



## **Migration and social policy in sub-Saharan Africa**

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## Abstract

Internal, intra-regional and international migration in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) takes place within diverse socio-ethnic, political and economic contexts. Emigration pressure is fuelled by unstable politics, ethno-religious, conflicts, poverty and rapidly growing populations. Distinctive forms of migration characterise the different sub-regions, but unlike in other world regions, these migrations are largely intra-regional. These complex configurations are changing dynamically and are reflected in increasing female migration, diversification of migration destinations, transformation of labour flows into commercial migration, and emigration of skilled health and other professionals from the region. The formation of sub-regional economic unions to some extent simulated the kind of homogeneous societies which once existed in the sub-regions. In all cases, economic unions are often dominated by the economies of a single country to which movements of persons have been directed. Many countries are concurrently experiencing challenges and opportunities with respect to the emigration of skilled professionals, the diaspora's links with country-of-origin, and migrants' remittances from within and outside the region. At present most countries lack synchronised migration policies and programmes, as well as appropriate data bases to inform such policies.

In spite of its rich and diversified resources, SSA is the world's poorest major region, and most of the component countries are ranked low in terms of human development indicators. Illiteracy remains high and health conditions continue to deteriorate. There are as yet no encouraging signs of improvements in social conditions as many countries have failed to create jobs, despite pursuing stringent structural adjustment policies. In reality, the already poor social conditions of individuals and families are rendered poorer by stabilization and adjustment measures, and families have borne the brunt of government reductions in spending in the social sectors. Access to education, health and other social services has been curtailed, thus reducing the overall welfare of the population – particularly the poorer ones.

Africa's social policy framework is weaved around the key areas of employment, education and health, and the performance of social policies is therefore measured by the level of human and social development, which is in turn determined by the income, education and life expectancy of the population. In the area of health, migrants' vulnerable conditions and restricted access to health services make them especially susceptible to health risks. Immigrants usually experience greater difficulties than other groups in accessing social services and hence in exercising their rights, as a result of cultural problems and discriminatory policies and practices in host countries. Migrants and refugees who are not considered citizens with full rights may be denied access; they are often scapegoats, face xenophobic reactions by the local population and may be expelled when economic and political conditions deteriorate. The situation of women can be precarious, and that of migrant women more traumatic, being excluded from access to credit and land. Women suffer discrimination at various levels - from birth, at home, in the school, at the workplace and in the society - and their access to employment is severely restricted: they experience discrimination in securing employment and equal pay with men for the same qualification and job profile.

These myriad of problems - the worsening of the health condition of the population, poverty, unemployment and socio-economic insecurity and inequalities that aggravated and widened the rural/urban disparity, a deficit of decent work, poor quality of social services, lack of popular participation and endemic corruption – are further complicated by unreliable data to track trends

in social indicators. Yet more and more people will be living in cities and would require basic amenities in housing, clean water, and health care. These and traditional cultural attitudes towards women's participation in wage employment and politics must therefore be resolved in order to enhance social policy formulation and implementation in the region. Above all, the interrelations between migration and social policy must be explicitly appreciated and social policies appropriately incorporated into national development and migration policy framework. These are challenges that officials have to grapple with to advance the region's sustainable development.

## **Introduction**

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is a region, historically, of intensive migration prompted by demographic, economic, ecological, political and related factors; these have acted in combination to produce the variety of migration configurations: labour migrants, nomads, clandestine migrants, migration of skilled professionals, refugees and internally displaced persons. The component sub-regions are characterised by distinctive forms of international migration: labour emigration from western and central Africa; refugee flows within eastern Africa; labour migration from southern African countries to the Republic of South Africa (RSA); and clandestine migration in western and eastern Africa. In all cases, clandestine movements across long, porous frontiers by ethnic groups and pastoral peoples, and undocumented migrations, are perhaps the most common configuration.

What sets SSA apart from other regions, however, is that migration is essentially intra-continental. However, deteriorating socio-economic, political, and ecological conditions across the region have produced changes in the direction, pattern, composition, and dynamics of migration. The focus of this paper is on these intra-regional migrations, its root causes, and its implications for social policy and social service provisioning in the region.

### **The context and dynamics of international migration in sub-Saharan Africa.**

Spiralling population growth, which places tremendous strains on the development process, lies at the root of much international migration in the region. It not only creates the condition for migration through its linkages with labour force growth and unemployment but has combined with unstable politics, persistent economic decline, poverty, and environmental deterioration to shape trends and patterns of international migration. The contractionary fiscal and monetary policies have resulted in retrenchment of workers in the public service, the major employment sector while the limited capacity of the labour market to absorb productively the annual cohorts of job seekers turns them into potential emigrants.

The region's populations are strikingly young, thus making it extremely difficult for governments to create jobs fast enough to meet the needs of such a burgeoning youth population - the millions of additional people who join the labour force each year, adding to the large pool of unemployed and underemployed workers. Deepening unemployment in urban areas reflects the incapacity of the urban sector to act as a sponge for the rapidly growing workforce. Over the past decade, the region has experienced steady economic deterioration exacerbated by the imposition of stern adjustment measures, yielding a situation of daunting proportions.

Temporary, cross-border migration has been facilitated by regional variations in the seasonality of agricultural production. Small, unproductive landholdings have also compelled farmers in rural areas to seek waged labour or non-farm activities in the towns, and across borders.

Broader international trends also affect the region — globalization, regional integration and the entry of multinational corporations in search of cheap labour. Other forms of international migration have also increased—namely the circulation of low-wage labour, the permanent exit of skilled workers, and the clandestine migration of undocumented workers at all skill levels. Refugee flows are also largely confined to the region,

Today, SSA encompasses countries of immigration and emigration as well as those that combine both; some serve as transit routes for migrants. Countries that were once migrant-receiving have metamorphosed into migrant-sending countries. Since the late 1980s, traditional labour-importing countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Zambia) and attractive destinations for migrants (Nigeria, Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, and Zimbabwe) have experienced endemic

political and economic crises, which also spur out-migration of their nationals. It is precisely for this reason that countries are no longer classifiable as sending and receiving countries. Yet, the main traditional countries of immigration are Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in West Africa, Kenya in East Africa, Gabon in Central Africa and South Africa in Southern Africa. Nigeria, the region's demographic giant, assumed both situations between 1975 and 1990, fuelling a large-scale emigration of workers, both skilled and unskilled, to the Gulf and the Maghreb states. Côte d'Ivoire today is a country divided, again spurring the emigration of both non-nationals and indigenes. Zimbabwe's economy is all but collapsed turning millions into emigrants (Adepoju, 2005b).

### **Economic restructuring and deteriorating social conditions**

In a vicious cycle, poor education, poor health, and malnutrition forestalled economic growth to perpetuate poverty in the region. Decades of economic crisis have translated into today's deteriorating health and education structures. In spite of its rich and diversified resources, SSA is the world's poorest major region, and most of the component countries are ranked low in terms of human development indicators. Illiteracy remains high and health conditions continue to deteriorate. Owing to the failure of development planning to improve living conditions, the 1980s came to be known as the lost decade and the 1990s fared even worse, with absolute declines in many leading indicators. There are as yet no encouraging signs of improvements in social conditions as many countries have failed to create jobs. Instead, between 1994 and 2004, for instance, the number of workers living on less than a dollar a day increased by 28 million (ILO, 2007).

Adhering to the World Bank/IMF dictates, governments have been forced to reduce the size of the public sector, in many countries the leading source of jobs, and the private sector has generally followed suit to drive up rates of unemployment for both family heads and young people. The costs of structural adjustment have reduced access to education, health, food, and social services by removing subsidies, thus reducing the overall welfare of families, particularly the poor (Adepoju 1996). Cost-recovery strategies - a burden that is heaviest for the poor, the region's majority - call for families to pay the full cost of health and education at a time when family heads are increasingly jobless. Parents, unable to pay school fees, grudgingly withdraw their children from school. The cumulative result is that the average African today is probably less well educated, less well fed, less well employed, and less well paid than in the immediate aftermath of independence (Adepoju, 2005a). The dismal economic forecasts for the foreseeable future combine to stimulate emigration of especially young persons.

In reality, the already poor social conditions of individuals and families are rendered poorer by stabilization and adjustment measures, and families have borne the brunt of government reductions in spending in the social sectors. Access to education, health and other social services has been curtailed, thus reducing the overall welfare of the population – particularly the poorer ones. In the course of implementing SAPs, annual attendances dropped dramatically in most hospitals in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia and a host of other countries as a result of, in part, the cost recovery programmes. Poor patients, unable to pay stipulated fees in hospitals have resorted to other, less efficient forms of traditional health care. As subsidies were withdrawn from staple food (maize in Zambia and Zimbabwe, rice in Liberia and wheat in Senegal) and social services (health, education and public transportation in particular), workers are hard pressed to meet daily family obligations. It is now a common sight in some capital cities for hundreds of workers trekking on foot, morning and evening, to their offices, or to discover people, children included, making do with only one meal a day.

Pervasive poverty is therefore at the root of many problems confronting families today and is generally concentrated among people with low education, unstable employment or unemployment, low income, poor housing condition and large families. The incidence, depth and severity of poverty have tasked to the limit the ability of families to serve as safety net (Adepoju, 2005a). As poverty deepens and becomes more widespread, women are constantly under pressure, seriously compromising their ability to perform their traditional family welfare, health care and nurturing roles. A large proportion of poor women are increasingly being pushed into the labour force on very disadvantageous terms, due to the lowering of household incomes as real wages fall. Belt-tightening fiscal policies to boost the deteriorating economic conditions forced women to share the preserved role of the provider with men, or assume that responsibility entirely. Over time, this situation is almost becoming the norm rather than a reversal of traditionally assigned roles.

External debt is another major constraint to social and economic development efforts in the region with highest debt burden of any world region and average per capita spending for debt service higher than that on education and health. With nearly two-thirds of its export earnings devoted to debt service, the region's capacity to mobilize resources for socioeconomic development and employment generation is severely constrained. Concurrently, the economies have also been disrupted by prolonged civil war, political violence, economic mismanagement and widespread corruption. The resulting loss of state capacity that scares away investors and stifles development forced many to leave in search of a safer haven (Adekanye, 1998).

State collapse in several countries, such as Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and devastation by war of basic elements of infrastructure (schools, hospitals, homes) scattered family members far and wide, causing an entire generation to grow up without basic necessities. In these countries, children grow up recognising the sound of guns than the alphabets of textbooks.

The stagnant rural economy also underlies much of the region's high rate of emigration. Unable to satisfy their needs and aspirations within the local opportunity structure, migrants quite literally move in search of something better. Migration, whether rural-urban, intra-regional or inter-continental, always responds to the pull of opportunity and the push of abject poverty. Work opportunities, inadequate in both urban and rural areas, are fairly superior in terms of educational facilities which might benefit the migrants' children, who constitute the bulk of potential emigrants. This in part explains why migration persists in the region in the face of worsening urban unemployment.

#### **Deteriorating socio-economic conditions: emigration as family survival strategy**

SSA is a region worst affected by poverty. Wars, civil and political destabilisation severely erode the developmental progress of the post-independence decades. In spite of the crises, the family remains the primary socialising agent of the society; apart from its basic functions of biological reproduction and intergenerational solidarity, families are the main mechanism for social control and focus of most activities that permeate all aspects of African life, including migration.

Families in SSA have used selective migration and differential investment in education for its various members commonly as a strategy to ensure the survival of its members or to pursue economic mobility to supplement dwindling household resources. In doing so, households generally select and invest in a family member who is viewed to have the greatest potential for generating migrant earnings and sending remittances. Propelled by the economic crisis, migration has become central as a coping mechanism to secure family survival. Decisions about who should migrate, where, and for how long are sanctioned, if not completely controlled, by the family so as

to promote inter-generational flows of resources (Adepoju, 2005a). For many families, remittances are a lifeline and the dominant source of income to pay for rent, home construction, medical expenses, school fees, business investment, and a variety of other activities. In some resource-poor African countries, the importance of remittances, especially those in hard foreign currencies, are given considerable attention by governments, which work actively to encourage labour migration.

In the context of structural adjustment, African families, acting as the safe haven of last resort, have had to provide social security for, and sustain its retrenched members. Official social safety nets to ameliorate some of the negative impact of the restructuring programmes are little more than a palliative, essentially of a short-term nature and do not cover more than a small fraction of these workers affected. Dual-residence strategies enable families to function as an extended structure in the face of migration-induced separation. The expectation is that migrants will maintain close touch with family members left behind through visitations and especially remittances. Another family survival strategy involves selective migration for education. A family adopting this strategy sponsors one or more members as migrants to gain education in the city, invest in the person's education expecting to reap rewards when he/she obtains a job in the formal sector of the urban economy (Ouchou, 1990). The city-based family member typically feels compelled to remit regularly a substantial proportion of his or her earned income to support family members left behind at home.

#### **Widening destination for South-South migration**

Ratha and Shaw (2007) estimated that, globally, South-South migration accounts for 47 per cent of all migration from the South, a figure that is close to other estimates of about 50 per cent by the United Nations Population Division and the World Bank. If irregular migration is included, these estimates would be much higher. The estimate of 69 per cent of South-South migration for SSA is the highest of all major world regions. Such migration is also mostly intra-regional and the share of migration to other developing regions – Latin America and Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia) is negligible. Indeed, less than 1.5 percent of sub-Saharan Africans living outside their country live in countries of European Union (OECD, 2007). The proportion becomes even more insignificant if we include in the denominator the millions of refugees who have relocated to nations bordering zones of crisis and conflict.

*Intra-regional migration within SSA has become more varied and spontaneous.* Many who migrate no longer adhere to classic geographic patterns, but explore a much wider set of destinations than those where traditional seasonal work can be found. This diversification is evident in rising levels of both temporary and long-term circulation especially among Sahelian international migrants (Findley, 1997). Indeed, a large proportion of Sahelian migrants can be classified as commercial migrants, especially those from Senegal, a situation akin to Nigerian emigrants to Ghana in the early 1960s. What sets the Sahelians apart is their departure for unconventional destinations to which they had no prior linguistic or colonial ties. A pattern of replacement migration is also evident, whereby immigrants from neighbouring countries occupy positions vacated by nationals emigrating abroad, yielding a stepwise migration pattern, first from rural areas to cities and then from cities to foreign destinations.

The opening up of South Africa in 1994 was followed by an influx of migrants from various parts of SSA, including Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Kenya, and Uganda. Some of these nationals had earlier entered the Republic's then nominally-independent homelands clandestinely during apartheid era. They were mostly skilled professionals, a situation that set them apart from the traditional migrants from the neighbouring states, whose nationals were mostly unskilled mine workers and farm labourers. Traders and students from Zaire followed as its economy,



polity, and society virtually collapsed. The post-apartheid wave of immigrants from Senegal, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone consisted mostly of street vendors and traders seeking to capitalize on the relatively affluent market of the new post-apartheid republic (Adepoju, 2003).

*Brain drain and brain circulation:* Soon after independence, many SSA countries invested considerable proportions – 40 percent or more - of their national budgets in health and education. The years that followed therefore witnessed expansion of education and training systems, leading to rapid improvement in adult literacy. Although the number of qualified university graduates increased enormously, one of the most striking effects of economic stagnation has been the shrinking of budgets allocated to higher education, causing depressed academic salaries, eroding research grants and spurring emigration of professionals. In the 1970s, highly qualified, experienced workers in trades and professions migrated from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Senegal, Ghana, Uganda, to South Africa and even destinations outside of the region (Adepoju, 1991).

In trickles, brain circulation also took place between Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria; Togo and Cote d'Ivoire; Burkina Faso and Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, all countries with shared colonial legacies. Initially, the Gulf States became particularly attractive as destinations for highly skilled professionals. But even countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been showing signs of economic stagnation in recent years. Today, brain drain is being altered by brain circulation within the region. Skilled professionals, in particular, have found the booming economies of Gabon, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa to be convenient alternatives to Europe, the United States and the Gulf. In the past two decade, Nigerian, Kenyan, Ugandan, Ghanaian and Zimbabwean professionals have migrated to work in these countries' tertiary institutions, medical establishments and the private sector. A prosperous, politically stable country, with a rapid economic growth, Botswana attracted highly skilled professionals, who are in short supply, to work in the private sector and at the university, taking advantage of the relaxed laws on residence and entry introduced in the early 1990s.

South Africa is concurrently a recipient and a sender, perhaps also a transit country. In the familiar replacement migration system, shortage of doctors forced the government to recruit foreign doctors from Africa, especially Zimbabwe, and Cuba to fill the vacuum created by departing medical personnel especially in under-served rural areas. But the country has its own domestic problems, with unemployment being one of the thorniest. An estimated 25 to 40 percent of the country's workforce, mostly black persons, is unemployed. Thousands of youths missed out of education in protest to the apartheid rule; now these cohorts lack the skills for employment in a globalising and competitive labour market.

*Increasing xenophobia against immigrants:* SSA societies and people are traditionally hospitable to strangers, welcoming and sharing their limited resources with them. This is no longer the case in many countries. Increasingly, political leaders have resorted to the use of ethnicity and religion to reclassify long-standing residents as non-nationals as in Cote d'Ivoire. Aliens are scapegoats in periods of economic recession and are accused of stealing jobs from nationals. They are also stigmatised as criminals, and conduit for the spread of diseases, including HIV/AIDS as in Botswana and South Africa (Adepoju, 2003). In South Africa, the press and politicians played a large part in portraying immigrants as culprits of crime, drug abuse and labour exploitation, fanning public discontent among locals and driving a wedge between them and immigrants, and clamouring for their expulsion. These worrisome negative policy changes have compelled intra-SSA migrants to either return to their countries of origin or emigrate to

the North, in spite of the free movement of persons' protocols within respective Regional Economic Unions.

*Independent female migration is on the increase.* Traditionally, men migrate leaving behind wives and children (who may join them subsequently) in the care of the extended family. A variety of customs, coupled with job segregation and discrimination in the urban labour market, restricted female migration. Often young girls are withdrawn from school because their parents choose only to educate their brothers with the diminished household income, or because their families require their labour to help mothers and aunts, thereby perpetuating intergenerational cycle of poverty. Two decades of economic distress and the changing economic circumstances are increasingly forcing communities to condone female migration.

Independent female migration has become a major survival strategy in response to deepening poverty. As men increasingly lose their jobs, and incomes become irregular, women, like men are turning to migration to meet their economic obligations (Oppong, 1997). Driven by poverty, they are now migrating to urban areas in greater numbers in search of wage employment in the face of deteriorating living and working conditions in rural areas. Increasing access to education means that educated women are having greater opportunities for employment in the urban formal sector and are able to participate perhaps more effectively, in both non-domestic and formal sector activities (UNFPA, 2006). The increasing proportion of educated females is also reflected in the accelerated migration of females (especially the young ones) into urban areas to seek further education and jobs.

Women in West Africa have historically been involved in cross-border migration; they dominate the informal commercial sector, which is less affected by economic crisis than the wage sector where most male migrants work. The increase in autonomous female migration is not confined by national borders: female nurses and teachers from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe, now engage in international migration, often leaving their spouses behind at home to care for children. Once set in motion, migration of skilled female professionals took root. Female nurses and doctors have been recruited to work in Saudi Arabia, Europe and North America. The emergence of migrant females as breadwinners puts pressure on traditional gender roles within the African family. This phenomenon constitutes an important change, and indeed a turn-around, in traditional gender roles, creating new challenges for public policy (Adepoju, 2005a).

*The Maghreb has emerged as transit and destination for migrants.* The dramatic changes in SSA's economic fortunes have adversely undermined the abilities of families to meet the basic needs of its members. One emerging consequence is the weakening of family control on the youth. Driven by desperation, some engage in illicit activities and fall prey to traffickers' rackets in their desperate search for survival. The unemployed youth remain socially and economically dependent and disillusioned. Worsening youth unemployment and rapidly deteriorating socio-political and economic conditions, poverty and human deprivation, stimulated and intensified irregular migration as well as trafficking in young boys and girls. A few years ago, a young graduate would secure a job, establish independent household and begin a process of assisting siblings to acquire formal education. Today, his/her counterpart would roam the street, unsuccessfully seeking for a job for months, and if successful, the salary is too meagre to support a minimum level of living (Adepoju, 2005b).

The Maghreb has now emerged as a major region of transit for irregular migrants poised to enter the EU countries clandestinely. Many who fail to enter Europe settle in Morocco rather than face the humiliation of returning home. They do odd jobs in Casablanca, Tangiers and Rabat simply to

survive. Apart from these irregular migrants, there are several thousand others resident and working in regular situations or studying in tertiary institutions in these countries (EU, 2005). Statistics are imprecise as to the number, qualifications, employment status, nationality and duration of residence of regular migrants in, especially, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. These migrants often face hostility and xenophobia from locals, fuelled by the illegal activities of their compatriots in irregular situations. In 1998, Libya's leader announced the formation of the Community of Sahel Sahara States linking Libya with Sudan, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and other nearby states. Many immigrants from these countries, including 500 000 from Chad, have since been attracted to Libya, and now account for one-sixth of the country's population (Adepoju, 2006b).

### **Regional economic unions and intra-regional migration**

The formation of sub-regional economic unions to some extent simulated the kind of homogeneous societies which once existed in the sub-regions. These economic unions are often dominated by the economies of a single country to which movements of persons have been directed: RSA and Botswana in Southern African Development Community (SADC), Gabon in UDEAC, Cote d'Ivoire in CEAO, Nigeria in the Economic Community of West African Countries and Congo in CEPGL. More spectacular, these countries' prosperity was built by migrant labour – cocoa and coffee plantations in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, mines and agriculture in South Africa, forestry and oil fields of Gabon. Resource-rich but labour-short countries – Botswana, Gabon, and Cote d'Ivoire - rely heavily on immigrant labour. About 28 per cent of Cote d'Ivoire's population are foreign born and one quarter of the workers in Gabon are foreigners from countries from and outside Africa.

Under the terms of the 1994 Abuja Treaty, these are expected to develop gradually as the building blocks of the African Economic Community. The free movement of persons without visa within ECOWAS and the adoption of an ECOWAS passport as a symbol of unity to progressively replace national passports in circulation over a transitional period of ten years has accelerated intra-regional migration and helped to advance the concept of a borderless sub-region (Adepoju, 2007). In SADC, the original 1997 protocol on Free Movement of Persons was revised several times to incorporate serial objections from member States, especially South Africa. In the revised protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons, the initial six-month visa-free entry period was reduced to three months, and States reserved the right to enter into bilateral agreements with other States in respect of condition of entry of immigrants (Oucho and Crush, 2001). Hence, migration in SSA should also be addressed within NEPAD's framework to serve a larger role in the management of intra-regional labour migration, as well as within the framework of the African Union Policy on Migration.

### **Social Policy: conceptual and methodological perspectives**

Social policy has been viewed in many perspectives but in all cases includes efforts to tackle social injustice, poverty, inequality, enshrine basic rights and ensure the well-being and minimum welfare of the citizens (Aina, 1997). Adesina (2007) defines social policy as the collective public efforts at affecting and protecting the social well-being of the people, through education and health care provision, habitat, food security, sanitation and so on in order to guarantee a minimum level of livelihood. The multi-dimensional nature of the development process however implies that every economic, political or cultural activity necessarily has social dimensions or implications (Mkandawire, 2001). To that extent, initiatives in the areas of education, health, housing and agriculture impact on the people, positively or otherwise, immediately or with a time lag, in an interrelated manner.

At the conceptual level, Africa's social policy framework is weaved around the key areas of employment, education and health (AU, 2003). The performance of social policies is therefore measured by the level of human and social development, which is in turn determined by the income, education and life expectancy of the population. In this context, social policy implies "a mechanism that allows for collective state-led measures, implemented by the state and its partners – the private sector, civil society and international development partners -, geared to ushering in the best possible socio-economic conditions, addressing the structural irregularities in wealth and means of production distribution, ensuring greater equality for all, and correcting market shortcomings, thereby protecting the most vulnerable groups (AU, 2003).

Other components of the framework are wage and non-wage employment/work, an aspect on which data on the labour market situation in the region is grossly lacking; investment in terms of human, social, financial and material capital accumulation – the engine of growth; and poverty level (monetary or human). In SSA, the pervasive state-driven development model is exemplified by the apartheid-era policy social exclusion in South Africa; the controlled production system in central Africa that paid little attention to mass education, or the discriminatory urban-focussed access to social services in pre-independence eastern Africa; and the independence-era socialist-ideological basis of social services provisioning and strong public-financed provision of basic education in west Africa (AU, 2003). The overarching problem with this model is that of funding to ensure sustainability of these policies. This bottleneck became apparent during economic crises that necessitated the structural adjustment programmes which worsened and sometimes reversed progress hitherto achieved in human development, especially in respect of health and income. This shortcoming was manifested in the increasing number of the working poor and worsening housing conditions as only the privileged were able to access and effectively utilise services and social goods.

In the area of health, the linkages between migration and health concerns have only recently been brought to the fore by the spread of diseases including TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS. Migrants' vulnerable conditions and restricted access to health services make them especially susceptible to health risks. Seasonal migrant workers in particular are vulnerable to, and capable of, spreading diseases both during and after the migration. Mine workers in South Africa living in overcrowded hostels are particularly vulnerable to tuberculosis infection; dual residence and long absence from spouses have also resulted in migrants contracting sexually transmitted infections through casual partners. All these conditions raise issues of vulnerability of migrants, limited access to medical care, entitlement to basic health services, and the need to incorporate the health care of migrant populations squarely into public health, and social policies.

With respect to access to social services, immigrants usually experience greater difficulties than other groups in accessing services and hence in exercising their rights, as a result of cultural problems and discriminatory policies and practices in host countries. Often, immigrants are unaware of their rights or are afraid to claim them; they may not understand the local language or are simply unfamiliar with the available social services. Migrants and refugees who are not considered citizens with full rights may be denied access; they are often scapegoats, face xenophobic reactions by the local population and may be expelled when economic conditions deteriorate. As of mid-2007, only 37 countries globally have ratified the International Convention on Protection of the Rights of Migrants and Members of their Families, and only 15 have signed the convention which came into force in July 2003. Of these, 10 SSA countries, mostly in West

Africa<sup>1</sup> have ratified the convention; these are mostly migrant sending countries. So far eight<sup>2</sup> countries, also mostly in West Africa, have signed the convention.

The situation of women can be precarious, and that of migrant women more traumatic, being excluded from access to credit and land. Women suffer discrimination from birth, at home, in the school, at the workplace and in the society. Women have unequal access to employment: they experience discrimination in securing employment and equal pay with men for the same qualification and job profile. Sexual exploitation and sexual violence expose women to HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections; many are abused and raped, especially in countries (Liberia, DRC, Sierra Leone, Somalia) experiencing prolonged conflicts. Many children were born to women abducted during periods of conflict. Combatants often abandon their wartime families to reunite with their original families once they are demobilised at the end of conflicts. Under pressure to rebuild their destroyed infrastructure, few governments emerging from periods of prolonged conflict are inclined to address such social issues. Families or relatives are therefore saddled with the burden of rehabilitating such women and their abandoned war babies from their meagre resources (Adepoju, 2005a). Rather than escaping from the trap of poverty, many trafficked victims are repatriated when apprehended, resulting in personal trauma and bringing dishonour to their families. Their reintegration back home is thus often problematic.

In southern Africa, for instance, high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, especially in the major labour-sending countries (Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe) and in the labour-receiving countries (Botswana, South Africa) – and increasingly elsewhere in the region – creates a nightmare scenario of acute labour shortages. The pandemic takes a heavy toll in the education sector of the traditional sending countries. Concurrently, the emigration of doctors and nurses is occurring at a time when their services are acutely required in the overstressed health sector. The role of migration in spreading HIV/AIDS also needs to be re-examined critically: immigrants are uniformly blamed, but the evidence for this is untested and may well be spurious. The medium-to-long-term social, economic and demographic implications of the ravaging pandemic for the supply of skilled workers in heavily infected countries must be explored more systematically (Adepoju, 2006b). This applies also to the potential to resort to immigration to offset domestic labour supply losses. Current research efforts have focused largely on demographic consequences; attention should now shift to the economic and social consequences of this trend on the productive sectors at micro, meso and macro levels.

### **Choice of survey location**

Data on migration in the region is patchy, but slowly improving. At the methodological level, research effort could concentrate on collating and refining available secondary data from a variety of sources – censuses, migration surveys, poverty surveys, demographic and health surveys – in order to posit the analyses within a broader socio-developmental context. Censuses are the most comprehensive data source, but information on the stock and flow of emigrants from the region is more readily available in the destination countries than it is in the countries of origin. The exception is the SADC's 2000 round of censuses that collected information on cross-border migrations, and the Southern African

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<sup>1</sup> Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal in West Africa; Uganda and Seychelles in East Africa and Lesotho in Southern Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Benin, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo in West Africa; Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe in Central Africa and Comoros in East Africa

Migration Project (1997-2007). Special migration surveys using qualitative and quantitative approaches and similar instruments, indeed perhaps an African Migration Survey, using a core questionnaire incorporating national modules that address specific national issues, would need to be designed to facilitate comparative analysis.

A selection from a set of countries which represent the range of migration configurations discussed above is suggested for the proposed study of social policy in SSA. These countries include Burkina Faso, Mali, Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe (major migration-sending countries); Ghana, Gabon, Botswana, South Africa, Kenya, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria (a combination of sending and receiving countries). (see section on regional integration).

**Problems and challenges facing the region's social policy regime:**

A puzzle in the SSA migration scene is not why migration is accelerating in the face of poverty and deteriorating living conditions but rather why is there not even greater emigration in the face of such dire conditions? And, what prospects are there at the end of the tunnel for the region's economic malaise, political turmoil, social exclusion of vulnerable groups and the vacillating effects of the structural adjustment? Perhaps the real problem, and therefore the focus of policy should be social and economic development, not migration. Evidence suggests that migration proceeds with or without development, but that some types of migration respond to coherent changes in development and social policy.

International migration will become more visible in the region in the future. First, the prospects for internal migration in the region are shrinking as a result of generalized poverty, unemployment and socioeconomic insecurity. Consequently, some of the migration that would otherwise take place internally is likely to become replacement migration in urban areas and sequentially emerge as intra-regional emigration. Second, the prospects for South-South migration are not very encouraging. Several countries of the Persian Gulf that hosted immigrants from SSA in the past are undergoing simmering political upheaval and their economies need fundamental restructuring. The era of large-scale labour importation in the Gulf appears to be over.

A major development issue therefore is the productive employment of the millions of educated youths who will scramble for work in the formal sector, or join the lengthening queue of potential emigrants, ready to migrate clandestinely to do any kind of odd jobs anywhere, but increasingly outside of their countries. It is certain that the pressure for labour migration in search of jobs abroad will intensify. Sub-regional economic unions which provide in their agreements for free flow of skilled labour and rights of establishment in member countries could facilitate intra-regional labour mobility and promote self-reliant development in the region.

Persistent economic difficulties in the region will continue to spur additional migrants. Experience shows that wherever spectacular differentials exist, migratory flows, in regular but increasingly in irregular situations, are directed from impoverished countries to more affluent societies, as is the case of RSA and her neighbours where, in spite of erected electric barbed fences along its border with Mozambique, desperate migrants ventured and continued to risk entry.

In SSA, more than in any other region, economic recovery and improved living conditions depend crucially on the successful resolution of ongoing economic malaise – a goal that is not in sight. The debt burden dramatically reduced the capacity of governments to mobilize resources for socioeconomic development. At the same time, inflows of foreign direct investment declined.

Governments must strengthen the democratization process and improve the quality of governance to ensure a greater and more effective participation of the people in politics and development. Governments should also redirect their huge military and security expenditures to much-needed socioeconomic investment in education, health, energy, shelter and related infrastructure. The absence of peace and stability discourages investment and leads to human and capital flight.

So far, efforts have focussed on economic development, ignoring the critical social development including efforts to curtail the region's high population growth. Since the growth of the labour force continues to outstrip employment growth and prompt emigration, the formulation and implementation of comprehensive population policies targeted at moderating population growth through fertility decline is an inevitable long-term strategy to reducing migratory potential. Long-term initiatives designed to provide jobs, promote rural development, access to credit and livelihood for the poor are crucial social policy tools, but to be effective, must be built on the social fabrics of the family.

How vulnerable, and resilient, are African families and its members – children, youths, men, women, elderly – in the face of the challenges and pressures brought to bear on it? The centrality of the family as the focal point of people-centered development should be recognised; past attempts to compartmentalise families into different target groups for each sector have yielded poor results because such paradigms have been, and continue to be, at best inappropriate and at worst irrelevant.

Families in difficult life situations, vulnerable families, single-parent families headed by women, poor families with elderly members or those with disabilities, refugee and displaced families, and families with members affected by AIDS require special attention of governments and communities. This is particularly the case because migration, poverty, conflict-induced population movements have strained the capacity of families' support to the limit. Chronic unemployment, malnutrition, endemic conflicts and economic deterioration have also adversely affected the capacities of States to tackle the key developmental problems: illiteracy, lack of educational opportunities, inadequate institutional capacity, poor health infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, rural degradation and so on.

Women continue to encounter gender-specific obstacles in various fields of national life; they are often discriminated against in employment, economic opportunities and access to credit, and are marginalised politically. Most programmes ostensibly set up to cater for women's welfare are constrained by high institutional budgets, with little for grassroots' activities and for their health, education and income-generating opportunities; these also lack continuity and sustainability.

Adolescent and youths are losing out on formal education. Education for children has become out of reach for most families with the consequences that growth in primary education has slowed down in many countries. Efforts must therefore be made to reverse the loss of, and youth exclusion from, the labour market that drive some of them to criminal gangs and traffickers.

Economic restructuring programmes are impoverishing and impacting negatively people's livelihood in the sectors of education, health and employment. SAP reform measures are mainly short-term and do not address long-term concerns of structural transformation, sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

Poverty - a state of deprivation through lack of access to economic and social resources - is manifested in illiteracy, lack of access to water, poor housing and declining purchasing power. Low education, poor health, poor nutrition, low incomes, large family size, and food insecurity

are among the factors that contribute to poverty at the micro level of the family. For about half of African families, poverty is so widespread and deep-rooted that access to adequate food, clean water, safe sanitation, reliable health care, decent housing and a basic education constitutes a dream yet to, but must be, achieved.

Farm productivity has steadily declined and food security jeopardised in areas where large numbers of men have migrated for long periods. Migration is eroding day-to-day mutual support among family members. Women farmers and women left behind are seriously affected as lack of title to land can block their access to agricultural credit, services, and aids. In addition, women farmers rarely have direct contact with agricultural extension agents; and when they are reached, their limited education may prevent them from using agricultural information effectively. Migration has nevertheless made it possible for single and unaccompanied married women to live and work in towns.

The rapidly spreading HIV/AIDS is a major development challenge to governments and families, more so that the youth are the most heavily infected. The burden of HIV/AIDS on families is daunting. Adult deaths (of parents) often result in break-up of households, with children being fostered by relatives or becoming homeless. The loss of the agricultural labour force in the worst affected countries has grave consequences for family food security. Households affected by HIV/AIDS often withdraw children from school to help at home with care-giving or income-generating activities.

Traditional systems of controlling, monitoring, protecting, and supporting the young, and the elderly are breaking down in the context of economic crisis. This development is further exacerbated by spatial dislocations of people seeking new sources of security and support. Social policy measures should creatively programme intervention measures to reinforce the economic situation of families to enable them perform their traditional roles more effectively by, for instance, introducing subsidies for vulnerable and poor families.

These myriad of problems must therefore be resolved in order to enhance social policy formulation and implementation in the region: the worsening of the health condition of the population which have reversed the gains made in the 80s and 90s; poverty, unemployment and socio-economic inequalities that aggravated and widened the urban/rural disparity; a deficit of decent work across the region; poor quality of social services; incongruence between the quality of output of education and the needs of the labour market; lack of popular participation and endemic corruption. Others are the inadequate monitoring of the social impact of economic and social policies - recent economic reforms have worsened rather than resolve social problems - which is hampered by unreliable data; and traditional cultural attitudes towards women with respect to their participation in tertiary education, wage employment and politics. Very soon, by 2015, half of the region's population is projected to live in urban areas, necessitating dramatic improvements in health, housing, water, transport, educational facilities and in particular access for the disadvantaged segments of the population, including migrants.

**Conclusion:**

A variety of factors – poor economic performance and mismanaged economies, failed states, political instability, conflicts, environmental disasters, poverty, and excruciating social and economic effects of HIV/AIDS – have constrained efforts at achieving social policy goals in the region. Governments will need to redesign appropriate development paradigms to help generate viable employment opportunities for the teeming youth population to utilise their latent energies for productive activities in economic, social, political and community activities and also help to



reduce the increasing incidence of irregular migration, trafficking, drug abuse and violence among mostly unemployed youths.

Female education has cumulative effects on family welfare. Governments must pay more attention to raising female literacy as an end in itself but also because it has profound effects on the health and nutritional status of families, child survival, and intergenerational transfer of technology (Subrahmanian, 2002). Improvement in female education could in the long run help improve family health, reduce family size, increase opportunities for employment, enhance productivity, even in informal economic activities, and reduce poverty. Governments should eliminate gender discrimination in programme activities, empower women, and build equality into all forms of human resource development. The position of women in migration decision making and control of resources should be critically evaluated; so is the influence of culture and religion on female migration, a process that is likely to intensify in the future. In that context focus on migration and gender should explore the determinants, mechanisms and consequences of contemporary female migration and changing status of women migrants, characteristics of independent women migration, gender equity in access to education and health, survival strategies and socio-economic consequences under conditions of vulnerability.

The incidence, depth and severity of poverty in SSA today are such that the responsibility for fighting poverty should be borne by the government in partnership with communities and families at the grassroots level. Unemployment is a key factor in poverty, and ill health perpetuates poverty. One way forward is to put in place appropriate measures to improve education and access to employment opportunities. The main route to exit poverty is gainful employment.

An assessment of SAPs' pervasiveness and generally negative impact and its linkages to demographic change, especially migration, should include the types of decisions families are taking and their repercussions on the quality of life of the people. Cushioning the effects of cost recovery strategies, especially with respect to the declining rates of educational enrolment can help invigorate on-going social development programmes.

Street children, real victims of conflicts and disruptive population displacements, and products of poverty, famine, conflicts, migration, unemployment, and broken homes, constitute a growing urban tragedy. Specific programmes should be put in place to enhance their nutritional requirements and reproductive health needs. Achieving sustainable livelihoods, food security, peace and stability, are essential for sustainable development in the region.

Migration will intensify in the region in the future as a result of deepening poverty and socio-economic insecurity, hence issues relating to deteriorating social conditions, education, employment, health and pauperisation of the working class deserve centre stage in both policy and research agenda. So also is movement of irregular migrants, health and crime factors associated with cross-border movements. The interrelations between migration and social policy are complex; social policies must therefore be appropriately incorporated into national development and migration policy framework. These are challenges that officials have to grapple with to advance the region's sustainable development.

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