

African Migration Policy

by Michelle Tambi

Migration has dominated news cycles in recent years as illegal migration from Africa to the Mediterranean and the related deaths have been discussed frequently. In general, much of the discourse in the field of migration focuses on **the movement of people from the global south to the global north** despite the fact that migration between developing countries accounts for almost half of all migration (Rathan and Shaw 2007). While much of the conversation surrounding migration is centered around the states of the global north pursuing measures to reduce an influx of migrants, I will look at the policies African states which have experienced a rise in immigration over the past fifteen years (Revised AU Migration Policy Framework).

Niger, Senegal and Eritrea are all members of the African Union, which is the successor of the Organisation for African Union. As **80% of all migration actually takes place in Africa** due to structural factors like armed conflicts, which create internally displaced persons and refugees, and **the porous nature of borders**, which makes migration relatively straight forward, the African Union established a **Migration Policy Framework** in 2006. Since then the efficacy of the framework has been evaluated and subsequently, it has been altered. Members met in Zanzibar in 2016 to update the Migration Policy Framework and created a ten year action plan for its implementation. The African Union aims to facilitate migration in Africa as well as tackle issues such as brain drain, brain waste and security risks of migration.

The 2015 Joint Labour Migration Programme lists **the mutual recognition of qualifications** as one of its targets. This is a direct attempt to contest the brain waste phenomenon. Brain waste is quite a regular occurrence in the global north, where the credentials of migrants, typically from the global south, are not recognised as legitimate, forcing migrants into lower paid jobs for which they are over qualified. In an attempt to maximise the benefits of migration while minimising the risks, tackling brain waste is essential as it can curtail the skills gap prevalent in African economies caused in part by the brain drain.

Additionally, the African Union aims to improve the mobility of the African population as a method of inducing a **brain gain**. By promoting investment in the productive capacity of African states through increased education funding, they aim to expand student and academic mobility. In this way African states, which are depicted as homogenous sufferers of the brain drain, can in fact experience a brain gain as those in education as well as the educated are able to go abroad and put their skills to use.

The risks and downsides of migration are also addressed in the Migration Policy Framework. Forced migration from areas of conflict give rise to smugglers and traffickers. Although, only recently publicised, **the trafficking of African migrants** in the Middle East and North Africa regions as they attempt to enter Europe is not a new phenomenon and has been depicted in documentaries as early as 2012. The African Union now aims to criminalise and prosecute those involved in human trafficking and people smuggling in Africa.

Finally, the **African passport** is also a project of the African Union. The Union aims to establish a common market enabling the free movement of all factors of production including labour and abolishing all visa requirements for African citizens in all member states by 2018. In addition to this, the AU seeks to use migration as a means of development. This will be done through the promotion of low cost remittance transfers as well as human capital transfers.

ECOWAS is a regional and economic union comprising of fifteen West African states. One of the fundamental priorities of ECOWAS integration policy is the free movement of persons within the region. ECOWAS aims to reduce migratory pressures outside of the region by strengthening industries and overall improving macroeconomic performance including stabilising inflation. ECOWAS also views migration as part of the development process, acknowledging the role that **remittances** from the diaspora play in the economy.

ECOWAS wants their members to **harmonise migration policy** in addition to setting up a system of migration monitoring so they can identify that factors triggering migration outside of the region and attempt to offset them.

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.205.2306&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/working_papers/WP-C6.pdf

https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/32718-wd-english_revised_au_migration_policy_framework_for_africa.pdf

<http://www.unhcr.org/49e47c8f11.pdf>