

Migration Analysis of West African Countries

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ABSTRACT

West Africa is often characterised as a model of legal and illegal forms of migration owing to several factors like over population, diverse cultures and languages, huge stock of internal migration, low income economies leading to poverty and a free movement administration strongly backed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECCOWAS). However, very little is known about the nexus between migration and the actual reasons to migrate in West Africa. Indeed, this research will attempt to carry out an understudy of the reasons, constraints and benefits for both origin and destination countries and how migration can help in developing the West African region. The paper concludes that constraints such as policies put in place to curb free movement can be detrimental to the stay of migrants residing in destination countries.

Keywords: West Africa, Migration, Poverty, Constraints, ECOWAS.

I. INTRODUCTION

The West Africa region stands as the largest in Africa comprising of fifteen states who are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECCOWAS). ECOWAS is an intergovernmental organisation created in 1975 with a view to building a common socio-economic space in the region (Flahaux & Haas, 2016). Notably, the West Africa region has the highest population and the largest geographical area in Africa. Due to its population size and land mass, the region is prone to social ills such as extraordinary stages of under-developmental issues which has led to vulnerability, unpredictable climate, life and food insecurity, poor economy and many more. It also has the fastest growing population and it is considered to be amongst the fastest growing regions in the world with a yearly increase in population of over 4 percent (a figure which excludes Cabo Verde), (UNESCO, 2017). Also, the West African region is one of the poorest in the world as the economy is insufficient to reduce the level of poverty in the region. It is no surprise that the region has the highest number of both regular and irregular migrants on the continent of Africa (UN, 2017). Migration has been considered as an eye opener to developing countries as it is expected to help in reducing poverty, access to good education, ensuring good jobs, good health care facilities and

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better living standards. This and other factors such as corruption, conflict, presence of members in Diaspora also act as push and pull factors to migrate (Flahaux & Haas, 2016).

Over recent decades, there has been increased interest in migration related issues in West Africa. The same applies to a series of recent publications on both internal and international migration. A better understanding of this nexus between internal and international migration is important in order to assess whether current efforts to support free movement for all is truly inclusive in a region composed mainly of lower income economies aiming to boost its economic and social development. It is also essential to better mobilise their respective Diaspora in particular in order to mitigate specific shortage of expertise and gaps in the pool of youths via the promotion of circular movements and other programmes. The present report can be considered as an attempt to undertake a comparative study of migration among ECOWAS members (Flahaux & Haas, 2016).

II. TYPES OF WEST AFRICAN MIGRATION

The Regional Migration Context

Looking at migration in West Africa, people move intra-regionally, internally, internationally and continentally. About seven million migrants live in West Africa. The European Union is very much similar to the ECOWAS in terms of free movement of people leading to internal and intraregional migration. However similar it is to the ECOWAS, it is not as effective as many of its resolutions are not as intentionally carried out like that of the European Union.

According to United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) as of June 2017, people of concern in West Africa include some 290,000 refugees, of whom 179,000 are in situations of protracted displacement, and some 7,300 asylum-seekers. In addition, an estimated one million people are stateless in the region and several million more are at risk of statelessness.

Intra-regional Migration

Intra-regional migration is the predominant form of West African migration. According to some sources, more than 80% of West African migration would be intra-regional. For a long time, a fairly clear distinction has existed between the origin and destination countries. Before the economic disorder of 1970s and 1980s, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal were poles of attraction. Since then, these countries have lost some of their appeal. They nevertheless remain key countries of destination. Over time, a diversification of destinations has occurred. The growing attractiveness of Ghana for instance is an example (IOM, 2005). Other countries, traditionally considered as emigration territories, for instance Benin and Cabo Verde, have progressively become countries of destination, although their emigration rates remain high. Conversely, Sahelian countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger cannot be considered proper countries of destination. They are however countries of transit, which, given the characteristics of trans-Saharan migrations, can become to a certain extent de facto countries of destination. Intra-

regional migration is primarily work related. They can be temporary, more permanent, and seasonal (particularly in the case of Sahelian states' nationals). In most cases, migrants work as low skilled workers in the informal labour market in a similar way as nationals (UNHCR, 2017).

Concerning refugees, West Africa is characterised by a recurrent situation of prolonged forced displacements. During the past years, the Nigerian and Malian crises have involved significant refugee movements. In 2017, UNHCR analysis estimated at 134,000 Malians who were displaced in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger.

Extra-regional West-African Migration

In terms of volume, extra-regional West-African migration is less significant than intra-regional migration. Such movements are very diverse. Recent decades have seen a diversification of destinations. The diversity of extra-regional migration is also related to the variety of situations in terms of migratory status regular and irregular migrants, students, refugees, victims of trafficking, etc. in terms of means of transportation, of educational levels, of type of jobs performed, inter alia (UNHCR, 2017).

Regarding sub-Saharan migration, mention can be made of the decline of Gabon, which had been for a long time a significant country of destination. Conversely, the attractiveness of South Africa has progressively risen, especially among Nigerian and Ghanaian nationals. Among OECD member states, Europe and America are popular destinations of West African Anglophone qualified migrants primarily Nigerians and Ghanaians (IOM, 2005). France retains a certain appeal for nationals of francophone countries. A striking fact is the emergence in the 2000s of two new countries of destination: Spain and Italy. However, the global economic crisis, which has particularly affected South European states, has caused a significant decline of regular flows towards these countries. It is also common to recognise the growing attractiveness of Gulf countries among some West African migrants. In this respect, existing statistics are limited for these flows. Contemporary West African armed conflicts have not only caused refugee movements within the ECOWAS space but also in neighbouring countries. In 2015, UNHCR estimated that around 14,960 Nigerian refugees were present in Cameroon, and 50,456 Malian refugees in Mauritania.

Extra-regional migration in West Africa

As a general rule, population censuses only show a small presence of extra-regional migrants within ECOWAS member states. This being said, a fairly significant presence of Mauritanian nationals exists in some countries, especially in Mali. In addition, around 16% of African foreigners residing in Nigeria are not West Africans (UNHCR, 2017).

Irregular migration

Generalities

The status of irregular migrants within West Africa is rather ambiguous (IOM, 2005). As previously noted, until 2014, ECOWAS citizens were required to hold a residence card to legally stay and work in other member

states. However, a laissez-faire approach prevailed and in practice West African nationals could not properly be considered as irregular migrants. Since 2014, the residence card has been repealed. Cases of irregular migration should therefore be extremely rare. It must be noted though that these amendments remain poorly known by the competent national authorities. Extra regional migration among other African states is rarer (Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli, 2015). This being said, it is likely that irregular migration prevails. Such is notably the case of Nigerian nationals with little or no education residing in South Africa. Regarding North Africa, it was only during the 1990s that Libya and, to a lesser extent Algeria and Mauritania become countries of destination for West African migrants, especially low skilled workers from Sahelian states. Over the years, Saharan migration has evolved. Following the example of the Maghreb populations, West African migrants have ceased to just consider these states as countries of destination and have started to use them as transit countries for migration generally, irregular towards Europe (UNHCR, 2017). During the 2000s, major events such as the Libyan armed conflict and the strengthening of controls at European frontiers have resulted in new migration patterns, notably in terms of migratory routes. When referring to irregular West African migrants in European countries, it is essential to keep in mind that they mainly correspond to overstay situations rather than irregular entry into the territory of a given state. Also, the illegal migration of persons moving through the Sahara desert and the Mediterranean remain widespread (Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli, 2015).

The West African migratory route

A first option here is to use Mauritania as a country of transit in order to reach the Canary Islands. This route, active between 2000 and 2006 has been virtually abandoned due to the operations conducted by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) in cooperation with the authorities of the considered states. In 2014, around 4000 irregular entries (mainly West Africans nationals and more specifically Malians and Cameroonians) were recorded at this border. The most common itinerary is currently the Central Mediterranean route (UNESCO, 2017). The bulk of the Sahara crossings starts in Niger and continues through Libya and, in lesser cases through Algeria. An alternative route transits through Mali. Spain is also a destination country which can be assessed using the Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish territories) routes through Morocco. Mauritania is regarded as the migration route in order to reach the Canary Islands. This course, dynamic between 2000 and 2006 has been essentially hindered due to the operations conducted by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) in partnership with law enforcement agents of the states. Around 4000 sporadic sections (basically West Africans nationals and more particularly Malians and Cameroonians) were recorded at this border in 2014. The foremost common agenda is as of now the Central Mediterranean course. Although, Mali used to be the main country of exit until the crisis which only reduced the number of illegal travelers (UNESDOC, 2018). The bulk of the Sahara intersections begins in Niger and proceeds through Libya and in lesser cases through Algeria. An elective course travels through Mali.

Given the disturbances affecting the country since 2012, it is now less commonly used. Libya has been, and to a certain extent, remains an attractive country of destination for West African migrants moving irregularly, especially those from the Sahelian zone, employed in low-skilled jobs within the agricultural and the

construction sectors (IOM, 2005). Libya is also the main starting point of irregular West African migration through the Mediterranean towards Europe. These migration flows are composed of migrants, refugees, victims of trafficking, children, including unaccompanied and separated minors increasingly numerous and young (UNESCO, 2017). West African migrants are nonetheless mainly economic migrants. The risks experienced by migrants and refugees are significant: risk of death with crossing the desert and the Mediterranean, risk of abuse and exploitation from smugglers, local authorities and populations during the journey and transit in Libya (IOM, 2005). Irregular migration streams of West Africans towards Europe basically Italy utilising the Central Mediterranean are essentially composed of Nigerians, Guineans and Ivoirians. Regarding the Central Mediterranean course and unaccompanied minors, the Italian Service of Work and Social Arrangements gives detailed data on monthly basis (IOM, 2005).

III. Managed Migration: the ECOWAS Free Movement Regime

ECOWAS has three main components concerning the free movement of persons which include: the right of entry, residence and establishment. ECOWAS norms relating to free movement are found in different types of legal documents, including the Treaty of the Community, Protocols and Supplementary Acts; Decisions, Resolutions; Regulations and Recommendations (UNHCR, 2017).

ECOWAS ENTRY RIGHT

According to the UNHCR 2017 report, ECOWAS legal administration had ensured visa free entry to persons for a period of 90 days without requiring a residence permit. Since the adoption of the Supplementary Act AISA.1/07/14, the provisions related to short stay have been repealed. This right of entry does not include the right to engage in a professional activity which is covered by the legal regime of residence and establishment. There are particular measures that exist for regularities and vagrant workers. The conditions applicable to the exercise of the right of entry and short stay include:

- Community citizenship;
- Entry on the national territory through an official port of entry; and
- Possession of travel documents and valid international vaccination certificates.

In reality, however, there are practical obstacles to free movement remain. For instance, member states' nationals when passing through land borders are often as possible subject to manhandling and badgering by corrupt public agents. Also, there is a considerable number of illicit road blocks, installed by fake security agents for the main purpose of extorting money from travelers (IOM, 2005).

ECOWAS Residential Right

This right enables persons from non-member states to reside for the purpose of livelihood. This gives them the privilege to school, work and earn a living. The right allows nonresidents to freely apply for job(s), work and reside taking into cognisance the administrative and legal protocols binding on employment of legal residents (UNHCR, 2017).

Before 2014, the exercise of the right of residence was subject to the granting of an ECOWAS Residence Card which added a layer of bureaucracy. In practice, it is arguable that the ECOWAS Residence Card regime did not operate adequately. Two main reasons can be given. Firstly, few member states have adopted laws and secondary legislations to organise the status of ECOWAS citizens (UNHCR, 2017). In most cases, a laissez-faire policy was applied. A second reason refers to the very content of ECOWAS norms. The regime of the right of residence was conceived for formal labour markets (request for a job application, etc.). West African labour markets being largely informal, the effective implementation of the right of residence could only be marginal. In 2014, the legal regime of residence was revised. ECOWAS took these limitations into consideration and, in 2014, abandoned the Card of Residence system (UNHCR, 2017).

This constitutes an essential amendment of the free movement regime owing to the fact that the vast majority of West African migrants living in ECOWAS member states could not have access to the ECOWAS Residence Card and were therefore technically in an irregular situation.

ECOWAS ESTABLISHMENT RIGHT

This right corresponds to free movement of individuals engaged in independent professional activities. Similarly than for salaried workers, the ECOWAS norms ensure equal treatment of Community citizens and nationals. It also includes access to unpaid activities, as well as the set up and management of companies established in member states (UNHCR, 2017). The right of establishment also includes the exercise of freedom to establish agencies and branches or subsidiaries like multinational corporations. In practice, freedom of establishment is not fully realised. Some national legislations and practices continue to restrict the exercise of independent activities to their nationals like Ghana (Cohen, 2008).

This research will further examine the implications of migrations on both origin and destination or host countries. As broad and diverse as migration, its impacts can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. The constraints on migration of persons would also be identified as its impacts could also be either good or bad. Also, the research will recommend a form of agreement between origin and host nations so that financial goals are mutual

and less burdensome on one party. Centering on this mode of movement, the research highlights a few key situational approaches that governments confront in effecting proper migration policies.

Universal movement frequently creates extraordinary benefits for transients and their families, in spite of the fact that there are a few hazards and in most cases, none. Movement can incredibly increase earnings of both migrants and their families and has seen a huge increase in poverty reduction (Brubaker, 2005).

Most times, the plan to emigrate is not well done. Migrants are either so much in a hurry to move because of their current situations or they have no proper knowledge of the financial implications of migrating (Cohen, 2008).

Although, migrants earn incredibly from free movement, the choice to emigrate is often made with insufficient data and has both high cost implications and risks, especially in the event that the movement is illegal. However, governments can help to provide an analysis of border trafficking of citizens to discourage illegal movement choices (Brubaker, 2005). Governments ought to work hand-in-hand with migration-related organisations between origin and destination nations to help indict traffickers and unlawful abuses of migrants using illegal routes. Migration of low-skilled workers can be beneficial to the development as it can be an intentional way of reducing poverty. This can also reduce the number of unemployed individuals, reduce poverty and increase wages.

It is important to understand that individuals from many poor countries are either incapable to follow through with the requirements for a successful migration or lack the financial capabilities (Brubaker, 2005). Restricting the movement of low-skilled migrants, whereas remaining touchy to concerns in goal nations over social pressures, work openings for low-skilled locals and the unavoidable economic burden or financial implication can be better achieved through regulatory programs planned mutually the internal and international nations. Those programs are put in place to aid migrant a luring and motivating force for return back to their own countries. Government can improve working conditions of citizens by reinforcing proper job administration, which may require political will instead of cash. Also, origin countries can lure their citizens back home with good jobs and create collaboration platforms with host companies like aiding the return of their citizens and ensuring double nationality for their citizens in Diaspora.

According to Brubaker (2005), A well-educated citizen in Diaspora can seamlessly pave the way for financial accessibility, technological exchange, economic expansion, innovation, vast information and contacts for firms for their domestic countries. Also, development processes can be altered when high-skilled workers migrate thereby leading to the following:

- (a) there may be loss of opportunity and the will of other workers to actually transfer knowledge;
- (b) there can be a reduction in the gains from having high-skilled workers;
- (c) they could stand the chance of losing well talented and trained workers who may not return after being invested on;

(d) there may be an increase in the cost of specialised administrations. Governance can be enhanced by profoundly taught citizens who can elucidate the need.

International Migration can be Highly Beneficial

According to Chauvet, Gubert, Mercier and Mesple-Soups (2013), the Diaspora plays an important role in the exchange of information between origin and host nations. The return of citizens in Diaspora to their domestic nation is broadly seen as fostering economic growth (Ellerman 2003). Citizens in Diaspora may be more successful than foreigners in exchanging information in their countries because of the deep understanding of culture and dialects. Citizens can also be ensured of not losing their status in case they travel for time which will not be beneficial to the origin country (Cohen, 2008).

Goal nations can permit temporary migrants to take advantage of the benefits they got from their work overseas, like, insurance, pension and disability programs (Cohen, 2008). Such courses of action, in any case, require viable education within the beginning nations to supply such administrative services which can best accomplished through bilateral agreements as earlier mentioned. Goal nations have given different motivations for the return of migrants. An example is the French loans and technical assistance to migrants from Mali and Senegal to set up businesses in their domestic nations. However, such programs are very few. Universal organisations as well, run programs to advance return, in spite of the fact that the main aim is to support persons who are homeless. The IOM, before it was addressed as the Migration for Development in Africa program (MIDA) had a program between 1974-1990 called the Return of Qualified African Nationals program which was instrumental in returning over 2,000 Africans back to their countries (IOM, 2005).

In comparison to non-temporary immigration, temporary immigration programs can be highly beneficial to home countries because such migrants earn higher salaries which would aid development and also improve their effectiveness in destination nations. It may be less beneficial for a migrant who intends to migrate temporarily because the benefits of migration are long lasting and can better be enjoyed by a migrant with a permanent resident (IOM, 2005). Be that as it may, the presence of transitory movement programs (reflecting resistance to lasting relocation) may encourage bigger legitimate streams. On the part of goal nations, brief movement offers the adaptability to target required aptitudes and to alter passage in reaction to changes in labour demand. Temporary relocation can diminish monetary weights which will be related with low-skilled movement. The implication is that temporary migrants would find it difficult to maximise the benefit of such migration (Lucas, 2004).

Also, pressures or constraints from immigration can be reduced by promoting temporary jobs for migrants. Arrangements for brief migration moreover can be seen as providing an elective to sporadic movement. (Cisse and Bambio, 2015) posit that government in destination or goal countries should ensure that temporary programmes are

not mixed because most temporary migrants from Mexico to the United States find a way to get permanent residency despite all the channels put in place for a temporary relocation.

Advantages and Disadvantages to Temporary Migration

There are points of interests and dependence on transitory movement for workers who are financially disadvantaged. Contracting a transitory worker means a shorter term of business compared with enlisting a lasting foreigner, and in this way higher cost for preparing. Transitory transients are too less likely than changeless ones to contribute in aptitudes particular to the goal nation such as fluency in speaking the language and getting the certification required because the returns are earned within a short time-frame (Cholewinski, 2014). In any case, for migrants from creating nations, their salaries are so huge that they may legitimise considerable speculations in securing such abilities, including temporary periods. For the home nation, settlements (and repatriation of resources) may be higher with transitory movement, since brief transients are less likely to bring their dependents and more likely to preserve close ties with the domestic nation (Winters 2005). Maybe most vitally, transitory relocation programs can provide an opening to extend lawful, untalented relocation, which creates the most noteworthy formative effect for root nations. On the other hand, temporary relocation may give a less solid expansive labour surpluses, as future cancellation of is simpler for goal nations than removing already existing emigrants. In any case, it is this adaptability (coupled with less long-run populace weight, fewer concerns over integration, and less annuity commitments) that produces brief relocation beneficial for goal nations (Winters 2005).

International Treaties have had only Limited Impact on Migration

Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has the potential to improve cooperation on labour services between countries of origin and destination, but so far it has not facilitated a significant rise in cross-border labour movements (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). The ILO has pioneered the development of international instruments for protecting the rights of migrant workers, and the UN General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which clearly defines the rights of migrant workers, including irregular workers (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). The convention entered into force in 2004. However, none of the major destination countries have ratified it yet which means enforcement is limited.

IV. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the constraints of migration can be disadvantageous to the stay of migrants residing in destination countries. There are certain factors that infringe on the benefits of bilateral

agreements between origin and host countries such as lack of financial capability to implement the regulations of monitoring migrants and identifying the right ones for the program. Also, West Africa, being a developing continent still battles with technological know-how and as such may not be able to adequately determine the number of migrants they have in destination countries thereby making it difficult for bilateral negotiations. It is difficult to estimate job shortages or wages in the different sectors of the destination countries. Lastly, the will and negotiating power may not be accomplishable especially when corrupt leaders are involved in the agreement, it will end unfavourably.

V. Recommendation

The main driver of low-skilled migration is bilateral relations like the EU, US-Mexico relations and the Arab emirates. These pacts are numerous and have been responsible for fostering relations which are beneficial for both the home and destination countries (IOM 2005a).

Taking a cue from the case of Saudi Arabia and the Middle Eastern relations in the 1990s, bilateral relations may be especially imperative in encouraging both home and destination countries with a specific channel or program for immigration that will produce genuine benefits and limit costs. An example of such programs could be the assurance that temporary migrants would be well cared for and returned upon completion of the contract (IOM 2005a).

However, Philippines have made great success with ensuring a good agreement for their citizens in different parts of the globe (Lucas 2004b). Consequently, West African countries can help ensure that documents of their citizens are accepted in destination countries through bilateral agreements. They can also help with ensuring that people who migrate temporarily are well integrated upon return and that there is transfer of technology and human resource development just like the bilateral agreement between Colombia, Ecuador and Spain (IOM 2005a). Bilateral agreements can also ensure that the origin country cooperates in monitoring and managing migration, by ensuring that temporary migration is indeed temporary (Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli, 2015).

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