

Migration Dynamics in Western and Southern Africa

Introductory Article

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ABSTRACT

Migrations have occurred throughout human history. Human migration generally refers to the movement of people from one place or state in the world to another for taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence, usually across a political boundary. This can occur at a variety of measures, i.e. intercontinental (between continents), intracontinental (between countries on a given continent), and interregional (within countries). Either migration of people from one place to another can be voluntarily or they may be forced to move. Accompanied with migration are many challenges that migrants experience; these may be physical, financial, psychological or emotional. Human migration affects population patterns and characteristics, social and cultural arrangements and processes, economies, and the physical environment. As people move, their cultural personalities and ideas diffuse with them, creating and changing traditional landscapes.

CONTEXTUALISATION OF RESEARCH

The movement of people within the country and outside of its borders has historically been a major feature of most societies. A wide range of factors has been responsible for why people choose to migrate. Broadly there are push and pull factors that underlie reasons for migration. The push factor being reasons why people want to leave their country whilst pull factors are reasons why people want to go to a new country. Some of these migrants are escaping from poverty, armed conflict, social strife, political turmoil and economic hardships. This will invariably have an impact on the political, cultural, economic and social dimensions of the host country. Although push-pull factors provide a framework for understanding the motives for movements, a need exists to understand the dynamics of globalisation affecting migration. Globalisation since the mid-twentieth century and in the 21st century has also been a cause of migration due to the advancement in transport and communication technology as travel time and

distances between countries no longer pose a challenge. Hence, the movement of people across borders not only reshapes the political, cultural, economic and social spheres of nations it creates new transnational communities and interdependencies between people and states.

In this special edition on migration five diverse papers are presented, all of which focus on the African context. Four research papers focus on South Africa whilst one focuses on West Africa. In the African context, South Africa presents an interesting context as it brings new insight on the different facets of migration considering its long isolation due to apartheid and its colonial history. It is the most recent democracy in the continent since its liberation in 1994. Being such, it has become a popular destination for migrants from all over Africa and the globe due to it being perceived as the regional powerhouse in the continent.

Post-apartheid South Africa embraced being a Rainbow Nation, accommodating its diverse racial and ethnic population groups living in the country. It also tolerated the massive migration of African foreign nationals from different parts of the continent and provided political asylum to those that fled their home country due to the ravishes of war, political upheavals and famine. In addition, it held a soft approach towards undocumented migrants who escaped the scrutiny of migration policy. Migrants in South Africa, in the early phases of democracy and in the past integrated within local communities and eked out a living in a diverse number of economic sectors. They even set up families by marrying locals and introduced new business and entrepreneurial skills to the country.

The peace and sense of security enjoyed by migrants was short-lived after fourteen years of democracy with the outbreak of xenophobic violence in 2008, which shocked the world. At the centre of this violence were Mozambicans, Malawians and Zimbabweans who were violently attacked. At least 60 foreign nationals were killed, hundreds injured and thousands displaced. A variety of reasons was found contributing to this xenophobic violence. High unemployment rates amongst locals, porous borders, escalating crime rates, poverty, police and government corruption, ineffective service delivery and an inept foreign policy featured as primary causes of this violence.

Despite the various explanations for the xenophobic violence, there is reason to believe that migrants were caught in the wave of nationalism that began permeating the different facets of South African life after democracy. Post liberation the emphasis was on racial inclusivity, building a Rainbow Nation and embracing the African Renaissance. A new set of patriotism took precedence in constructing a post-apartheid political conscience (Murray 2003: 443) to the extent that even local consumer goods were branded “proudly South African”. Dodson (2010: 6) asserts that the spirit of nation building meant the creation of a new oppositional “other,” and that this “other” was essentially defined as “non-South African”. The manifestation of this “other” is projected onto foreign Africans living in South Africa, described as strangers or aliens.

A second outbreak occurred in 2015, which went contrary to the former President Thabo Mbeki's vow during the 2008 xenophobic violence that South Africa "would never see again" such violence (Westcott, 2015). This time round, the xenophobic violence was spurred by the comments made by the Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini at a moral regeneration event held in KwaZulu-Natal. He stated that foreigners should go back to their home countries because they were changing the nature of South African society with their goods and enjoying wealth that should have been set aside for local people (South African History on Line, 2016). This became the catalyst for xenophobic violence once again in the country with Durban experiencing the most internecine as compared to other provinces. The violence took the form of setting alight foreign migrant owned shops, looting of shops, evicting migrants from their homes, assaulting and murdering them. The government repatriated amongst others over 5,500 people, primarily from Malawi and Zimbabwe (Tejas 2015). The socioeconomic impact of the high numbers of particularly low-skilled foreigners living in the country was one reason for repatriation.

Despite prevalence of xenophobia amongst a section of South African population, the vast majority of South Africans condemn such actions and welcome migrants to be part of South African society and it's Rainbow Nation. The actions and overwhelming goodwill expressed by South African civil society through humanitarian assistance and places of safety at the time of the violence provides a contrary view. It suggests that not all South Africans are xenophobic. The goodwill of South Africans is exemplified by the ongoing support from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and a number of Humanitarian Aid Organisations that provide a variety of services to migrants. These organisations are patronised by South Africans who originate from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Mention needs to be made of sections of the private sector that provide employment and the patronage of South Africans who support the informal economic activities initiated by migrants.

Like South Africa, West African states have a colonial history, which ended from the 1960s onwards. West Africa is a politically and culturally complex region. It has a diversity of religions, dialects, languages and continues to be challenged by vestiges of colonialism even in the 21st century. The region is endowed with human, land, energy and mineral resources. Nigeria has the largest population in the region and concomitantly generates the largest GDP. The region is politically unstable and is characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality. Notwithstanding the social, political, cultural and economic dynamics characterising the region, the movement of people is less restrictive as compared to other parts of the African continent.

The formation of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West Africa) made the movement of people in the region much easier. ECOWAS was formed in 1975 comprising fifteen nation states in the West African region. It affirmed the right of member states with respect to entry, residence and settlement of people in the

region. Although there was a lot of migration and mobility in and across West Africa, the issuance of an ECOWAS passport was the political attempt at supporting the movement of people between different parts of the region. Notwithstanding the permissiveness with which people can move in between countries in the region an important challenge is the paucity in the enforcement of ECOWAS protocols on entry, residence and settlement of people.

Settling in any part of the ECOWAS region poses a major challenge, as the regularisation of documents is very difficult to secure. Harassment at border posts and discrimination against migrants is widely prevalent in the region. The economic and social ills of member states in the region are projected on to migrants instead of the causes of corruption, mismanagement and global forces. Such blame translates into xenophobic behaviour, which makes migrants the target of attacks and abuse. Migrants in the region are confronted with a major challenge in respect of easy and risk-free transfer of remittances to their home country. This is due to inter-country restrictions on money transfer and costly transactions.

It would appear from the synopsis on migration in both South Africa and West Africa certain similarities and challenges exist. The papers that are presented in this volume although diverse in nature, but given the context, history and locality of the two countries some lessons and insights can be drawn. In the paper titled “The Migration and Integration of Ejigbo-Yoruba in Côte d’Ivoire” Adebusuyi Isaac Adeniran illustrates how unhindered migration can be identified as a medium for spreading development initiatives at a regional level. Adeniran highlights the role of open migratory systems in enabling the emergence of a regional identity in West Africa. This cross-border migration is traced to precolonial times. During colonial times, the geographical and political demarcation of borders in this region was enforced and the economy of nation states was monetized. In the post-colonial period, there was an emergence of free labour migration for wage work and inter-dependencies emerged across borders that were inherited from colonialism. Organised transport operators who traffic people to different parts of the region facilitate movement of people and promote networks amongst migrants between and amongst nation states. This movement of people has led to the development of ideas across border, securing funds for individual and community initiated projects across borders. Adeniran illustrates in his study that a large number of migrants from anglophone Nigeria have found it easier to trade and settle in francophone Côte d’Ivoire despite colonial, linguistic and geographical impediments.

Gerelence Juggunath in her paper titled “Foodways in the Indian diaspora: Hindu women expatriates in South Africa” discusses how cultural continuity, innovation and choices that Indian emigrants in South Africa make to enhance and reassert their identity. Using the preparation and consumption of food amongst Indian migrants, the paper illustrates how food plays a defining role in engaging local and national culture. What people eat reflects numerous factors including societal, spiritual, artistic, psychological, as well as political, economic

and other conditions. From a feminist perspective, the paper explores the women's gendered roles in providing, preparing and presenting food to their families, and the balance they maintain in imparting family and cultural values, while adjusting to life and foodways in South Africa. An important transition that expatriate women had to make in the South African diaspora was to make an adjustment from the extended household to a nuclear family set up. As consequence of this change in household structure, there were no kin and support structures such as house cleaners, gardeners, cooks and drivers, which resulted in them adapting to all household responsibilities. One of the ways in which they managed to prepare food was through the technological medium of Skype calls to their mothers and mothers-in-law in India. They also imported certain food items that were not available in South Africa. The women enjoyed displaying regional cuisine at family and other social gatherings as a way of highlighting their cooking talents. It was the women's way of preserving traditional recipes and asserting their regional and caste identity through their culinary skills. It presented an opportunity where the women shared recipes, communicated in the mother tongue, recollected stories, expressed their concerns, reminisced about India, and developed culinary skills or what LeBesco and Naccarato (2008:236) term, 'culinary capital'.

Continuing on the discourse of women migrants, Kalpana Hiralal in her paper titled "Women, migration and domestic violence" documents the narratives of immigrant women who have been victims of domestic violence, often trapped in abusive relationships largely through migration policy, language impediment, lack of finance and cultural and social isolation. Hiralal contends that the traditional analysis of migration has often been male centred with women perceived as and treated as adjuncts to men, because they came as part of family migration. Hence, female migration has been "hidden from history". However, feminist analysis of migration seeks to locate migration in the context of identity, agency, livelihoods and employment. Although women are no longer seen as passive victims and 'dependants' but as principal wage earners and head of households in the migration process (Nolin 2006: 5), in reality they still continue to be subjugated. This is not because of choice but due to circumstance. Given the unfamiliar social setting, lack of funds, fears of social ostracism and lack of community support are some of the factors that prevent women from leaving their husband. Abused migrant women found it difficult to seek help, as many locals were seemingly unfriendly, largely due to xenophobic attitudes, language differences made it difficult to bring the abuse to the attention of law enforcement officials and due to their immigration status. In addition, cultural factors played an important role in silencing women from reporting domestic violence. One of the major findings of the study was that the lack of money was a primary reason for migrant women remaining in abusive relationships. Although South Africa is an increasingly popular destination for migrants, the context is intimidating and unstable where women migrants suffer violence, overt hostility, social exclusion as well as economic exploitation.

In the paper titled “Cross Provincial Migration amongst the South African Indian Diaspora” Sultan Khan looks at factors that influence cross provincial migration amongst the Indian diaspora in South Africa. During their arrival from the 1860s onwards, a large community of indentured labourers settled in the province of Natal whilst their trading class counterparts immigrated mainly to the Gauteng Province. The paper traces the historical movement and settlement policy of the colonial and later apartheid regime that restricted Blacks including the Indian diaspora from moving into urban centres and across the provincial boundaries of the country. Indians were primarily restricted to live and work on the periphery of the urban centres. The penetration of Indians into white classified areas led to the promulgation of a series of legislations to prevent influx. One of the most notorious legislation was the Group Areas Act of 1950, which forcibly removed some thousands of Indians from settled neighbourhoods and resettled them into dormitory-like townships, which were monolithic and mono-functional in nature. The movement of Indians to the economic hub of Gauteng was restricted and so it was in the white dominated province of the Orange Free State. In the post-apartheid era, all legislation on the movement and settlement of South Africans has been abolished. It is in this context that the fourth and fifth generation Indians are migrating from the Province of the KwaZulu-Natal to Gauteng Province. Amongst this cohort of migrants, there are highly educated and skilled individuals. One of the major push factors for the movement of Indians to Gauteng Province is the implementation of affirmative action policies in KwaZulu-Natal, which provides them with little work opportunity as many of the lucrative jobs are reserved for Black Africans.

Shanta Balgobind Singh looks at the incarceration of African foreign nationals in a South African prison. The paper titled “Migration and African Foreign Nationals incarcerated at the Westville Correctional Centre, Durban, South Africa”, Balgobind Singh interrogates the different policies on migration and incarceration of migrants who have come into conflict with the law and consequently remanded into custody. African foreign nationals similar to South Africans who have come into conflict with the law are incarcerated in overcrowded prisons and under unhealthy living conditions. In the study, the research subjects were held in remand without trial for crimes pertaining to assault, possession of drugs, theft, robbery, and expired visa. In all of these offences, the subjects alleged to be framed by law enforcement officials. In addition, corruption on the part of law enforcement officials who demanded bribes in order to evade prosecution was observed. It was further observed that law enforcement officials were in breach of the South African Immigration Law, which stipulates that foreign nationals be held in remand in a correctional service for a maximum of thirty days. The average period in custody was six months with some being incarcerated for almost a year. One of the major reason for prolonged incarceration amongst foreign nationals in remand was their inability to afford paying bail. In this respect, Balgobind-Singh asserts that South African law enforcement officials are in violation of the Bill of Rights, which states that

everyone including prisoners is equal before the law, and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

The five papers provide different insights into migration and some of the dynamics that underlie it. The dynamics of the role of migratory systems; local and national culture; identity and violence provides a deeper understanding into migration. These characteristics are not specific to the African continent, but it are also found elsewhere in the globe. Migration trends and patterns in Africa as a continent will perhaps compare well with migration in developing countries. Some of the migration characteristics prevalent on the African continent could easily feature in the migratory discourse in developed countries. The rationale behind such an assertion is that the migrant contexts may be different but the dynamics underlying it could be similar. Such an assumption needs to be tested through comparative research.

CONCLUSION

The worldwide sense of crisis surrounding the mass movements of refugees and migrants has given rise to debates specifically addressing the issues surrounding migration. The relative underdevelopment of some countries is a major factor that lures people to move towards better developed countries with more prospects for development and upward movement on the socio-economic hierarchy. The data source for this special edition was derived from articles generated by various researchers. The articles in this special edition provides a valuable contribution towards understanding migration. The research demonstrates that despite the negative connotations attached to foreign migrants, they are individuals with dreams and ambitions who migrate with the hope of attaining a better life, not only for themselves, but also for their families who they have left behind.

International migration and internal mobility are one way of addressing the growing demographic and persisting economic disparities. When migrants move, many manage to improve their income, access to education, or personal security, as well as contributing to the welfare of their regions of origin. However, migrants are also at risk of being exploited or experiencing discrimination. While migration cannot mitigate all of the labour market challenges and economic inequalities for the coming years and decades, smart migration, integration, and non-discrimination policies will have considerable implications. Future migration policies should aim at reducing the direct and indirect costs of migration while maximizing the possible benefits of migration. When developing these policies, it is crucial that decision makers consider and invest in long-term solutions that can be adapted to meet the changing needs of their economies and societies. Whether they are fleeing armed conflict or economic deprivation – or both – people will continue trying to cross borders in search of a decent life, and the global community needs to address this. Internationally and nationally, immigration policies should prepare appropriate governance structures and

policies in the present moment to prevent greater difficulties later. National governments and international bodies need to act together in a collaborative planning process involving the sharing of best practices and the development of guiding principles for policymaking to ensure migration because of environmental change and as an adaptation strategy to be adequately incorporated into their planning.

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