

Development and Migration Movements in Africa

Degni Filio

At present, the populations of Africa and the Caribbean developing countries are mobile, and the typology of their movements is rather complex. Migration movements of the present time are not anymore based on colonial ties, but rather to the destination offering greater opportunity.

The developing countries populations' migration into developed, industrialized countries are due to the inequality of development and incomes, causing poverty, and also to the existence of high population pressure.

Migration Movement in Africa

Origins of migratory movements

Historically, population movements in Africa date back several centuries (Hance 1970), and evidently predate colonial rule, but the model, volume intensity and direction of migration have been substantially altered by colonial administrations. Moreover by accelerating some pre-existing migration patterns, colonial rule exerted a notable impact on the motivations for migration (see Gugler 1969). The effects of colonization on migration were left in the economic, social and political structures of African society. In order to understand fully the current migration - development interrelation in Africa, this discussion will be confined largely to economic factors. It is also essential to stress that African regions were not homogenous in their colonial experience in terms of the impact of colonial rule on migration, particularly the phenomenon of la-

bour migration. Almost throughout Africa, the increased needs for a large (mobile) labour force to work in the plantations, mines and administrations had been satisfied with slave labour. One explanation of such colonial labour policy (Gugler 1969, 1135) was that the economic strategy during colonial rule was geared highly towards the development of the urban sector. The resulting uneven and unequal growth of the economy led to the migration and distinct social and economic differentiation between the rural and urban sectors, the prevail even today.

After independence, various national governments started building upon the foundations of the development strategy initially laid by the colonialists (Adepoju 1977). Colonial periods, investments in industry, commerce administration, social amenities, primary educational institutions etc., were concentrated in the major towns to the neglect of the rural areas. This colonial legacy of development strategy is still present in many African nations governments' development policies. Thus, increasingly the economies of these countries are marked by the uneasy co-existence between the rural, agricultural low productivity and the urban, industrial sectors (Gwasa 1976). The export-oriented development path, and the concentration of massive investments in a few cities, are the major causes of regional and human inequality which in turn paved the way for migration. In such a situation, the choice facing the African migrants with respect to the decision to mi-

grate and where to go, is therefore largely predetermined by the overall development strategy, in the sense that the location of productive activities virtually determines the intensity, pattern and direction of migration.

With respect to this motivation, it seems that economic factors are primary in the sense that people migrate mainly to improve their economic well-being. This also suggests that migration is a response to economic incentives arising largely from disequilibria in the labour market between urban and rural sectors (Knight 1972). The migration decision-making process in Africa is largely based on economic motives. The problems of urban unemployment in Africa also have impact (Gugler 1969). However, a substantial proportion of migrants (rural-urban areas) are illiterates and therefore, they are self-employed. In the case of wage expectations, their experience and knowledge about working conditions are reflected in their salaries. They often go for low-paid jobs, where even the wage is not the minimal (Adepoju).

Patterns of migratory flows

Internal migration

The fact that migration is rational economic behaviour and that people move to maximize economic incentives suggest that the greater the differences in economic opportunities between sectors and regions of a country, the greater the flow of migrants from poorer to richer areas. In Africa, associated with the economic motives is the desire to improve educational status, training and level of skill, and this constituted flows from Africa to Europe.

The role of social and psychological factors - desire for change of place, escape from boredom and cultural isolation of the rural environment and joining relatives and friends who had early migrated to towns or overseas, and for the so-called attractions of the social facilities, are preceded by economic motives (Beijer 1961).

Intra-continental migration has been a much more common phenomenon, following the acquisition of territories by Europeans governments and the introduction of a market economy requiring wage labour (Todaro 1989). This intra-continental movement has tended to be primarily of male workers moving temporarily out of tribal areas for employment, with periodic return movements to tribal homes. During the last thirty years, there has been evidence of more extensive family emigration, this has been particularly common in West Africa.

The magnitude of internal migrants (men and women) are dissatisfied with poor living standards in rural areas and have expected of better standards of living in the urban areas. This also is a major factor in the outflow of rural population to towns in many Third World Countries. In the Ivory Coast, in 1968, for example, about 8 per cent of illiterate males and 11 per cent of illiterate females age 15-29 years migrated from rural areas into the urban areas (towns) (Gregory 1971). Almost thirty years after, the statistics have increased enormously. The urban population growth, unemployment and poverty are due to this exodus. Rapid urbanization, and particularly the growth of cities, associated with problems of urban slums, degradation of environment, inadequate health services and poverty, have emerged as major socio-economic issues in the urban areas. No longer is migration viewed by economists as a beneficial process necessary to solve problems of growing urban labour demand. On the contrary, migration today is seen as the major factor contributing to serious urban unemployment problems. This ubiquitous phenomenon (migration) is caused by economic and structural imbalances between urban and rural areas (Todaro 1989).

The internal migration in Africa as well as in other developing countries, increased the growth rate of urban job seekers and also urban population growth, while depleting the rural countryside of valuable human capital.

We must recognize that, in terms of job opportunities, migration is a symptom of socio-economic indispositions of the society of where the immigrants came from. By this, I want to emphasize that central to the migration phenomenon is economic and social policy that affects rural and urban real incomes (as the case of Africa today, and of Europe some decades ago), and continues to influence, directly or indirectly, the migration process.

The internal migration has dual consequences. Firstly, the depleting of the rural countryside of its human capital, and secondly, the urban population growth with exacerbation of unemployment and the slopping socio-economic conditions.

We need to understand finally that the inequality in development (socio-economic) internally and (economic) externally has massively provoked immigration of all patterns and of both genders (Oyowe 1992).

In many African countries, the outflow of the illiterate people into the cities has dislodged the educated, and some non-educated ones who can afford to migrate to overseas. Many of them constitute the flow of international migrants under different status.

International migration

Since the abolition of the slave trade in the nineteenth century, few Africans have left the continent for permanent residence abroad (Hailey 1957). Migrations across international boundaries, labour migration, voluntary or forced migration caused by famine, conquest or other disasters are known to be as old as history. The forces which impel people to migrate across international boundaries are often similar to those that bring about internal movements.

The migratory phenomenon has become a traditional type of nomadic movement and it is increasingly the consequence of two factors: the inequality in development encouraged by accelerating rate of population growth in Af-

rica, and the attraction of relative economy stability in Europe.

The global pattern of the international migration of Africans during this century is to say, one of very voluntary movements, to be numbered in millions of persons, across political boundaries which may bear little relation to cultural zones (International Labour Office, "Inter-territorial migration" 1957, p. 292).

Analyses and factors which have affected migration movements (immigration of European settlers to the new world and other part of the globe and Africans migrants to Europe and also to other part of the world) have been generally concerned with the relation between the volume of migration, and economic, social, political and other conditions prevailing in the areas of immigration and emigration (Hofmeijer 1966).

Initially, emigration from Africa, primarily to France and Britain, consisted predominantly of unskilled, manual labourers who occupied jobs which were unpleasant and had low status and were, as a result, shunned by the nationals.

Immigration of that epoch was synonymous of development, and it was a contributor of these countries economic miracle. During this last decade, the developed countries (EU) decided to stop the flow of foreign workers (Chesnais 1992). In many European Union members States, the migratory flow is of prime concern to public opinion, used by some politicians as their major political program. In France for example, the flow of African migrants during the last 15 years has brought the French governments to revise their immigration policy.

The important role that the colonization has played in determining the volume and direction of Africans migrants to France and Great-Britain cannot be denied (see Int. Mig 1956). Cultural, linguistic, political and social institutions and way of life, is seen as attachment to France and Great-Britain. Such considerations account in large part for the fact that much of emigration

from Britain are from the British colonies (British Commonwealth), and from France are the French colonies (Francophone Africa). Such affiliations have determined the choice of the emigrants.

In general, the factors determining (Africans) international migration have been mostly in terms of PUSH and PULL explanations, with movements tending to flow from countries with low levels of living to those with high levels. In the vein of this analysis, the argument about the cost of the brain drain is Africans governments' concern. With poor socio-economic policies, they have lost their best skilled people. This is indeed the outcome of poor development policies, lack of democracy and distributive justice, not giving the opportunities to the young people for their basic rights, starting with education or training.

The brain drain in developed countries are mostly of the 70s flow of Africans emigrants consisting of students and highly skilled persons escaping from political oppressions (Seers 1968). This pattern changed in the late 80s and early 90s with the flow of Africans to Europe consisting since then, primarily of unskilled and illiterates mostly young men age 20–35 years. For these young unemployed men, going elsewhere is the only option, whatever that elsewhere is in Europe, so long as the conditions of living are better than their point of departure.

The multiple aspects of international migration are not viewed solely in economic terms, but also in the light of problems associated with the integration of migrants into the social fabric of the receiving country. In some European countries (France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Great Britain) where there is a large population of African immigrants, customs, language, religion and political ideas have been brought along. Problems of adjustment have arisen in their new environment. The social problems arising from international migration of Africans as well as citizens of other developing countries can be considerable. The frustrations which they experience cause some to reject the new society and engage in anti-social behaviour.

In many cases, cultural values carried over from the native country tend to sustain strongly the immigrants themselves. Manifestations of conflict resulting in cultural disintegration appear naturally with great intensity.

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