

# **Policy perspectives on international migration and national development in sub-Saharan Africa**

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**Presentation based on a new book: International Migration and National Development in sub-Saharan Africa: Viewpoints and Policy Initiatives in the Countries of Origin (Eds: Adepoju, van Nearssen and Zoomers)**

# The 3Ds: the macro-setting for emigration

- **Demography**
- **Development**
- **Democracy**
  
- **Many people still remain poor, living on less than \$1/day and unemployment remains high.**
- **Many who work are in the informal sector with low earnings.**
- **No progress made towards reducing extreme poverty by half by late 2005 MGD targets. Rather, deterioration/ reversal in many countries**
- **Major migrant receiving countries weakened by political and economic crises prompting S-N movements**
- **RECs dominated by economies of few countries to which movements of people are directed**

# **How a coherent international migration policy can contribute to the fight against poverty**

**The link between international migration and combating poverty in SSA:**

- **Key question: in what ways does migration impact on poverty and how can policy measures reinforce the gains from migration to alleviate poverty**
- **Migration can have ambiguous effects on poverty by alleviating or exacerbating poverty and its conceptually complicated to measure**
- **Few SSA countries as yet have comprehensive migration policies (South Africa, Nigeria) - human and financial resource constraint**
- **Only in a limited way is international migration referred to in the context of PRSPs – migration not mainstreamed in broad development agenda- data and institutional constraint**
- **In general, there is no systematic policy/approach to input international migration as a structural element in combating poverty**
- **Many countries still view migration as a development failure rather than a constituent part of broader social and economic transformation processes**

# **Can international migration automatically result in poverty alleviation or sustainable development?**

- **Mixed results: impact of remittances depends on several factors: remittances are variable over time and lack sustainability; its more stable in the short-run among first generation migrants, may decline sharply over time**
- **Remittances rising steeply, now parallel export earnings and ODA; help sustain and enhance livelihoods of poor resident members, basic health care services, education, agricultural production; improving basic infrastructural facilities**
- **Alleviating poverty among poor households may have multiplier effects within local communities and national economy**
- **Policy environment and research to make remittances work productively for poor recipients, communities and countries, as leverage for poverty reduction, without increasing dependence.**
- **Explore opportunities/minimise obstacles for remittances - low-cost transfer services and less stringent regulations.**
- **migrants face at destination - isolation, endure unsociable working hours, alienation; marital/family disruptions; job dissatisfaction; skills under-usage; problems of reinsertion into domestic job market**

# Key development-migration issues

- **Excruciating poverty, chronic unemployment, low wages for workers, conflicts, persecution, ecological degradation prompt people to leave their home countries in search of livelihood abroad.**
- **Emigration helps reduce domestic unemployment and boosts revenue through migrants' remittances; but governments intensely worried about brain drain's detrimental effects on achievement of MDGs.**
- **African leaders lowered tariff regimes, restructured economies, liberalised trade, opened up markets with disappointing results for better access to world market/increased FDI**
- **After years of implementing WB/IMF SAPs, few jobs have been created, work deficit deepened and poverty is widespread**
- **SSA's rapidly growing population places tremendous strains on development process, intensifies poverty and emigration pressure.**
- **Productive employment for millions of educated youths scrambling for work a daunting, urgent challenge.**
- **Agriculture main employer: incomes and productivity levels low and disadvantaged in international trade;**
- **High tariffs/ technical barriers to trade cost SSA \$20 billion yearly in lost exports; Agricultural subsidies in North impacts negatively income of farmers and prompts emigration; Cotton producers abandoning rural areas and migrating into urban unemployment, as potential emigrants.**

# Current policies and constraints

- **Africa' human resources management hampered by unilateral policies of the North to attract/recruit professionals**
- **African countries lose their 'best and brightest,' pay price producing human capital for use by Northern countries; domestic development goals severely constrained by the outflow of scarce skilled manpower.**
- **Haemorrhaging of health professionals from Africa a serious human resource problem facing the health sector today. Ethical code of recruitment of (eg South Africa-UK MoU) difficult to enforce/monitor. Some are mooting the idea of compensation**
- **Diasporas - sources of financial flows, technology transfer, bridge for international ideas, investment and capital; stiff immigration policies of North deny many scientists the flexibility of relocation.**
- **Leaders courting nationals to return must address 'push' factors that spurred brain drain in the first place, provide returnees environments conducive to productivity, with due reward for their efforts.**
- **Remittances, however large or desperately needed, don't compensate for loss of skilled emigrants' contribution to training and transfer of expertise to younger cohorts at home.**

# Way forward

**In the context of the AU's Strategic Framework for a Policy on Migration; African common position on migration & development; and the Road Map for Action on Labour Migration & Development for mainstreaming migration into development activities at national, sub-regional and regional levels, African governments should:**

- **make poverty-alleviation and employment-generation cornerstones of development agenda**
- **institute incentive-based tax regimes to attract migrants' remittances and ensure productive, employment-generating investment.**
- **channel development assistance into job creation projects, allowing investments in social capital to pay off.**
- **advocate for mutually beneficial trade relations with North to stimulate economic growth and generate employment opportunities.**
- **strengthen institutional capacity with appropriate human and financial resource input to effectively formulate and implement migration policies**
- **Enhance economic situation to retain and stimulate return of skilled nationals to enhance economic growth, generate employment and reduce poverty amongst their populations – with the potential effect of curtailing emigration**

**Information on migration within, from and to SSA remains patchy and needs to be upgraded. Need for systematic migration data collection and management for formulating relevant and comprehensive migration policies and programmes**

# Way forward contd

**The North should promote:**

- **intervention programmes to reduce emigration pressure at source regions**
- **mechanisms that allow for more regular immigration to improve immigrants' lives, and through remittances, those left behind.**
- **flexible residential rules to promote opportunity for virtual relocation for skilled professionals and Diaspora transnational transactions**
- **effective mechanisms to work with vibrant Diasporic associations; assist viable projects in the context of co-development**
- **measures, with financial institutions, to reduce transfer costs and risks of migrants' remittances**
- **measures to systematically remove high tariffs and technical barriers to trade that cost SSA billions of dollars yearly in lost exports and jobs.**
- **development assistance targeted at sustainable employment generation/poverty alleviation programmes**
- **cooperative research and information-sharing between origin, transit and destination countries**