

What are Africa's issues in migration policy?

Contributions from the African Migration Alliance international Workshop 2005

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PRESENTED :

- ~~1) Research Conference, Birchwood Conference Centre, 21-28 July (Benoni)~~
- 2) Joint Population Conference, Stroomfontein University of the Free State, 28 September
- 3) N2 Gateway, Durban

The African Migration Alliance's 2005 Workshop

The African Migration Alliance is a networking initiative for promoting migration-related policy research on the African continent – its goals are to help make high-quality migration data available to African policy-makers and to attack the incomplete state of migration data for the continent.

A kickoff workshop was held on 10-11 March 2005 with Department of Social Development sponsorship, and 16 excellent quality papers were presented from across Africa and from overseas.

The workshop papers

This presentation puts forward a synthesis of points made by the authors, for submission to the Southern African Ministers' Conference on Population and Development. Some of the main themes were:

- Poverty and what drives migration
- Destinations of Africa's migration flows
- Migration policies and priorities

Key authors were Adepoju, Bouare, Hugo, Lekogo, Kamunga, Kihato, Collinson, Cross, Gwebu, and Landau

Africa's general climate for migration, 1

The most critical issue for migration appears to be rising rates of economic migration. The rural production economy is in decline or in collapse in many places, and the debt burden is flattening development attempts.]

Adepoju points out that migration flows are now reaching new, non-traditional destinations, where migrants have little informational or network support. Emerging destinations include:

- Northern Europe and the Middle East
- Australia and South Africa

Africa's general climate for migration, 2

Out of the rising flows to new destinations comes a concern on the part of host countries to do something about inflows.

- Bouare discusses higher rates of migration in the Francophone countries, and puts forward a need for rural development work to keep a rural/urban balance.
- Cross notes intense concern from governments in Europe and especially Britain.
- Adepoju and Ouchó both point out that if it is managed properly, international migration is a win-win option, that supplies skills to host countries and sends cash flows to source countries

Trends and issues in African migration, 1

A number of hot issues and current trends were identified in the papers. Among others:

- Oucho and Lekogo note that remittance flows are rising, and the countries now depend increasingly on foreign cash flow
- Kithato and Adepoju discuss the feminization of migration, and the extent to which migration by women has begun to replace migration and migrant earning by male heads of household. Writing from Northern Natal, Collinson notes continuing high male migration and rising female migration

Trends and issues in African migration, 2

The impacts of migration and the policies around it also drew comment:

- Kamunga discussed war and refugees in the DRC, noting how many refugees fall through the net of United Nations assistance because they do not meet policy specifications or come from a recognized war zone
- Ouchon notes the achievement of the reestablished East African Community in providing for free movement of people, and Adepoju refers to the efforts of ECOWAS in West Africa along the same lines – both authors feel that easing migration is a precondition of development

Trends and issues in African migration, 3

Several other issues drew general comment from the authors at the workshop. These included:

Brain drain or gain: Participants argued strongly for the unjust and dangerous effects of loss of skilled migrants from the African continent

Human trafficking: Opinion was strong that trafficking was taking place on a significant scale, and that measures to combat it were not in place

Xenophobia: There was general agreement that manifestations of xenophobia are rising as cross-border migration rates increase, and that xenophobia is finding expression in legislation and undercutting traditional African hospitality

Destinations for Africa

Most of the authors at the workshop commented on flows and destinations:

- Lekogo and Collinson refer to migrants choosing destinations with relatively favorable social and political conditions
- Adepoju, Lekogo and Landau refer to migration driven by unstable political conditions even short of outright conflict
- Hugo discussed migration of skilled workers from Africa to Australia
- Adepoju refers to borders blurring when there are cultural ties or continual exchanges across them
- Kihato notes how xenophobia can lead to migrants continually being forced to relocate
- Gwebu notes migration declines when jobs and support are less easy to get

Various authors noted continuing flows from East Africa to the Middle East, from West Africa to Europe and the Middle East, and from East, West and Central Africa to South Africa

Migration drivers in Africa

In this light, migration within and out of Africa has a number of major drivers. Among the most important are the need to earn, and the need to escape from conflict zones:

- Lekogo and Adepoju refer to collapsed economies and the international terms of trade, and Lekogo also noted that misinformation plays a role, often portraying South Africa as a more favourable destination than it really is
- Ucho gives a detailed picture of refugee flows among the countries of East Africa, showing how total outflows rise and fall as conflict flares and abates
- Adepoju shows how migrants workers are being succeeded by migrant entrepreneurs, and how rural-to-urban migrants are coming to cities to take over jobs abandoned by migrants going overseas.

Migration policies in Africa

The workshop participants for the most part saw the need to collect accurate migration statistics as tightly wound around the lack of specific migration policies in Africa's new context of rising economic migration, which is tying Africa more closely into the world economy.

- Collinson highlighted the need for health data around migration in the age of HIV/AIDS
- Adepoju notes the lack of appropriate anti-trafficking legislation, and also refers to the disastrous effects of xenophobia on immigration policy in the Ivory Coast
- Kihato refers to the burden placed on women migrants by inappropriate or inadequate laws around immigration policy in South Africa specifically

Migration moving forward?

There was general agreement on the need to promote better migration statistics, as well as to support capacity building where necessary. Perhaps the most important call is for appropriate migration policies covering all the tricky issues brought forward.

Landau refers to the prevalence of mythology about migration in policy circles, and the need to adopt new frameworks that go beyond popular stereotypes to address the changes taking place.