

# **An overview of key trends of migration in Africa**

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# Migration on the global agenda

- Migration is a hotly debated topic but paradoxically not well understood
- The linkages between migration and development have received increasing attention in recent decades both within policy circles and the academic literature
- But also: increased negative public mood towards migration in many destination countries
- Human mobility a key factor for global, sustainable development  
SDGs: migration is a cross-cutting issue, relevant to all of the SDGs

# Migration on the global agenda

- 11 out of 17 goals contain targets & indicators that are relevant to migration
- Target 10.7 facilitate orderly, safe, regular migration
- Other targets also make direct connections to migration topics, including labour migration (8.7 and 8.8), international student mobility (4.b), human trafficking (5.2, 8.7 and 16.2), remittances (10.c), migration data (17.18) and more
- Agenda 2063 advocates for the free movement of people as part of the continental
- integration agenda.
- Global Compact on Migration
- Global Compact on Refugees
- Global Forum on Migration and Development
- Undergraduate/postgraduate studies, migration research centers, departments on migration, etc
- Polices; institutions, etc, (National Migration Policy, Africa Institute for Remittances, AU, IGAD,etc)

# Trends and patterns

- Around 281 million international migrants in 2020 (3.6 % of the global population); meaning that staying within one's country of birth overwhelmingly remains the norm
- The great majority of people do not migrate across borders; much larger numbers migrate within countries (nearly 300 million internal migrants in China in 2023).
- Women comprise slightly less than half of all international migrants (48%); age and skill selective
- Since 1970, the number of international migrants has tripled
- The international migrant population has increased in size, but remained relatively stable as a proportion of the world's population growth
  - 2.8% in 1995
  - 2.9 in 2000
  - 3.4% in 2010
  - 3.6% in 2022

# Key facts and figures 2000- 2024 WMR

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2024</u>
• # of international migrants	150M	281M
• Proportion of migrants	2.8%	3.6%
• female international migrants	47.5%	48%
• children	16%	10%
• # of migrant workers	-	169M
• Remittances	128 billion USD	831 B \$
• # of refugees	14 M	35.4 M
• # IDPs	21 M	71.4 M

# Key migration trends in Africa

- Clearly, migration from Africa is not as widespread as is widely perceived; migration from Africa generally is low by global standards,
- Africa is a world region with the least intercontinental outmigration, accounting only 14.1 % of the world's total migrant population as of 2017; compared to the share of Asia (41%) and Europe (27.1%) (IOM 2020)
- The largest share of emigrants are from middle-income countries
- Only 3 % of the African population live outside their country - compared to 8.5% of the European population living outside their country

- More people migrate within the Global South (around 37% of all migrants) than from the Global South to the Global North (around 35%).
- If a majority of people move within their regions, then there is a need to look at South-South migration, which has been neglected in the media narratives and also political narratives. Everybody's focusing on South-North.
- When it comes to refugees, 85 percent are hosted in the Global South.
- Most African migrants are not crossing oceans, but rather crossing land borders within Africa; and most of the movement, except for North Africa, takes place within the region
- Despite what is commonly assumed, more than 80% of African migration occurs within the continent (IOM 2022).

- In 2015, there were an estimated 21 million migrants in Africa, of which 18 million from African countries and the rest mostly from Europe; Asia and N.America (Chinese short term workers, western ‘expats’, etc)
- Africa also hosts more than a quarter (37%) of the world’s refugees
- It may surprise that most migration is regular, safe and orderly, and - regionally focused and often directly connected to work (IOM 2024).
- In recent years, irregular migration from Africa to Europe has received extensive attention (Flauhaux & De Haas 2016).
- 94 % of African migration across oceans takes on a regular form; and
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, most movements take place within the region.
- Intra-African migrations since 2010 have increased +46.3% compared to +26% for Africa-Europe migrations (Mo Ibrahim foundation 2022)

# Key migration trends in Africa

- In 2020, the total number of African migrants was 40.6 million.
- This is only 14.5% of the global migrant population, much less than Asia's (41.0%) and Europe's (22.5%) shares.
- Africa is often seen as a continent of mass displacement and migration caused by poverty and violent conflict.
- The portrayal of Africa as a 'continent on the move' is linked to stereo-typical ideas of Africa as a continent of poverty and conflict.
- Migrants from richer African countries tend to migrate to destinations outside of Africa
- Migrants from relatively rich origin countries tend to be better educated and skilled.

# Key migration trends in Africa

- However, sensationalist media reportage and popular discourses give rise to an image of an ‘exodus’ of desperate Africans fleeing poverty at home (De Haas 2016).
- The rate of migration to richer countries from Africa could be projected to increase with rising economic opportunity, education, and other factors—called the *Migration Hump*—
- And recede once the wage differential between origin and destination countries narrows sufficiently, and other non-pecuniary considerations become important to the quality of life of migrants (Shimeles 2018)

# Drivers of migration

- The driving forces, dynamics and patterns of migration vary across Africa's regions.
- However, over the last 15 years migration has increased in all of Africa's regions, and is characterised by a largely young migrant population, that is under the age of 30, and diverse migratory flows.
- High youth unemployment and the desire for better opportunities abroad are key motivators for this demographic
- The root causes of migration in Africa are numerous and inter-related. The push-pull framework provides insight into this complex web of factors. Lack of socio-economic opportunities and the rule of law, poor governance, corruption, political instability, conflict, terrorism and civil strife are major push factors.
- Pull factors include the real or perceived opportunities for a better life, higher income, improved security, and superior education and health care in countries of destination

# Drivers of migration

- Many people assume that migration from Africa is primarily driven by extreme poverty.
- It is driven by a mix of economic, social, political and environmental factors. Additionally, it's often those with some financial means who can afford to migrate, not the poorest.
- Conflict and instability: political instability, armed conflicts and persecution have forced millions to flee their homes
- Environmental factors: climate change and environmental degradation are increasingly significant drivers of migration, particularly in regions like the Sahel and the HoA.
- Most climate-related migration occurs within countries, especially to neighbouring areas and urban centers
- Forced immobility - that people cannot move despite their need or desire to do so - is another problem

# Irregular migration routes

- Migration routes in Africa are constantly evolving and changing.
- In recent years, the eastern route (Gulf of Aden migration route) has witnessed increased numbers of migrants, particularly from the HoA, moving to the Gulf countries and beyond.
- The southern route from East/Horn of Africa to southern Africa
- The northern route from mainly West and the Horn of Africa en route to Europe, via the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea.
- Although migration on the northern route is small in comparison to other routes, a lot of resources are being channelled towards migration management on the northern route (AU 2018)
- This may be due to the political attention that migration received in Europe.

# African perspective

- Migration from an African perspective is complex and deeply rooted in the continent's history (slave trade, colonial legacy, post-independence conflict, etc), current socio-economic conditions and global dynamics

- Understanding these factors is crucial for addressing the challenges and opportunities that migration presents for Africa

Migration has long been a part of African history, with patterns of movement shaped by trade, pastoralism, seasonal labour, and cultural exchanges

- Historically, migration in Africa is generally categorised into three main periods: migration during pre-colonial, during colonial and post-colonial times.

- The notion of irregular migration was created after borders and visa regimes were introduced, as it was a norm, prior for African pastoralist and traders to move between places within the continent (Okyerefo & Setrana 2018).

# African perspective

- Intra-African migration dominates: more African migrants' move within the continent; extra-regional movements are largely regular
- Over 80% of African migrants move to other African countries rather than leaving the continent. RECs such as ECOWAS, SADC, EAC facilitate this movement through policies that promote free movement of people
- Most migration takes place within countries, often from rural areas or small towns to larger urban areas or cities
- African migrants often face restrictive immigration policies in destination countries, which influences migration routes and methods; lack of skills recognition; racism, discrimination

# African perspective

- Moreover, the migration route from N.Africa to Europe, via the Mediterranean, for mostly short-term work was largely regular until visa requirements came into force (Fargues, 2017; Adepoju et al., 2021).
- Indeed, migration within Africa remains challenging. For example, 54 of the 55 African Union (AU) Member States signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
- 44 countries have deposited their instrument of ratification, but only 4 countries have ratified the Free Movement of Peoples Protocol. It comes into force when 15 countries ratify the protocol
- With 28% of country-to-country travel within Africa allowing African citizens visa-free entry - a notable increase from 20% in 2016

# African perspective

- African governments are increasingly focusing on migration as a development issue, integrating it into national and regional strategies, due to the scale of remittances, skills transfer and diaspora investment
- African diaspora is recognized by the AU as the 6<sup>th</sup> region of Africa in 2003
- Its objectives: strengthening cultural, political and economic ties; leveraging resources (skills, knowledge, technology transfer) and promoting a sense of unity, solidarity and shared identity among people of African descent globally, countering fragmentation caused by slavery, colonisation and contemporary migration
- However, the recognition of the 6th region is symbolic; implementation gaps exist; representation in the AU structures not addressed yet

-legal pathways; labour externalization - migration as a pressure relief valve for high unemployment

-Little attention has been provided to skills and knowledge transfer

-Brain drain is a concern: the African Union estimates that about 70,000 skilled professionals emigrate from Africa every year.

-9 countries - Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe - have lost more than \$2.0 billion since 2010 from training doctors who then migrated.

Annually, it is estimated that Africa loses around \$2.0 billion through brain drain in the health sector alone (Au 2018).

- Destination countries do not pay for the cost of training African doctors they recruit. For instance, one in ten doctors working in the UK comes from Africa, allowing the UK to save on average \$2.7 billion on training costs.

-Remittances are an important source of financing for SSA; significantly exceeded FDI flows in 2023

- Over the last decade, remittance flows to Africa doubled, reaching \$100 billion in 2022, surpassing the funds received through ODA and FDI.
- Remittance flows to SSA reached \$54 billion in 2023; more through informal flows
- The largest recipients of remittances in SSA during 2022 include Nigeria (20.5 billion); Ghana (4.9 billion); Kenya (4.2 billion); Zimbabwe (3.1 billion); Senegal (2.9)
- In general, the economies of smaller, poorer, and fragile countries are more dependent on remittances. % of GDP: Gambia 29.1%; Lesotho 22.5% ; Somalia 21.4%; Comoros 20.9%;Cape Verde 13.5%;Guinea-Bissau
- IMF study shows that a 1% increase in remittances as a GDP, extreme poverty can be reduced by 22%
- However, remittances cannot be a substitute for a sustained, domestically engineered development effort.

## Intra-African remittances

- In 2019, over 21 million Africans were living in another African country; South Africa remains the most significant destination
- More than 2/3<sup>rds</sup> of cross-border migration in Africa takes place within the continent itself, and the flow of remittances between African countries is sizeable.
- The WB estimates that intra-African remittances could be around \$14 billion a year.
- Within SSA, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan and Uganda were the top remittance senders in the region

# The narrative around African migration

- There is no single narrative that defines this large continent which is characterised by mixed and complex migration trajectories associated with its diverse history, culture and geography.
- The discourse over Africa is often linear and oversimplified narrative, which is not just depicted in people's mobility but also in broader issues.
- The existing perception is that Africans have been and always regarded as the frontrunners when it comes to international migration
- Despite its significance, intra-Africa mobility has been overlooked and least understood
- African potential migrants do not intend to migrate to Europe; in both East Africa and Central Africa, around 40 % prefer to stay within the region or the continent (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2021)

# The narrative around Africa migration, ctd

- However, in Europe, migration has been increasingly seen in terms of border security or management
- The EU framed migration especially since 2015 as a ‘crisis’ to be addressed through different interventions (*a crisis is often address through a short-term, life saving, emergency intervention*)
- The European perspective is reflected in its overwhelming focus on three areas
- Addressing the ‘root causes’ of irregular migration;
- Enhancing border controls to restrict migration, with a particular focus on smuggling and trafficking in persons;
- Return, readmission and reintegration (the 3 R’s) - unpopular among African countries; EU sought to leverage ODA to press EHOA countries to cooperate on border management and 3 ‘R’s

# The narrative around Africa migration, ctd

- While the narrative of preventing migration by addressing its root causes seems compelling, it contradicts the broad academic consensus that economic development leads to more rather than less migration, at least in the short term (Zaun & Nantermoz 2022; De Haas 2010).
- Externalisation of borders became a favoured strategy leading to bilateral agreements of development aid in return for action against migrant smuggling; curving the flows of African migrants into Europe
- Border controls may simply divert migration rather than halt it entirely (Coggio 2021)
- Over the past decade, more interventions aiming to restrain SSA migration to Europe
- However, the fear of “invasion” emanates not only based on a small fraction of African migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea but also taking into account a long-term projection of demographic growth coupled with limited economic opportunities

# Implications of narratives on migration policy and programming

- This distorted image of reality has become an explosive issue in a political climate in which nationalist and xenophobic populism is on the rise (Mckeen 2019).
- Focusing on controlling migration from Africa may have affected its broader development assistance priorities, potentially prioritizing support to countries strategically relevant for migration instead of on the basis of development need (Coggio 2021; Frows 2020)
- Centred on addressing “root causes” of migration, has left a raft of pressing development issues unaddressed (Soto 2022)
- Structural ‘root’ causes are often overlooked- international politics, inequality, exclusion, climate change, globalisation, conflict, etc
- The root causes of migration cannot be addressed without holistic understanding of missing factors in migration.

# Conclusion

- There is an established migration narrative that migrants from Africa are increasingly moving towards Europe on an irregular basis
- Unfortunately, migration programming in the region is adding to the oversimplification of the otherwise complex migration trajectories.
- There is a risk that simplistic narratives lead to inadequate responses.
- Poverty is often assumed to be a single cause of migration and migrants from Africa are characterised as vulnerable people who are manipulated by criminal smugglers, stressing the importance of breaking their networks
- Indeed, border securitization is also a concern among African countries, as intra-African migration is often negatively framed
- Media reports and public opinion certainly shape migration policy and programmes

# Conclusion...

- Policy measures should rather focus on widening safe, legal pathways for labour migration and providing local livelihood alternatives.
- Focusing more on migration governance over securitization, and on long-term interventions including in public services, rural development, education and youth employment is key
- It is important to decentering migration governance with migration policy and programming emphasize on maximizing the benefits of migration for the all parties involved (Triandafyllidou 2022),
- Positive narratives? can capitalize on celebrating diversity, integration -the human face of migration
- There is a need to decolonise knowledge on migration

**THANK YOU!**