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Migration and urbanization trends in Africa

Prof Pragna Rugunanan

Department of Sociology

University of Johannesburg

1. Introduction

The narrative of African migration needs to be reconceptualized and positioned from an African perspective amplifying African voices researching migration on the continent. Recent research reveals that African migrants, contrary to the sensationalized images of irregular African migrants into the Mediterranean, is that the majority of African migrants tend to cross land borders within Africa rather than across oceans.

Research shows that Africa only accounts for 14 per cent of international migrants, whereas migrants from Asia constitute 41 per cent and from Europe account for 24 per cent of the global migrant population. The focus on African migration has always been on displacement and irregular migration, yet a significant body of research has findings to the contrary. The majority of African migrants do not wish to leave the continent, and displaced people and refugees would prefer to return to their home countries. African migration is mainly intra-continental and predominantly across land borders. oceans. International migration is very expensive, and migrating from rural areas is even less common. Movement from rural to urban areas is a result of several reasons: poverty and food insecurity, drought, lack of economic opportunities, lack of resources, and climate change.

Africa is a complex, multi-faceted continent infused with a varied and fluid social, cultural economic, political and environmental milieu. Correspondingly, its migration trajectories speak to this complex dynamic and contradict the monolithic perspective of the continent by researchers, the public and media alike. We need to enhance and foreground the pivotal and progressive role migration can play in the development of the continent.

Migration research on the continent is often preoccupied with the concerns of donor countries and thus a true narrative of the unique dynamic of migration on the continent is lacking. The over compensation on irregular migration shifts the focus on how migration can benefit member states. While migration policies have become a priority for African states, the implementation and practice of such policies is lacking. The revision of the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) in 2017 and 2018 offered member states the opportunity to prioritize the implementation of strong policy and institutional frameworks to manage migration processes and to recognize it as a key development strategy that could enhance the economies of countries. Strong policies can transform the governance of migration on the continent.

The lack of reliable official data compounds African migration research, together with an absence of large-scale sampling frameworks. However, more recent available migration databases have significantly expanded the scope to conduct analyses on migration from and within African countries.

Still missing is the macro-data that would allow the overall tracking of migration patterns from, to and within Africa over the past centuries, as Africa has always been a migrating continent.

2. Internal & International migration

Africa has a long internal and international migration history, with intra-continental migration exceeding inter-continental. Based on stereotypes and informed by a western-centric bias of Africa as a continent of poverty and conflict rather than from theoretically informed empirical research. Research from national border posts shows that migration will continue to increase across the continent. The World Migration Report of the IOM (2019) concurs that African migrants move within their respective regions. In countries where data is available, households show that one member has at least migrated internally or externally.

African migrants move in search of economic opportunities, security and better educational facilities. Employment is one of the main drivers for migration. Households with international migrants are known to be wealthier than households without migrants. Migration is used as a strategy to improve livelihoods, to minimize risks and to diversify income sources.

In a study by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, on selected African countries, key findings show that migration is highly diversified; internal migration is more evident than international migration, the difference being Senegal, Kenya, and Burkina Faso. For rural households, internal migration is more common than international migration. Uganda, which is less urbanized compared to those in the study sample, has the highest share of households with internal migrants.

Voluntary migration can benefit the country of origin and host countries, and the communities migrants originate from and locate to. Research shows that within regions and between countries, cross-border migration is prolific. In some cases, there is endless daily border crossings by traders, predominantly women who have become the main heads of households. The African Migration Report shows that the border between Rwanda and Democratic Republic of the Congo, between the towns of Rusizi and Goma, records an estimated 30 000 people crossing the borders daily. The majority of these are women. Traders from the DRC sell fruit, fabrics and other goods, while the Rwandese traders sell clothing, smaller electronics goods and other packaged commodities for trading. The Beitbridge border post between Zimbabwe and South Africa is one of the busiest road border posts in Southern Africa. This post is open 24 hours a day and allows for the daily crossing of 30 000 people between South Africa and Zimbabwe. The reasons range from economic needs, to accessing educational institutions in South Africa to medical resources. The trade enhances the economies of both countries. There is also a substantial growth of informal cross-border traders between these two countries.

The more recent Seme-Krake joint border post between Nigeria and Benin in October 2018 eases cross-border trade and mobility between the two countries. The aim of the joint border post is to facilitate more regular and legitimate channels of migration with the hope of increasing cooperation and coordination and eliminating shadow forms of migration practices, such as human trafficking.

International migration is less common compared to internal migration on the continent, with the exception of Senegal, Kenya, and Burkina Faso. International migration is very costly, and from the emerging data, it is evident that internal migration is viewed as a first level resource to accumulate funds before long distance migration can be considered.

Who migrates?

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization report informs us that most migrants are likely to be male and between 15 and 34 years of age. Young people are more agile in youth and resourcefulness to seek employment opportunities and other livelihood options. Women migrate mainly for family reasons inclusive of family reunion, marriage and divorce. Education and family reasons are the most important drivers of migration.

More current research shows that women are migrating independently and without family members, leaving behind children in the care of left-behind family members. Research in the 1980s from Nigeria reflects on the autonomous migration of young women migrating voluntarily and involuntarily to Europe to engage in sex work. Contemporary research shows that young women from Nigeria are migrating to urban cities as domestic workers. For Muslim women, more invisible in the migration literature, reasons cited for migration relate to social security, well-being and access to higher education. Evidence shows women migrating independently as migrant workers because of increasing

divorce rates and lack of local economic opportunities. These women are also becoming the primary breadwinners for sending remittances to the family. Women's remittances go towards healthcare, food, nutrition, housing and education while men focus on investment needs. On the plus side, migration is said to improve women's autonomy, self-worth, authority and even standing in the community.

While migration may lead to potential benefits for women, in the form of greater freedom, increased autonomy and livelihoods, the downside of women migrating independently leads to increased family tensions, increased vulnerability to health and sexual violence, and the potential for xenophobic attacks. It makes them more perceptible to crime and forces them to engage in sexual acts for economic and social well-being. Women migrants faced social exclusion through labelling and prejudice because of their low socio-economic status.

Research shows that women who were forced to migrate experience depression due to separation from their families. A broader body of research on left-behind children in Ghana show that reverse remittances and marital instability has an adverse effect on left-behind children's subjective well-being which negatively affects migrant mothers in host countries. In South Africa, the intersection of xenophobia, racism, and patriarchy exposes African women to these triple forms of discrimination, increasing their risks and vulnerabilities in the host country. Women are further disadvantaged in the agricultural sector as they make up most of the labour force and are more susceptible to climate change and environmental disasters.

Other migration drivers that are given less attention that contribute to the migration flows of women are demographic changes, urbanisation, land grabbing, the freedom to practice their religion, and tolerance of LGTBQI groups.

Internal migration and urbanization

Research on internal migration and urbanization in Africa shows the increased movement from rural areas to urban areas. In Africa, compared to the 1960s where the numbers of people moving from rural to urban areas were around 15 per cent, this increased to 43 per cent in 2018 (UNECA, 2017). Research purports for the effective integration of urban policies into migration governance and making cities and human settlements safer, more inclusive and sustainable. Internal migrants move to urban areas in search of better opportunities, be it financial or educational, to diversify incomes due to climate change, and social and cultural practices that are discriminatory towards women.

Together with migration and natural population growth, a negative image of rural migrants who settle in unplanned and informal settlements has been created. Urban cities are seen as important areas of growth and development. Changing urbanization trends in Africa portrays a steady increase in poverty and inequality, with varying regional patterns across the continent. Earlier research by the African Development Bank Group in 2012, shows that approximately 47.8 per cent of the urban population were located in North Africa compared to 32.8 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa. Recent statistical evidence reflects that Central and West Africa dominate the urban population growth rates, while East, Southern and North Africa show accordant growth figures. Despite being described as one of the least urbanized continents across the globe, there are numerous future projections that Africa will become increasingly fast-growing, with estimations that the current population will double by 2050 and resettle in African urban areas. This growth will continue with increasing migration trends accelerating the urbanization process. However, opportunities and challenges linked to this growth will be dependent on high levels of control and management.

International migration

African migration is mainly intracontinental. South Africa is a magnate for international migrants with over 4 million migrants, followed by Côte d'Ivoire with 2.5 million. Europe is the favoured destination for African outbound migrants. In 2019, the African Migration Report recorded that 26.9 percent (i.e. 10.6 million) of the total 39.4 million Africans worldwide lived in Europe. Asia accounted for 4.6 million and North America was 3.2 million. In contrast to the media portrayal of Africans flooding Europe, the number of African migrants in Europe is one of the lowest. While this information relates to regular migration, data on irregular migration is difficult to access. Draft statutes to enhance data and analysis of Africa's migration management was signed in February 2020. Once more accurate data can be obtained about the continent's regular and irregular migration flows, governments can be better informed, prepared, and put support measures in place.

Between 2000 and 2019 international migrants comprise 2 per cent of the total population in Africa, compared with 3.5 per cent for the world as a whole, we see an increase in international migrants in Africa from 15.1 million to 26.6 million. This was quite a significant increase of 76% among all major regions of the world. Even though this increase was sharp, the total number of international migrants in Africa is modest compared to other world regions. International migrants make up 2 per cent of the total population in Africa, compared with 3.5 per cent for the world as a whole. It is interesting to note that Southern Africa hosted the largest migrant population at 6.7%. Seven countries in Africa hosted more than 1 million international migrants, including South Africa (4.2 million), Côte d'Ivoire (2.5 million), Uganda (1.7 million), Nigeria and Ethiopia (1.3 million each), the Sudan (1.2 million) and Kenya (1 million).

An estimated 47 per cent of all international migrants are female in Africa, very similar to the count for female migrants globally which is 48 per cent. It is interesting to note that in Eastern Africa, women account for 50 percent of migrants, in Middle Africa and Western Africa (47% each), and in Southern Africa it is 44 per cent and in Northern Africa, account for 43 per cent.

Impact on family well-being linked to migration

There is a wider body of literature examing migrant mothers' separation from their children. Mothers often have to make the difficult decision of leaving their children behind with left-behind family members. Migration exposes the children to potentially risky and impoverished environments with uncertain journeys ahead. The added burden of this migration decision involves mothers needing to make important life-impacting decisions about their children's lives, including: length of separation, costs and benefits of their decisions, the willingness of potential family members to care for the children, and expectations of carers. The impact of family well-being on left-behind children and family members needs additional research. Studies on left-behind children show mothers' absences impacts negatively on them, resulting in failing grades, a decrease in the children's quality of life, precarious and unsustainable situations. Research also shows discriminatory attitudes toward migrant mothers who migrate without their children, or those who put their families at risk. Women are painted in a negative light as neglecting their children, and abandoning them and her family. Men who migrate are not painted in this same light. A body of literature on Somali women migrating independently in Africa shows that family separation causes heightened emotional distress, inclusive of loneliness, concern and anxiety. While it is not only daily survival challenges that leave migrants feeling anxious but the

constant concern for the well-being of their loved ones left behind causes them increased distress and anxiety. A growing body of literature shows how women migrants use ICT's to mitigate against their absence from home. Studies show how the use of ICT's have made it easy for migrant women to remain in regular contact with their families; how mobile technologies is used to fulfil mothering responsibilities towards left-behind children in communicating and monitoring their children. Studies show that ICTs play an important role in preserving the mental health of migrants who are physically separated from their families. More current research shows how women cross-border traders use ICT as a strategic resource to keep in touch with their families and as a source of empowerment in their work as cross-border traders. The use of online trading platforms proves advantageous for migrant women, as it minimizes the problems faced by the traders, such as marginalization in a foreign country, health risks and vulnerabilities they experience when crossing borders, mental health issues when travelling and being away from their families for extended periods.

3. **Migration and conflicts**

Africa has been dispersed for many years whereby human movements and mobilities occurred on a large scale due to various displacements, including slavery, conflict and cheap labour. Various push factors influence individuals in African societies to migrate and these are politically and economically motivated. In addition, war, genocide, and terrorism have increased refugee migrations. Furthermore, international migration to developed states stimulates a political economy perspective that acknowledges the positive impact of international relations and the practice of security dilemmas that states develop within their borders. The African continent experience internal violence and exploitation of human rights and this occurred in the 1960s whereby thirty per cent experienced conflict. These African countries failed to achieve sustainable development goals and objectives.

The push factors in African countries play a major role in the migration of individuals and this includes low socio-economic status, increased unemployment, war, genocide, inadequate healthcare and corruption. However, pull factors included individuals' demands for better healthcare services, better rights and freedom, a lawful environment and economic opportunities.

Africa still continues to bear the scourge of record levels of forced displacement as a result of rapacious governments, political in-fighting, civil wars and violent extremist groups. In 2021, it experienced a record level of forced displacement. An estimated 32 million Africans were either internally displaced refugees or asylum seekers. In 2019, Africa became host to 7.3 million refugees (including asylum seekers), this figure accounted for 25 per cent of the global refugee population.

Records show that Africa's displaced population is concentrated in ten African countries. These top ten countries are in conflict and account for all forcibly displaced people on the continent. The conflicts include governments' repressive actions against citizens, extremist group violence, militia factions, armed gangs and organized criminal groups linked to transnational crimes involving terrorism, kidnapping, human trafficking, smuggling of migrants and smuggling of arms and weapons.

The increased securitization of intra-African migration impacts the ratification of Africa's free movement of person agenda. In addition, the porosity of borders, lack of similar travel documentation, a lack of cohesive policy frameworks by member states, lack of capacity and properly trained border personnel, plus appropriate infrastructure, hampers the adequate policing of border controls.

The impact on families fleeing persecution and conflict can have a detrimental effect on the family members' well-being and concern for their family members.

Environmental and climate change can influence migration patterns on the continent. Africa is one of the most susceptible continents to climate change. Research confirms that migration and conflict are two seminal consequences of environmental change emerging from the environment-migration and climate-conflict subfields. The context within which environmental change leads to migration or conflict are complex and manifold. The contextual social, political, economic and cultural fields need to be considered when examining how the environment impacts migration and conflict. Freeman makes the important point that the nature of war and conflict in Africa is changing, replacing large-scale civil wars with smaller, limited or regional conflict. While challenges to the state were becoming less common, diverse forms of violence such as election violence, political violence and violence over resources were taking precedence.

4. **Displaced populations**

Africa still continues to bear the scourge of record levels of forced displacement as a result of rapacious governments, political in-fighting, civil wars and violent extremist groups. In 2021, it experienced a record level of forced displacement. In 2021, an estimated 32 million Africans were either internally displaced refugees or asylum seekers. Violence, natural disasters and climate change are contributing factors of displaced populations. In 2019, globally, there were 41.3 million people displaced internally, the causes of which are violence and conflict, of this number, 41 percent were in countries across Africa. In addition, that same year, environmental disasters such as drought, floods and tropical cyclones displaced another 2.6 million people. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are not refugees, they do not receive international protection that comes from crossing a national border in times of crisis.

Of the 32 million forcibly displaced persons, 24 million are internally displaced, meaning that they have fled to the first safe refuge. If they are within their own country, they should be protected by their own government, which may adhere to the Kampala Declaration. If they have been forced to cross a border, then additional international laws of protection apply once a forcibly displaced person is outside their country of origin (such as the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol or the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention.

Important to stress that Africa hosts the world's first legally binding regional instrument on internal displacement, the Kampala Convention. Forty (40) member States of the African Union are signatories to the convention and, as of February 2020, 29 States have ratified it. While States have already made a notable commitment to the convention, it still needs to be systematically and comprehensively translated into practice by the African States to realize its full potential

With three-quarters of African countries ranking among the least developed countries, underdevelopment can contribute to instability and inter-linked to displacement. What is prevalent is simultaneously attending to multiple drivers of displacement. In Africa, countries are dealing with multicausal drivers of displacement and understanding the interlinkages between conflict and natural hazard-related displacement becomes necessary.

In Africa, urban areas are the fastest growing areas, with climate change prompting a shift towards African cities. Sub-Saharan Africa is noted as the world's fastest urbanizing region. While IDP's are drawn to urban areas to seek assistance, they often end up in with the urban poor in slum areas, exposing them to additional health hazards, other risks and forced evictions, increasing their vulnerability.

Two examples, in Mogadishu, is home to approximately 600 000 IDP's, can change and reshape urban landscapes. Can add diverse urban landscape to create social and economic opportunities to leverage on skills of IDP's. In Maiduguri in Nigeria, internal displacement led to new local markets opening up.

IDPs have adopted a range of coping mechanisms in Burundi, including prolonged migration and sending family members in search of work, in addition to selling assets, reducing the quantity or quality of food, reducing non-food costs such as school and health care and dependence on humanitarian assistance.

While considering the needs of IDPs, it is also important to understand the impact of displacement on host communities. For host communities, the availability of financial resources to cater for the growing community can strain fragile economies, infrastructure and social services. In home communities, the loss of labour on already strained communities can have a detrimental effect, together with a breakdown in economic and basic services, can increase the vulnerability of the community and risk potential.

Research from OCHA highlights the following:

- The DRC has at least over 6 million forcibly displaced people, this means it has at least a third more displacement than any other country in Africa.
- In South Sudan, with a total population of 11 million, 4 million are forcibly displaced. This makes South Sudan the country with the most displaced population. Most of its forcibly displaced are refugees and asylum seekers, primarily in Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia.
- In 2020, Ethiopia's forcibly displaced population increased, with almost 1.8 million people dislocated due to the conflict in Tigray. Ethiopia also hosts over 800,000 refugees from surrounding countries.
- In recent years, Nigeria has encountered a number of destabilizing security threats. In the North East region, violent attacks by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa have displaced 2.5 million Nigerians. It is further plagued by kidnappings, extortion, and organized criminal attacks in the North West that an additional 800, 000 people have been displaced.
- Sudan has 2.5 million of its own internally displaced population, in addition to hosting 1.1 million refugees from South Sudan and Eritrea.
- As a result of militant Islamist group violence originating in Mali, Burkina Faso is dealing with an unprecedented upsurge in forced displacement with close to 1.2 million inhabitants being displaced.
- Mozambique, experienced a violent insurgency in the north by Ahlu Sunnah wa Jama'a (ASWJ), resulting in the number of displaced increasing from 211,00 to 668,000 people in the past year.

Recommendations:

- Data shows that the Africa-to-Africa migration corridor, is the fifth largest in the world. One of the pitfalls of documenting and recording migration flows on the continent is that information about these migration flows are limited, especially pertaining to internal flows. Reliable data on socio-economic conditions related to migration in rural and urban areas, further disaggregated by age, sex and origin of emigrants is required.
- Using an Africa-centric lens to understand a community's cultures, norms and values will further strengthen an understanding of how it influences/affects migration patterns.

- While the migration agenda has been placed high on the list of African countries, with numerous inter-State cooperation agreements, there is little on-going cooperation and information sharing between countries about migration. This hampers the collection and collation of meaningful and comparable data that could benefit researchers and policymakers.
- More effort must be made in better utilizing existing migration platforms to coordinate information and data sharing to inform policy makers.
- Concrete, empirical evidence based studies are required to counterpose the negative narrative of migration from Africa.
- It is incumbent that reliable official data and appropriate sampling frameworks in the form of census or survey data is the priority of every government.
- The impact of migration on left-behind children needs more critical engagement and should become a priority on government agendas.

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