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## **AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGE OF MIGRATION**

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*“Laws, fences, even the risk of drowning in the Mediterranean won’t stop people from migrating...the only way to stop people from migrating is to give them a reason to stay.”*

Solomon Melessia<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*The paper addresses itself to the phenomenon of migration of Africans to Western countries in search of better opportunities. Africa has lost and (continues to lose) its human resource through migration to destinations outside the continent. It is a phenomenon that has roused debates among policy makers, academics and other stakeholders particularly with regard to migration of skilled manpower that would have been critical to the development of Africa. The continent’s best brains are flocking to countries that are already endowed with a significant percentage of skilled manpower at the expense of Africa. The paper has looked at the brief history of migration, some of the reasons as to why Africans migrate to the West, its impact on Africa, hardships and successes of African migrants and possible solutions to this seemingly endless exodus of Africans to the Diaspora.*

**Key words:** Migration, illegal migrants, refugees, people smugglers

### **Methodology**

The study focuses on Africa which of late has become a key source of migrants to Western countries. The continent has a population of about 1.2 billion, with over 60% being under 25 years (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2017), Africa continues to lose its youthful and energetic population to the West through migration and most of the migrants use illegal and risky means to get out of the continent. Countries of

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origin and destination are considered in the discussion. Research was conducted through reading relevant literature and making reference to electronic and internet sources.

## Introduction

This paper will focus on migration from Africa to the West, reasons why people have continued to migrate from Africa, the impact of this migration on the continent and what can be done to stem the outflow of human resource for the benefit of the continent's social-economic development.

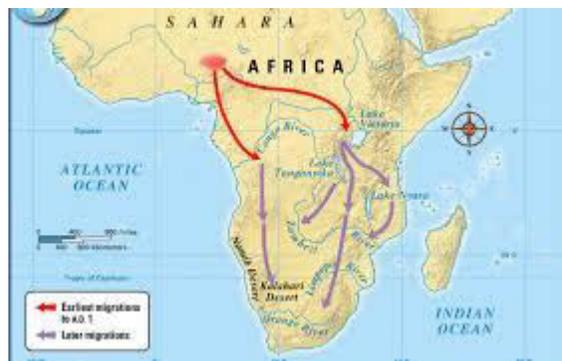
## Migration in the Twenty First Century

In the last few years, the world has been flooded with reports of people from different parts of the world fleeing their home countries to other lands in search of better lives. From Asia to Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, millions of people have continued to move elsewhere due to political oppression, outbreaks of war, economic collapse, religious persecution, and drought, among other factors. However from 2015, there has been an unprecedented movement of people across international boundaries and many of these people were illegal migrants. At the end of 2015, Germany alone had taken in 1.1 million refugees and migrants, most of whom were fleeing the wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Apart from those crossing continents, there are migrants who move within their own countries (rural-urban migration, internally displaced persons), regions and sub regions such as Somali refugees in Kenya, South Sudanese who have sought refuge in other African countries, the Rohingya Muslim minority who have fled religious persecution in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar for safety in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, and the millions who continue to journey from Latin America and the Caribbean northwards to the United States and beyond.

**Migration** can be defined as the movement of people from one place to another. It is influenced by push and pull factors and can be voluntary or involuntary. Migration is a phenomenon that has occurred throughout human history. Archeological evidence by the Australian Museum (2016) indicates that the first migration out of Africa to Europe and Asia occurred about 1.75 million years ago by the human species known as *Homo ergaster* and was followed by *Homo erectus* approximately 1.6 million years later. It is believed that the movement was prompted by the sudden drop in the earth's temperature that led to the Ice Age which made it difficult for humans to survive the extremely cold weather and many of them died (National Geographic Society, 2016). Those who moved from Africa at the time could well be described as the first ever *environmental refugees*. When the weather improved and the population increased, some of the people moved to Europe, the Middle East, and South East Asia up to Australia. This partially explains the existence of people of African ancestry in some of these lands (National Geographic Society, 2016; British Broadcasting Corporation {BBC} News website, 22 September 2016).

One of the most significant human movements in Africa is what is referred to as **Bantu migration or Bantu expansion** that took place about 3,000 years ago. There was a series of mass migration from West Africa to Central, East and Southern Africa that was prompted by factors such as drought, famine and population explosion. It is estimated that up to 60 million people migrated from West Africa to other

parts of the continent during this period (<http://www.south-africa-tours-and-travel.com/bantu.html>). The Bantu were mainly farmers and when they settled in southern Africa they established powerful empires such as the Great Zimbabwe and the Zulu Kingdom where King Shaka kaSenzangakhona (1787 - 1828) commonly referred to as Shaka Zulu was one of the most powerful monarchs. Proof that the Bantu expansion was a significant human migration is supported by archaeological, linguistic, genetic, and environmental evidence.



### The Bantu Migration

Map courtesy of sites.google.com

Some of the other major migrations that have occurred in recent history include the following:

1. **Trans Atlantic Slave Trade**– It took place from around 1526 to 1867, and about 12.5 million slaves were forcefully shipped from Africa, of whom 10.7 million were taken to the Americas mainly to provide cheap agricultural labour.
2. **Migration of Europeans to the United States**– This can be traced back to 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed in the New World, and subsequently the wave of human flight continued for several centuries. The migrants were fleeing religious and political persecution, economic hardships and famine caused by serious crop failure. The potato blight of 1845 – 1849 saw about one million Germans leave their country for America. The establishment of colonies in the New World by major European powers of the time like France, Spain and Portugal saw a surge in migrant numbers. In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century about 240,000 Europeans arrived in America but during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Americas had received over 50 million European immigrants ([www.emmigration.info](http://www.emmigration.info)).
3. **The Second Great Migration of African Americans (1941 – 1970)** More than five million African Americans escaped hardship and discrimination in the South to the North, Mid West and West of the country (Gregory, 2009).
4. **The boat people.** These were refugees who were fleeing the war in Vietnam from 1975 onwards. Although the war ended on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1975 the flow of refugees from that country continued and by 1997, more than 1.6 million Vietnamese had left their country mainly because of hardships resulting from the conflict. Of these 700,00 had fled their country by boat – hence the phrase *boat people* – while the rest left overland and ended up in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore

and Thailand. Many of them were eventually resettled in the West as well as Australia. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), between 200,000 and 400,000 boat people died at sea while fleeing their country for safety elsewhere.

The eruption of conflict in Syria in February 2011 as part of the “Arab Spring” triggered one of the largest human migrations of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The “Arab Spring” was a wave of popular uprisings against autocratic regimes in the Arab world that started in Tunisia in 2010 and spread to Egypt, Libya and other Middle East countries. Some of the countries to which Syrian refugees had fled to by October 2016 and the corresponding number of arrivals are as follows:

1. United Kingdom	8,000
2. USA	12,000
3. Jordan	655,000
4. Turkey	2.5 million
5. Pakistan	1.6 million
6. Lebanon	1.5 million

These are official figures, but there are many Syrians who have fled (and continue to flee) war at home but are undocumented in their adopted countries. China, Russia and the Gulf states had not taken in any Syrian refugees by 2016 (Amnesty International, 2016).

### **Out of Africa**

The movement of native populations out of Africa from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been influenced mainly by the desire to seek a better life outside the continent after dissatisfaction with conditions back home. Following independence in the 1960s, Africans were hopeful that the end of colonial rule would bring a new era of economic and social prosperity. After undergoing hardships associated with colonial rule such as restriction of basic freedoms, racism and denial of economic opportunities, the dawn of independence was viewed as an opportunity for Africans to manage their own affairs, determine their destiny and enjoy a dignified life, but this was not necessarily the case. Political oppression (Zaire {Democratic Republic of Congo-DRC}, Uganda, Central African Republic), coups that resulted into despotic military dictatorships (Ghana, Benin, Togo, Somalia, Ethiopia, Mali, Republic of Congo) and economic challenges are some of the factors that caused disaffection among some people in Africa. Poor governance through autocratic one-party dictatorships created harsh conditions in some countries forcing many citizens to flee. Malawi under Hastings Kamuzu Banda and Guinea-Conakry under Ahmed Sekou Toure and Kenya under Daniel Arap Moi are good examples.

### **Brain Drain**

In other cases a combination of these factors encouraged emigration, for example political oppression, war, drought and famine in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia). Those who could get the chance to flee their homeland did so at the slightest opportunity. They include students who went for further education overseas and chose to stay abroad at the end of their studies, thus denying Africa a

critical skilled human resource that would have been crucial in the continent's development. This formed the beginning of the "brain drain" for Africa that has continued to date with serious consequences for the continent. From 1960 to 1987, 30% of Africa's highly skilled manpower departed for the West; between 1986 and 1990, approximately 50,000 to 60,000 Africans in the middle and higher managerial echelons left the continent, and since then, more than 23,000 academicians migrate from Africa annually (Adepoju, 2008).

Other professions have also been affected by the endless flow of trained personnel from Africa. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) more than 12,000 South African trained doctors work in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. The figure for Ghana is 926 doctors practicing in the OECD states yet back home there is a serious shortage of medical personnel (Africa Focus Bulletin, September 2016). The trend is the same all over Africa and affects a wide range of professions. Virtually all sectors have been affected by this drain which has negatively affected Africa's forward movement. Public hospitals lack doctors and nurses, institutions of higher education face serious shortages of experienced faculty staff, among others. Sadly, African governments hire expatriates at exorbitant costs to fill the gap left by migrating, highly skilled nationals. Payments to expatriates working in Africa have been put as high as US \$4 billion per annum (<http://www.aracorporation.org/files/factsandfigures.pdf>). Countries where Africa's skilled human resource has settled are major beneficiaries because they did not train these specialists yet they gain from their expertise.

With the end of the racist apartheid regime in South Africa in 1994, the country became another magnet of attraction for African migrants. Out of a population of 50 million, up to 5 million are believed to be immigrants from Sub Sahara Africa, a majority of them from neighbouring Zimbabwe and living in their adopted country illegally. The Zimbabweans fled their country following President Robert Mugabe's controversial land and economic reform policies from the year 2000 that led to a near collapse of the once vibrant agricultural sector, shortages of basic goods (including food) and hyper inflation. Migrants from Sub Sahara Africa were attracted by South Africa's strong economy that promised jobs and other opportunities that were not easily available in their home countries.

Scores of Africans who are facing social-economic challenges still dream of migrating to the West in search of better opportunities and the surge in number of migrants is unstoppable, fueled by increasing difficulties at home and the belief that life in the West is better than in Africa. As of May 2014, it was estimated that about 600,000 illegal migrants were waiting on the North African shores to cross into Europe (*The Economist*, May 31, 2014).

A majority of African illegal migrants reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea although there are other routes that migrants use to leave Africa, such as through Egypt into Israel, across the Red Sea into Saudi Arabia and Yemen. These Middle East countries are usually a stop-over because for many migrants their dream is to eventually settle in Europe. A few African migrants have opted to take the long route to South and Central America from where they try their luck of getting to the United States and Europe.

They start by moving overland to South Africa, and then are smuggled by air to Brazil. From South America they find their way to Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico and into the United States (UNODC, 2016). However the number of African migrants who use alternative routes to leave their continent is still small compared to those who use the Mediterranean Sea because the latter is the shorter and more direct route to Europe. Initially it was principally the upper and middle class who would migrate because they were educated and could afford to pay for the journey but today even those who are less endowed do all they can to raise funds to enable them migrate, with some selling all that they have in order to make it overseas.

Illegal migrants go through a lot of hardships in trying to attain their goals. They have to pay between US \$5,000.00 and US \$10,000.00 per person to people smugglers who promise them safe passage to Europe. The cost of the journey varies due to such factors as the country of origin, the distance from one's country and how many international borders have to be crossed before reaching the desired destination. Those wishing to migrate to countries like Germany, Sweden, Norway and Finland have to pay a higher "premium" partly because of these countries' strong economies and the belief that it would be easier to make it there compared to countries like Greece, Spain and Portugal. Due to desperation, migrants go to extreme ends to raise the "migration fees". On Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016, the BBC reported that African migrants transiting through Egypt are forced to sell some of their body parts to human organs smugglers so as to raise enough money to enable them get to Europe. The organs, mainly kidneys, were being sold for between 2,000 – 15,000 United Kingdom pounds each.

The journey entails moving through thousands of kilometers of tropical jungles and the Sahara Desert, exposing oneself to all manner of danger such as wild animals, bandits, militias, dehydration, kidnappers and rapists. Many have died along this stretch and on reaching the North African coast, survivors have to spend time crammed in illegal holding centers as the smugglers plan to take them across the Mediterranean Sea. In September 2016, the BBC reported a case where immigrants were kept in hot, poorly ventilated underground shelters along the Libyan coast as they waited to cross over to Europe. Libya has become the major departure point for African migrants because of the lack of a central government following the overthrow of Col. Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011 and the subsequent breakdown of law and order in the country that led to, among other things, emergence of dozens of militia groups that control different portions of the country. These militias demand payment to guarantee migrants safe passage through their territory. Prior to the overthrow of Gaddafi Libya was a destination country that attracted millions of migrants from Sub Sahara Africa mainly due to proceeds from its then booming oil industry.

On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2015, Save the Children Fund reported that five migrants died after an explosion in a Libyan factory where they were being held prior to crossing to Europe. Dozens of others suffered serious burns but they did not get any medical attention until when they landed (illegally) in Sicily. In early 2016 a boat with about 500 illegal migrants was intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard a few kilometers into the Mediterranean and all on board were brought back to Libya before finally being deported to their home countries. One migrant from the Democratic Republic of Congo claimed to have

spent close to one year on the journey from the DRC to Libya and paid thousands of dollars only to have his dream of reaching Europe cut short by the Libyan authorities. Part of the year was the time he spent in Libya doing odd jobs to raise money so as to be smuggled into Europe. To get to Europe from Libya smugglers put migrants in rickety boats or seriously overloaded rubber dinghies. Some of the vessels are poorly maintained and safety measures are hardly taken into consideration.

Following sustained mass arrivals of illegal migrants into Europe, the European Union formed a body known as the *Frontières extérieures* or FRONTEX on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2004 and tasked it with coordinating activities of border agencies within member countries. The force was equipped with warships and fighter jets to patrol the Mediterranean Sea and conduct operations at entry points in several European countries with the principal goal of keeping away illegal immigrants. However, rather than stop illegal flows of people, the approach taken by the European Union (EU) seems to have encouraged more migrants to move into Europe. FRONTEX warships have been operating close to the Libyan coast looking out for boats filled with Europe-bound migrants and when spotted, the boat occupants are transferred into the rescue ships, given medical attention, food and warm clothing then taken to reception centers on the other side of the Mediterranean. Since would-be migrants and the people smugglers are aware that European ships and planes will come to rescue those in distress at sea, the number of people trying to reach Europe illegally has only increased, thereby working against the plans of FRONTEX. On 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2016, FRONTEX was renamed the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and given additional powers to deal with the migration challenge. (<http://frontex.europa.eu/about-frontex/origin/>)

### **Underwater Graveyard**

Due to overloading, poor safety standards and sometimes bad weather, cases of migrants dying at sea are common. In April 2015 close to 1,250 African migrants died in the Mediterranean Sea of whom 800 drowned in a single incident on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2015 when their fishing boat went down 193 km from the Italian island of Lampedusa (*The Guardian*, Sunday April 19, 2015).

The flows usually pick up during summer when the Mediterranean waters are calm but dwindle during stormy winters. Despite the real danger of dying at sea, more and more migrants still attempt to cross to Europe even after learning of the deaths of many who had gone before them. At the end December, 2015 a total of 1,000,573 migrants had crossed the Mediterranean Sea into Europe, and 3,771 drowned while attempting to reach European shores (International Organisation for Migration-IOM, 2016). In 2016 5,079 African migrants drowned in the Mediterranean Sea (IOM, 2017). The continual loss of life in the Mediterranean has made it the largest underwater graveyard for Africans. Cases of African migrants drowning while making the perilous journey to Europe via the Mediterranean or in the Sahara Desert and elsewhere occur on an almost daily basis but it is only when the number of victims is high that the information gets the attention of the global media. It is ironic that during the slave trade, Africans were forcefully removed from their motherland and shipped to the New World (with some dying on the way) but today they are willingly departing from Africa to the rich countries even at the risk of losing their lives.

Efforts by European governments to stem the flow of migrants into their countries have not bore much fruit and the arrivals have continued undeterred. According to the EU Commissioner for Migration, Dimitris Avramopoulos, erecting fences along borders of European countries "is not a solution." (Reuters, 04/04/2016) This is partly because illegal migration encompasses a complicated network of players that transcends national boundaries. Corrupt government officials (such as police and immigration officers), transporters, document forgers, among others make it almost impossible to stop this form of human trafficking in the near future because all of them have a stake in the "business" that is highly profitable.<sup>2</sup> The economy of some towns along the migration routes in the Sahara desert such as Agadez in Niger and Tamanrasset in Algeria is to a large extent dependent on money paid by migrants on their way to Europe. Advances in technology have made it even easier for the criminal cartels to coordinate their activities across continents and with the involvement of dishonest officials in the game, it becomes even more difficult to put an end to it.

### **Elusive Dream in the Promised Land**

Even for those who make it to Europe, they soon realize that it is not the "promised land" that they had assumed it to be. The different culture, language, harsh weather, racism and xenophobic attacks, lack of proper housing, unemployment, among other hardships soon make the new arrivals realize that life would not be as smooth as expected. Soon or later it dawns on them that they had just exchanged misery without hope for misery with hope. Some of those who were "lucky" to reach the West are regretting having made the decision to leave Africa because life had proved very hard for them.

Humiliating scenes of African migrants living rough on the streets of Paris, Rome, Milan, Berlin and other cities became common in 2015. The main train station in Milan was crowded with the new arrivals that were frowned upon by locals because they had "strange tropical diseases." Such migrants are caught in a catch 22 situation: they find it difficult to continue staying in their adopted countries and at the same time they cannot go back to Africa because they lack the means to do so; some had sold all their possessions before departure and it would be too embarrassing for them to return home empty-handed yet their families had invested so much hope in them.

Anti-immigration and right wing political parties/groups as well as some European leaders accuse the immigrants of "diluting the Europeanness" of their countries and that continued migration would lead to the "Africanisation of Europe." While supporting construction of a border fence between his country and Croatia and Serbia, the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban stated that migration will dilute Europe's "Christian values" (Reuters, 04/04/2016), adding that "Hungary does not need a single migrant..." (*The Guardian*, 27/07/2016). Attacks against foreigners have been reported in countries like Britain, France, German and Sweden. The attacks were conducted not just by diehard xenophobes but in some cases even by government agencies. In a report released on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016 Amnesty International accused Italian police of using violence against migrants and refugees, including beatings, electric shocks with stun batons and sexual humiliation while receiving them at processing centres. The

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<sup>2</sup> Latin American illegal immigrants to the US pay \$6.6 billion to people smugglers while the figure for those fleeing East, North and West Africa to Europe is \$150 million per annum (UNODC, 2016)

report added that “The European Union’s pressure on Italy to ‘get tough’ on refugees and migrants has led to unlawful expulsions and illegal treatment which in some cases may amount to torture” (Amnesty International, 2016). Amnesty International has also documented reports of a policy known as *push back* through which some European border control officials beat, abuse, or rob migrants before forcefully sending them back to where they came from.

In northern France migrants set up a camp that came to be known as the “Jungle” near the port city of Calais, and it was not different from rundown refugee camps in African countries. On a visit to Calais in September 2016, the then French President Francois Hollande stated that his government would ensure the camp is closed before the end of the year.



### **Squalor in the Jungle (Calais)**

Photo courtesy of The Independent.co.uk

The site of squalor, poor sanitation and lack of the most basic requirements for human existence made French authorities vow to close the “Jungle” and redistribute all the refugees to different parts of France – although for most of them their desire was to cross the English Channel into the United Kingdom where they thought conditions for their social-economic improvement were better than in France. Pressure for the camp to be closed was because it was deemed to be an “embarrassment” to have such an establishment in a leading European power like France in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. With a population of about 8,000 it was teeming mainly with refugees from Sub Sahara Africa and Asia. On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2016 the then French Interior Minister, Bernard Cazeneuve said it was imperative for the migrants to be moved out of “the cold and mud” (*The Standard*, 21/10/2016). The “Jungle” was forcefully destroyed by French police within three days beginning Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016 in what the French Interior Ministry called a “humanitarian intervention” (*The New York Times*, 24/10/2016).

Other reasons why there is resentment towards migrants is because locals feel they (migrants) are taking away their jobs and will drain public funds that would be used in their resettlement, while others have been accused of engaging in criminal activities and terrorism. The 11<sup>th</sup> March 2004 Madrid train bombings that left 192 people dead, the Paris bombing of 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 (130 deaths) terror attacks in Brussels (22<sup>nd</sup> March 2016, 35 deaths), and the Nice attack in France (14<sup>th</sup> July, 2016, 84 deaths) are among terrorist activities that were linked to or blamed on immigrants.

### **Fear of Deportation**

Illegal immigrants live constantly under the fear of being deported once state officials catch up with them. American President Donald Trump's threat to expel all illegal immigrants in the US (they number about 11 million) under his "America First" policy and build a wall along the US-Mexico border to keep away "undesired aliens" has sent fresh fears among those whose stay in America is not regularized. Already this policy is being implemented and illegal migrants, including Africans are regularly deported from the US. Illegal immigrants play hide and seek with the authorities, cannot access government services like medical attention or even seek formal employment and have to make do with menial jobs where they are paid a pittance as is common in the tomato farms of southern Italy. Others engage in criminal activities to fend for themselves. Even if they had qualifications, they cannot seek formal employment since they are undocumented aliens who do not appear in any government records. For female migrants it is more challenging because hard situations can force them to be involved in prostitution to make ends meet, while at other times they find themselves at the mercy of cartels and pimps who subject them to sexual slavery and exploitation although they may have been promised well-paying jobs when they were being lured from Africa.

### **Success Stories**

It is important to note that not all African migrants who move to the West end up living in dehumanizing conditions. There are a number of success stories of African migrants who have made it in the West, and their brethren look at them as role models whom they want to emulate by taking the same route that they did— migrating.

**Mebrahtom Keflezighi** migrated from present day Eritrea with his family in 1987 when he was 12 years old and they settled in America. He went on to acquire American citizenship and is now one of the most well known marathoners in that country. He won the 2009 New York City Marathon, the 2009 Boston Marathon, was a silver medalist at the 2004 Greece Olympics and finished in fourth place during the 2012 London Olympic Games, among other sporting achievements.

**Ihan Omar** became the first Somali-American to win a public office in the US when she was elected into the Minnesota State House of Representatives on November 8, 2016. At one time she lived in Utange refugee camp near Mombasa in Kenya before moving to America.

**Cécile Kashetu Kyenge**, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, was the first Black Minister in Italy, having served as Minister for Integration from 2013 – 2014. She moved from the then Zaire to Italy to study medicine in the 1980s and eventually took up Italian citizenship. Currently she is a Member of the European Parliament representing the North-East Italy.

Many other migrants have excelled in diverse fields in their adopted countries and their contributions have been phenomenon. They have used their skills and other abilities to bring progress to their adopted countries as well as helping their countries of birth. Remittances from Africans in the Diaspora run into billions of dollars and the money is used to help families back home in various ways such as putting up decent houses, establishing businesses, education and training. In 2015, remittances from Africans in the

Diaspora amounted to US \$35.2 billion (World Bank, 2015). Returning migrants bring with them skills and entrepreneurship that are lacking at home yet critical for social economic advancement. In a report to a UN symposium held in Turin, Italy in June 2006, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) stated: "Although the debate on the impact of international migration on development in Africa has largely been shaped by the loss of skilled Africans to the developed world, growing evidence shows that international migration has positive effects on social and economic development in Africa." (Africa Focus Bulletin, September 2016).

There are also African professionals in various fields in the West who are not migrants but have moved there to make use of their talents and skills. Good examples are footballers like Didier Drogba and Yaya Toure (Ivory Coast), Victor Moses and John Obi Mikel (Nigeria), Victor Wanyama and Dennis Oliech (Kenya), Emmanuel Adebayo (Togo), Samuel Eto'o and Alexander Song (Cameroon) among many others. They have brought fame and glory to their countries and Africa as a whole. World beating Kenyan athletes like Paul Tergat, Dennis Kimetto, Eliud Kipchoge. Catherine "The Great" Ndereba, Janeth Jepkosgei and Pamela Jelimo can also be considered in this regard because they have equally made Africa known in the sporting world.

It is possible that if these people had not left Africa or got exposure to the outside world, they may not have been successful as they are today and here is where Africa needs to take note. For those who have succeeded elsewhere it is mainly because of the enabling environment that made it possible for them to discover, nurture and exploit their different talents and abilities. The same can be done in Africa if there was political will: allow for free thinking, put up necessary infrastructure, implement workable economic, social and political policies that put the interests of the country above those of the leaders. This would be a start to bringing meaningful development to Africa.

However, even Africans who have attained prominent status in the West have not been spared the indignities of die-hard racists. While addressing a public rally on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2013 in Cervia on Italy's Adriatic coast, a man from the crowd threw two bananas towards Minister Kyenge. Right wing radicals who supported the banana incident claimed that they were "protecting the Italian identity" because to them Minister Kyenge was "a banana loving ape." (CNN, 29/07/2017). The minister also received several death threats and one local politician even went further and wished that the minister should be raped so that she can understand the pain felt by victims of crime that the racists blame on immigrants. If a cabinet minister in a major European power and a member of the G 7 can be subjected to such cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment on the basis of her ancestral background, then only the worst can be expected of the *lumpen proletariats*.

This goes to show that no matter the achievements of Black people in the West or even at the global stage, they will not be fully accepted in a society that is predominantly white. African Americans whose history in the US dates back centuries are yet to be fully integrated into mainstream American society because they are judged by the colour of their skin and not "the content of their character (King, 1963).

Three days after being crowned the 1960 Olympic Boxing Heavyweight Champion, a white waitress refused to serve Muhammad Ali in a restaurant in his home town of Louisville, Kentucky because according to the establishment's policy, "we don't serve negroes" (*The Guardian*, 23/08/2009). Jesse Owens was the African American track and field athlete who won four gold medals during the 1936 Berlin Olympics and brought great honour to his country. The record that Owens set was not broken until the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles when yet another African American track and field star, Carl Lewis won four gold medals. Despite the feat achieved by Owens, he was never invited to the White House or even sent a congratulatory message by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as was the tradition for such achievers because "he (Roosevelt) was too busy" (*The Afro America*, 10/10/1936). The examples are countless, but perhaps the most significant one is where racist white Americans refused to recognize Barack Obama as the US president for the eight years he was in power from 2008. For them he was first and foremost a "nigger" and not a human being or even the president of the most powerful nation on earth. Offensive cartoons and commentaries aimed at Obama (and by extension the entire Black race) were not uncommon in the American and other media establishments in the West.

### **Reverse Migration**

While many Africans are struggling to go to "greener pastures" outside the continent against all odds, foreigners are also flocking to Africa in big numbers in search of opportunities. And unlike Africans, they are coming here as investors through dignified means, not rickety boats. They do not beg for alms or sleep rough on the streets. In the recent past, Africa has experienced the arrival of Chinese nationals in large numbers. They are actively involved in infrastructural development such as road and railway construction, bridges, housing projects, sports facilities and conference centers. In Kenya, a Chinese company is laying the Standard Gauge Railway that will run from the port of Mombasa all the way to western Kenya, with the possibility of extending up to Kisangani in the DRC. The new African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa was put up by Chinese funding and technical expertise to the tune of US \$200 million. It was officially opened in January 2012 and with 20 floors, "China's gift to Africa" is currently the tallest building in the Ethiopian capital. The Chinese are also involved in other sectors such as energy, tourism, communication and ICT.

If foreigners can travel thousands of miles to come and make a decent living in Africa, it is possible for Africans themselves to gain from the same resources that foreigners are benefiting from. Although foreigners have invested in Africa, at the end of the day they take the profits back to their home countries. With good governance, this trend can be reversed so that there can be a win-win situation between Africans and foreign investors.

### **The Way Forward**

The movement of Africa's human resource, particularly skilled manpower to other lands has left yawning gaps on the continent because these people are "the engine of growth and development" (Adepoju, 2008) on whom the continent would have depended on for progress just as citizens of Western nations played their role in developing their countries.

As shown earlier on, efforts that have brought about “Fortress Europe” have so far failed to stop the flow of illegal migrants to Europe and different strategies could be tried. In 2015, a number of European countries such as Austria, Greece, Hungary, Norway and Slovakia erected border fences and introduced other tougher border control measures to deter migrants from flowing into the EU. In addition to the razor-trip fences, there are security guards, cameras, aerial surveillance planes, warships, sniffer dogs and electronic surveillance equipment, among others – but all these have not stopped illegal immigration. It has been argued that “...the only way to stop people from migrating is to give them a reason to stay.” (Melessia, 2015) and this must be done by African governments in partnership with Western countries that have to bear the burden of hosting illegal migrants.

For a start the EU could work with African governments to create more opportunities that would discourage Africans from migrating. Investment in fields such as agriculture, mining, energy and technology would go a long way in improving these sectors because they are critical to social-economic growth. During her trip to Africa in October 2016 that took her to Mali, Niger and Ethiopia, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel wanted to increase her country’s investment in these states as one way of reducing migration to Europe where Germany remains the major recipient of this human “export” from Africa. Merkel’s “Refugees Welcome” policy resulted into Germany absorbing the biggest percentage of immigrants into Europe in 2015, and this also led to the ruling Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union coalition losing to the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party during state elections in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2016 (Reuters, 04/09/2016). Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is Merkel’s home state and by giving AfD 21% of the votes, voters were sending a strong message that they were not happy with her migration policy. Merkel’s national approval also went down from 67% in 2014 to 45% in 2016 mainly due to her open door migration policy. Prior to her departure to Africa in October 2016, Merkel stated that “The well-being of Africa is in Germany’s interest” (*Deutch Welle*, 08/10/2016), adding that Africa was the “central problem” as far as migration to Europe was concerned, and that investing in some key sectors would create opportunities that would encourage, particularly the younger generation in Africa, to resist the temptation of migrating.

Following Merkel’s African tour, the German government pledged on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2016 to give the UNHCR \$67.44 million to be used in improving conditions in some African countries that were the major source of illegal immigrants flocking to Europe (*The Standard*, 09/11/2016). The target countries were affected by conflict, climate change and poverty and include Burundi, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan as well as West African countries affected by the murderous Boko Haram insurgency that originated in Nigeria. On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016, the BBC World Service News programme *Focus on Africa* reported that the EU had set aside \$635 million to be given to Niger to help in curtailing migration of Sub Saharan nationals through its territory. The Nigerien town of Agadez is one of the key transit points for Sub Saharan Africans moving to Europe.

European countries spend a lot of resources in trying to prevent illegal migrants from reaching their shores. Through FRONTEX, the EU has used millions of Euros in its operations that have seen

thousands of migrants brought to Europe. Resources that are being used to prevent migrants from reaching Europe could be used to improve conditions in the sending countries. In 2016 the EU set aside €176m for FRONTEX operations. Fabrice Leggeri, the Executive Director of FRONTEX disclosed that among activities the money was to be used for were "...returning illegal migrants, providing safe passage for genuine refugees and disrupting people smuggling rings" (BIJ, 2016). This amount could be productively invested in selected projects in African countries and create opportunities for the unemployed who believe that the solution to their joblessness is to depart from Africa. Better conditions at home will most likely deter a significant number of people from leaving.

African governments could also create an enabling environment for those in the Diaspora who want to return home or have a desire to invest in the continent. Challenges such as poor transport and communication networks, persistent power failure, water shortage, insecurity and dismal internet connection need to be overcome in order for Africa to attract back its "prodigal children" from the Diaspora as well as increase the flow of foreign investment.

One of the major setbacks blamed for problems facing the African continent is poor leadership. Dictatorship, lack of accountability and transparency amongst leaders are some of the reasons cited for problems bedeviling Africa and contributing to migration. Dictatorial regimes in the then Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko (present day DRC), Somalia under Mohamed Siad Barre, Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariamu through to the present regime and Eritrea under Isaias Aforweki are just a few examples where bad leadership has contributed to the flow of migrants from these countries. In Eritrea, young people are subjected to a mandatory and indefinite military conscription. The young generation in this country would rather avoid the military call-up and find their way out, and this has contributed to making Eritrea one of the biggest sources of Sub Saharan African migrants heading to Europe. Accountability would ensure, *inter alia*, fairness and justice in the use of public resources, equitable distribution of the "national cake" and inclusive leadership that does not discriminate on the basis of tribe, race, region, religion or creed. This would reduce levels of poverty and destitution. Fair and equitable distribution of national wealth would minimize resentment that has been known to lead to armed opposition against the national leadership forcing citizens to flee their countries as refugees. Western governments could use their influence over African countries to ensure that there is political and economic accountability which would make life more meaningful to a majority of the citizens. The feeling of discrimination and marginalisation has led to armed insurrection and even outright civil war in countries like South Sudan, Nigeria and Ethiopia.

### **The Riches of Africa**

Africa is endowed with a wide range of natural resources which if rationally exploited would positively transform the lives of her people and turn the continent into an economic super power. None of the European countries to which Africans dream of settling in have natural resources comparable to those of Africa such as oil, gold (50% of known global reserves are in South Africa), diamond, copper, bauxite, cobalt, uranium, iron ore, fertile soils, rivers, lakes, forests, a largely youthful population and much

more. While addressing cheering crowds in the Guinean capital Conakry, the late Gaddafi once said “We want to be born and die in Africa. There will be no more emigration to Europe. All riches are to be found in Africa” (Daily Nation, 27/06/2007). Studies have indicated that Africa has many minerals that are yet to be discovered and mapping them will enable African countries know what they are worth and hence deal with foreign investors from a point of knowledge as far as their resources are concerned. Corruption, nepotism and lack of accountability have meant that very few people benefit from the riches of Africa. After decades of exporting oil, many Nigerians are living below the poverty line. Out of a population of about 160 million, approximately 100 million Nigerians live on less than a dollar a day (Kale, 2012). The country is sinking under the weight of an external debt that totaled \$11 billion as of October 2015 (Debt Management Office-DMO, 2015). Nigeria is currently in recession and is a major oil importer, despite being the second largest oil producer in Africa! In Angola, Africa’s leading oil exporter, proceeds from this resource have benefited mainly the family and close allies of Jose Eduardo Dos Santos who ruled the country from 1979-2017. In mid June 2016 Dos Santos appointed his daughter, Isabel Dos Santos as the non-executive director of the state oil company, Sonangol.

Strengthening of regional economic blocks like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the East African Community (EAC), easing of travel and trade restrictions among African countries would lead to increased business opportunities. It is ironical that African countries conduct more trade with nations outside the continent than among themselves.

Would-be migrants should be advised that the West is not an answer to their problems and that it is possible to have a decent life in Africa. The amount of money paid by illegal migrants to people smugglers, if invested well in Africa, can bring about positive changes and improvement in standards of living. For example with \$ US5,000.00, one can put up a business and even invest in education and training to enhance their knowledge, rather than give it to people smugglers and die before reaching Europe or get there but live a life that is full of untold hardships. While not opposing the movement of Africans to the West, what is significant is the manner in which they go there and why: Africans should move around the world in dignity and out of their own volition but not due to desperation, and once in the West they should live lives that are worth of a human being.

Although the sending and receiving countries may benefit from migrants in different ways, the continued outflow of a promising generation of people from Africa does not augur well for the continent. It reinforces the false belief that the West is the solution to Africa’s problems and the best way of escaping hardships in Africa is to leave for America and Europe. Continued migration helps to entrench lopsided development and widening the gap between rich and poor countries, further deepening the dependence mentality by portraying Black people as helpless and hapless and forever at the mercy of the West. It is possible for these people to realize their dreams right here in Africa without necessarily suffering unspeakable indignities in their desire to make a better life in the West because migration *per se* is not the panacea for African problems.

## Conclusion

The paper has looked at the issue of migration and how Africa has continued to lose its critical human resource through exodus to the West. Measures that have been put in place by receiving nations have not stopped Africans from fleeing their countries in search of “better” life in the West. Africa is not a poor continent – it is richly endowed with vast resources that can transform it into a global power. Attainment of a strong economic foundation will enable Africa, as a member of the global community, to play an active and not passive role within the community of nations and stamp its agenda on the world map on equal terms with other continents.

The continual flow of foreign investors into Africa who want to tap into its resources is evidence of a continent that can adequately provide for her citizens if proper policies are put in place to ensure equitable distribution of Mother Nature’s endowment to the Cradle of Mankind. Foreign investment is good for Africa but should not be to the disadvantage of the continent. It is the onus of African governments to create necessary conditions at home that will discourage would-be migrants from fleeing the continent. At the same time, these governments need to come up with policies that would attract African professionals in the Diaspora to come back home and use their wealth of experience and economic status for the well being of Africa. Illegal migration to the West is not a sustainable solution to challenges faced by Africans.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AfD	Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for German)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
DMO	Alternative for German
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FRONTEX	Frontières extérieures (External Borders)
G 7	Group of 7 (most industrialised countries)
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development
UK	United Kingdom
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organisation