

# **Demographic Changes and Family Wellbeing in Africa**

## **Demographic trends and migration: Interlinkages, challenges and opportunities**

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### **1. What are the main interlinkages between demographic trends and rural to urban migration in contemporary Africa?**

A body of literature establishes that African demographic trends are shaped by fertility rates, birth rates, child mortality rates and an ever increasing population growth, but also by migration trends (United Nations Population Information Network 1994; Drummond, Thakoor and Yu 2014; Canning, Raja and Yazbeck 2015; Adepoju 2019). For instance, if both fertility rate and child mortality rates decline, a country will have a bulging population, resulting in a large number of workers per capita which in turn gives a boost to the country's economy. It is the Southern part of the African continent that has the highest fertility rates and youth dependency rates globally, with child mortality rates declining in most African countries due to advancements in the countries' health sector. The contemporary African profile has varying fertility rates due to the increase in access to women's education and to family planning services (Canning, Raja and Yazbeck 2015; Bongaarts 2017). Studies illustrate that Africa is currently the fastest growing and youngest region in the world.

There is a strong link between demographic trends - in particular population growth - and rural to urban migration in contemporary Africa because population growth affects the increase of urban areas through migration (Bryant et al 1978; United Nations Population Information Network 1994; Mokomane 2014; IOM 2015; Adepoju 2019). Thus leading to the creation of more urban areas, mega cites, and intermediate and small cities. Africa is regarded as having the highest urban growth rates globally, with Adepoju (2019: 59) reporting that "African cities are important engines of inclusive and sustainable development for all, as they are increasingly relevant in the global value chain". Mbouda, a city in Camoroon is reported to be the fastest growing city with an annual growth rate of about 7.8% (Muggah and Kilcullen 2016). Often migrant population is diverse and

consists of men (dominating the African labour force), women, boys and girls who are migrating for numerous reasons (see Report on Labour Migration Statistics in Africa 2017). In 2017, men in Africa constituted about 245.4 million of the labour force while women were only 188.4 million (Mahamat 2019: 25).

Rural-urban migration in Africa is a complex and evolving topic and is shaped by push and pull factors such as political unrest, natural disasters, the need to seek greener pastures and escape poverty, better education opportunities, health and childcare facilities, growing population, increased rate of urbanization, the ratio of working age to non-working age, responses to the anticipated pressures on food, energy and water resources, marriage commitments and ageing populations respectively (Potts 2008; United Nations Population Information Network 1994; Canning, Raja and Yazbeck 2015; Mercandalli and Losch 2017; Teye 2018; Adepoju 2019). It is imperative to note that push and pull factors are different across age groups, gender and skilled people leading to others migrating either temporarily or on a permanent basis. For instance, Tacoli (2012) indicated that more younger people are migrating to cities. Evidence from studies illustrates that access to education and improved sanitation is higher and less costly in urban areas unlike in rural areas (UNECA 2017). Teye (2018) is of the view that migrants from developing countries in Africa may be helping to control the rapid decline in total fertility rates in developed countries, even though more evidence is needed. The GSS report (2018) shows that there is enough evidence to suggest that urbanisation is contributing to a reduction in total fertility rates in Africa. Ghana is a key case study to demonstrate this fact, for instance, Ghana's total fertility rate has declined faster in urban areas than in rural areas, it is currently on 3.3 in urban Ghana is 3.3 and 4.7 in rural Ghana.

Despite rural-urban migration influencing fertility rates, it has also influenced Africa's child mortality rates (Mercandalli et al 2019). Thus, urbanisation contributes to the reduction in child and maternal mortality rates. Hence, Teye (2018: 7) reports that Nigeria has been the top receiving country of remittance from those in urban areas with an amount of 22.3 billion dollars. These factors are impacting African demographics in diverse means; in some cases they are reducing and increasing population sizes in giving and receiving

areas. For instance, rapid increase in African population is leading into a projection of a high increase of urban population in Africa - from 40% in 2015 to about 60% by 2050 (UN-DESA 2014) with rural-urban migration continuing to drive the urbanisation process. In 2020 Africa has approximately 450 cities with about 78% of the continent's population living in urban areas (Kanos and Heitzig 2020). However, governments continue to discourage rural-urban migration as it is against principles of sustainable development and it also puts enormous pressure on urban resources such as housing facilities, water, electricity, sanitation or investments to generate employment opportunities (Owusu 2018; UN-Habitat 2018). According to Teye (2018: 3) inter-regional emigration is dominant in middle Africa and is least in Northern Africa. In 2017, the main destinations were South Africa (2.2 million), Côte d'Ivoire (2.1 million), Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Kenya (UN-DESA 2017). Awumbila et al (2014) argues that even though international migration has in recent migration debates, received more attention, internal migration is far more significant in terms of the number of migrants and remittances.

If poorly managed, demographic trends may lead to disasters such as exposing the continent to higher poverty rates, smaller investments in children, lower labour productivity, high unemployment or even underemployment coupled with the risk of political instability and informal/unplanned settlement (Mokomane 2014; Migration Policy Framework for Africa and plans of action. 2018-2030; Adepaju 2019). To avoid such disasters, governments ought to focus on population age structures and not just population size (United Nations Population Information Network 1994). Rapid declines in death rates, particularly of children, have been attributed to a rapidly growing population leading to a bulging youth cohort in Africa with an expected rise of youth population to about 2.4 billion by 2050 (Migration Policy Framework for Africa and plans of action. 2018-2030; He 2022). Even though child mortality rates have declined, fertility rates have remained high, leading to high youth dependency ratios in Africa and a projected increase in life expectancy. This eventually will lead to an increased burden of caring for the elderly.

In line with these influencing factors affecting African demographic trends, one can understand that socio-economic and demographic transformations have direct and indirect implications for the well-being of families in the region because of the migration

of family members around the continent and the continent's need to harness the demographic dividend<sup>1</sup> in order to realise African development through accelerating economic growth. Firstly countries need to improve women's and girls health thus empowering them, increasing their investment in education, family planning and skills, thereby enhancing their human capital and giving them decision making power (Bloom et al 2009; World Bank 2011; Canning, Raja and Yazbeck 2015). Over the past ten years, African countries (especially sub-Saharan Africa) has undergone profound changes in their population structures.

The need for better living conditions has led to the economically active group migrating from rural to urban areas for work, thus changing the demographic structures in both areas. The largest cities in Africa that have attracted migrants include Lagos in Nigeria (21 million people), Cairo in Egypt (20.4 million), Kinshasha in D.R. Congo (13.3 million), Luanda in Angola (6.5 million), and Nairobi in Kenya (6.5 Million), Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire (4.8 million), Alexandria in Egypt (4.7 million), Johannesburg in South Africa (4.4 million), Dar es Salaam in Tanzania (4.4 million), Casablanca in Morocco (4.3 million) and Accra in Ghana (4.1 million).

## **2. What are the trends in inter-state labour migration in Africa?**

Overall, given Africa's demographic transition and the speed with which it takes place and the economic and human development policies that accompany it, are capable of powering the next wave of economic growth with healthier and better-educated youth cohorts that enter expanding labour markets and add to improved financial markets. However, the demographic dividend is largely shaped by the changes in worker productivity. Currently, Nigeria has the highest gross domestic product of billion US\$504.203 on the continent (World Economic Outlook Database 2022). The country is able to create a productive workforce and create demand for labour within its country. Speeding up the demographic transition helps in delivering more and higher-quality

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<sup>1</sup> This is the interplay between changes in a population's age structure due to the demographic transition and rapid economic growth

workers, the full economic benefits can be achieved only if there is strong demand for labour: the supply of labour is not enough in the absence of sufficient demand.

In Africa, labour migration is mostly inter-regional and approximately 80% of the migration is characterised by the migration of low-skilled workers (ILO Report 1996-2023). The ILO report further argues that the consolidation of South to South migration corridor is key in the discussion of African labour migration in search of labour markets and better wages. The African labour migration is defined by the demand in economic sectors like mining, agriculture, fishing and construction services, with South Africa absorbing most semi-skilled migrants in the agricultural sector (UNCTAD 2018). Further, services such as domestic work, health care, cleaning, hotels and restaurants and retail trade are the main drivers in the African labour migration and youth constitute the largest portion. For instance, migrants between 15 and 35 years increased from approximately 2.8 million in 2008 to about 5.8 million in 2017 and to date, this number is ever-increasing (Mahamat 2019: 37).

### **3. What are the challenges to families left behind?**

The migration of people from places of origin has been on the rise in recent years, for instance, since 2000, the international migrant stock has been growing faster than the total world population and to date, it accounts for 3.2% of the world population (Démurger, 2015: 2). The United Nations report (2022) estimates that about 281 million people live and work outside their country of birth in 2020 and one in seven people is a migrant globally. In Africa, there is a lack of conclusive official numbers of children who stay behind, but informal estimates illustrate that millions of children are growing up without at least one of their parents because of migration (UNICEF 2020; Carranza 2022). Often migrants do not always move with their entire family, they usually leave the rest of their family (such as spouses, children and parents) behind because of uncertain living conditions in communities of destination, unfavourable migration policies or increased cost of migration (Lu 2014; Raturi and Cebotari 2022). Even though families left behind arguably benefit from labour migration through remittances which ease financial burden and improve the well being of left behind family members (Alcaraz et al 2010; de Brauw 2014; Démurger 2015; Davis et al 2016; Migration Policy Framework for Africa and plans

of action. 2018-2030), they are often exposed and experience several challenges because of the physical absence of the migrant. These challenges vary across individuals and they are context dependent - to some they affect the left-behind members health, education, labour supply response among others. Thus, identifying the impact of migration on family members who remain is an open empirical question with inconclusive evidence.

The impact of migration on left-behind families has been long debated in literature (Démurger 2015; Zhao et al 2018; Knipe et al 2019; Zhang 2021; Raturi and Cebotari 2022). There are dire social costs that migrant families bear and usually these are age and gender dependent (Migration Policy Framework for Africa and plans of action 2018-2030). For instance, Démurger's study (2015) demonstrates that in Mexico, parental migration significantly increases educational attainment for girls, while it lowers the probability of boys completing junior high school. For instance, splitting up families have multiple adverse effects on education, health, labour supply response, and social status for family members who do not migrate (Jordan and Graham 2012; Mokomane 2014; Wang and Mesman 2015; Cebotari, Mazzucato, and Appiah 2018) and the effects vary from one context to the other.

Despite the above, those left behind after an economically active family member(s) migrate are left with the burden of wanting to make up for the lost employment and spend more time on household chores. Further, the absence of the main caregiver can increase children's probability of dropping out of school and delay school progression and performance if the migrant is away from family for long term (Antman 2013). Thus there is lack of parental supervision and care (Wang and Mesman 2015) which for instance in Ghana, led to the girl child suffering the most (Cebotari et al 2018).

The disruption of family life which can lead to poor diets and increased psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, or psychopathology (in children), especially to dependent family members who often includes children, women and the elderly (Parreñas 2005; Suárez-Orozco, Bang, and Kim 2011; Jordan and Graham 2012; Mokomane 2014; Wickramage et al 2015). This places a huge responsibility of household chores and work

left behind members. Démurger (2015) states that migration is often expensive and does not necessarily lead to immediate employment in areas of destination. This may even translate into reduced income for the left behind family because they have to finance the migrant in their place of destination until they are financially stable.

Further, migration can reduce labour force participation for family members left behind, especially for women. Migration may reduce incentives for education when perceived future returns to education are low because of expectations of migration to those left behind (Mokomane 2014). When parental health becomes more costly, it will outweigh the economic benefit of migration and may therefore reduce the incentives. Further, migrant commitment to their family may weaken over time, leading to reduced financial transfers to those left behind (Bryceson 2019).

Though this discussion have shown that left-behind families are prone to several challenges, Démurger (2015: 1) is of the view that “identifying the causal impact of migration on those who are left behind remains a challenging empirical question with inconclusive evidence.” There is a need for support systems to be made available for these families to help them cope with any detrimental impacts of migration, especially its effect on education and human capital accrual.

#### **4. What are the regional instruments (policies and programmes) can support orderly migration in Africa?**

Africa is to date is the fastest growing continent and migration is a natural phenomena which is unavoidable and if poorly regulated, it can bring risks and challenges, including for sustainable development and decent work, in countries of origin, transit and destination, in particular for low-wage workers (ILO Report 1993-2023; Flahaux and Haas 2016). Hence governments ought to formulate regional instruments that can help in ensuring orderly migration and functional countries across Africa. Key players in include the African Development Bank, the African Union and UNECA. The literature illustrates that several African countries have formulated migration policies to protect migrants and maximize the developmental impacts of migration (Mokomane 2014; Teye 2017). For instance, the African Union elaborated a draft protocol in 2015 on the free movement of

persons, right of residence and right of establishment (Migration Policy Framework for Africa and plans of action 2018-2030). As of July 2018, 32 of the 55 African countries have signed the protocol. However, a number of African countries have no programs for harnessing the benefits of migration within the African continent (Teye et al 2015) and Adepoju (2019) states that African cities are fragmented and disconnected in nature, which reflects a lack of policy around African development. Most of the available policies and programmes have not achieved desirable results because of a lack of financial resources and weak technical capacity (Teye 2018).

There is also the 2017 African Union Migration Policy Framework for Africa which was revised. Following, there is the Plan of Action 2018–2020. Both policy frameworks are centered on strengthening local dimension of migration policies towards leveraging the opportunities that come with well managing Africa’s urban areas. Further, Maru (2020) states that in February 2020, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development has also endorsed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, establishing four freedoms: (a) movement; (b) work; (c) business and (d) residence.

In conclusion, if African migration is well managed, both internal and international it can contribute to socio-economic development and can promote human rights for all (Flahaux and Haas 2016; Adepoju 2019). Even though this is dependant on the political will of African unions. Receiving countries must, therefore not only be concerned about strict border control systems and securitisation of migration but be able to harness the potential of migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination (Ratha et al 2008; ECLM Report 2018; ILO Report 1996-2023). For instance, to date people in Africa still require visas to travel to 51% of the African countries, thus hindering smooth cross-border trade (African Development Bank 2018; Migration Policy Framework for Africa and plans of action. 2018-2030). Nonetheless, the migrant contribution is arguably dependent on the quality of the job and the working conditions that migrants find themselves in. Hence, migration researchers call for effective policies and actions to reap positive dividends from migration and urbanization in Africa as subsequently discussed. Lately, there has been an increasing awareness of the role of cities within the migration policy discourse. For instance, cities such as “Accra, Addis Ababa, Cape Town, Dakar, Durban, Kigali, Lagos,

Luxor, Nairobi and Paynesville have joined the 100 Resilient Cities Initiatives to prioritize and implement resilient strategies between 2013 and 2018” (Adepoju 2019: 48).

##### **5. What are the regional instruments (policies and programmes) relating to family policy in Africa including the African Union Agenda 2063 (2013)?**

The development of the African continent requires actions in different policy realms that are time-coordinated and can be adapted to the current level of the demographic transition and results-driven. These policies and programmes should be geared towards opening the demographic window of opportunity whereby the policies can manage Africa’s significant declines in fertility rate (for instance, Rwanda currently has the lowest fertility rate on the continent) to reduce young dependents, lack of job creation, quality of work and underemployment (ILO Report 1996-2023). However, one should know that African countries are heterogeneous in nature and the instruments may require adjustment in each country, taking into account each country’s challenges and available opportunities (see the South African Labour Migration Policy published in February 2022). For instance, as of 2020, countries such as Lesotho and CA Republic have the highest mortality rates of 13.69 and 11.72, respectively would want to reduce it, while those such as Nigeria with larger cohorts of older workers would want to focus on encouraging savings and investment (He 2022). Governments ought to engage and involve the society at large in order to achieve African economic growth and positive demographic transition. Largely, the African continent is strongly governed by Africa’s Agenda 2063 which calls for the free movement of people, capital, goods and services between countries of origin and destination and the 2014 African Union Commission’s (Adepoju 2019; Migration Policy Framework for Africa and plan of action 2018-2030; ILO Report 1996-2023) that are inline with the sustainable development goals were urban areas are centres for “inclusive and sustainable development” (Adepoju 2019: 60). Thus, strengthening Africa’s role on the global trade market and working towards poverty eradication in Africa because currently, only 10 – 12% of African trade occurs on the continent.

Canning, Raja and Yazbeck (2015: xiii) argue that “the right policies can help countries to reap the benefits of demographic change on the overall development of a nation.” And African countries should learn from each other on how they can share knowledge in order

to enjoy the full potential of demographic dividend. Hence there is a need for proactive policies relating to family well-being on the African continent.

Further African countries have been guided by the Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration (JLMP) since January 2015. This is a broad framework aimed at anchoring labour migration work in Africa and its main objective is to achieve better governance of labour and skills mobility within Africa and realising a well integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. The JLMP is being implemented by the International Labour Organisation through two projects which are i) AU-IOM-ILO JLMP-Priority project and the ii) Extending social protection access and portability of benefits to migrant workers and their families in selected RECs in Africa. If these policies are well implemented, African families have access to public services, opportunities, freedom and human rights protection. African countries need to speak a “common language” in addressing migration issues including xenophobia, discrimination, abuse or forced migration.

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