saharan Africa where migration stocks relative to the total population have been increasing over the past few decades (de Haas 2007).

Human migration has long been considered an important element of population dynamics which can have significant consequences on both areas of origin and destination. According to Oderth (2002) migration has shaped the nature of both receiving and places of origin more than any other phenomenon in human geography. The existence of an intricate relationship between immigration and development is also captured by Hammer et al. (2002), who claim that migration can have a decisive impact on the direction and speed of development on both origin and destination.

The process of growth and development which West African countries have experienced in the colonial and post-colonial periods has been characterized by the process of areal differentiation (Riddell 1980). In a spatial sense, employment opportunities and developmental changes have been concentrated in a few areas, especially the cities; the rural areas, which dominate both in terms of population numbers and areal extent, have either undergone little growth or have felt the backwash effects of development elsewhere (Hirschman, 1958; Myrdal, 1957).

Although historically, West Africa developed large urban centres for capital cities of great empires, commercial and religious centres (Chandler 1994), urbanization in this region

of the world is mostly a recent phenomenon: one estimate has it that the urbanization level of Africa as a whole was 5% in 1900, 12% in 1950, and 28% in 1980 (Bairoch 1985). Immigration accounts for a larger share of the growth of urban areas and cities. Adepoju (1976) shows that in Nigeria, net migration (considering both national and international migration) is more important than natural increase in the growth of cities. Zachariah and Conde (1981) also noted that nearly half of the growth rate of urban areas was contributed by migrants. Studies have shown that the growth of population in towns and cities in Ghana, Ivory Coast and Nigeria is largely the result of migration (Hugo 1978; Lattes 1984).

Rural-urban migration is a major pattern of flow of migrants in West Africa. This implies that more people are leaving the farms and other rural economic engagements in search of jobs in the towns and cities. A fundamental changing character of rural-urban migration is from one which was circular in nature and male dominated to one which has become more permanent and includes a larger number of family units (Riddell 1980).

The scale of migration in recent years has increased tremendously. In recent times movement across national borders within West Africa has been facilitated by the ECOWAS Protocol on free movement and establishment. These movements raise new issues, and ultimately have consequences, implications and challenges for development in the sub region.

Patterns of Migration in West Africa

Population mobility in West Africa is not a recent phenomenon but forms the basis for its colonisation by the various tribes inhabiting the different parts. Most of the tribes of the region are thought to have moved southwards to the present locations in search of better ecological conditions and safe havens. Most of these early group movements involved larger tribes who sometimes used force in settlement. With an apparent partitioning of the West African landscape by the various tribes be they centralised or acephalous, the need to exchange products of the different ecological areas led to trade in commodities which crystallised into the famous trans-Saharan trade routes. Integration between the peoples of West Africa transcended beyond trade in commodities to include intermarriages between powerful kingdoms, exchange of slaves and military alliances. Transhumant activities and the dispersal of the Fulani across the Sahel involved considerable mobility. Religious education and the *hadj* to Mecca were associated with major mobility and sometimes settlement of West Africans all across West, North and East Africa (de Haas 2007).

European colonisation of the African continent changed the contours of movement in West Africa along purely commoditised norms. These have been entrenched after independence as African economies have not broken the shackles of colonisation but continue to feed the metropolitan cores in Europe and America through the international commodity markets. Internationalisation has crystallised into globalisation with widespread implications for commodity, capital and people movements. The motives, drivers and conditions under which migration occurs in these periods differ markedly. A sketch of the patterns in the different periods is expatiated below.

Patterns of migration in the Colonial era

In pre-colonial times, migration occurred largely in search of security, new land safe for settlement and fertile for farming. The colonial regime altered the motivation and composition of migration by introducing and enforcing various blends of political and economic structures, imposing tax regimes and establishing territorial boundaries (Adepoju 2005). From the sixteenth century onwards, growing European mercantilist trade and the establishment of forts along the West African coast negatively affected trans-Saharan trade and was associated with the slave trade, which led to the forced displacement of millions of people from Africa to Europe, North America, and the Caribbean between the mid sixteenth and early nineteenth century. A series of economic and recruitment policies - compulsory recruitment, contract and forced labour legislation and agreements - were employed to stimulate regional labour migration from Mali, Togo and Upper Volta to road networks, plantations and mines in Gold Coast and Ivory Coast.

The developments in rail and road construction and other infrastructure works as well as the growth of cities such as Accra, Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Abidjan, Lomé, Dakar and Cotonou triggered major rural-rural migration of farm workers and rural-urban migration of skilled and unskilled workers, traders and students. Infrastructural works in colonial urban centres, the introduction of taxes (Arthur 1991) and organised labour recruitment (Bump 2006) have been mentioned as major factors that stimulated migration from non-wage, rural subsistence economies to the urban and rural wage sectors.

Transportation development also facilitated labour migration by reducing the distance and hazards of journeys that hitherto hampered long distance migrations. These developments stimulated and altered large-scale population movements, giving rise to the male-dominated, seasonal and cross-border migration which subsequently became institutionalised.

Labour movements were therefore of North-South and South-South trend between the poor northern countries and the mineral-rich and plantation-rich southern countries. Also, within countries northern rural migration to the south for work in plantations and mines was deliberately engineered by the colonial masters. Some chiefs were dethroned for not meeting annual quotas of labour demanded by the colonial administrations, while people hitherto not belonging to any royal lineage were uplifted to status of chiefs for fulfilling these obligations. Taxation and brute force were the main weapons used during this period.

Post-Colonial patterns

The post-colonial period saw the emergence of free labour migration for wage work, weaving a complex grid of relations and inter-dependences over the artificial borders inherited from colonialism. In the early 1960s, both South-South and South-North migrations developed simultaneously. The opening up of resource-rich West Africa and the suppression of the capabilities of poorer areas during the colonial period created the basic spatial logic for the labour migration which ensued. The expansion of cash crops to increase foreign exchange needed for the new developmental aspirations magnified labour flows to colonial destinations such as the cocoa belts in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, coffee in Côte d'Ivoire, groundnuts and cotton belts in Senegambia. These zones attracted labour from Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mali, Guinea, Cape Verde and Togo.

Intra-regional mobility in West Africa has been generally dominated by a predominantly North-South movement from landlocked countries of Sahel West Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad) to the more prosperous plantations, mines and cities of coastal West Africa (predominantly Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and The Gambia). Senegal played the role of both receiving and sending country. The French automobile industry in the valley of the Senegal River also called for immigrants' labour. Irrigated agriculture increased the capacity of the valley regions of Senegal and Gambia.

The relatively prosperous economies of the Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire migration pole attracted large numbers of internal labour migrants as well as international migrants from countries such as Togo and Nigeria (mainly to Ghana), Guinea (mainly to Côte d'Ivoire) and Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali (to both). The presidents of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in the spirit of pan-Africanism opened their borders to immigrants to work and stay (Anarfi & Kwankye 2003).

Cocoa and coffee cultivation in Côte d'Ivoire necessitated large numbers of farm labourers from neighbouring poor regions as most indigenes sought jobs in urban areas and

on own plantations. The traditional north-south migration continued from the colonial era to service these plantations.

Mining and cocoa production in Ghana continued to serve as magnet for migrants as far as northern Nigeria. Ghana's mining sector was probably the biggest under British colonial rule in West Africa and offered a range of opportunities for employment for which local people minimally took part. New resource frontiers were opened up to increase cocoa production in the middle belt and western regions which saw unhindered migration flows into the country and large circular migration within the country.

In the early 1970s, Nigeria also became a major migration receiving country resulting from the oil boom. Several sectors of the Nigerian economy were buoyed by oil revenues and overnight the need for both professionals and low-skilled workers peaked. Rising incomes of the urban middle class, mass public investments and rapid industrialisation attracted substantial number of West African labour migrants (van Hear 1998). Professionals from English-speaking countries such as Ghana flooded the Nigerian workplace.

Migration in the era of globalisation

Recent migration patterns and their underlying motives are modelled along the new forces of globalisation which are transforming economies the world over. The deteriorating socio-economic conditions and deepening poverty in the late sixties and early seventies propelled a wide variety of migration configurations. Macro-economic adjustment measures and a huge increase in the number of entrants into the labour market have fuelled a job crisis, creating a sustained pressure for emigration. A significant amount of brain circulation takes place between Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria; Togo and Côte d'Ivoire; Burkina Faso, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. Since the 1970s, highly skilled migrants, including doctors, paramedical personnel, nurses, teachers, lecturers, engineers, scientists and technologists moved from Ghana first to Nigeria and later to other African countries, Europe and North America, attracted by relatively higher salaries and better prospects of living conditions. Many students also remained behind at the end of their training as political, economic and social conditions at home deteriorated.

The Network of Surveys on Migration and Urbanization in West Africa (NESMUWA) created in 1989, carried out an important survey in seven countries in 1993: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. Between 1988 and 1992, more than 6.4 million migratory movements were recorded between the seven countries of the network (Bocquier and Traoré 2000). Among these migrations, 2.3 millions were

international. The most important flows were recorded between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso (half of the total flows). Burkina Faso has the lowest internal migration incidence (30 percent of the total flows only as compared to Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal (62 percent), Mauritania (54 percent), Mali and Guinea (51 percent) and finally Niger (47 percent). However, there is recent disruption in the migration profile between Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Even though Côte d'Ivoire still holds a leading destination position it experienced a sharp decrease in the flows of international migrations.

The recent changes in West African migration patterns actually show that migrations that depend only on a local natural resource remain extremely fragile and dependant on the world market. West African migrations are becoming part of a dynamic and unstable world migration system and are strongly affected by economic and migration policies (expulsions and restrictive policies) both in developed and developing countries. The West African migration system is not an autonomous entity and closely relates to several migration systems in the South and in the North and interacts with them (Robin 1996, 68).

Since the late eighties, traditional labour importing, richer countries in the sub-region (Côte d'Ivoire) and hitherto attractive destinations for migrants (Nigeria) have experienced political and economic crises, which also spur out-migration of their nationals. Until the early 1980s, few Nigerian professionals emigrated because domestic working conditions were attractive and internationally competitive. The collapse of oil price, a sharp decline in oil revenue, rapid deterioration in living and working conditions, wage freeze, devalued national currency, declining real incomes, authoritarian military rule and the vacillating economic situation fuelled large-scale emigration of skilled and unskilled workers abroad. Post-apartheid South Africa also attracted highly skilled professionals from Nigeria and Ghana to staff the universities and other sectors and tradesmen from Senegal and Mali including street vendors and small traders from Sierra Leone.

Migration patterns within and from Africa (1970-2005)

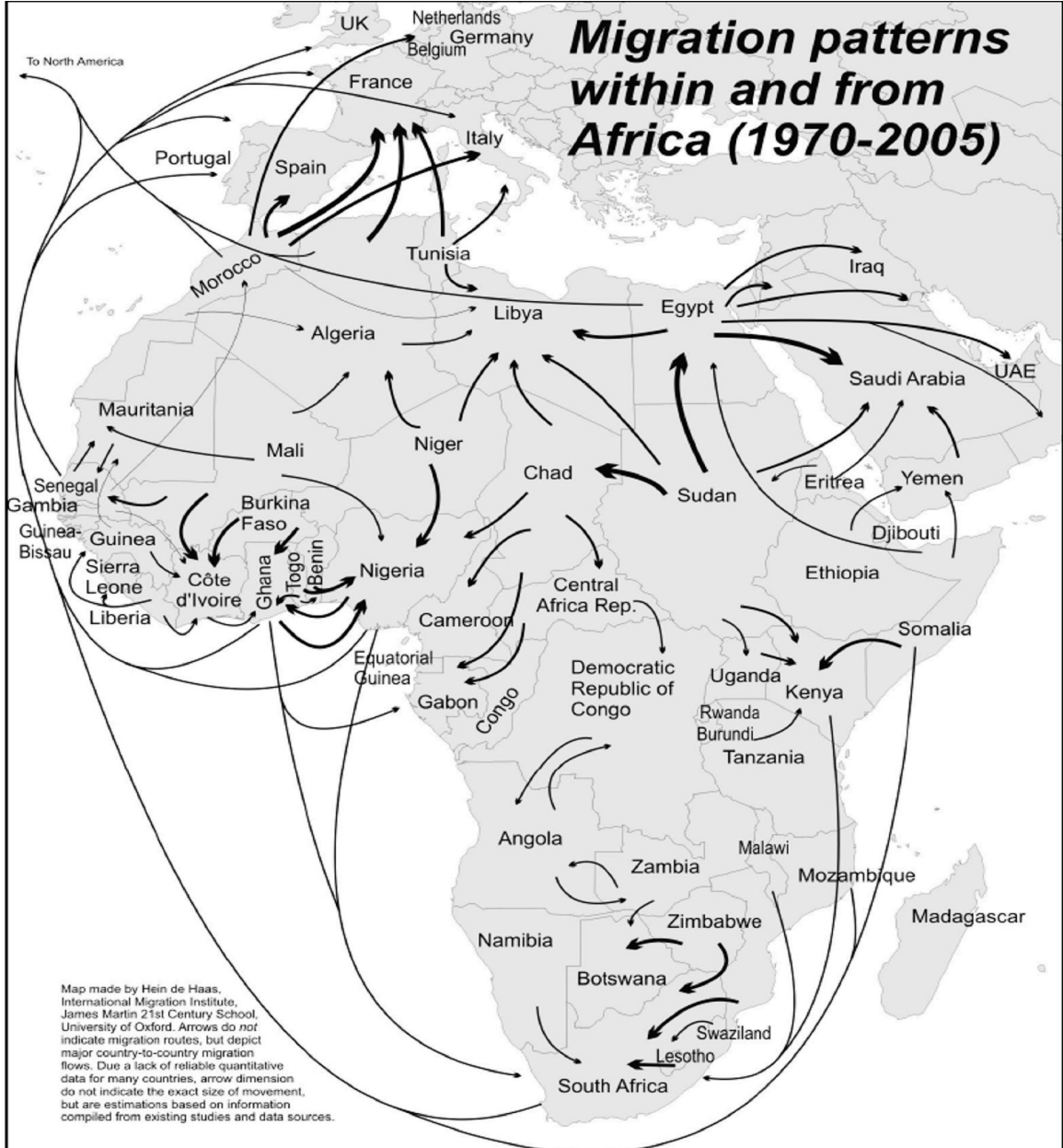


Table 1: Matrix of international migrations (in 1000).

Origin	Destination									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Burkina Faso (1)										
		281		11	*	14	*	18	2	329
Côte d'Ivoire (2)										
	227		24	117	3	47	13	15	21	468
Guinea (3)										
	*	38		11	3	*	38	40	17	149
Mali (4)	13	166	10		6	10	12	44	49	312
Mauritania (5)	*	8	2	5		*	32	na	na	47
Niger (6)	13	67		8			1	200	36	323
Senegal (7)	1	18	37	14	31	1		63	81	347
Other Africa (8)	16	105	38	10	Na	112	30			311
Rest of the World (9)	2	14	6	13	Na	28	25			88
Total (10)	273	697	117	187	45	213	152	380	206	2274

Sources: NESMUWA survey. * Figures less than 1000 migrations; na: not available.

Notes: Period 1988-92. population aged 15 years and more.

Secondary source: Adama Konseiga

Senegal and Libya are transit countries for migrants seeking to enter the European Union countries clandestinely. Ghana and later Nigeria turned labour exporting countries when economic conditions deteriorated. Ghana is currently experiencing return migration of its nationals in response to the government's progressive economic policies, and political stability in the country. Libya is an important destination country for many West Africans, a trend that debunks the invasion hypothesis that Europe is being invaded by black Africans.

The reorientation of most African economies from traditional to non-traditional exports stressing on export potential seems to have strengthened the magnetic properties of old receiving centres and created new ones in ecologically favourable zones for exports such as pineapples, oranges, vegetables and flowers. Rural-rural migration trends are on the ascendancy and this comes with new mechanisms of land tenure arrangements and a range of linked activities. The growth of the informal sector in all urban systems continues to employ most migrants falling outside the wage-sector thereby downplaying the magnitude of the urban unemployment crisis often missed by government statistics. The opportunities of the global village are now varied and do not necessitate movement of a traditional nature. Information technology jobs move to labour rather than labour moving to demand areas.

Brain circulation of shorter durations now occurs both within West Africa, Africa and the rest of the world. The constraints on movement in the global era are minimal on professionals and enormous for the less skilled. Visa constraints prevent most international migrations out of the region while within the region economic crisis resulting from fallouts of globalisation prevent settlement of citizens.

Some issues in West African Migration

The movement of people raises several issues in terms of motives or drivers, impacts, actors, regulation or management of the process and relations between places. Some of these issues are cursorily discussed below.

The Drivers of contemporary migration encapsulate both old tendencies and new aspirations and constraints. While in the past push-pull conceptions of the migration process provided a framework for understanding the motives for movements, today we need to understand the dynamics of globalisation and read different meanings into our old conceptualisations. No West African is insulated from global trends and shocks. Our responses to these trends and shocks in terms of choice of livelihood options detail our aspirations, experiences, constraints and opportunities. While urbanites are seeking opportunities and fleeing abroad to fill labour vacuums, rural dwellers are replacing them and creating new concentrations of populations in globally induced opportunity zones.

The process of rural-urban or rural-rural migration has created 'Empty Spaces' in the rural economy. By empty spaces is meant the labour vacuum created by the absence of the many rural out migrants. The impact of these spaces in the rural economy cannot be overstated, especially with regards to disruption of rural livelihoods. Out migration leads to drastically reduced labour size and quality, which in turn reduces farm size and quality of work resulting in reduced food production and reduced household wealth with consequences of increased vulnerability in many rural areas leading to food insecurity

The economic crisis of the late 1970s through to the present for most countries has led to the growth and decline of towns and regions. The collapse of industry and mining companies has led to old mining areas losing their populations to newer economic niches. Similarly, Nigeria which became a receiving country in the 1970s is now a major sending country to Ghana and Liberia. On the whole, the desire to migrate out of the sub-region is higher now than ever before. However, there is a counterbalance whereby return migration is becoming common especially for economically stable countries such as Ghana.

Remittances constitute the lifewire connecting migrants to their families. A large number of rural people for whom agriculture no longer is a comfortable source of livelihood depend to some degree on remittances for mere survival and advancement. Similarly, most people in urban areas depend on international migrants for financial and other support for survival. Remittances represent the motivation for migration for subsequent migrants. Due to globalisation, remittances have become an important source of income to countries, towns and individuals. The survival of most families and poor countries now hinge on remittances as it represents over twice the official overseas development assistance from the EU to West African countries. Monetary transfers made by migrants in the region are substantial, and have come to constitute a major source of income for many households in the context of economic decline, retrenchment of public services and adverse environmental conditions. Migrants also represent an important source of energy, ideas and improved agricultural management techniques in many rural areas (DFID 2004).

Return migration is becoming common arising from economic and political stabilisation of sending countries or economic and political crisis of receiving countries. There is abundant evidence of return migration to Ghana due to its economic and political stability with most returnees going into self-employment and investing huge sums of money. The political crisis in Liberia, Sierra Leon and Ivory Coast has led to the return of many West Africans to their countries of origin. Some migrants return wealthy and establish farms and businesses while some return poorer than before.

Women migrants are increasingly drawn to the wage labour market (both formal and informal) as a survival strategy to augment meagre family income. Among the educated, emigration of unaccompanied married females has blossomed, this being a particular and recent phenomenon in the sub-region's migratory scene. Traditional male-dominated short-to-long-distance migratory streams in West Africa are increasingly feminised. Independent female migration has become a major survival strategy in response to deepening poverty in the sub-region. The phenomenon of females migrating independently, even internationally, enables them to fulfil their economic needs rather than simply joining their husbands; some professional women are emigrating from Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana leaving husbands behind to cater for their children. This development is a turn-around in traditional sex roles. Commercial migration, a dominant feature of the migration configuration in the sub-region, is essentially female-dominated, helping to promote intra-regional trade and serves as the lifeline for small-country economies of especially Benin, Gambia and Togo (Adepoju, 2000).

Trafficking in children and women is increasingly reported throughout the sub-region. Trafficking of children from Togo, Nigeria, Mali, to Cote d'Ivoire's plantations and for domestic servants in Gabon, and of women from Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, and Sierra Leone as exploited sex workers in countries of the European Union has also taken root. Trafficking in girls is reportedly rampant in the so-called "Triangle of Shame" the Niger/Chad/Nigeria border. Hundreds of trafficked girls from Edo State, Nigeria, end up in the sex industry in Italy (Adepoju, 2000).

The literature on push and pull forces often ascribes reasons for migration to singular causes or forces such as demographic, ecological, economical, political and social. The combined desires of mankind transcend these categories with one major aim, which is, "aspirations towards a better and humane life" which encapsulates the notion of development. Development is the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom such as poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance of repressive states (Sen 1999). There is the tendency for emigration to become progressively independent of the economic conditions that originally caused it. The movement of population alters social and economic structures within sending communities in ways that increase the likelihood of subsequent migration. According to Myrdal (1957), changes in social system does not induce countervailing changes, but rather induces supporting changes which move the system further away from the initial state. He argues that once development starts in a particular centre, that region induces its own momentum of growth through the process of cumulative causation. The momentum of growth is sustained and fortified by the center's contact with other parts of country and trade and factor movements have "backwash effects" and "spread effects" on lagging regions. In developing countries the backwash effects are stronger than spread effects meaning that the tendency for migration to slow down is weaker.

Emerging challenges

The relationship between migration and development is highly contingent on context and history. Making migration work as an agent of personal and spatial development is a major challenge manifested in several spheres. Should migration be prevented or harnessed? Migration is "life" and without movements there is no civilisation. Our task is therefore to tailor movements to the benefit of both sending and receiving areas. Tailoring migration to

the benefit of origin, destination and migrant- that is win-win-win situation- is the major challenge of the 21st century. The important thing today is to formulate policies to minimise the ills and to maximise the opportunities. The best migration policy is development policy (Korner 1987 in Hammer et al 1997).

An important challenge to migration in the West African sub-region is the paucity in the enforcement of the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) protocol on entry, residence and settlement. Thus, the treaty signed in Lagos on 28 May 1975 creating the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) covered wide areas of economic activities. Article 27 of the Treaty affirms a long-term objective to establish a community citizenship that could be acquired automatically by all nationals of Member States. In 1992, the revised Treaty of ECOWAS, among others, affirmed the right of citizens of the Community to entry, residence and settlement and enjoined Member States to recognise these rights in their respective territories.

Free movement of persons seems to be respected by the states who signed the treaty, but regularisation of documentation for settlement purposes is still a nightmare. Harassment along border post is on the decline but not eliminated. Discrimination against migrants is a reality in most countries where indigenes feel threatened by the prosperity of the newly arrived who usually have one major aim of success in whatever endeavour they engage in, which spurs them on.

The free movement of West Africans during the colonial period was disrupted after independence as countries sought to protect employment positions for their citizens. Also periods of economic crisis translated into periods of dislike for non-nationals. The blame for economic and social ills is usually put on foreigners rather than the root causes of corruption, mismanagement and international forces. Senegal expelled Guineans in 1967; Ivory Coast expelled about 16,000 Beninise in 1964; Sierra-Leone, and later Guinea and Ivory Coast, expelled Ghanaian fishermen in 1968. Earlier on, Ivory Coast had expelled over 1,000 Benin and Togo nationals in 1958; Chad expelled thousands of Benin nationals who were illegal migrants and not law abiding. In early 1979 Togolese farmers were expelled from Ghana and Ivory Coast. Ghana expelled all illegal aliens without valid residence permit as from 2nd December 1969; this exercise involved an estimated half a-million people mostly from Nigeria, Upper Volta and Niger. Nigerian traders were once expelled from Cameroon, Zaire and Ivory Coast. The largest case of mass expulsion of undocumented aliens took place in Nigeria in 1983 and 1985 (Adepoju 2005)

Complex emergencies or civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Mali have led to the displacement of several thousands of their citizens and migrants from other nations. The disruptions in livelihoods and the scale of displacement constitute problems for other areas within the same country and outside it. Nearly 70 per cent of Liberia's population was displaced, and thousands who fled the war to seek refuge in Sierra Leone, were soon dislodged as conflict broke out there in March, 1991. About 750,000 people were displaced within the country and another 500,000 'foreign' residents, mostly nationals of Burkina Faso, were rendered homeless and in desperation fled to their countries of origin (UN, 2003, in Adepoju 2005). Mass migrations of this nature tend to have negative impacts on both migrants and destination regions as none is prepared to deal with the situation. For migration to be successful it must be a planned activity based on real or perceived opportunities and facilitated by social networks. A major challenge to ECOWAS is establishing an emergency response system capable of handling emergency migrants in an integrative manner rather than the current refugee camp system which tends to breed all sorts of social vices.

The worsening economic situation in most West African countries frustrates the migration process by making the benefits for most low-skilled jobs not worth the efforts of migrants. Many West Africans are stuck in countries without the financial means to travel back home. At the same time the host countries feel threatened by their presence and easily blame all illegal tendencies on them. Xenophobia is on the rise in most places with migrants being targets of attacks and abuse during minor disturbances such as during international football matches, election periods, and general economic hardships. This unwholesome development is rooted in economic downturn, increasing unemployment among young nationals, conflicts and political instability. The migration process is entangled in a web of socio-economic and political insinuations with negative repercussions for development.

The challenge of internalising the problem of empty spaces in rural areas and 'dying' regions is important for spatial equalisation of the development process. How do we compensate for the empty spaces? It has been suggested that less labour intensive techniques for the rural economy, irrigation, storage systems and a range of rural development packages are needed in meeting this challenge. Since there are hardly any jobs for migrants in urban areas and cities due to their large numbers and the lack of dynamism in the micro economies to absorb the excess labour, there should be a policy encouraging rural-rural migration. If rural livelihood is given all the support it needs not many people will prefer to move and the increase in productivity will as well enhance the economy of the sub-region.

Encouraging return migration for domestic development is a major preoccupation of several countries. Do poor countries have the means to fund such moves? Countries do not necessarily need to invest massive amounts into programs meant to harness the potentials of migrants. Simple consultancy services on opportunities and the state of the economy is all that most migrants want to know before embarking on any risky return. Since migrants venture into various kinds of environments, work places and show high levels of resilience and risk-taking behaviours, they should be considered the vanguard of development initiation. Encouraging return migration however necessitates a stable political atmosphere, prudent financial management and a brighter future outlook. Both state and private sectors have a role to play in ensuring this atmosphere.

Easy, smooth, cheap and risk-free transfer of remittances is an important component of migration-development nexus. Migrants work hard to earn their income, which is often geared towards taking care of their families back home. Inter-country restrictions on money transfer, costly transactions and risky informal transactions are major challenges facing most migrants in West Africa. The cost of doing business in the sub-region and even travelling is comparatively higher than in the advanced countries. Efforts are being made to reduce transaction cost albeit slowly. Charges on domestic and international cash transfers need to be reduced and eventually eliminated for sums below some minimum thresholds. Banks need to change their traditional practices in tune with modern realities or else smaller financial organisations some of whose operations can be harmful to migrants are taking up a substantial portion of the market.

Conclusion

The quest for a better and humane life has led to mankind dispersing over the surface of the earth in pursuit of different livelihood options. Migration in West Africa is an age-old practice propelled by economic, security, social and political reasons. In the contemporary global world, diverse forces account for why people move or stay. Different opportunity zones are opening up distinct from the traditional migration attraction poles which blur our traditional understanding of the migration process. West Africa has experienced changing contours of migration with destination countries becoming sending areas when economic and political conditions change. However, the major sending countries in the north have remained so thereby maintaining the North-South migration orientation. Within countries, the North-South orientation is maintained except for big urban centres. Rural-rural migration is said to

be on the increase as the promotion of non-traditional exports by structural adjustment policies has imprinted on the development landscape new sending areas which hitherto produced locally consumed agricultural products. There is therefore a farewell to farms producing local food staples in favour of those producing exotic exports that earn more cash.

Migration in West Africa portrays some changing characteristics and challenges. Its main drivers are now diverse and in response to wider global impulses. The open spaces created by migration poses new challenges for development, while remittances and return migration have potentials for enhanced development of sending areas. The ability to manage migration in West Africa is in doubt as countries frequently infringe on regional agreements on migration policies in response to their economic and political idiosyncrasies. Managing migration is a major objective of ECOWAS because of the several benefits that its members and the world as a whole gain from people and expertise moving to areas of scarcity and maintaining an economic and natural balance.

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