

## **Managing Migration in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with particular reference to Ghana**

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### **Abstract**

Outgoing migration has attracted international attention recently because of desperate efforts by migrants especially from Sub-Saharan Africa to enter Europe clandestinely via sea-lanes, and other routes resulting in numerous and avoidable deaths.

Remittances from migrants in Europe have been playing critical role in the economies of Sub Saharan African countries. For example, in 2004 Nigeria recorded 3.6% of GDP coming from remittances while it was 25.9% for Lesotho. Remittance from wages of migrants abroad and the income multipliers they create are critical resources for the sustenance strategies of receiving households. The extra resources at the disposal of these households in turn make them agents of local and international development. In Burkina Faso, for example, the population living beneath the poverty line was reduced by 7.2% in rural area as a result of international remittance (UN Population Division)

Records from the Bank of Ghana indicates that remittances from abroad increased from \$680 million to \$1.4 billion in 2004 representing a third of GDP with the bulk of these remittances going into consumption, education and housing (Addoh) Nevertheless, each migrant leaving Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) deprives the country of vital manpower for development.

The paper therefore, examines the dangers of illegal out-migration, and how migration can be managed effectively as a poverty reduction strategy in Ghana so as to achieve its positive effects as well as how international co-operation in migration may be maximized to benefit Ghana and its development partners.

### **Introduction**

The issue of migration has recently come out forcefully in the international circles because of its socio-economic implications. If not properly managed, migration can create a lot of difficulties for both the host country and the country whose people are migrating. The youth especially, from Sub-Saharan Africa are migrating from the region in their numbers and it calls for proper management in order to avoid human suffering associated with it. It is ironic that at a time that Europe is steadily clamping down on migration, certain interrelated factors such as conflicts, civil war, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, social and economic problems in SSA have been serving as catalytic factors for migration.

Despite stringent measures such as tough entry rules, repatriation and imprisonments that have been adopted by host countries, migrants from SSA risk their lives to cross the Sahara through Libya to Europe. The route is by crossing the strait of Sicily which

separates Tunisia from Italy; or Strait of Gibraltar which separates Morocco from Spanish Andalusia or more recently the 150 miles strait that separates the Canary Islands from the shores of the Moroccan Sahara. (Boubakri, 2004)

### **Key Questions**

The research was guided by the following key questions;

1. Why persistence in migration in the face of stringent immigration laws?
2. Why is the international community still committing huge in managing migration?

### **Methodology**

The research followed the following methodology

- Secondary data was collected through extensive reading of articles newspapers and journals.
- Key Informant Interview was conducted
- Snowball Method was used to reach some returnees for their experience
- Descriptive analysis was used to capture the critical overview of the research.

### **Migration in Sub-Saharan Region**

Actual numbers of African migrants are unknown due to lack of statistics and undocumented migration. According to the latest estimates there were more than 14 million migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa or 2.3 per cent of its total population and this number does not even take into account some refugee flows, which are considerable in the Great Lakes Region and in West Africa. (UN Habitat, 2007)

West Africa has the highest number of International population (6.8 million or 4.7 percent of the Region's population. Cote D'Ivoire still hosts many migrants (2.6 million or 15 per cent of the national population. This population was in fact doubled during the 1990s before the recent internal instability in the country. Migratory flows mainly involve temporary workers from land-locked countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. (UN Habitat, 2007)

In central Africa International Migration is high in percentage terms (4.2 per cent of the sub-regional population) but more limited in size (1.5million) Gabon has the highest population of migrants from both the region and the continent. Migratory flows are generated by labour demand in the lumber and the mining industries in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. (UN Habitat, 2007)

East Africa hosts a significant number of international migrants (4.4 million), even though their percentage (2.3 per cent) is below the regional average. In this region, refugee movements are predominant rather than labour related migration and refugees have strong urban impact. For example, Keren-the second largest city in Eritea –has doubled its population during the last five years due to refugee inflows, arising from both the conflict with Ethiopia and the civil war in Sudan. (UN Habitat, 2007)

### **International Migration**

Causes of migration are complex and varied as it involves interrelated factors. Among the key factors are:

- Globalization is a huge driver of migration, as global communication and geographical access expands, investment flows, and trade is liberalized. The world population continues to grow even though poverty deepens in several parts of the developing world particularly in SSA.
- Migration from Africa has been caused and sustained by the lack of economic opportunities within the region and
- Migration has also been caused by Africa's growing disparities with developed countries.

### **Regional Migration**

Traditionally, migration in Sub-Saharan Africa had been induced by workers migrating to work in mines and plantations in Eastern and Southern Africa. According to Nkamleu, the history of migrant labour in Southern Africa was tied to capitalist development of plantation and mining and dates back to the 1850s. Indeed it was the mining sector which played the dominant role in the Southern Africa migration equation. This is in contrast with other countries where plantations became the dominant factor. For example, migrants worked on peasant farms in Senegal, and cocoa plantations in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire. (Nkamleu, 2006)

### **Benefits**

Remittances from African migrants in Europe have been playing critical role in the economies of Sub Saharan African countries. Examples include the following:

- In 2004 Nigeria recorded 3.6% of GDP coming from remittances while it was 25.9% for Lesotho.
- In Ghana, remittances received by NGOs, embassies, service providers, individuals etc through the banks and finance companies for the first six months of 2007 amounted to US\$3.17 billion. (Ghana Budget Statement, 2008). The bulk of these remittances went into consumption, education and housing.
- In Lesotho remittances from wages of migrants abroad and the income multipliers they create are critical resources for the sustenance strategies of receiving households.
- In Burkina Faso, the population living beneath the poverty line was reduced by 7.2% in rural area as a result of international remittance (UN Population Division)

### Cost of Migration

Migration has its cost. It has caused some critical challenges and untold suffering to some individuals and the region of Sub-Saharan Africa. One may identify three main dangers which are expressed below:

#### The First Danger

- It is when crossing the Great Sahara, with its no man's lands, its ergs and regs and its bands of robbers who target travelers heading north or returning home in the case of people working in Libya. (Boubakri 2004).

**THE SAHARA DESERT:** WITH SAND DUNES, HIGH TEMPERATURES, LACK OF WATER, WILD ANIMALS ETC WHERE MIGRANT RISK THEIR LIVES

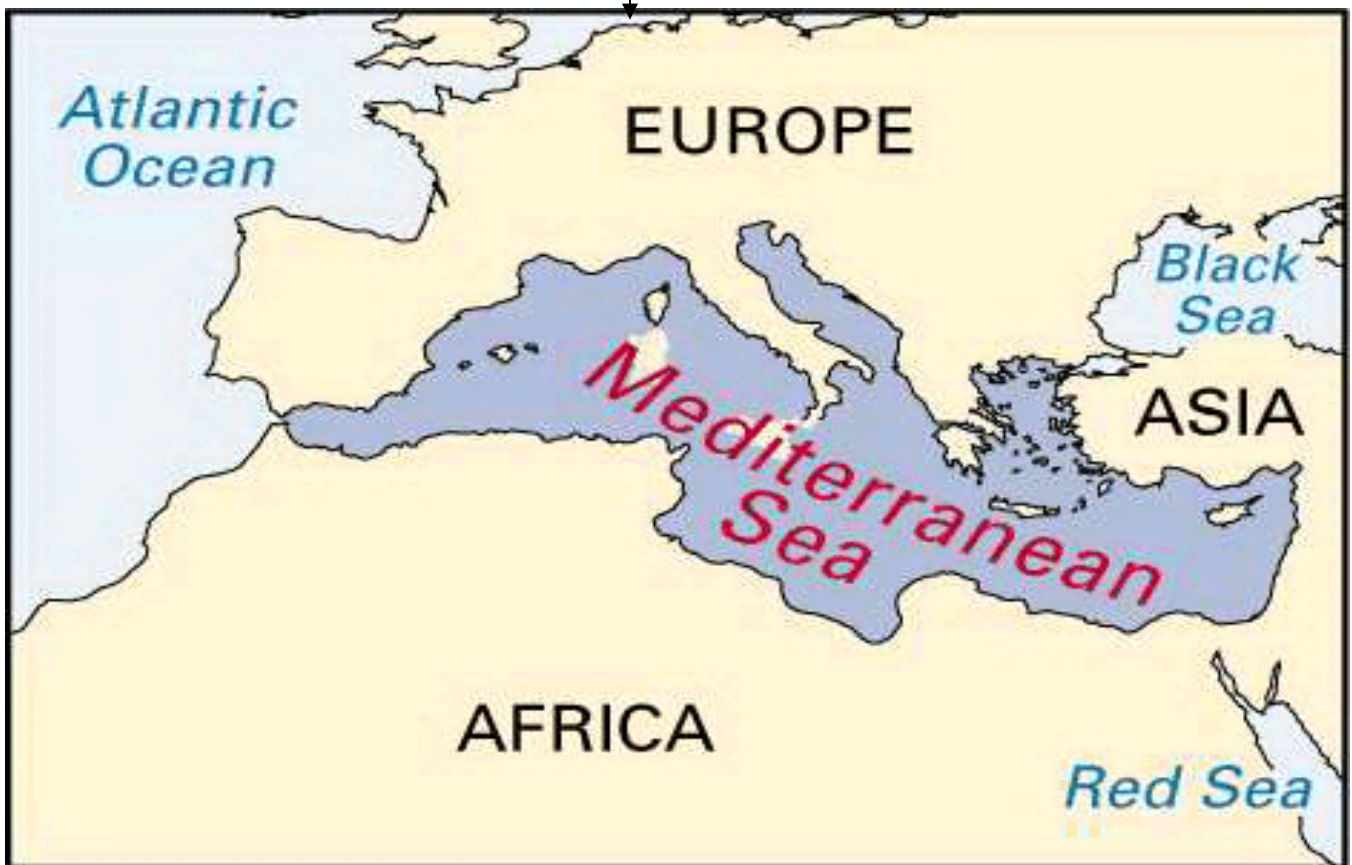


Source: [www.saharamet.com/desert/photo/sahara.html](http://www.saharamet.com/desert/photo/sahara.html)

## The Second Danger

The second danger is when migrants are attempting to cross the Mediterranean sea from Africa to Europe, during which hundreds of people get drown every year. (Boubakri, 2004)

**THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA:** hundreds of people drown every year. (Boubakri, 2004)



Source: concise.britannica.com

## **The Third Danger**

Each migrant leaving SSA, deprives the country of vital manpower such as teachers, nurses and doctors for development and also causes dislocation in kinship relationships which are important for social cohesion (Agyei, 2006)

## **Migration Trends in Ghana**

A large population of Ghanaians lives outside Ghana and their contributions to the Ghanaian economy and to individual households are increasingly recognized. Mass emigration in the 1970s and 1980s has helped to sustain a large flow of migrants presently and created a large Diaspora that spans Europe, America and elsewhere. This has shaped remittances flow, the volumes of which are difficult to measure accurately (COMPAS, 2005)

According to Anarfi et al, a migration pattern to Ghana has been through several phases since the 1960s and shows the importance of both regional and inter-continental flows. Up to the late 1960s, Ghana was a country of net migration, but economic deterioration led to the expulsion from Ghana of around 250,000 people mainly West African migrants between 1969 and early 1970 by the regime of the time. The emigration of Ghanaians started after 1965 and was sustained by economic decay throughout the 1970s until the mid 1980s. The mass emigration led to establishment of a diaspora that spans Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Asia. (Anarfi and Kwankye et al, 2003 quoted in COMPAS)

## **Ghana and International Migration**

While Ghanaian migrants within Africa are a significance source of remittances, the majority of remittances are sent to Ghana from outside Africa. As noted above, migration outside Africa has been sustained by the lack of economic opportunities within the region and growing disparities with developed countries. The fact that there is now an established Ghanaian diaspora means more Ghanaians have contact and social ties with people outside the region. Network between resident Ghanaians and those in the diaspora have helped to facilitate remittances-sending as well as further migration. (Peil 1995:358 quoted in COMPAS)

## **Ghana and Regional Migration**

Regional Migration has been a popular phenomenon to Ghanaians. It was intensified particularly to Nigeria and Ivory Coast. A very wide spectrum of people emigrated, initially it was mainly skilled workers and professionals, but by the early 1980s this included many unskilled and semiskilled workers Migration from Ghana to Nigeria was especially high during the 1970s: as the economic situation in Ghana deteriorated, the Nigerian economy boomed, driven by the dramatic increase in oil prices after 1973. Increasing poverty accelerated the tempo of Ghanaian migration since 1970s. By the late 1970s and 80s, economic decline and stagnation compelled Ghanaians to move out. This was also aggravated by bad governance under military regimes. By 1980s migration had become a coping strategy for individuals and family. (Agyei, 2006).

Most of the migrants who went to Nigeria did not intend staying permanently, and many worked in Nigeria for a very short period of time, returning to Ghana with savings to support themselves and their families.. But in the early 1980s the incumbent military regime in Nigeria ordered the expulsion of foreign workers, about half of whom were Ghanaians. Official estimate put the figure of Ghanaian expelled in 1983-1985 at between 900,000 and 1.2 million. This was a catastrophe for Ghana; thousands died on the journey home and there was a critical shortage of food and commodities to supply the returnees (Anarfi and Kwankye et al, 2003; Van Hear 1998, quoted in COMPAS).

### **Ghana and Rural-Urban Migration**

High illiteracy rate among the youth is also responsible for rural-urban migration. The youth who drop-out from school and those who do not gain access to education faced with the hardships and poverty in the rural communities become frustrated and move into cities such as Accra and Kumasi for non-existing jobs and end up selling on the streets items such as dog chains or become armed robbers who terrorize innocent civilians.

Other factors include: deterioration and inadequate social services such as health and education, imbalances in distribution of social services and infrastructure as well as lack of employment opportunities and employable skills

### **Impact of Migration**

Migration has had a great impact on the people of Ghana for example, remittances for families left behind for subsistence, education and health. Records from the Bank of Ghana indicates that remittances from abroad increased from \$680 million to \$1.4 billion in 2004 representing a third of GDP with the bulk of these remittances going into consumption, education and housing (Addoh). In spite of this, each migrant leaving SSA, deprives the country of vital manpower such as teachers, nurses and doctors for development and also causes dislocation in kinship relationships which are important for social cohesion (Agyei, 2006).

### **Managing Migration**

Problems of migration like the issue of climate change should be a global phenomenon and should be seen as such. Issuing of stringent immigration rules is a cosmetic way of approaching the issue because it does not remove the root cause. It does not promote human dignity either if migrant who are running away from unbearable conditions fall into another dilemma for being a foreigner in their place of abode.

The international communities need to address themselves to the critical question as to why a chunk of the migrants are coming from Africa. The key problem is poverty. Africa has been marginalized from time immemorial due to slavery to the present unfair trade imbalances by the World Trade Organization (WTO). For example, while the developed economies provide subsidies for their agricultural products in order to offer unfair competition to the African countries, SSA countries are made to remove subsidies. One

wonders how Africa which is a basically agrarian economy can compete with the developed world in this Agricultural Sector.

The developed and the SSA countries including Ghana would benefit immensely if there is strong collaboration between both the developed and SSA. If they pull resources to manage migration through poverty reduction strategies it would also mean that the high rate of migration would reduce.

Current data on migration should serve as an indicator for the international communities to channel resources to poverty prone areas of SSA to ensure that the basic necessities of life among the people are met. Good governance, wage differentials etc should be seriously addressed through collaborative efforts of both the developed countries and SSA. Where people get their basic necessities of life there is no merit for such people to move in great numbers to suffer in a foreign land. The age old saying that 'home sweet home' still holds water.

### **Future Research**

Reducing Migration through poverty reduction strategies in developing countries

### **Conclusion**

Where people get their basic necessities of life there is no merit for such people to move in great numbers to suffer in a foreign land.

### **Recommendations**

The following would go a long way in addressing the issue of migration in Ghana:

- Migration must be integrated into Ghana's Foreign policy and foreign mission staff in destination countries should undertake to protect migrant workers in those jurisdictions
- Ghana should seriously address the issue of rural poverty because in most cases the rural urban migration serves as a spring board for migration to the European lands.
- Public Education on migration should be intensified as some of these migrants were gainfully employed in their respective towns and yet are being deceived into believing that they could be richer overnight when they travel to Europe or America.
- The governments of Ghana should commit more resources to education right from the basic levels to the higher levels. This type of education should be tailored more towards Technical and Vocational Education and Entrepreneurial Development.



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