Migration Governance in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

This article postulates that, despite its magnitude and positive impact in Africa, the attention accorded to migration, especially migration governance, which is fundamental to the management of migration, is not commensurate with its relative importance. To this end, the study uses qualitative methods to gather and analyze data from published research, policy documents, and evaluations conducted on the subject matter. Based on a literature review on the state of migration governance in Africa and its implications on African countries' capacity to manage migration, the analysis observes that migration governance is relatively weak. The study attributes this mainly to inadequate resource allocation toward migration management. It unravels the reasons for this modest investment within the framework of public budgeting theories to explain how governments determine resource allocation across different needs. Furthermore, the article documents the substantial contribution of migration toward development in Africa against the relatively meager investments toward migration management. It also documents the substantial donor investments in the migration sector and decries this state of affairs with regard to the continent's ability to set its migration agenda. The study concludes that the manifestations of weak migration governance are the reduced capacity of Africa to nurture and capitalize on the positive impact of migration, as well as the limitations on its ability to negotiate migration compacts. It recommends that Africa increases its investment in the migration sector as a prerequisite for taking charge of its migration agenda.

Keywords: Africa, migration governance, challenges, opportunities

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INTRODUCTION

Migration is defined in terms of time and space, that is, the movement of people that involves a change in their usual place of residence to another administrative boundary within a country or the movement of people from one political boundary to another over a period of time (Tsegay, 2023). The former phenomenon is internal migration, while the latter is international migration. The subjects in question are called migrants. In this regard, international migration is a situation whereby migrants move to, and live outside of their country of birth or usual residence for at least one year (Tsegay, 2023). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a migrant as:

> A person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students (IOM, 2019).

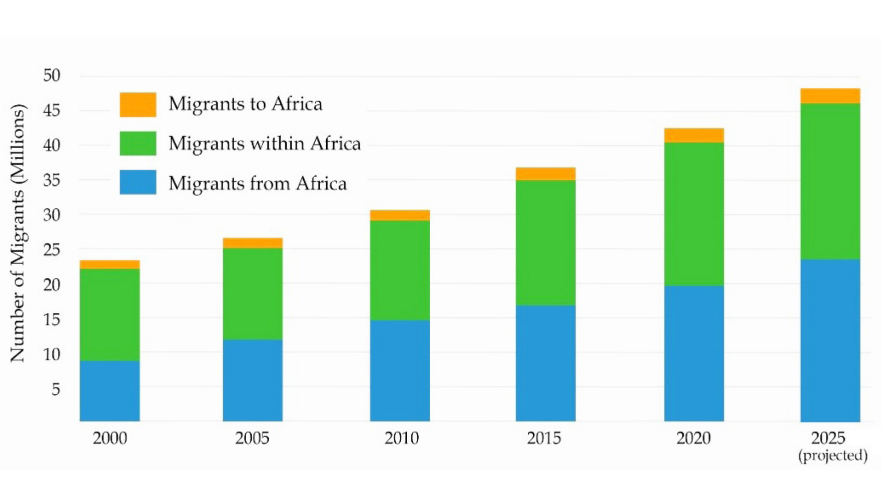
The IOM definition is arguably more comprehensive, as it includes the diffent types of migration and migrants, that is, internal or international; regular or irregular; voluntarily or involuntarily, and temporary or permanent. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, the author adopts the IOM definition of migration.

The magnitude of migration in Africa

Historically, Africans have migrated. Before European colonization in the late nineteenth century, Africa was the scene of great movements (Amin, 1995), including the movement of Homo sapiens from Africa spreading throughout the rest of the world some 80,000 years ago (Gugliotta, 2008); the forced migration of Africans during the slave trade between 1500 and the 1860s when at least 12 million Africans were shipped to the Americas (Gates Jr., 2013); the *Guruuswa* – the movement of the pastoralist Shona people from the Great Lakes region to present-day Zimbabwe (Shoko, 2007); and the *Mfecane* – the violent wars over land and resources that tore apart several ethnic groups between 1820 and 1835 and led to forced migrations in the southern and central African regions (Mensah, 2016). After colonization by Europeans in the late nineteenth century, the continent has experienced vast movements of labor, both within and from the continent (Amin, 1995).

Recent trends point to a continuation of migration in Africa, characterized by cross-border, mixed-migratory movements, including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied minors, environmental migrants, smuggled persons, victims of trafficking, and stranded migrants (Mixed Migration Hub, n.d.). International migration within and from Africa has experienced steady growth in recent times, increasing from approximately 31 million in 2010 to 42.5 million in 2020, and to an estimated 47.5 million in 2025 (UNDESA, 2016).

Figure 1: Migration within and from Africa



Source: UNDESA (2016)

Further, a sizable proportion of African migration is intra-continental. Those who migrate from the continent move mainly to Europe, the Gulf States, Asia, and North America. It is also noteworthy that a characteristic of African migration is that it is mainly intra-regional and inter-regional, a phenomenon that has a long history (UNCTAD, 2018). As Table 1 depicts, West, East, Southern and Central Africa exhibit the strongest examples of intra-regional migration flows on the continent (Shimeles, 2010).

Table 1: Inter-regional and intra-regional migration in Africa (percentages)

ORIGIN	**DESTINATION**				
	East Africa	Central Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa	West Africa
East Africa	60.51	5.30	16.73	17.38	0.08
Central Africa	37.90	47.59	4.38	5.68	4.44
North Africa	46.00	26.70	23.02	0.80	4.12
Southern Africa	15.12	1.66	0.27	82.47	0.48
West Africa	0.24	7.32	0.61	0.74	91.10

Source: AUC (2021)

Inter-regional migration is prevalent mainly from West Africa to Southern Africa, from East/Horn of Africa to Southern Africa and from Central Africa to Southern and West Africa (UNDESA, 2016). The bulk of the migrants from North Africa move to Europe (predominantly to France, Spain and Italy) and to the Gulf States (mainly to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) (UNCTAD, 2018).

Intra-regional movements within the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the African Union (AU)[2] are also pronounced (see Table 2). This trend has been on the increase, notably between 2000 and 2010, and is mainly attributable to proximity and the easing of barriers to travel for citizens of the RECs within their respective regions.

Table 2: Shares of international migrant stock within and between RECs, 2017 (Percentages)

ORIGIN	DESTINATION							
	AMU	CEN-SAD	COMESA	EAC	ECCAS	ECOWAS	IGAD	SADC
AMU	16.8	45.2	5.8	0.0	1.4	29.2	0.5	0.9
CEN-SAD	1.6	33.4	14.3	3.5	7.3	25.8	11.9	2.2
COMESA	0.4	8.8	30.5	16.7	8.1	0.1	22.8	12.7
EAC	0.0	7.7	29.4	23.4	9.3	0.1	15.9	14.3
ECCAS	0.1	5.7	22.4	16.0	26.0	2.1	7.8	20.0
ECOWAS	1.2	46.7	0.3	0.0	3.6	47.1	0.2	1.0
IGAD	1.0	15.0	33.7	15.0	2.7	0.0	31.7	1.0
SADC	0.0	1.0	22.0	13.0	12.3	0.0	6.2	45.5

Source: UNCTAD (2018)

Evidence suggests that despite a substantial increase in emigration from Africa to Europe over the past decades, the number of Africans migrating irregularly to Europe represents a small percentage as compared to regular arrivals (IOM, 2017). This is despite the rather disproportionate emphasis by researchers and the media on irregular migration from Africa to Europe in recent years.

IMPACT OF MIGRATION IN AFRICA

Migration has both positive and negative effects in Africa. The advantages of migration in Africa include the money that migrants send home (remittances), the reduced pressure on jobs and resources in migrant-sending countries, and the diasporic investments and new skills that migrants can return with to their home

[2] The eight RECs of the African Union include the following: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the East African Community (EAC); the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

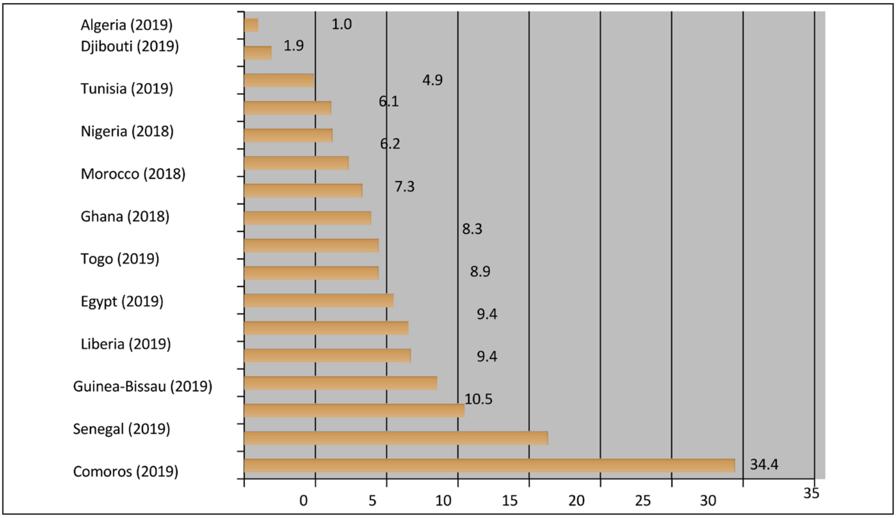
countries. The disadvantages include the brain and brawn drain (a depletion in people of working age who migrate from the continent), which reduces the size of the potential workforce; de-skilling; and the potential for remittance-induced inflation in migrant-sending countries.

Positive impacts of migration

Remittances

Remittances constitute a vital source of income for developing countries. They help families to access food, education, health care, and other basic needs (World Bank, 2020b). According to the World Bank, remittance flows to Africa amounted to US$17 billion in 2004, and this figure rose to US$61 billion in 2013, which constituted 19% of Africa's GDP in that year (World Bank, 2017). In 2022, remittances to sub-Saharan Africa amounted to US$53 billion, which was a 6.1% increase from the previous year. Further, remittances to the region were projected to rise by 1.3% and 3.7% in 2023 and 2024, respectively. It is noteworthy that remittance flows to sub-Saharan Africa in 2022 were nearly twice the size of foreign direct investment (FDI), were relatively more stable, and supported the current accounts of several African countries dealing with food insecurity, severe droughts and floods, and had debt-servicing difficulties (World Bank, 2023).

Figure 2: Remittances as a percentage of GDP in selected African countries, 2018 and 2019



Source: World Bank (2019; 2020a; 2020b)

The example of Lesotho brings into sharp focus the import of remittances in some African countries. In 2018, Basotho migrants sent home US$438 million, a figure that surpassed official development assistance (ODA), which stood at US$146,7 million, and FDI, which amounted to US$39,5 million (IOM, n.d.) (Lesotho).

After FDI, remittances are Africa's largest source of foreign inflows (Ratha et al., 2011).[3] In 2024, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries are expected to reach $685 billion, larger than FDI and ODA combined (Ratha et al., 2024). Further, large and stable remittance flows can improve a country's creditworthiness and, on the basis of future inflows, can be used by both governments and commercial banks in recipient countries as collateral for raising bond financing from international markets (Mudungwe, 2017).

However, while remittances to Africa have been substantial and more stable and countercyclical than other financial inflows (and thus sustaining consumption and investment during recessions), remittance flows to sub-Saharan Africa had been expected to decline by 23.1% to $37 billion in 2020 mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while a recovery of 4% was expected post-COVID-19 (Ratha et al., 2024).

Diaspora participation in development

There is abundant evidence of the impact of diasporas in the development of their countries of origin. Apart from remittances, diaspora contributions also include philanthropic activities, knowledge exchange and skills/technology transfers, enhanced trade links between host and recipient countries, and better access to foreign capital markets through diaspora bonds (Ratha et al., 2024). Through the IOM's Migration and Development in Africa (MIDA) and the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), some countries on the continent have benefited from temporary return programs of their professionals abroad to alleviate skill shortages at home (Mudungwe, 2017).

Enhanced labor market efficiencies

Wage differentials notwithstanding, the laws of supply and demand dictate that labor will move from areas where it is abundant, to areas of labor shortage. In some cases, such movements have been regimented, as in the case of South Africa where, from the latter half of the nineteenth century, labor was sourced from other southern African countries, mainly Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, and Namibia, to work in gold and diamond mines (Kok et al., 2006). In recent times, and through bilateral agreements, some African countries have effected the movement of skills from countries with abundance, to countries with shortage. In 2021, the governments of Rwanda and Zimbabwe signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU), which paved the way for the former to recruit teachers from the latter. The MoU also paved the way for Rwanda to recruit Zimbabwean lecturers to teach

[3] These figures account for only officially recorded remittances and do not include data from about half of the continent's countries that do not report remittance data regularly. When one adds the inflows to these countries and the unrecorded flows to the rest of Africa through informal channels, the size of remittance flows will be substantially higher.

medicine and health sciences at its universities (Nyathi, 2021). Zimbabwe is expected to have exported 477 teachers to Rwanda by September 2024 (Chigoche, 2022).

Besides the Rwanda/Zimbabwe case, there are also examples of bilateral labor agreements in two specific Southern African Development Community (SADC) corridors: between Lesotho and South Africa, and between Zimbabwe and South Africa (IOM, 2021).

Through bilateral labor agreements, as chronicled above, Africa has the potential to rationalize its labor. This would not only promote safe pathways for labor migration, but also regional integration, social cohesion, and cultural exchange.

Economic and social integration

Migration has the potential to play an integral role in the integration (and overall development) of the African continent with regard to economic, social, cultural and knowledge transfer aspects. Economically, migrant networks and diaspora communities play a crucial role in facilitating trade and investment between origin and destination countries on the continent, fostering economic integration and cross-border collaboration (Gumede et al., 2020).

In 2018, the AU adopted two ground-breaking protocols that have the potential to integrate the African continent: The agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (the Free Movement Protocol). The AfCFTA seeks to increase intra-African trade and investment, while the Free Movement Protocol seeks to progressively facilitate the free movement of persons, right of residence, and right of establishment. The successful implementation of these protocols would not only enhance economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction across the continent, but would also provide opportunities for intra-continental labor migration and remittance flows, thereby bringing the economies and people of the African continent into a single integrated regional block (Brunow et al., 2015).

Over the years, migration has facilitated the exchange of ideas, traditions, language, and cultural practices among different African communities, enriching the continent's cultural fabric and promoting a sense of shared identity. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) provides key insights into the substance of cultural exchange, highlighting the pivotal role of cultural kinships and mutual languages cementing relations of cross-border communities within the context of trade and human relations. Further, cross-border trading has promoted social cohesion and economic inclusion across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC), and SADC regions, as languages and cultures are learned and shared during the interaction between buyers and sellers, resulting in lasting people-to-people integration and socioeconomic and cultural relationships across borders. Migrant populations often maintain strong ties with their home countries while integrating into their host communities, creating networks, and fostering social cohesion across national borders (AUC, 2024).

Knowledge transfer

Through migration, the continent stands to benefit immensely as migrants move between countries transferring knowledge, best practices, and technology, promoting the exchange of ideas, and fostering regional collaboration in various sectors. This exchange of human capital can promote economic growth, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Various African and regional blocks have collaborated to ease restrictions on human mobility in order to facilitate movement of highly skilled professionals for purposes of skills transfer and filling critical skills gaps. For example, the Kenya-Rwanda relationship, in which Rwanda offers residence permits to skilled workers and work permits to semi-skilled workers from Kenya, is a good example of collaboration (AUC, 2024). As noted above, another example is the Rwanda-Zimbabwe bilateral agreement that has seen Rwanda importing almost 500 teachers from Zimbabwe.

Negative impacts of migration

Brain drain

Perhaps the most significant externality of migration on the African continent is the loss of skills to other regions. An estimated 70,000 skilled professionals emigrate from Africa each year, resulting in a huge skills gap on the continent (Sima, 2024). Consequent to this brain drain, the continent spends approximately US$4 billion annually to employ about 100,000 expatriates. This amount translated to 35% of ODA to Africa, and is considered to be a significant contributor to the further weakening of already fragile health systems in low-income migrant-sending countries (AfDB, 2011). The real cost of the loss of skilled human resources from the continent is brought into sharp focus when superimposed upon the cost borne by migrant-sending countries in educating and training the professionals. For example, a 2005 report by the IOM (quoted in Landau and Vigneswaran, 2007) revealed that South Africa spends US$1 billion in training health-care workers who migrated. It is debatable if the remittances that the departed health workers send back home can surpass the direct and indirect public resources invested in training them (Landau and Vigneswaran, 2007). In his paper on the brain drain of medical professionals from Zimbabwe, Chibango (2013) highlights that Africa might have lost approximately US$1.2 billion from the 60,000 professionals that the continent lost between 1985 and 1990.

More specifically, the international migration of health-care workers contributes to a crisis in human resources for health in many African countries. The movement of health professionals from low-income to high-income countries has received much attention over the past few decades, and researchers consider migration to be a significant contributor to the further weakening of already fragile health systems in the sending countries. The 2006 World Health Report estimated a global shortfall of almost 4.3 million health personnel, with 57 countries (most in Africa and Asia) facing severe shortages. Currently, nearly all African countries show increasing outflows of health-care workers (WHO, 2006). It is anticipated that the international migration of health workers from Africa is expected to continue rising post the COVID-19 pandemic period (AUC, 2020). Concomitant with the brain drain is the cost borne by migrant-sending countries in educating and training the human resources, to the benefit of receiving countries.

Another aspect of the brain drain is brain waste, or the de-skilling of qualified professionals. This phenomenon refers to occupational change among highly skilled migrants to low-skilled jobs that are unrelated to their educational and occupational backgrounds. This may be due to barriers to participating in the labor market related to work permits, lack of recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, low value given to professional experience acquired in the sending country prior to migration, lack of demand for their specific skills, or discrimination based on gender and ethnicity (IOM, 2012). Such is the prevalence of this phenomenon, that a study published in 2016 estimated that nearly two million immigrants from all nations and with college degrees in the United States are unemployed or are employed in low-skilled jobs (Soto et al., 2016). De-skilling has implications for the sending country when the affected migrants return home, as they may require re-training.

Remittance-induced inflation, impact on exchange rates, and dependency

Evidence suggests that remittances can induce inflation in developing countries. The conversion of large inflows of remittances into domestic currency raises the money supply. If these inflows are not absorbed into productive sectors or capital investment, they go into consumption expenditure, which fuels inflation. The rising level of remittances can have a spending effect that can trigger a rise in the price level of non-tradable goods (Sachs and Larrain, 1993). These are goods that can only be consumed in the economy in which they are produced and cannot be exported or imported. Since the goods cannot be imported, an increase in demand for those goods will result in price increases. Examples of non-tradables include water supply, all public services, hotel accommodation, real estate, construction, and local transportation. Further, an increase in remittances can cause an appreciation in the real exchange rate through rising domestic prices. There is also evidence that the overvaluation of the real exchange rate, as a result of an increase in remittances, causes an under-estimation of long-term economic growth and, as a result, the production of tradable goods suffers from weak institutions and market failures, which can lead to an increase in inflation (Narayan et al., 2011).

While for many developing countries remittances constitute a lifeline for development and help alleviate poverty among recipients, it has been argued that if remittances are substantial, the real exchange rate in the recipient country could appreciate, thereby making its goods less competitive on the international market.

Studies also show that remittances can create dependency, thus weakening the recipients' incentive to work and slowing economic growth (Ratha, n.d.).

Social consequences of migration

While there has been notable focus on the positive economic impact of migration on development, there is a need to similarly investigate its negative social implications, which include its impact on the family unit and xenophobia. Migration may have significant undesirable by-products due to family separation. A study by Kufakurinani et al. (2014) chronicles a range of psycho-social problems encountered by children and youths – "diaspora orphans" – in Zimbabwe, who have one or both parents living abroad, and the resultant delinquency and dysfunctional teenage behavior.

While Africa envisions regional integration as one of it goals under Agenda 2063, such integration should, of necessity, be both economic and social. Critical to social integration is the social cohesion of Africans across the continent, the shared values, sense of belonging, inter-connectedness, and solidarity among communites from different nationalities. Yet the competition over limited resources and the perception by communities in migrant receiving countries that foreigners take advantage of the labor market and welfare services without contributing to the country, can influence policies and public attitudes towards them and stoke the flames of xenophobia (Mudungwe, 2014). Therefore, it can be argued that, to a certain extent, xenophobia stands in the way of the African dream of an integrated continent.

MIGRATION GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGING MIGRATION

Given the magnitude of migration in Africa and the opportunities and challenges that migration presents, it is pertinent that the continent engages in the migration and development debate. Migration and development is defined as "a conscious effort to harness the positive aspects of migration for the benefit of development while simultaneously mitigating its negative impact" (Mudungwe, 2014). Going by this definition, for the continent to harness the full potential of migration and mitigate its negative impact on development outcomes presupposes the presence of robust migration governance regimes in African countries. The IOM (2022) defines migration governance as,

> The combined frameworks of legal norms, laws and regulations, policies and traditions as well as organizational structures (sub-national, national, regional and international) and the relevant processes that shape and regulate States' approaches with regard to migration in all its forms, addressing rights and responsibilities and promoting international cooperation.

Therefore, efforts to manage migration in a coherent manner and reap the positive impact of migration on development outcomes require the presence of harmonized migration policies and legal frameworks that are integrated in a country's national development strategies, and well-coordinated and inclusive institutional structures for managing migration. Integrating or mainstreaming migration is the assessment of how migration will impact planned actions and instituting strategies to mitigate the expected negative consequences and enhancing the positive impacts on the outcomes of the planned actions at all stages of national development planning, including design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Stand-alone migration policies have limited impact on development outcomes and are not sustainable; they should therefore be integrated in the broader national development frameworks for sustainability and far-reaching impact. In this regard, migration policies should be an integral part of the national development planning discourse and process, thereby having a direct impact on national development and benefiting from the national fiscus. However, the presence of migration policies, legal frameworks, and institutional mechanisms is premised on the availability of up-to-date data on the magnitude, nature, and impact of migratory patterns. Further, it is imperative that the migration policies and legal frameworks are implemented consistently and are subjected to regular monitoring and evaluation.

While the foregoing is the ideal, the evidence suggests that the majority of African countries lack robust migration governance regimes. Landau and Vigneswaran (2007) point to the scarcity of migration data on which African countries can make informed predictions (and, therefore, evidence-based policies) for managing migration and capitalizing on its potential benefits. A recent African Union Commission (AUC) study corroborates this observation, and revealed that except for data on immigration/emigration and labor migration, there are gaps in the collection of data on other critical aspects of migration, including data on remittances, the diaspora, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling. The report also revealed that while most countries collect data on refugees and asylum seekers regularly, it is debatable as to whether the countries could achieve this regularity without the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which has an obvious interest in up-to-date data on refugees and asylum seekers (AUC, 2018a). The AUC study also revealed that except for border governance strategies and policies, most countries lack national policies on migration, labor migration, and diaspora matters.

Further, of those countries that have national policies governing migration, labor migration, and diaspora matters, a significant number of these frameworks do not have implementation plans, nor do they have monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with progress and impact indicators. The policy frameworks of most countries are also not integrated into their national development plans (AUC, 2018a).

With regard to institutional mechanisms for managing migration, the AUC study further revealed that very few countries have ministries, units, or agencies dedicated to managing migration, and equally few countries have national coordinating mechanisms, that is, national forums for coordinating migration.

A national coordinating mechanism is typically a government-led inter-agency platform in charge of facilitating cooperation and coordination of migration issues among stakeholders with migration-related functions and responsibilities. It is an integral part of a country's migration governance system and brings together all relevant government institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners involved in managing migration. Of those countries that have national coordinating mechanisms, just over half of the mechanisms are established by statute, and can, therefore, enjoy budgetary support from the national fiscus (AUC, 2018a).

With weak migration governance regimes in Africa, indications are that the continent is not harnessing the full potential that migration can potentially bestow toward development outcomes. As a corollary, the continent is also not poised to minimize the negative impact of migration on development to the extent possible. Much as they are aware of the migration issues facing them, there is a gap between African countries' commitment and actual technical capacity to handle migration (AUC, 2017). Given the foregoing, it is imperative to explore the reasons that could explain why few African countries have invested in their migration governance systems.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING THE STATUS OF MIGRATION GOVERNANCE AND BUDGETARY PRACTICES IN AFRICA

Mogues (2012) reviews theories and empirical inquiries into the governance conditions that determine how governments prioritize the allocation of public resources across different needs. This section discusses these theories to ascertain how these factors determine the status of migration governance in Africa. It is also possible to use the frameworks to unravel how migration governance issues in Africa affect investments in the migration sector.

The garbage can budgeting model

This model postulates that budget processes are independent from systematic influences; hence, budget decisions are the random outcomes of a large set of independent events. Thus, most often solutions arise before problems, and many unnecessary solutions may exist before a problem is realized (Denomme, 2023). The garbage can model symbolizes a meeting where ideas are discussed and decided on, as a "garbage can" that participants are chaotically dumping problems and solutions into as they are being generated. The term "garbage can" portrays the manner in which items in a trash can are organized – a messy, chaotic mix. It portrays problems, solutions, and participants/decision-makers as three independent "streams" that are each generated separately and are disconnected from each other. These three streams only meet when the fourth stream of choice opportunity arises, as a garbage can, for the streams to flow into (Mogues, 2012).

Thus, budgets are the result of an organized anarchy that has four streams: (i) the actors; (ii) the problems as perceived by the actors; (iii) the solutions proffered by the actors; and (iv) the actions they take in the form of initiatives. The framework suggests that the allocation of public resources is basically a simple random walk process in which public spending in one year is equal to the previous year's spending plus a random amount that could be negative or positive. The inference is that given a problem, policymakers with limited time and resources, and a choice among competing needs, there is an equal chance that any of the alternative expenditures will be chosen. As a result, the policymakers' decision is not influenced in a systematic way by actors (Mogues, 2012).

The incremental budget model

This model suggests that in making budgets, policymakers tend to consider historical expenditure patterns, and that changes in budget allocation are incremental, increasing or decreasing by the same proportion each year. The basic assumption of "incrementalism" is growth in expenditure, and budgeting is characterized by limited budgetary review and non-rational forms of analysis. Therefore, since the current budget allocation is tied to the previous year's budget, there is little room for actors to influence the budget through lobbying (Mogues, 2012; Greenwood et al., 2022).

The status quo bias

This is a phenomenon whereby policies or budget items are continued, even though they may have outlived their usefulness. Those who stand to benefit from the current state are usually the ones with the power to have lobbied policy enactment or budget allocation in the first place, and likely to be more influential to have the policy or budget allocation maintained, than the constituency that prefers an alternative. The beneficiaries' lobbying power increases after the policy or budget allocation is instituted, and the process becomes self-perpetuating (Mogues, 2012). Thus, under the status quo bias, decision-makers avoid changes and maintain the current situation. However, in a dynamic world with rapid technological advances, change is constant and the status quo bias can hinder progress (Godefroid et al., 2023).

The veto-players theory

Veto-players are influential actors and institutions that can effectively block budgets. These include groups like political parties in government and presidents. Thus, budget composition is, to a large extent, a function of changes in ideology within government and between governments over time. The greater the ideological distance between alternating governments, the greater the change in budget composition reflecting the political outlook of the alternating governments (Mogues, 2012).

Budgetary trade-offs

As they prepare budgets, policymakers are faced with an array of competing demands, while at the same time restricted by national income. Therefore, in the absence of a budget expansion, an increase in one budget item is accompanied by a decrease in another, or other budget items (a budgetary trade-off). In this context, ministries or departments that have relatively limited clout may fare badly in budget trade-offs (Mogues, 2012). For example, an increase in the defense budget may be accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the expenditure for the ministry of cultural affairs.

Interest groups and collective action

Interest groups, or groups of people who seek to influence public policy on the basis of a shared interest or concern, have the ability to lobby for public policies, expenditures, or investments that are favorable to them. Interest groups include farmers' organizations, diaspora associations, women's groups, youth associations, etc. Because of the power they wield, interest groups can exert pressure on political agents whose objective is the retention of political office. However, the extent to which interest groups can influence political agents is determined by:

(i) Physical proximity of group members and access to transportation and communication infrastructure, which facilitate coordination and mutual monitoring of actions and intra- group coordination and organization.

(ii) Group size: Controlling for spatial concentration and access to transport and communication infrastructure, larger groups are more difficult to coordinate than smaller ones. However, larger groups can wield more political clout through their greater aggregate income resources and greater combined voting power.

(iii) Education and information: The role of the level of education of group members and access to information can play a critical role in lobbying. A group that is well educated and has greater access to information is in a better position to accurately assess the consequences and merits of different policies and investments, and discern their outcomes, and is therefore in a better position to provide knowledge to policymakers and argue its case (Mogues, 2012).

Providers of international development aid

Government partners that provide development aid can exert a strong influence on a country's policy and public expenditure. Partners include multilateral agencies and governments from the developed world and natural-resource-rich countries. For small economies or countries in or emerging from conflict, donor aid can be overwhelming, and so can the influence of the donor on the recipient country's policies and spending. Historically, the evolution of development paradigms influences the sectors where donor funds go. In recent years, the advent of budget support and structural adjustment loans has seen the emergence of underwriting plans on overall budget allocation, usually a negotiation process between governments and donors. In some cases, donors may use their financial or political leverage on the governments to ensure that a government does not deviate from using both aid and domestic public resources as per plan. Implicit in these mechanisms is that donors can sway policies and resource allocation in developing countries (Mogues, 2012).

There are long-standing concerns in the development community over donor preferences and conditionalities and the limited impact that donor aid has in recipient countries. There are also growing concerns that in aid-dependent countries, aid can lead to divergence and inconsistencies between recipient governments' priorities and resource allocation (Mogues, 2012). For example, there has been a proliferation of national migration policies in Africa at the behest of donors.

However, the ownership, and consequently implementation of the policies is weak, or non-existent. In this regard, a historical analysis of donor involvement in the migration space in Africa is instructive. Prior to 2006, when the AU adopted its first comprehensive migration policy and adopted a common position on migration, migration was a low priority for most African governments (AUC, 2018b). However, the issue has since gained traction as a strategic policy area on the continent, partly stemming from a growing realization that managed migration can be a driver of development if managed in a comprehensive manner. Le Coz and Pietropolli (2020) argue that this shift could, in part, be due to the increase in European Union (EU) migration-related investments on the continent, especially since 2015. Consequently a number of African countries have formulated migration policies, although their implementation has been patchy (AUC, 2018a). This raises the question whether this could be as a result of donor-driven imperatives – in this case the EU – that focus more on curbing migration flows from Africa (Le Coz and Pietropolli, 2020), particularly from certain regions of the continent than the more broader developmental aspects of migration. Additionally, it begs the question whether the budgetary allocations of African countries toward migration would be more considerable if programming in the area of migration were organic. This argument is developed further in the next section.

THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

To a large extent, the descriptions and theories of public spending presented above explain the weak migration governance systems in Africa. This section, therefore, analyses the migration governance situation in Africa within the context of the descriptions and theories of public spending, as outlined above.

First, the migration and development debate is a relatively new concept and generated considerable interest among development policymakers and academics at the turn of the millennium, giving rise to what is known as the migration–development nexus (Bastia, 2013).

Second, there is a lack of migration data in Africa, as the 2018 AUC (2018a) study revealed. Therefore, while policymakers may acknowledge migration as an important parameter for consideration in development plans, without adequate data, policymakers do not know what aspects of migration to include in development plans and can therefore not make informed predictions on the potential benefits of migration.

Third, very few countries in Africa have government ministries or departments dedicated to migration. Additionally, few countries have institutional mechanisms for coordinating migration. Of those countries that do have them, the institutional mechanisms are not statutory bodies (AUC, 2018a). The African Development Bank (AfDB) also notes that some African countries established specialized units or departments to manage support from their diaspora; however, it makes the observation that these units are weak and unable to significantly tap the benefit of their diaspora (AfDB, 2010).

Fourth, the diaspora constitutes a major interest group in the migration sector in Africa, but they are seldom consulted in policy dialogues in their countries of origin. This is mainly because they do not hold official recognition as a constituency in their countries of origin, nor is there evidence of the diaspora's high organization and coordination efforts. In some cases, citizens in the diaspora left their home countries due to political differences with their governments and have some involvement in conflicts that are raging in their home countries. Therefore, governments in their home countries view them with suspicion (Féron and Lefort, 2019).

In view of the foregoing, it would seem that a combination of the theories discussed earlier are at play in explaining the weak migration governance regimes in Africa. The "garbage can," incremental budget, and status quo bias models have a common thread that runs through them – conservatism. Since the migration and development debate is a relatively new phenomenon, spending on migration would be a departure from the norm. This, coupled with the lack of migration data (that could demonstrate the potential benefits of migration and could therefore persuade policymakers to prioritize migration in national development planning) is detrimental to the case for including the migration sector in public spending.

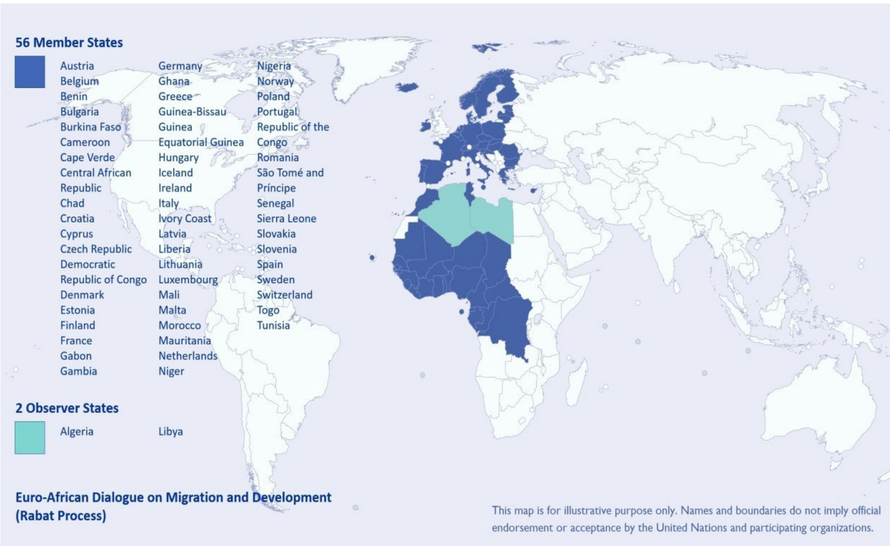
The budgetary trade-offs model presupposes the existence of ministries or institutions that would haggle in favor of their sector. However, as noted above, very few countries on the continent have dedicated ministries or departments responsible for migration. Further, institutional mechanisms for coordinating migration are either weak or non-existent, thereby weakening the ability of migration interest groups to lobby effectively for their sector. Similarly, the diaspora, as an important constituency that could play a significant role in lobbying for the migration sector, receives no formal recognition, has yet to organize itself well and, in some cases, labor under suspicion of the home governments.

Donor funding for migration activities, primarily from the EU and European countries, increased tremendously in Africa in the past two decades. The paradox, however, is why migration governance is weak amid the increased donor funding for migration activities. Assessments of EU funding of migration in Africa make the observation that the funding focuses heavily on tightening border controls and preventing migration into Europe (Deutsche Welle, 2016) and combating human trafficking and migrant smuggling (Landau and Vigneswaran, 2007) instead of addressing the root causes of flight in the countries of origin. The past decade witnessed a proliferation of donor-funded migration policies in Africa. A significant proportion of these policies have no action plans, no monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and are not integrated into the national development plans of the recipient countries. Further, as Landau and Vigneswaran (2007) observe, even countries that have good migration policies lack trained personnel and the requisite systems and technology to implement them effectively and consistently (Landau and Vigneswaran, 2007).

Despite the fact that the bulk of migration in Africa is intra-continental, EU funding for migration activities and research skews in favor of countries and regions on the continent from which migrants moving to Europe originate. Hence, the EU established the Rabat Process and the Khartoum Process, through which EU-funded initiatives seek to address irregular migration on the northern migratory route from Africa to Europe. It is noteworthy that there are no similar initiatives in southern and parts of east Africa, presumably because countries in these parts of the continent are not major source countries of irregular migrants to Europe.

Established in July 2006 in Rabat, Morocco, the Rabat Process (also known as the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development) is a platform that brings together 58 African and European countries to discuss migration issues. In Africa, the Rabat Process covers West and parts of Central and North Africa (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Map of the Rabat Process countries



Source: IOM (n.d.) (Rabat Process)

Another EU-led initiative is the Khartoum Process, also known as the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative. Established through the Rome Declaration in 2014, the initiative focuses on addressing human trafficking and migrant smuggling from and through the Horn of Africa and East and North Africa to Europe (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Map of the Khartoum Process countries

Source: IOM (n.d.) (Khartoum Process)

The skewed nature of EU support to Africa in the area of migration is also evident in the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), which was established in 2016 after the 2015 Valetta Summit on Migration to address the root causes of irregular migration and displacement of persons in Africa. The EUTF is a €4.7 billion initiative that is operational in 26 of the 55 African countries across three regions, including the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa. Another example is the Regional Operational Centre in Khartoum, Sudan, that is funded by the EUTF in the amount of €5 million. The center is a platform for sharing information on irregular migration and associated criminal networks among countries of the Khartoum Process, and is managed by CIVIPOL, the technical cooperation operator of the French Ministry of the Interior.

With weak migration governance regimes on the continent, one can argue that the aid that goes into the migration sector could have more impact if African countries had robust migration governance systems with the capacity to utilize the aid effectively. That a big portion of the EUTF is implemented by European organizations, the Better Migration Management Programme and CIVIPOL is instructive in this regard.

CONCLUSIONS

This article shows that there has been an increase in migration in Africa in recent years, and that the bulk of migration is intra-continental, intra-regional, and inter-regional within and between the eight AU Regional Economic Communities. Despite the alarmist media reports about the migration "crisis" from Africa to Europe, evidence suggests that the number of Africans migrating irregularly to Europe in recent years represents a small percentage as compared to regular arrivals.

The article also shows that migration has both positive and negative effects in Africa. The positive impacts include remittances, reduced pressure on jobs and resources, and the diasporic contributions to development and philanthropic activities in their home countries. The negative impacts include the brain and brawn drain and de-skilling, while overreliance on remittances has the potential to induce inflation in remittance-receiving countries and exert upward pressure on the exchange rate. Further, it argues that remittances can create dependency among recipents, thus weakening their incentive to work and slowing economic growth. On the social front, migration may result in family separation, which could have adverse consequences on the psycho-social development and behavior of children and youths.

However, despite the magnitude of migration in Africa, and the fact that the bulk of migration is intra-continental, in general, migration governance regimes and the capacity of African governments to manage migration are weak. Weak migration governance systems could be the result of several factors, namely: (i) the limited or lack of resources allocated toward the migration sector by African governments; (ii) the paucity of migration data that demonstrates the potential benefits of migration and could therefore persuade policymakers to prioritize migration in national development planning; (iii) migration interest groups and institutional mechanisms for managing or coordinating migration that are either weak or non-existent, thereby weakening their ability to articulate and lobby effectively for their sector; and (iv) a "fire-fighting" approach by major donors that are supporting the migration sector in Africa.

Donor funding for migration is skewed in favor of managing certain aspects of migration (specifically irregular migration on the northern migratory route) at the expense of a holistic approach that recognizes that the bulk of migration is intra-continental. To a certain extent, this approach also largely ignores capacitating African governments to manage migration, preferring organizations from donor countries to implement migration projects in Africa.

The manifestations of weak migration governance systems are the reduced capacity of African governments to (i) nurture and fully capitalize on the positives that migration can bestow to national development; (ii) mitigate the negative impact of migration on development outcomes; and (iii) effectively negotiate migration compacts with other regions that are destinations of African migrants.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing presentation and analysis, four recommendations emerge: (i) Defining an African migration agenda; (ii) Mainstreaming migration into development strategies;[4] (iii) Establishing robust institutional mechanisms for managing migration; and (iv) Strengthening migration data systems.

Defining an African migration agenda

That donor funding for migration in Africa is to a large extent skewed toward the priorities of the donors, could partly be symptomatic of the absence of an evidence-based, well-defined continental vision and agenda on migration that all Member States, RECs, and stakeholders subscribe to. However, in the AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa, the Common African Position on Migration, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Africa has the basic frameworks on which to synthesize a continental agenda on migration. The point of departure for the frameworks is that that well-managed migration can benefit both migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries. Further, the frameworks identify good migration governance as a prerequisite for the coherent management of migration. In this regard, the AUC, in conjunction with its RECs, Member States, and civil society are urged to formulate an evidence-based continental vision (and agenda) on migration. The vision and agenda would form the basis for migration programs on the continent, and donor partners would be urged to support activities within the context of the programs thus identified. The research on migration would be conducted periodically, and would inform the continued relevance (or otherwise) of the vision, agenda, and programs.

Political ownership of the continental vision and agenda at the highest level is a critical success factor for achieving the programs. It is imperative, therefore, that parliamentarians and senior policymakers at national, regional, and continental levels be sensitized and buy into the vision and agenda.

Mainstreaming migration into development strategies

Besides ownership and limited information on migration and its potential impact on development outcomes, perhaps one of the reasons why the migration sector is inadequately funded is because in general, migration policies are formulated and implemented outside the broader national development strategies, and do not, therefore, enjoy funding from the national fiscus. Migration policies that are conceived and implemented outside the ambit of the national development strategies

[4] Mainstreaming migration is the assessment of how migration will affect planned actions, and instituting strategies to mitigate the expected negative consequences and enhancing the positive impacts on the outcomes of the planned actions at all stages of national development planning, including design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Stand-alone migration policies have a limited impact on development outcomes, and are not sustainable, and should be integrated in the broader national development frameworks for sustainability and far-reaching impact. In this regard, migration policies should be an integral part of the national development planning discourse and process, thereby having a direct impact on national development, and benefiting from the national fiscus.

tend to be funded by donors, and when donor funding dries up, implementation is discontinued or jeopardized. Further, it is difficult to discern the impact of policies implemented in this manner on national development outcomes.

Pursuant to this observation, AU Member States and RECs are urged to mainstream migration into national and regional development strategies respectively as a matter of course. This not only ensures funding for migration programs, and therefore sustainability, but also ensures that the impact of migration is monitored and evaluated at national and regional levels. Perhaps the most critical aspect of mainstreaming migration into national and regional development strategies, is that it enables a country or region to factor in the negative impact of migration on development outcomes. For example, to counter-balance the loss of skills through brain drain, a country may want to consider a forward-looking policy mix that encourages the export of labor in some professions, while at the same time retaining skills in essential or shortage areas, or produce more of the skills that are in demand abroad while satisfying the needs at home. Such a policy mix would ensure a balance between satisfying labor needs at home while addressing unemployment through the export of “excess” labor requirements. This could be achieved through deliberate policies in the education sector and the introduction of appropriate remuneration regimes for skills that are deemed essential. A policy of this nature could also include strategies to maximize benefits from migrant labor, that is, deliberate, pro-active policies that court and facilitate diaspora participation in the national discourse on national development (Mudungwe, 2009).

Establishing robust institutional mechanisms for managing migration

One would assume that a sector that contributes significantly to the gross domestic product (GDP) and reduces unemployment at home, among other positive impacts, would deserve to be nurtured. Hypothetically, a country for which remittances constitute a significant proportion of GDP can establish a fully-fledged ministry or department dedicated to the migration sector and fund that ministry or department from remittance income – nurturing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Establishing a ministry, department, or at least a national or regional mechanism that has the sole responsibility of managing or coordinating migration activities ensures that migration issues are brought to the fore on the national and regional agenda. Ideally, a coordinating mechanism should be established by statute. This ensures that its mandate is anchored in law, and can therefore enjoy funding from the national fiscus, thereby enhancing sustainability of tenure.

In order for their investment in the migration sector to be sustainable and have meaningful impact, donor partners are urged to invest in building the capacities of migration governance systems of African countries.

Strengthening migration data systems

As noted above, the paucity of data on migration, and most importantly, up-to-date data on how migration impacts development in Africa, are perhaps the Achilles heel of migration governance on the continent. The need to establish and invest in more systematic migration data collection and analysis mechanisms is central to achieving the other pre-conditions for establishing an effective migration governance system, as discussed above.

By its cross-border nature, international migration requires cooperation between and among countries. In this regard, if it is to be managed successfully, there should be consistency between not only the migration policies and legislation of various countries and regions, but also reliable migration data that is comparable. This calls for efforts to harmonize definitions of migration data variables and collection systems across the continent and beyond so that data are comparable across jurisdictions and regions (Mudungwe, 2014). The United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration provide guidance in this respect (AUC, 2018b).

While data collection comes at a considerable cost, countries may want to consider collecting migration data during ongoing, regular censuses and surveys. This could be achieved through including questions on migration on the survey tool and can reduce the cost of data collection considerably. However, to discern more detailed trends, it would be necessary to commission dedicated surveys and research (Mudungwe, 2014).

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