

RESEARCH PAPER BY
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PLENARY SESSION Scheduled for: August 29, 10.40

SESSION OVERVIEW

HOT TOPIC: MIGRATION

Africa's migration challenge is crippling: an industry plagued by human traffickers, terrorists and corruption, with revenues of \$1 million a week in one Nigerian city alone. Citizens, suffering from growing populations and rising unemployment, head to Europe in search of better opportunities, often paying with their lives. A resurgence of conflict in a number of countries has displaced millions more Africans, while refugee camps are overflowing. A panel of African foreign ministers discuss what can be done to address this huge challenge.

Regional challenges

Voluntary and forced migration from Africa is caused by political persecution, civil war, resource depletion and search for better economic opportunities and education. The UN reports that 18.6 million Africans migrated internationally within Africa and to other continents in 2013 (*United Nations 2013*) and while statistics are difficult to obtain, this number has certainly risen in recent years. Contrary to most media coverage, the rate of emigration within the continent is higher than other developing regions, at 50%. In sub-Saharan Africa, the intraregional emigration rate is almost 65%, in contrast to the intercontinental emigration rate of North Africans at 10%. Immigrants from higher and middle-income countries usually have higher educations and greater resources to pay for transportation than emigrants from lower income countries. The former demographic disproportionately migrate to OECD countries, while the latter will usually migrate within Africa. Colonial ties to the home country usually help shape the emigrant's choice of European destinations (*World Bank, 2011*).

When migration is promoted safely, it can produce enormous benefits for migrants and societies. On a micro level, financial remittances sent home by migrants provide families with greater incomes, and on a macro level migration can also spur cross border trade and investment and facilitate the exchange of knowledge (*IOM, 2014*). Migrants seeking higher education and training abroad who return to their home countries not only improve the caliber of the workforce, but can offer valuable insights, leadership and training to their home country.

Forced Migration

Environmental degradation and political crises are the main reasons for migration within Africa and from Africa to the Mediterranean European countries. In 2014, both conflict and climate problems including flooding and infrastructure damage caused 120,000 South Sudanese to migrate (*International Organization of Migration, 2014*). The UNHR reports that in 2014, conflict in DRC caused 450,000 Congolese to flee to neighboring countries and Boko Haram's insurgency caused 54,000 Nigerians to flee to three host countries (*UNHCR, 2015*).

Refugee host countries face a series of ethical and financial dilemmas including the responsibility of providing emergency services, nutrition, health care, aid and shelter to the incoming populations. Some host countries may opt to leave this responsibility to NGOs or multilateral organizations. Nevertheless, the need to address the problem's root cause and find a solution remains.

Voluntary Migration

Africans who immigrate outside of Africa may face difficult journeys depending on their socio-economic status. Lower skilled migrants journeying to Europe typically cross the Mediterranean by boat through four major routes. Few make the journey safely without dying or being intercepted by border patrols. The journey is perilous; migrants risk drowning from capsized boats, contracting numerous diseases, or dehydration. If they arrive in Europe, they may be kidnapped or sold into slavery. *The Guardian* reports that an unprecedented number of migrants attempted the journey this year, and the death toll was approximately 1,500 in April. According to the *Economist*, African migrants often pay over \$1,370 per person to get on boats to Malta and Italy (*Economist, 2013*).

Despite this high price, few achieve their dreams of a better life. Many migrants are forced into trafficking or enter into misleading contracts with traffickers, who pose as helpers. Upon the arrival of the migrant to the destination country, the migrant may be forced to pay heavy penalties to pay for their debt, or may be sold into slavery. Migrant women and children are particularly at risk for becoming victims of trafficking. "In the Middle East, rules that treat migrants who leave their job — in particular women who leave their work as domestic helpers — as illegal aliens increase migrants' vulnerability to physical abuse and exploitation" (*World Bank, 2011*). Smugglers and corrupt government officials facilitate the process of trafficking and poor enforcement and cultural attitudes perpetuate it.

Brain drain of highly educated Africans in contrast to low-skilled migration

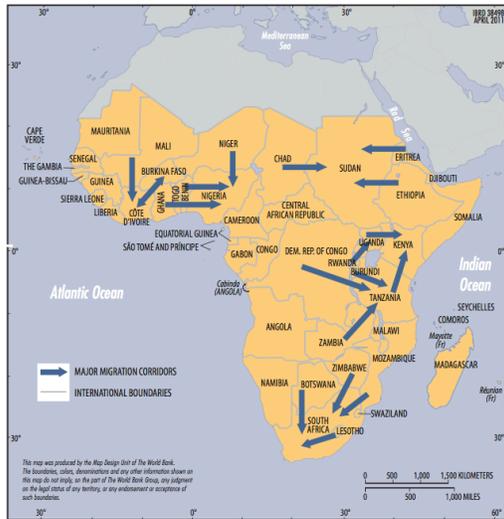
Other Africans from higher socio-economic backgrounds and who have completed higher levels of education leave their countries through safer routes and with guaranteed destinations. One out of every eight Africans with a college education lived in the OECD in 2008 (*World Bank, Leveraging Migration, 2011*). We can infer that the brain drain is the result of limited, well-paid

job opportunities for qualified individuals with high skill levels. The problem of the brain drain for healthcare professionals, specifically doctors and nurses is particularly acute. The migration of skills of this kind is good for economic growth in host countries, but detrimental to lower income countries from which the migrants are leaving, if they do not return (*African Renewal, "From Migration to Tensions"*). Home countries who have attempted various policy measures to retain or re-attract citizens who seek education elsewhere have had mixed success rates. The OECD notes specific success stories, including India, where the government has enticed migrants to return, which has resulted in the creation of numerous start-ups. In addition, new studies by the World Bank have found that in Africa, the further a person travels, the more beneficial their trade. African migration may stimulate African exports and foster international trade because of the increased access to information (*World Bank, 2014*).

Recommendations from the World Bank, UNHCR and the IOM:

- Imposing service requirements after students complete their education could encourage more students to remain in the continent (*World Bank, 2011*)
- Governments can facilitate diaspora networks, which may encourage emigrants to have better ties to their home countries, and potentially return after they work or study abroad (*World Bank, 2011*)
- Countries should address the root cause of child immigration, and develop programs to protect children from traffickers, and publicize or produce information campaigns to change public attitudes about trafficking women and children and inform potential migrants about the risks involved in migrating (*World Bank, 2011*)
- Bilateral agreements between origin and destination countries that encourage legal immigration can help protect migrant workers
- NGOs and governments can create campaigns and trainings to inform migrants about their rights as workers in other countries. The IOM, for example, launched a campaign to inform migrant workers of their rights titled: "Are we working or are we exploited?"
- Migration should take place in safe ways, which means African governments should develop comprehensive bilateral migration policies with host countries (*IOM, 2014*)
- African countries and the international community should strengthen border control systems to prevent transnational crime, including smuggling, trafficking and forced labor (*IOM, 2014*)

Figure 1.3 Major Migration Corridors in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2010



Source: Authors, based on data from World Bank 2011.

Further reading:

Fourfold increase in migration to Europe <http://bit.ly/1yfp0W2>

An account of a ship of stowaways <http://nyti.ms/1KaVFR9>

Why the brain drain could actually benefit African countries <http://theatlantic.com/1dh1aPm>

Europe's worsening migrant crisis <http://bit.ly/1mi2Kai>

The plight of African women migrating to Europe <http://n.pr/1dYjjVc>

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