

Migration

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Trend and Economics

Migration has risen to the top of the agenda of dialogue between Europe and Africa. So much so that at the recent Africa/Europe Summit held in Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire, migration overshadowed the discussions, especially due to the recent sad episode of slave trade in Libya of migrants in transit. Just to step back in history, migration is as old as the human race, and for centuries it was the driver for globalization. For centuries people - and, later, corporations - freely moved to settle away from their birth place or actively engaged in buying from and selling to each other in lands at great distances, such as with the famed Silk Road.

People **migrate** for many different **reasons**. These **reasons** can be classified as economic, social, political or environmental. Political **migration** means moving to escape political persecution or war. Environmental **causes of migration** include natural disasters such as flooding. Economic factors provide the main motivation behind migration. According to the International Labour Organization, approximately half of the total population of current international migrants, or about 100 million migrant workers, live outside their home country by choice and, in most cases, with the concurrence of the host country in search of better job and lifestyle opportunities for their families. In some countries, jobs simply do not exist for a great deal of the population. These migrants come with skills or capital that bring socio-economic benefits.

Historically, records show that from 1815 to 1932, 60 million people left Europe, primarily to "areas of European settlement" in the Americas, especially to the United States, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Australia, New Zealand, and Siberia. These populations also multiplied rapidly in their new habitat; much more so than the populations of Africa and Asia. Many of the migrants were running away from religious or political persecution. These new areas of European settlement have been successful in creating a mixed breed that coexists in relative harmony. As a result, on the eve of World War I, 38% of the world's total population was of European ancestry.

In the middle of the 19th century, a classic case of forced migration due to natural cause is that of Ireland, which experienced a famine never seen before in the country's history. By late fall 1845, the main staple of the Irish diet, potato, was practically wiped out. With the government not clear on how to respond, many people died of starvation. The famine killed hundreds of thousands and forced millions of Irish to flee. Between 1841 and 1851, the Irish population decreased by 1.6 million people, or approximately 17% of the total population, due to starvation and emigration.

There are therefore two categories of migrants – voluntary and forced, or regular and irregular, mainly refugees or displaced persons. Currently the concern is on irregular migration because of its unpredictable nature and its potential challenges.

Socio-Political Impact

There are four impact areas of migration, namely; the **receiving and country of origin**, the **individual or group of migrants**, transit points and where applicable, the **environment** as well as mode transportation. A major and immediate impact to the country of origin is the loss of human resources. People who tend to migrate are the educated or with skills. This category usually integrates better in their new or adopted country. On the positive side, benefits do flow back to the country of origin in the form remittances as well as technological and skills transfer. For the receiving country, migration can complement labour shortage or skills gap but this may not adequately offset the fear of its impact on the labour market and on the demography. A huge influx can lead to cultural shock in addition to the attendant adjustment or settlement costs.

Thus Europe's huge concern on migration is more on refugees because of the impact on security, cultural, religious and racial configurations. The recent surge of migrants from Syria, Yemen and other war torn countries is a case in point and did indeed send shockwaves throughout Europe. Due to conflicts and political turmoil in some parts of Africa and the Middle East the number of people seeking asylum and safety rose to 1.3 million per year with some countries receiving more applications than others. Germany had over 700 thousand applications and Denmark with a population of less than 7 million is hosting over 100 thousand refugees. Refugees by nature seek temporary status until such time that the push factor or conditions that triggered their exodus subside and can allow for them to return to their home country. Refugees are usually kept in designated zones and find it difficult to integrate either by choice or design. The cost of maintaining one refugee range from US\$ 1000 – 5000 per month. Faced with huge costs and possible political backlash, many European states resorted to cutting back on development assistance. Given the high cost of maintaining, Europe would rather set up holding grounds in Africa. This is a very slippery road. Kenya, with one of the largest refugee camps in the world has been stuck for over 30 years. In addition to costs there are security and cultural challenges where refugees get involved in criminal or political activities. In the recent past, a number of refugees are known to have participated in the civil war in Syria by joining ISIS or have engaged in terrorists acts in other parts of the world.

Because of the threat that such migration poses to Europe it has contributed to the rise of populist ultra-nationalist political parties that are anti-migration. Its manifestation include the Brexit debate and subsequent referendum - triggered by increasing fear of mobility within the European Union and from outside the continent. In the USA the rise of Trump-ism with his "America first" policy is a typical anti-migration stance whose primary aim is to limit Islamic, Black and Hispanic migrants to the United States. Trump's recent comments on immigrants from specified regions clearly testify on the need for a global dialogue and compact on migration. Ironically migrants especially the slaves made huge contribution to countries like the USA and yet they continue to be marginalized.

Labour Mobility and Artificial Intelligence

Distinguishing this current wave of globalization from earlier ones, author Thomas Friedman has said that today migration is “farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper.” Its political dimension is getting more and more pronounced because of its demographic and socio-economic implications. Labour mobility is essential for competitiveness, for harmony and for sustainable development. Globally it is estimated that 3% of the global population, which is about 220 million people work or live outside their country of origin. This, in economic terms, is a ‘healthy’ balance and this percentage of the world’s population is constantly on the move. Current demographic trends point to the need for global compact on labour mobility. By 2050 it is estimated that the world population will be at about 9.5 billion with the greater percentage of that number living in Asia and Africa. In Europe, demographic dynamics is tilting towards more aged population. Population decline has been recorded in a number of countries and this contraction is on the rise. Europe will therefore naturally face a serious shortage of Human Resources that requires some balancing acts maintain a healthy ecosystem..

Informed by declining labour force to perform repetitive jobs/tasks a number of countries are heavily investing in automated processes - artificial intelligence and robotics. Advancement in artificial intelligence might be a relief to those countries experiencing population decline. But only to a point. Robotics are now being used to carry out some of the more labour intensive jobs like manufacturing and soon they will be able to perform the more complex tasks like taking care of patients. These will have huge implications on human labour. At least the one thing for sure is that there will be increased labour unrest.

Displaced persons and Irregular Migrants

Of the 65 million displaced persons globally, around 22 million are under the age of 18 and 30% of these displaced persons live in Africa. There are 10 million stateless persons. Several international conventions or treaties aimed at protecting migrants have been agreed to. However, a few countries have either domesticated these treaties or adhered to the principles enshrined in those conventions. These conventions include the United Nations, The European Union, The African Union among others. Migrants often face discrimination and are denied access to the basic human rights such as education, health care, civil rights, just to mention a few. Some migrants, for fear of being deported or forcibly repatriated to their countries of origin especially for non political migrants not seeking asylum, opt to stay illegally. For example in the US alone it is estimated that’s there are over 10 million illegal immigrants. And many of them live under fear, are exploited and are denied basic human rights.

Some migrants are impelled to cross national borders by war or persecution at home. These immigrants may be considered refugees or asylum seekers in receiving countries. The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defined the qualifications for such migrants and bound signatory countries not to return these newcomers to places where they could be persecuted. According to the text put forth by the Convention, a refugee is “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a

particular social group, or political opinion” (1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee).

Some Africans are blaming the EU for the eruption of slavery because they say it’s the result of European countries blocking the migration of Africans to their continent.

The EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings was adopted in 2012. This updated the 2005 EU Action Plan on best practices, standards and procedures for combating and preventing trafficking in human beings. The strategy is a set of concrete and practical measures to be implemented over the next five years. These include prevention, protection, support of the victims and prosecution of the traffickers as well as the establishment of national law enforcement units specialized in human trafficking and the creation of joint European investigation teams to prosecute cross-border trafficking cases

Khartoum Process is anchored in the EU-Africa Action Plan on Migration and Mobility 2014-2017. The participating states work to: (1) create a framework for policy and dialogue; (2) share knowledge and experiences to strengthen cooperation with the support of international organizations like IOM, UNHCR, and UNODC; and (3) seek funding opportunities and facilitate resource mobilization to support concrete projects. At the Valletta Summit on migration on 11-12 November 2015, the Khartoum Process was mandated to monitor the implementation of the initiatives and actions under the Valletta Action Plan¹ for the period of 2016-2018:

- Developing cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination in order to fight against irregular migration and criminal networks, especially through initiatives concerning technical assistance, training and exchange of information and of best practices.¹
- Upon request, cooperating with countries in the region to strengthen their capacities in the field of migration management.
- Assisting countries in implementing prevention measures such as information campaigns aiming at raising awareness on the risks of irregular migration (trafficking of human beings, smuggling).
- Strengthening the coordination between all services involved in order to tackle human trafficking and smuggling of migrants.
- Identifying and prosecuting criminal networks.
- Setting up criminal law frameworks or strengthening the existing frameworks and fostering the ratification and the implementation of two additional protocols to the “United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime”: the “Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea” and the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children”.
- Supporting the victims of human trafficking and protecting the human rights of smuggled migrants
- Fostering sustainable development in transit and origin countries in order to tackle the causes of irregular migration.
- Upon request, assisting countries in setting up and managing reception centers, in ensuring access to asylum procedures and in counseling migrants.
- Developing a regional framework to facilitate the return of migrants – including voluntary return- and their reintegration in the country of origin

At the recent EU/AU Summit almost all the elements of the Khartoum process were adopted and in addition the leaders agreed to support mobility of students, staff and academics across the African continent. They also agreed to enhance exchange programmes between Africa and Europe.

The Summit also discussed and agreed on how to address jointly the root causes of irregular migration and also on how to;

- save and protect lives of migrants and refugees, in particular in Libya
- accelerate assisted voluntary returns to countries of origin
- speed up the resettlement of those in need of international protection

The Khartoum process is yet to be implemented especially as it relates to the push factors. It now remains to be seen as to whether the Abidjan Declaration will see light of day.

Environmental challenges and forced migration.

The impact of climate change and its implications on migration are not readily available. More and more people will be affected as human induced environmental change such desertification, deforestation, or soil erosion intensity in frequency space. The most common causes of food insecurity in Africa and other Third World countries are drought and other extreme weather events; climate change and military conflicts. Climate related conflicts have been witnessed in the Lake Chad and in Eastern Africa where thousands have lost their homes, crops and livestock due to drought and/or floods. Globally between 2008 and 2014, 184.6 million people were forced from their homes due to floods, earthquakes and tropical storms. Vast majority of disasters are due to global warming. Implementation of the Paris accord or climate change important in order to mitigate against rising number of displaced persons.

Migration from conflict areas

This is highly complex and it's nature very sensitive too such as the mass exodus from Syria, Libya, Yemen and, in the recent past, Iraq. What started in each of these countries internal governance conflict escalated into a full blown civil war that sucked in external forces turning into a global problem. The huge number desperate refugees caught the attention of the internal community because of the manner in which were received and treated. They were denied transit rights as some states were not willing to allow them enter their territory. Those who manage to make it not only ended up living a distressed life but also become an eyesore in their new home. Just from Syria, more than 11 million fled with a significant number dying.

In the case of Libya, internal insurrection with decisive support of NATO forces removed the leader leading to the collapse of the state. The country for some time now is administered by militias and war lords with each controlling limited territory. Libya has become an ideal transit point and a sanctuary for criminal gangs and terrorists such as ISIS and Al Qaeda. This crisis could not have reached such proportions had the international community thought through the implications of removing Muhammad Gaddafi in the manner in which it was done.

Conclusions and Way Forward

Clearly, there are two broad categories of migrants - forced and voluntary migration with the latter being the core of the 3% global workers or persons residing outside their home country while the former comprises mainly the refugees or displaced persons. Tools for managing these two classes must be tailored to specific type and causes. Forced migrants are largely as a result of economic, political, natural or climate related. Current tools are geared more into managing and controlling the flow of migrants into Europe than addressing the root cause. Europe has channelled most of its resources to transit states and to victims of illegal migration. This has achieved limited success and therefore there is increasing recognition to direct more resources to the countries of origin in order to mitigate the fundamental root causes.

As a way forward and to make a strong case for action, Europe might wish to interrogate socio-costs of migration. This should also take into account resources spent in countries of origin and transit states as well as actual resources in reception camps and for integrating migrants at terminal points. Further analysis to determine whether, extending resources to African states can stem the migration provided the two sides enter into a win-win agreement aimed at ensuring that the resources are applied only for the intended purposes. Specific areas in which the resources that can benefit include development of skills, Transformation of African economies to develop employment opportunities through value addition and industrialization, and to strengthen socio-economic governance. All these must be done in the context and understanding that it is only through mutual and shared responsibility that the migration crisis can be managed.

There is need for a full fledged study to determine costs and dynamics of migration and its implications to European and African is essential.