

# Book review

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## Migration in West Africa

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A recent book edited by Joseph Kofi Teye titled *Migration in West Africa* discusses cross-border movements by regular and irregular migrants in search of economic opportunities and to maintain social relationships. This four-part volume consisting of 13 chapters discusses migration patterns, drivers, and socio-economic impacts of internal and cross-border migration in West Africa. While the authors are at pains to show that migration, in particular and mobility, in general, are part of the fabric of life in West Africa, they dismiss the media discourses that convey images of millions of West Africans migrating to the European “El Dorado” and other destinations such as the Maghreb and Southern Africa. The authors argue that contrary to the narratives suggesting an exodus of Africans to the Global North, intra-regional migration is the dominant process in West Africa.

Part I consists of four chapters that discuss the changing patterns and governance of migration within and from the region. The chapters combine empirical findings with theoretical reflections to develop compelling migration-development narratives that make the book relevant to readers outside West Africa. For instance, while migration from labor-surplus areas to labor-scarce destinations is often explained from an economic perspective, several authors challenge such orthodox conceptualizations of drivers of migration by arguing how non-economic drivers (e.g., culture, social networks, and religion) also influence migration decisions.

Chapter 1 by Joseph Kofi Teye covers migration trends, patterns, and drivers within and from West Africa and reveals how state formation processes and political administration shaped current mobility patterns and social transformation during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Teye refers to West Africa as a “sub-region” that experiences mixed migration flows and high levels of intra-regional migration, including labor and forced displacement.

In Chapter 2, Faisal Garba and Thomas Yeboah explore several critical challenges in implementing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol, whose aims are to promote the free movement of persons and

regional integration. These aims have been hampered by the rampant extortion and harassment of migrants at border crossings and a general lack of coherence on cross-border mobility between the member states' national legislation and the ECOWAS Protocols.

Chapter 3 by Priya Deshingkar and Doudou Dièye Gueye provides a gendered analysis of human smuggling from Senegal to the Global North. Using the impoverished Kolda region of Senegal as a case study, the chapter provides valuable insights into gender-religious belief systems and their intersection with irregular migration and human smuggling processes.

In Chapter 4, Mary Boatemaa Setrana and Nauja Kleist argue that family relations are central to the gendered dynamics of migration and remittance flows in West Africa. The chapter posits that the feminization of migration is linked to the broader social changes occurring in the sub-region.

The three chapters presented in Part II focus on environmental and forced migration. In Chapter 5, Joseph Kofi Teye and Ebenezer G.A. Nikoi discuss migration as a response strategy to extreme weather events. They present interesting case studies on how floods, drought, and rainfall variability have been migration and displacement triggers in several parts of West Africa. The authors argue that most displaced survivors of extreme weather events relocate to nearby regions to continue their lives without undergoing major livelihood adjustments.

In Chapter 6, Heaven Crawley and Veronica Fynn Bruey discuss the struggles of Liberian refugees living in protracted displacement and poverty in Ghana to secure national and international protection. Chapter 7 presents an examination by Leander Kandilige and Geraldine Asiwome Ampah of the peculiar protection vulnerabilities experienced by voluntary migrants in times of crisis because of a lack of access to national protection mechanisms during crises. The authors conclude that existing generic national disaster management agencies are inadequate in providing specific support for voluntary migrants during disasters, and they call for a mechanism dedicated to protecting the rights of voluntary migrants during crises.

The three chapters in Part III focus on labor migration, diaspora, and development. In Chapter 8, Olayinka Akanle and Olayinka Damilola Ola-Lawson contribute to the debates on the link between labor migration and socio-economic development in Nigeria. In Chapter 9, Tebkiet Alexandra Tapsoba and Dabiré Bonayi Hubert examine the trends in the flow and development impacts of remittances in Burkina Faso. They argue that although households that receive regular remittances are economically better-off than those that do not, most of the cash remittances are spent on consumer goods and are not invested in productive sectors. In Chapter 10, Nohoua Traoré and Gertrude Dzifa Torvikey contribute to the knowledge of the historical migration trajectories by situating the development of the cash-crop economy within the history of labor migrations into Côte d'Ivoire and the crises that ensued as a result, by highlighting the different waves of migration into Côte d'Ivoire.

Part IV focuses on return migration. In Chapter 11, Amanda Bisong outlines how the return process contributes to vulnerability and continued precarity in returnees in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. She argues that poorly implemented return programs have worsened the vulnerabilities of migrants instead of promoting migrant integration. A significant contribution of this chapter is its exposition of the role of local institutions in the reintegration of returnees by helping them cope with the vulnerabilities they are exposed to in their places of origin.

Chapter 12, authored by Joseph Mensah, Joseph Kofi Teye, and Mary Boatemaa Setrana, elucidates the interconnections between immigrant integration, transnationalism, and return intentions, focusing primarily on Ghanaian and Senegalese migrants in the Global North. From this analysis, it is evident that although many migrants settle and integrate into their destination countries, they remain connected to their homelands through various transnational engagements. The authors argue that migrants often sustain simultaneous connectivity to both ends of the migration cycle, not because they are unable or unwilling to integrate, but because they use this connectivity to facilitate their livelihoods in the origin and destination countries.

In Chapter 13, Joseph Kofi Teye presents the main conclusions. First, that diaspora remittances and investments in West African countries have the potential to contribute significantly to socio-economic development in West African countries. Second, although several policies and programs have been implemented to strengthen mechanisms for protecting current and returned migrants, the existing state-led frameworks for protecting vulnerable refugees and labor migrants remain ineffective and are not comprehensive. Third, despite a general lack of programs to enhance the developmental impacts of financial remittances, West African countries have the potential to contribute significantly to socio-economic development in these countries.

*Migration in West Africa* is a valuable volume that African migration scholars should find helpful, especially from the point of view of understanding the causes, dynamics, and implications of migration in West Africa. The edited volume draws out several policy lessons based on the experiences of West African states. Importantly, its nuanced reflections on both national and regional migration policy and programming, provide a refreshing contribution to the ongoing debate on African migration. Hopefully, there will be a second edition, and this would give the authors an opportunity to elaborate on some of the interesting but insufficiently addressed debates around transit migration within West Africa, human trafficking, and cross-border migration corridors. Also, the general lack of recent country-specific data on immigration would need more attention.

This book is written in a very accessible way, and it provides comprehensive information on several issues related to the migration-development nexus (e.g., environmental displacement, return migration, and remittances) in West Africa by presenting micro-empirical case studies from several countries. Scholars interested

in historical analyses of migration flows and the legal instruments governing the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons will find this book particularly helpful. This edited volume is a welcome addition to the literature on African migration.

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