

Recent trends in international migration in and from Africa

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Introduction

This paper outlines the complex of interrelated factors associated with migratory movements within and from Africa. Spatial mobility is a fundamental social and historical aspect of African life, but what sets it apart from other regions, however, is that most African international migration is intra-continental, consisting of regional movements by refugees, nomads, undocumented migrants, and seasonal labour migrants.

Distinctive forms of migration characterise the different African sub-regions: there is labour migration from western and central Africa to other locations within the region, as well as to the countries of the North and to the oil-rich lands of the Middle East; there are refugee flows within eastern Africa and, increasingly, within western Africa as well; there is labour migration from eastern and southern African countries to South Africa, and there is the cross-border clandestine migration of nomads in West and East Africa.

Although the spectre of African refugees has captured the attention of the world, other forms of international movement migration have also increased, namely the circulation of low-wage labour, the permanent exit of skilled workers, and the clandestine migration of undocumented workers at all skill levels. Moreover, unlike refugee flows, which are largely confined to sub-Saharan Africa, these newer forms of migration are increasingly directed towards countries in the north.

Background to emigration dynamics

Rapid population growth has combined with unstable politics, escalating ethnic conflict, persistent economic decline, poverty, and environmental deterioration to shape trends and patterns of international migration in Africa. Spiralling population growth and unemployment lie at the root of much international migration in Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world. Rapid population growth places a tremendous strain on Africa's development as the disparity between labour force growth and job creation creates migratory pressures by generating high rates of under- and un-employment. Unemployment rates of 33 percent or more among secondary school and even university graduates – the cream of the region's youth – illustrate the extent of the potential crisis.

African populations are strikingly young and very few African countries can create jobs fast enough to meet the needs of such a burgeoning youth population. Migration is a crucial link in the chain of events linking high fertility to labour force growth and unemployment. Although a high rate of population growth does not necessarily translate into migration, in the context of a deteriorating economy it provides a trigger for migration to be set in motion.

Broader international trends also affect the region – globalisation, regional integration, network formation, political transformation, and the entry of multinational corporations in search of cheap labour (Adepaju, 2004). Deteriorating economic, social, political, and ecological conditions across the continent have produced changes in the direction of African migration, as well as in its pattern, composition and dynamics. Successive political and economic crises have triggered flows to new destinations

that have no prior historical, political or economic links to the countries of emigration. Moreover, as the various crises have intensified, migratory outflows have increased in both size and effect. Deepening unemployment in towns and cities reflects the incapacity of the urban sector to act as a sponge for the rapidly growing workforce, compelling people to consider alternative destinations away from oversized metropolitan areas with undersized job opportunities.

External debt is another major constraint to development in Africa. With nearly two-thirds of its export earnings devoted to debt service, the region's capacity to mobilise resources for socioeconomic development and employment is severely constrained. African economies have been disrupted by civil war, political violence, and economic mismanagement, usually in the context of an overtaxed ecosystem. This gives rise to local conditions that fall below the critical threshold for tolerance, forcing many to leave in search of safer havens. Whether from village to town, town to city, country to country, or continent to continent, migration always responds to the pull of opportunity and the push of poverty. For many Africans, the push of abject poverty is more compelling than the pull of better living conditions abroad.

Political instability resulting from political, religious, and ethnic conflicts is unusually strong as a determinant of migration in Africa. The Horn of Africa – consisting of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, and Somalia – has long been noted for generating millions of refugees. For decades, these countries produced large numbers fleeing conflict and drought. Later the focus shifted to West Africa, where prolonged internal conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone produced millions of refugees to the Ivory Coast and to Guinea, as well as thousands of internally displaced persons. More recently, the spotlight has shifted to the Great Lakes region, where Burundi and Rwanda have become major sources for refugee migration (Oucho, 1995; Adepoju, 2005b).

Many countries that were once immigrant-receiving have metamorphosed into migrant-sending countries. Since the late 1980s, traditional labour-importing countries (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana) and attractive destinations for migrants (Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal) have experienced endemic

political and economic crises, which spur out-migration of their nationals. Nigeria, the sub-region's demographic and economic giant, assumed both situations between 1975 and 1990, within a time span of less than a generation. This was due to several interlinked factors – the collapse of oil prices and sharp declines in oil revenue, rapid deterioration in living and working conditions, devalued national currency, wage freezes, inflation and protracted authoritarian military rule. These fuelled large-scale emigration of workers, both skilled and unskilled, to developed regions such as the Persian Gulf and the Maghreb states. Côte d'Ivoire today is a country divided, again spurring the emigration of both non-nationals and indigenes (Adepoju, 2006).

In most African countries, the public sector – the dominant employer – has not been able to provide viable employment opportunities to meet the demands of the rapidly-growing labour force, thus generating large numbers of unemployed youths. Mismanaged economies and human rights abuses, especially under military regimes across the region, have spurred the exile of both skilled and unskilled persons. Conflicts and environmental degradation have further aggravated the pressure for migration from poorer to relatively prosperous regions, within and, increasingly, outside the sub-region. In the Sahel in particular desertification and cyclical famines have triggered waves of environmentally-displaced persons across national frontiers, both within and outside the region.

Fragile ecosystems are forcing populations to migrate from hinterland to coastal regions. Landlessness and rural poverty generate emigration: small, unproductive landholdings yield low incomes that farmers must supplement with earnings from non-farm activities. Given the limited opportunities for earning in most villages, this need turns directly into out-migration, and many poor farmers are abandoning work and life in the rural areas to migrate to the oversized urban agglomerations with undersized jobs, or to neighbouring countries, simply in order to survive.

Widespread poverty and human deprivation, and the deterioration of the well-being of the vast majority of the population fuelled clandestine migrations. In recent years, macro-

economic adjustment measures and huge increases in the number of entrants into the urban labour market have created a sustained pressure for labour emigration. Added to this development, the retrenchment of public sector workers in response to structural adjustment measures, coupled with sharp increases in the number of annual entrants into the labour market have fuelled the job crisis, creating a sustained pressure for labour emigration. Such a stressful socio-economic environment, coupled with declining real incomes, has combined to create the perception of a dismal economic future and has exacerbated the exodus of, especially, young, educated – but mostly unemployed – persons.

Many people do not possess national passports, in part because of illiteracy, poverty, and the corruption of officials, but also because the centralised issuing of passports in national capitals is out of reach of the majority of rural dwellers. A variety of interrelated factors – rapid growth of the population and the labour force, decades of stunted development, the so-called lost decade, the debt overhang, deregulation and restructuring of the economy – have rendered high proportions of the work force unemployed, and wages for those who are in employment have plummeted dramatically. The region's rapidly-growing population places tremendous strains on the development process, and creates conditions for migration through its linkages with labour force growth and unemployment. Unemployment has deepened, in part because of the rapid growth in the labour force in the face of contractionary fiscal and monetary policies which resulted in the retrenchment of workers in the public service (Adepoju, 2006).

The limited capacity of the labour market to absorb the annual cohorts of job seekers productively turns them into potential emigrants. The current unemployment rate of one-third or more among secondary school and university graduates signals a crisis of migration. In several countries, especially Lesotho, Mozambique, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso and Togo, the push of abject poverty is as compelling as the pull of enhanced living conditions in the countries of the North.

Political instability resulting from conflicts is a strong determinant of migration in the region.

The political landscape is unstable, unpredictable and volatile. The loss of state capacities in Liberia, Somalia and Sierra Leone, the breakdown of states rooted in precarious democratisation processes, the inconsistent effects of structural adjustment programmes and straightforward human insecurity have also prompted a variety of migratory movements, including those of refugees (Adekanye, 1998).

Disillusioned, unemployed young people face difficult choices between being apprenticed to a trade, farming, or going to school – only to join the queue of job-seekers roaming the streets, seeking unsuccessfully, often for months, for even lowly-paid jobs. For many of them, migration in pursuit of higher education or wage employment is urban-centred and may be preparatory to migrating abroad. By migrating, these youths exchange misery without hope for misery with hope. The informal sector's incapacity to absorb the rapidly growing number of job seekers compels potential migrants to find alternative destinations, and to be ready to do any job anywhere – increasingly outside their home countries.

Since the 1980s, Africa has experienced negative economic growth and a deteriorating well-being of its people. As the effects of economic restructuring bite harder, migration has become a coping mechanism of the last resort, strictly for survival. Macro-economic adjustment measures, widespread poverty and human deprivation, the deterioration of the well-being of the population, and excruciating external debt constrain governments' capacity to mobilise resources for socio-economic development, and to generate employment for the youth.

Trends and changes in migration configurations

Migration in Africa today is dynamic and extremely complex. This is reflected in the diversification of migration destinations, the transformation of labour flows into commercial migration, the feminisation of migration, and the migration of skilled health and other professionals from the region. In addition there are now huge remittances flows, with a significant increase in the role played by those

in the diaspora in the development of their countries of origin. Trafficking in human beings and the changing map of refugee flows complete the picture. Some of these key migratory configurations, which need to reorient policy directions in Africa for at least the next two decades, are now discussed.

Diversification of destinations: Spatial mobility is a fundamental social and historical aspect of African life. Today Africa persists as a region of considerable migration, but what sets it apart from other regions is that most African international migration is intra-continental, consisting of regional movements by refugees, nomads, undocumented migrants, and seasonal labour migrants. Deteriorating economic, social, political, and ecological conditions across the continent have produced changes in the direction, pattern, composition, and dynamics of African migration. Successive political and economic crises have triggered flows to new countries to which the migrants have limited or even no historical, cultural, political, or economic links. Moreover, as the various crises have intensified, migratory outflows have increased in both size and effect. The adoption of policies of structural adjustment seems to have accelerated the pace of out-migration in the context of economic stagnation.

Many who migrate thus no longer adhere to classic geographic patterns, but explore a much wider set of destinations than those where traditional seasonal work can be found. This diversification is evident in rising levels of both temporary and long-term circulation. As economic instability has deepened, fewer emigrants from Africa have stable and remunerative work in traditional destinations. Consequently, circulation and repeat migration have expanded to a wider group of alternative destinations.

Whether migrants stay within their own country, migrate outside their country but within Africa, or go to another continent altogether, depends on both regional opportunities and foreign constraints. The unstable economic situations in many African cities and the continued weakness of the agricultural sector have drawn more people into circular migration. The disadvantageous terms of trade for Africa's primary products, including cotton, also provokes different patterns of migration –

traditionally directed to the cities, but now, increasingly, to other countries.

The diversification of destinations chosen by African migrants includes Senegalese and Malian migrants to Zambia, and more recently to South Africa and the USA. Many are now migrating to Libya and Morocco. This development has mushroomed as a response to the limited opportunities for migration into the traditional labour-receiving countries of the North, where opportunities for regular labour-migration, especially for unskilled and semi-skilled persons, have been virtually closed except for family re-unification purposes.

A trend toward greater emigration off the continent is also evident, with growing movements of skilled workers to Europe and America. Emigration to France, for example, is increasingly chosen by experienced Malian migrants who have contracts and potential support there. As a result of new needs and new perceptions, traditional seasonal and circulatory patterns of movement are being replaced by more diverse patterns involving complicated itineraries and multiple destinations.

There is some evidence to support a pattern of replacement migration, with migrants of rural origin moving to the towns to occupy positions vacated by nationals who emigrate abroad. In some instances, immigrants from neighbouring countries occupy positions vacated by nationals emigrating abroad, yielding a stepwise migration out of Africa.

Just as the economic crisis began to reduce employment within Africa, the Gulf States became particularly attractive as destinations for highly skilled professionals. But even countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been showing signs of economic stagnation in recent years, rendering growing countries such as South Africa and Botswana relatively more attractive to migrants. Skilled professionals, in particular, pressured by uncertain economic conditions at home, have found their booming economies to be convenient alternatives to Europe, the United States, and the Gulf. Indeed, less than 1.5 percent of sub-Saharan Africans living outside their country live in countries of European Union.

In the 1970s, highly qualified, experienced workers in trades and professions migrated from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Senegal, Ghana, Uganda,

to South Africa and even destinations outside of Africa. Since the 1980s, emigration to Europe, North America and the oil-rich countries of the Middle East has intensified. A recent World Bank study noted, for instance, that some 23 000 qualified academics emigrate from Africa each year in search of better working conditions, and 12 000 Nigerian academics are now employed in United States alone.

Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, the UK and the USA are major recipients of sub-Saharan Africa's skilled professionals, due largely to the colonial legacy. Although total immigration from sub-Saharan Africa to the USA is relatively small in comparison to the total inflow and stock of immigrants to that country, the SSA immigrants consist primarily of highly educated people, especially those from Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria (Carrington and Detragiache, 1999).

Commercial migration: There is an overall trend away from mere labour migrants of unskilled persons towards the commercial migration of entrepreneurs who are self-employed, especially in the informal sector. A large proportion of emigrants from West Africa can be classified as commercial migrants, especially those from Senegal and Mali who are also moving to unconventional destinations to which they had no prior linguistic, cultural or colonial ties.

Initially, emigration focused on Zambia and, when its economy collapsed, it shifted to South Africa following the demise of the apartheid regime. More recently Sahelians in West Africa have been moving to Italy, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, and Spain, although there they encounter an increasingly hostile reception, with growing xenophobia, apprehension of foreigners, and anti-immigrant political mobilisations. As a result, a growing number are now crossing the Atlantic to seek greener pastures as petty traders in the United States.

The opening up of South Africa with the advent of democracy in 1994 was followed there by an influx of migrants from various parts of the sub-Saharan region, including Nigeria, Mali, Kenya, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Zaire, Kenya, and Uganda. Seeking to capitalise on the relatively affluent local market, some of these migrants find employment for themselves as street vendors and traders,

while others import African traditional attires and artefacts, employing and training locals and invigorating the informal sector.

Commercial migration, which is essentially female-dominated, helps to promote intra-regional trade and serves as the lifeline for small-country economies, especially for Benin, Gambia and Togo. Outside West Africa, commercial migration is essentially male-dominated.

Independent female migration: The traditional pattern of migration in Africa – male-dominated, long-term, long-distance, and autonomous – is increasingly becoming feminised as professional women migrate independently, within and across national borders. Anecdotal evidence reveals a striking increase in women, who had traditionally remained at home, now leaving their spouses to care for the children. A significant proportion of these women are educated migrants who move independently to fulfil their own economic needs; they are no longer simply joining a husband or other family member. Nonetheless, migration in Africa does still remain very much 'a family matter', with non-migrant family members intimately involved in and affected by migration decision-making.

Women in West Africa have historically been involved in cross-border migration; they now dominate the informal commercial sector, which is less affected by economic crisis than the wage sector where most male migrants work. The increase in autonomous female migration is not, however, confined by national borders: professional women from Nigeria, Ghana and, to some extent, Tanzania now engage in international migration, often leaving their spouses behind at home to care for children. Female nurses and doctors have been recruited from Nigeria to work in Saudi Arabia; and over five thousand Ghanaian and Nigerian nurses are working in the UK's National Health Service, in nursing and private care homes. Some women have taken advantage of the handsome pay packages in the United States to work for there a spell of time, to save against the harsh economic conditions at home. Others migrate with their children to pursue studies in the United States or the United Kingdom (since the educational system in Nigeria has virtually collapsed).

The relatively new phenomenon of female migration constitutes an important change, and indeed a turn-around in traditional gender roles in the sub-region creating new challenges for public policy.

Emigration of skilled professionals: The emigration of highly skilled professionals, including doctors, paramedical personnel, nurses, teachers, engineers, scientists and technologists from Africa was led by Ugandans and, later Ghanaians and Nigerians, attracted by relatively higher salaries and better living conditions. Soon after the collapse of Nigeria's oil-led economy in the mid-1980s, many Ghanaian professionals moved from Nigeria, in a step-wise pattern to South Africa's then 'homelands', as well as to Swaziland and Lesotho. In trickles, brain circulation took place between Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria; Togo and Côte d'Ivoire; Burkina Faso and Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire – all countries with shared colonial legacies.

Brain drain is being replaced by brain circulation within SSA. Over the past decade, skilled professionals from Nigeria and Ghana, in particular, have found the booming economies of Gabon, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa (where they replace emigrating white professionals) to be convenient alternatives to Europe, the United States and the Gulf. In recent years, Botswana has become a major country of immigration. A prosperous, politically stable country, with rapid and steady economic growth over the past decade, it has attracted highly skilled professionals taking advantage of the relaxed laws on residence and entry introduced in the early 1990s.

As mentioned above, the exodus of professionals also has a gender dimension. The traditional pattern of emigration has been for males to emigrate, leaving wives and children at home, to join them later. Since the 1990s, a significant proportion of professional women – both single and married – have emigrated independently in search of employment, either in the cities or, increasingly, internationally. Female nurses and doctors especially have been recruited to work in the Gulf States.

Between 1986 and 1990 alone some fifty to sixty thousand middle- and high-level managers emigrated from Africa in response to deteriorating economic and political conditions.

Repressive totalitarian regimes frequently divert scarce resources away from economic development toward the military. When coupled with inconsistent policies and widespread corruption, the resulting loss of state capacity scares away investors and stifles development. The collapse of the state itself promotes out-migration by people, especially those with skills, looking to escape repression and disorder.

Until the early 1980s, few Nigerian professionals saw emigration as a rewarding option because local working conditions were attractive and internationally competitive. However the biting effects of economic restructuring, authoritarian military rule and the fluctuating economic situation fuelled large-scale emigration, especially of skilled people, pushing many professionals to market their skills internationally. Adegbola (1990) estimated that 103 500 professionals and technicians emigrated from Nigeria to the UK, the USA, Canada and the Middle East between 1987 and 1989. Widespread unemployment and inadequate openings for admission into Nigeria's tertiary educational institutions were the deciding factors for a large proportion of visa applicants.

Since the 1990s, Ghanaians have been migrating in increasingly large numbers to rich countries, especially the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and the USA. By 1996 Ghana was among the top ten sending countries to the UK, registering a flow of about 21 500 during 1990–2001. By 2001, about 104 000 Ghanaians were living in the USA and 114 400 in Canada. More spectacular has been the emigration of skilled personnel: between 1995 and 2002, an estimated 69.4 per cent of medical officers trained in Ghana during the period emigrated abroad. Similar percentages are for dentists 27.3 per cent, pharmacists 43.3 per cent, medical laboratory technologists 19.5 per cent, and nurses/midwives 19.7 per cent (Anarfi et al., 2003).

Of the estimated four million sub-Saharan Africans living in OECD countries, more than 100 000 are professionals. This is about the same as the number of expatriate professionals employed in SSA by aid agencies at a cost to the region of about \$4 billion. This migration process denies the region the optimum utilisation of the skills of its diaspora (United Nations,

2004). Nigerians and Zambians in particular, highly skilled professionals constitute about a half or more of these country's foreign migrants. Two in every five nationals of Benin, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Lesotho, Malawi and South Africa working outside their home countries are highly skilled professionals.

Specialists in medicine and healthcare are a small proportion of the emigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, but the large exodus of doctors in particular has impacted negatively on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries, especially Nigeria (from where about 600 medical specialists work in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and up to 12 000 in the USA), in Ghana (where 60 per cent of doctors trained in the 1980s have emigrated), South Africa (where many white doctors have emigrated to Canada, Australia, the USA and the UK) and Zimbabwe (where about 60 per cent of doctors have moved to Botswana and South Africa as their country's economy has collapsed) (Adepoju, 2006).

The overall magnitude and impact of the brain drain from sub-Saharan Africa is captured in a report by the United Nations which estimates that 'over the next decade Africa will need to train an additional 1 million health care professionals.' It continues: '... leaders must find ways to retain more of the doctors, nurses, pharmacists and laboratory technicians (the region) currently produces' (United Nations, 2005). Blaming the rich countries for contributing to the crisis by creating a fatal flow of health professions from the region, the report points out that there are more Malawian doctors practising in Manchester, UK, than in Malawi itself, while 550 of the 600 Zambian doctors trained in medical school from 1978 to 1999 have emigrated abroad (*ibid.*). The IOM reports, similarly, that more Ethiopian doctors are practicing in Chicago than in Ethiopia. More than half of nurses and doctors from Ethiopia have emigrated from Malawi, and another quarter of the remaining health workers are probably infected with HIV/AIDS. If statistics are to be trusted, Ghana has lost 50 per cent of its doctors to Canada, Britain and the USA. Three-quarters of Zimbabwe's doctors have left the country since the early 1990s and half of social health workers have relocated abroad since 2001. In the last five years more than 16 000 nurses and about 12 500 doctors from

SSA are currently registered to work in Britain (UKNMC, 2005).

Irregular migration and its problems: In the Sahelian countries – Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and the Gambia – poor economic conditions, desertification, declining agricultural production and crushing foreign debt have created substantial emigration pressures, prompting many Sahelians to migrate from drought-prone areas to work in the cities, plantations, and mines in the coastal areas. Short-term migrations by Sahelians, especially Malians, were primarily for trade in neighbouring countries or to other parts of Africa. Others moved to Cameroon, Congo, Zaire, Gabon and the Central African Republic.

African migrants have increasingly adopted more sophisticated, daring, and evasive methods to enter northern countries, even as they tighten border controls. At the same time, irregular migration to South Africa intensified in the 1990s as a result of the relative absence of legal mechanisms for entry and work in post-apartheid South Africa. These irregular labour migrants, initially drawn from Lesotho and Mozambique were soon swamped by Zimbabweans as their country's economy virtually collapsed. The prospects of a booming economy in a democratic setting opened a floodgate for immigration to South Africa from variety of countries in Africa, and also from eastern Europe. It is estimated that nationals from about a hundred countries now live in South Africa. From West Africa came highly skilled professionals from Nigeria and Ghana, employed in the universities and in other professions; tradesmen from Senegal and Mali work as street vendors and small traders, ingeniously invigorating the informal sector through their aggressive commercial acumen, and also by engaging locals. These joined their counterparts from the Democratic Republic of Congo, then Zaire, and Zimbabwe to swell the informal sector.

Many so-called illegal migrants are accused by South Africans of engaging in illegal activities, including money laundering, smuggling and drug-related activities. Most immigrants in this category apparently entered the country without proper documentation, and others overstayed their legal residency, thereby becoming irregular migrants (Crush, 1999). These migrants are

often accused by the local population of obtaining scarce housing, of taking jobs from locals – working for very low wages thereby undercutting the local workers' dreams of higher wages and better working conditions, of exploiting South African girls by marrying them solely to obtain residence permits, and so on.

The number of undocumented immigrants in South Africa remains a controversial issue in the domain of public policy and public debate. Estimates of undocumented migrants range from 500 000 in the 1990s to the – greatly exaggerated – figure of 5 to 8 million initially flagged by the Human Sciences Research Council (Oucho, & Crush, 2001). It is now argued by some scholars that an estimate of not more than 1.5 million is more plausible. These estimates provide ready weapons for politicians who use the high figures to whip up popular sentiment, apparently to conceal some of their own failed electoral promises to improve living conditions (Crush, 1999). It is paradoxical that the politicians, the mass media and the general populace, long accustomed to receiving immigrants, should be involved in such controversy, because since the colonial times the country has always relied on foreign workers.

Determining the real situation has often proved difficult: questions have been raised over and over again and remain largely not satisfactorily answered. Three categories of irregular migrants in South Africa have however been distinguished:

- lawful entrants/unlawful stay including (a) retrenched migrant miners who remain in South Africa and work; (b) migrants who enter for a non-work related purpose (such as tourism or study) and are employed without a work permit or working in the informal sector; and (c) migrants with valid residence and work permits that have expired.
- unlawful entrants/lawful stay including (a) asylum seekers and refugees; (b) successful applicants for immigration amnesties and (c) undocumented migrants legalised under exemptions (mainly farm workers).
- unlawful entrants/unlawful stay including migrants who have jumped the border, acquired false documentation or been trafficked (SAMP, 2005).

Many of these irregular migrants are apprehended and deported but those from neighbouring Mozambique, and even Zimbabwe, often find their way back soon after.

The Maghreb region as origin, transit and destination: The Maghreb countries, apart from serving as a source of migrants to the European Union countries, especially Spain, France, Netherlands and Belgium (see Fargues, 2004 for details), and the Gulf states, have also become transit and destination of migrants. For historical and colonial reasons, France remains the principal destination for North Africans, where about 2,297,000 reside. This is followed by Spain with over 344,000 and Belgium (139,800) followed by The Netherlands harbouring about 164,000 migrants of north African origin. An estimated 58,530 live in the USA and 52,490 in Canada. Indeed, 45 per cent of the stock of total foreign-born population of all OECD countries is of North African origin (OECD, 2004).

One of the dramatic changes and challenges in the last decade has been the increasing migration through, and pressure on, transit countries of the Maghreb by irregular migrants. These migrants come, among other places, from Africa en route to European Union (EU) countries. Many of them may have left their countries of origin in irregular situations, by failing to obtain national passports and/or other travel documents before commencing their journey through unofficial routes. They may also enter transit and host countries (Maghreb and Europe, respectively) through unrecognised routes and/or without appropriate entry documentation, especially entry visas.

Stressful economic conditions, especially the absence of sustainable livelihood opportunities, poverty and unemployment, endemic conflicts, the perception of a bleak future, coupled with widening disparities in incomes and living standards between the north and the south, are fuelling the emigration of young educated persons in a desperate venture to enter the European Union (Belguendouz, 2006). In recent times, many youths have entered the Maghreb in the hope of crossing to Europe via southern European outposts, especially the Spanish Canary Islands and the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Irregular migrants manoeuvre their way in precarious conditions through bush paths, deserts and creeks to avoid authorities and check points. Some dig tunnels under border fences, or cut holes in them, sometimes with the assistance of corrupt or sympathetic guides. Many migrants carry false passports, and are assisted by agents – a network of traffickers and of migrant communities who have settled along these routes. The would-be migrants face a series of dangers along the route, including dehydration during the long trek across the Sahara desert, and shipwreck. Since the mid-1990s, intensified border patrolling at the Strait of Gibraltar has prompted migrants to cross from more eastern places on the Mediterranean coast as well as exploring new crossing points such as via the Canary Islands. In 2001, half of the interceptions of irregular migrants by the Spanish authorities took place off the Canary Islands, but by 2004, the figure had rocketed to 90 percent (ICMPD, 2005). The numbers simply keep increasing. It is estimated that in the first four months of 2006, the number reaching the islands from west African capitals surpassed the total for the whole of 2005. About five thousand irregular migrants use the rough route from ports in Senegal and Mauritania, but close to a thousand may have died in the between December 2005 and May 2006 (*The Economist*, May 13, 2006: 31).

Many irregular migrants use Morocco as transit, and many of those who fail to enter Europe settle there rather than face the humiliation of returning home (de Haas, 2005)R. They do odd jobs in Casablanca, Tangiers and Rabat simply to survive – in spite of the xenophobia and aggression from both Moroccan and Spanish border authorities. Between January and September 2004, 1 860 irregular migrants from Mali, 1 094 from Gambia, 332 from Guinea, 226 from Côte d'Ivoire, 220 from Ghana, 173 from Liberia, 171 from Mauritania, 163 from Nigeria and 158 from Guinea Bissau were apprehended in Spanish territorial waters, while seeking to enter EU territory. During the same period, 429 Moroccans were apprehended in Melilla and 681 in Ceuta (European Commission, 2005).

Libya has emerged as a major transit country towards Europe for illegal immigrants (through the Strait of Sicily), thus increasing pressure on EU external borders in the Mediterranean

(European Commission, 2004). This is due in part to the length of Libya's borders with neighbouring countries, the free movement of people between Libya and the non-Arab countries and Libya's pan-African policy. In 1999, Libya's leader announced the formation of a new organisation – the Community of Sahel Sahara States – linking Libya with Sudan and the former French colonies of Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and the Central African Republic. Many immigrants from these countries, including 500 000 from Chad, have since been attracted to Libya, now accounting for one-sixth of that country's population.

Apart from those irregular migrants using the Maghreb as transit countries to enter Europe clandestinely, there are several thousand others resident and working in regular situations or studying in tertiary institutions in these countries. Statistics are imprecise on the number, qualification, employment status, nationality and duration of residence of such regular migrants in, especially, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. These migrants often face hostile reactions by local population fuelled by the illegal activities of their compatriots in irregular situations – trafficking, crime, drug peddling, and so on. During September and October 2000, a general crackdown on immigrants by Libyan authorities led to clashes with local residents who allegedly attacked them in their homes and on the streets. About 500 died. Over 6 000 Nigerians and Ghanaians were subsequently repatriated (Obisesan, 2000).

Human trafficking: The 'closed door' policy of the North has inadvertently boosted illegal migration by migrants bent on securing entry into these more prosperous countries (Adepoju, 2005a). Recent incidents of trafficking in migrants and desperate attempts by individuals to enter the countries of Europe stowed away beneath ships' decks or in the luggage compartments of commercial aircraft are manifestations of the desperation of youths to emigrate from poor countries to those of the North.

Smuggling people has become a large and lucrative business for cartels in Libya which specialise in transporting Africans through the Sahara Desert and then across the Mediterranean. The double jeopardy faced by irregular immigrants has been touched on

above: they risk their lives when crossing the Sahara Desert and then again when crossing the sea from West Africa to Europe – via the Strait of Sicily, or the Strait of Gibraltar, and, increasingly, via the Canary Islands (Boubakri 2004).

About 2 000 Africans are believed to drown in the Mediterranean each year while attempting illegal crossings to Europe. The death of six irregular migrants attempting to scale the fence in Ceuta to enter Spain in September 2005 prompted the Spanish government to double the height of the metal wire fence barricade and defend it with Spanish Legion soldiers and the Civil Guard. The government also stepped up its anti-immigrant collaboration with Moroccan security forces.

Africa's human trafficking and smuggling map is complicated, involving diverse origins within and outside the region. Little was known until recently about the dynamics of this trafficking. Three main types of trafficking have since been identified in the region, namely trafficking in children mainly for farm labour and domestic work within and across countries; trafficking in women and young persons for sexual exploitation mainly outside the region, and trafficking in women from outside the region for the sex industry of South Africa (IOM, 2003).

In West Africa, the main source, transit, and destination countries for trafficked women and children are Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal. Trafficking in young children from rural areas to capital cities, especially from Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo and Ghana to Côte d'Ivoire's commercial farms, from and through eastern Nigeria to Gabon has increased in recent years (Dottridge, 2002).

Trafficked children are recruited through networks of agents, to work as domestic servants, in informal sectors, or on plantations. Parents are often forced by poverty and ignorance to enlist their children, hoping to benefit from their wages to sustain the family's deteriorating economic situation. Some of these children are indentured into 'slave' labour, as in Sudan and Mauritania. In Nigeria, young women are trafficked, especially from Edo State, to Italy and other countries in Europe. Women from war-torn Liberia and Sierra Leone are prostituting in Mali, just as local women are trafficked to Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and

France. Mali also serves as transit for trafficking women from Anglophone countries to Europe.

In East Africa, women and young girls abducted from conflict zones are forced to become sex-slaves to rebel commanders or to affluent men in Sudan and the Gulf States. Ugandan women prostitutes in the Gulf States lure young girls, who are usually preferred by their male clients, from their home countries. In Kenya, trafficking of young girls to Europe by syndicates run by Japanese businessmen, and of girls from India and parts of South Asia to Kenya, is essentially for the local sex industry. Kenya also serves as a transit route for trafficked Ethiopian women to Europe and the Gulf States (Butegwa, 1997). In Uganda and Kenya, some orphaned girls in the care of relatives are reportedly 'sold' to traffickers under the guise of securing for them better education, scholarships or marriage. Ethiopia is a source of trafficked women to Lebanon and the Gulf States. Traffickers transport Ethiopian women via Tanzania and Kenya as transit countries for Ethiopian women, to avoid Ethiopian government's recruitment regulations (UNICEF, 2003).

Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation is a simmering problem in Southern Africa, especially in Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia. South Africa is destination for regional and extra-regional trafficking activities. Women are trafficked through the network of refugees resident in South Africa, from Thailand, China and Eastern Europe. It is estimated that between 800 and 1 100 women from Bangkok, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, aged from 25 to 30 years, are trafficked into South Africa annually. Traffickers arrange transport for the victims while the Thai 'mama-sans' or male agents in South Africa fix them up with brothel owners (see Adepoju, 2005a).

Traffickers have extended the destinations of children to the EU, especially the Netherlands, the UK, and beyond. Women and children are trafficked to Europe (Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands) for commercial sex. Children are similarly moved in connection with domestic labour, sexual exploitation, and pornography. Trafficking syndicates obtain travel documents and visas for women and link them up with brothels abroad.

Leaders and politicians are increasingly paying attention to the problems of human trafficking. Wide media coverage of incidents of trafficking and repatriation of trafficked persons, stories of the harrowing experiences of trafficked victims abroad, intensive advocacy by concerned local and international NGOs and case studies of human rights abuses and dangers to trafficked persons in transit and at destination have forced many leaders to accept that human trafficking has reached crisis proportions. Countries are adopting action plans at national, bilateral and multilateral levels to curb this unwholesome human trafficking. But much remains to be done to change national laws regarding apprehending, prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators of trafficking, protecting the rights of the trafficked victims, and rehabilitating them into society.

Sub-regional economic organisations and intra-regional labour mobility

The 1980 Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos's framework for establishing sub-regional cooperation unions are more relevant now than they would have been two decades ago. As envisaged, these will serve as building blocks in a gradualist approach towards a continent-wide economic integration that would facilitate intra-regional labour mobility, and promote self-reliant development in the region. This is so because the African Economic Community treaty commits most nations to taking the measures needed for the gradual attainment of the free movement of people, and for ensuring their full enjoyment of their residence and settlement rights.

The major regional economic groupings in Africa are considered as the building blocks of the African Economic Community, and are expected to develop gradually under the terms of the 1994 Abuja Treaty. The goals of that treaty have been reinforced by the adoption in 2001 of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the establishment in 2002 of the African Union. In 2004, the Economic Commission for Africa rated ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) as having had 'above average performance' with respect to regional integration, and the Arab Maghreb Union

(AMU) as 'stagnant'. These ratings are based on progress made in regional integration, including the aspect of free movement of persons, which is especially muted in the AMU (United Nations, 2004).

The ECOWAS Protocol of May 29th 1979, on the Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Residence and Establishment is explicit regarding the free mobility of labour. Rights of entry, residence and establishment were to be progressively established within fifteen years from the date at which the protocol came into force. A labour migration was accelerated by the free movement of persons ushered in by the Protocol on Free Movement (Adepoju, 2002). The meeting of heads of state and government, held in Abuja, Nigeria at the end of March 2000 had as its major agenda the creation of a borderless sub-region. The abolition of mandatory residency permits and the granting of the maximum 90-day period of stay to ECOWAS citizens by immigration officials at entry points took effect from April 2000. The adoption of an ECOWAS passport as a symbol of unity – progressively replacing national passports – over a transitional period of ten years is intended to advance the concept of a borderless west African sub-region (ECOWAS, 2000).

The Common Market for East and southern Africa's protocol on free movement of persons and the Southern African Development Community's (SADC's) half-hearted attempt to facilitate intra-Community movements of nationals are still been finalised. Migration is a controversial issue in SADC countries: the original protocol on Free Movement of Persons was revised several times to incorporate serial objections from member states, especially South Africa. In the revised protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons, the initial six-month visa-free entry period was reduced to three months, and states reserved the right to enter into bilateral agreements with other states in respect of condition of entry of immigrants (Oucho and Crush, 2001). Many member states advanced selfish reasons for not endorsing the protocol until recently when the protocol was signed by member states, with the exception of Zambia. It is the belief of the author that intra-regional migration in Africa should be addressed within NEPAD's framework. In addition, recent efforts to create a borderless ECOWAS should be

replicated by other sub-regional economic groupings, especially the Maghreb Arab Union, in the spirit of NEPAD. These economic units should be revamped to serve a larger role in the management of intra-regional labour migration. The Abuja treaty of 1993 proposed establishing an African Economic Community by 2025, to facilitate intra-regional labour mobility and to encourage projects within the sub-regional groupings that would, ultimately, help to facilitate economic integration in the region and labour mobility within member states.

Migration matters should no longer be handled bilaterally; a regional, or even global, approach that harmonises migration policies is now required. Sub-regional economic organisations need to be revamped to facilitate intra- and inter-regional labour mobility, in tune with the visions both of NEPAD and of the African Economic Community. Persistent political unrest and fragmented, weak national economies mean that these regional and sub-regional economic groupings are crucially important. Economic integration can offer long-term prospects for stimulating intra-regional labour mobility, thus providing much-needed viable local and regional alternatives to the attractions of Europe. Existing groupings need to be revitalised, to serve the roles for which they were set up – and indeed many more – in a globalising world. The African Union Commission's Strategic Framework for a Policy on Migration in Africa (AUC, 2004) and the draft African common position on migration and development (AU, 2006) provide the appropriate platform for mainstreaming migration into development activities at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

The future outlook

Projections of Africa's population into the next half-century indicate prospects for a high-to-moderate rise in population size and, especially, in that of the labour force. This situation derives from decades of sustained population growth in all the sub-regions except North Africa where fertility has been declining. This demographic trend will be an important determinant of migration, as millions of people will be added annually to the pool of unemployed or marginally employed persons. A major

development issue during the next decade will therefore be the productive employment of the millions of educated and uneducated youths who will scramble for work in the formal sector, or – as has already been described – to join the lengthening queue of those ready to migrate clandestinely to do any kind of job anywhere – and, increasingly, outside of their home countries. For that reason, Africa is likely to be one of the largest sources of potential emigration in the future. Currently, irregular migrants are expending tremendous resources – both physical and financial – in their attempts to force their way into Europe. African governments should tap into these resources and support these youths in self-employment rather than allowing them to perish in the desert or the sea in a desperate search for the illusory Golden Fleece.

Poverty reduction is now the most urgent task facing many African countries. Unemployment is a key factor in poverty, and the millions of youths who are unemployed are socially and economically dependent, and disillusioned. In many African countries, the incidence, depth and severity of poverty are such that poverty reduction strategies have to be synonymous with economic growth and development strategies. It is for these reasons that development programmes have to be pro-poor and pro-jobs, to provide livelihoods for the youth. Governments must thus put poverty issues at the top of their political agendas, rather than treat them as residual social issues. In addition they must accept the private sector and civil society as partners in development. Political stability is a precondition for peace and development but, beyond that, governments must provide an enabling environment for participation of other role-players in the pro-poor development process, and mobilise and strengthen self-help capacities and individual initiatives at the local level.

The capacity of African governments to generate viable employment for their youth is further weakened further by the limited size of internal markets, and especially these countries' disadvantageous position in the new era of globalisation – which impacts on migration dynamics in various ways. Agricultural subsidies in OECD countries, especially the USA and Europe, have a negative effect on the income of farmers in the region. For example, West and

central Africa increased their share of world cotton exports from 4 per cent in 1980 to 17 per cent in 2002, yet heavy subsidies to relatively few cotton growers in the USA have drastically affected the livelihood of ten million cotton growers and their families in Benin, Kenya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Togo and Ghana, forcing most of these people to migrate to the cities, in a desperate bid for survival.

Since meaningful development cannot take place in conditions of conflict, African governments must strengthen the democratisation process and improve the quality of governance to ensure a greater and more effective participation of the people in politics and development.

Governments should also redirect their huge military and security expenditures, diverting the money thus saved to much-needed socio-economic investment. Experience shows that, for several African countries, the absence of peace and stability discourages investment and leads to capital flight. African governments must realise that development is as much a political as an economic undertaking. At the same time, the global economic downturn, as well as political and economic constraints on international migration in traditional recipient countries, have taxed the ingenuity of emigrants, increasingly forcing them to diversify migration destinations. Sub-regional and regional economic organisations might facilitate intra-regional labour mobility and promote self-reliant development.

Rich countries need migrants to meet labour shortages in highly skilled areas, especially in information technology and health services (to cope with long-term trend of ageing populations), and also to fill unskilled jobs that

locals do not want to do. Faced with rising domestic unemployment among 'underutilised' workers, such countries are increasingly more selective, restricting the movement of labour supplied by poor countries, and opting mainly for migrants with skills. In poor countries, governments are intensely worried about the detrimental effects of the resulting loss of skilled workers, especially doctors and nurses on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals – this despite the fact that emigration helps to reduce domestic unemployment and boosts revenue through migrants' remittances.

Persistent economic difficulties in Africa and the huge economic differentials between this region and countries of the North act as push and pull factors, luring migrants to Europe in spite of tightened entry requirements and controls. Migrant-receiving countries in Europe should therefore explore avenues for temporary regular migration, thus reducing the irregular migration of desperate African youths, with all its consequences and costs (including policing).

In Africa, more than in any other region, economic recovery and improved living conditions depend crucially on the successful resolution of the ongoing economic malaise. Without improvement in this arena, effective and sustainable development is a mirage. *But the goal is not in sight.* The debt burden has dramatically reduced the capacity of African governments to mobilise resources for development. In this context, the international community has a responsibility to help promote sustainable development and strategies that could alleviate poverty in the region and hence forestall pressures for emigration.

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