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Drivers of Migration in Africa

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Regular Migration

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Introduction

An important focus of the Global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration consultative process has been on addressing the root causes of migration so that migration becomes a choice not necessity. Motivations to migrate arise from a combination of factors such as demographic shifts; lack of employment opportunities, especially for the young; endemic poverty; natural disasters; income inequality and perceptions of unequal distribution of wealth; conflict; and economic and political instabilities.

Africa is often seen as a continent on the move due to crisis-led causes, mainly as people escaping poverty, environmental disaster, or violent conflict. the premise of poverty-driven migration out of Africa has been disputed by current research. African countries with comparatively higher levels of development, such as in the Maghreb, coastal West Africa, South Africa etc also tend to have the highest intensity of extra-continental migration¹.

The changing structure of labour demand

Common explanations about African migration focus on factors such as poverty and conflict in origin countries obscure the crucial role of labour demand. The dynamics of labour demand in African, European, Middle Eastern and other overseas labour market are a key factor in explaining changing patterns of intra-African migration as well as the recent increase of overseas emigration from sub-Saharan Africa. In particular, the segmentation of European and Middle Eastern labour markets into a higher skilled, formal sector and a lower skilled, often informal sectors, together with rising living standards and levels of education as well as ageing, has led to a persistent demand for migrant labour in the informal labour markets of comparatively wealthy destination societies, in which case migrant workers typically do the manual jobs that local workers are unwilling or unable to do (Castles, de Haas and Miller 2014; Massey et al. 1993; Piore 1979). This is not just the case in Europe and North America, but also for the Gulf countries, where the state-sanctioned creation of an extremely segmented labour markets through *kafala* or sponsorship system are key institutional drivers of the demand for female domestic workers (Fernandez 2011). At the same time, the increasing demand for skilled migrant workers, which is increasingly favoured by skills selective immigration policies (Czaika and Parsons 2017; de Haas, Natter and Vezzoli 2016), is also motivating relatively modest, but increasing numbers of young, skilled African to migrate overseas to work and/or study.

This explanation does not solely apply to overseas migration to the Gulf and Europe, but to a significant extent also to rural-to-urban migration within African countries as well as migration between African countries (such as refugee women working as domestic workers in Cairo, see Ahmed 2003) or within African countries, such as of domestic and construction workers (for Ghana, see Awumbila et al. 2017). While male migrants typically work in sectors such as construction, industry, and intensive agriculture, an increasing number of women have been migrating within and between African countries as domestic workers as part of a broader trend towards feminization part of a broader trend towards feminization of migration.

¹ Jonsson, 2009

Empirical studies indicate that that, notwithstanding the dangers, humiliation and discrimination migrants regularly go through, also such internal migration generally does pay off in many cases, in terms of providing better long-term economic and educational opportunities for migrants themselves and, particularly, for their families (cf. Awumbila et al. 2017). This also fits within other empirical evidence from migration occurring under conditions of poverty and high constraints, that (internal) migration is often part of household strategies to diversify income in order spread livelihood risks (see De Haan et al. 2000 on Ethiopia and Mali). It is vital to acknowledge the vital role of destination country labour demand in motivating people to migrate, as this is a key factor in explaining the continuation of African migration to other African countries, Europe and the Middle East, whether legally or illegally, in spite of migration restrictions and border controls.

Developmental drivers of migration

While labour demand and business opportunities in domestic and international destination areas plays a key role in motivating people to migrate, origin country development in the form of rising incomes, increasing education and infrastructure connections shape the conditions that initially tend to *increase* people's aspirations and capabilities to migrate. This is the opposite of what push-pull models would predict. Long distance migration in particular involves significant risks and costs, and the higher educated more often seek jobs, working conditions and life styles that are scarce in origin areas. This helps to explain why African countries with relatively higher levels of economic and human development (such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, South Africa, Ghana and Senegal) tend to have comparatively higher extra-continental emigration rates than the poorest African countries (such as Chad, Niger, Mali and South Sudan). The main exceptions on this rule are the large overseas refugee migrations from Somalia and Ethiopia.

From the migration research literature, there is ample evidence that economic development and social transformation in low-income countries is initially associated to *increasing* rather than decreasing levels of rural-urban migration and international out-migration (Zelinsky 1971). This is because modest income growth, improving infrastructure, increasing education, and access to media, tends to increase both people's aspirations and capabilities to migrate over increasingly long distances (de Haas 2010b). This partly explains the paradox why middle income countries—such as North African countries and South Africa, tend to have the highest levels of extra-continental emigration rates.

Only when societies become wealthy emigration decreases and immigration increases, after which which transform from countries of net emigration into countries of net immigration. Such migration transitions often occur together with demographic transitions: Emigration rates tend to be highest not in countries with the highest population growth, but rather in countries where high past fertility results in a 'youth bulge', or a high proportion of migration-prone young adults (cf. Skeldon 1997). This hypothesis of a "migration transition" has been empirically tested using historical (Hatton and Williamson 1998) and contemporary (Clemens 2014; Czaika and de Haas 2012; de Haas 2010) migration data from countries around the world, and also seems to apply to the African case, as extra-continental migration from Africa is dominated by countries with relatively high levels of economic and human development.

It therefore seems *relative poverty* resulting from rising aspirations combined with better opportunities and more attractive lifestyles elsewhere that drive the bulk of African migration rather than *absolute poverty*. At the same time, improved infrastructure, cheaper transport, the rapid diffusion of telecommunication techniques such as mobile phones (cf. de Bruijn, Nyamnjoh and Brinkman 2009; Schaub 2012), and improved education are likely to have increased awareness of opportunities in other countries and, hence, people's migration aspirations. As long as people's changing lifestyle preferences and increasing material expectations cannot be met locally, this typically translates in increasing aspirations to migrate, either to towns or cities, or abroad. Obviously, these changes are linked to profound changes in rural areas. Population growth and, to an increasing extent, mechanization are likely to decrease the potential for agricultural employment, while agrarian lifestyles do no longer match the cultural needs and expectations of an increasing numbers of youngsters.

Revisiting the link between poverty and migration

This also compels us to revisit the relation between poverty and migration. A growing body of empirical evidence from Africa corroborates the idea that also in situation of poverty and constraints migration is generally part of deliberate, carefully planned, and largely rational strategies by families in order to improve their long-term social and economic wellbeing rather than a stereotypical 'desperate flight from poverty'. This also means that the poorest families are less likely to be able to afford the costs and risks of internal, let alone international, migration.

There is indeed evidence that the poorest migrate less, and tend to benefit less from migration than the wealthier, as they are less likely to find stable and remunerative employment (Awumbila, Teye and Yaro 2016; de Haan, Brock and Coulibaly 2002; Konseiga 2007; Lucas and Stark 1985). This exemplifies the key hypothesis of migration transition theory that development initially tends to boost rural-to-urban and international migration by increasing people's capabilities (and aspirations) to do so. Such evidence also indicates that prime migration motivations are likely to differ according to people's personal situation and their family's relative wealth. For instance, a survey in South Africa found that individual "maximizing one's own future" (fitting with neoclassical theories) were rather applicable for never married men and women, while married men and women with longer time migration intentions generally did migrate with "reducing household risk" goals in mind (fitting with the 'new economics of labor migration') (Stark 1991; Stark and Levhari 1982).

The positive link between access to resources and the ability to migrate, particularly over larger distances, is replicated in several other studies. In Burkina Faso, for instance, a study found most components of rural development either have no effect on migration or rather tend to *encourage* migration to cities (Beauchemin and Schoumaker 2005). Bleibaum (2009) found that two villages in the Senegalese Peanut Basin, the more resourceful village had people emigrated to larger cities or Europe and for longer time, while the poorer village had seasonal migration to the cities. Also in Morocco, the poorest rural areas, such as the Tata province or the Drâa valley in the south or remote areas in the Atlas Mountains have seen much lower migration to Europe than comparatively prosperous regions (de Haas 2003).

Urbanization

The previous analysis exemplifies the extent to which the African migration experience is tied up with urbanization. Besides development in (rural) origin areas, urbanization is a key driver of many forms of migration within and across borders. Urbanization is an

intrinsic part of larger processes of economic development, particularly technological change (mechanization, infrastructure, communication) as well as the rise of capitalist economies involving a shift from agricultural (primary sector) production to manufacturing (secondary sector) and services (tertiary sector) as main sources of economic growth and employment. Taken together this process of 'rural-urban transformation' is a key driver of contemporary migration in developing countries. A recent analysis of internal migration intensities around the world suggested a strong link with development processes, although intensities show a great deal of variation (Bell et al. 2015). Although Africa still is the least urbanized continent in the world, its urbanization *rates* are amongst the world's highest. African urbanization seems to reflect patterns observed in other world regions, with fast urban growth initially concentrating on the largest population centres in earlier phases of development, followed by a 'decentralization' of urbanization with the fastest growth observed in smaller cities and towns, which is more typical for middle income countries, for instance in North Africa and Southern Africa (Berriane 1997; Geyer 2003; Gwebu 2006).

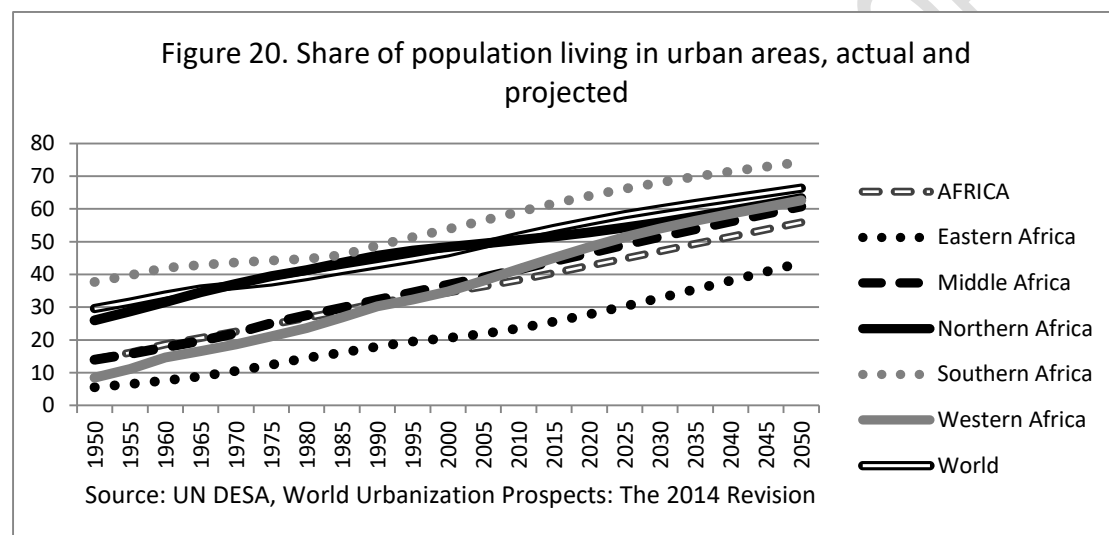


Figure 20 shows that the percentage of Africans living in urban areas has gone up from an estimated 14 per cent in 1950 to 40 per cent in 2015, and is projected to further rise to about 56 per cent in 2050. Although Africa as whole is less urbanized than the global average, this gap with the world average is decreasing. There are also clear differences between regions, with southern Africa being the most urbanized region and eastern Africa the least urbanized region. This seems to confirm more general evidence about the close relation between levels of economic development and urbanization rates (Bloom, Canning and Fink 2008; Chen et al. 2014).

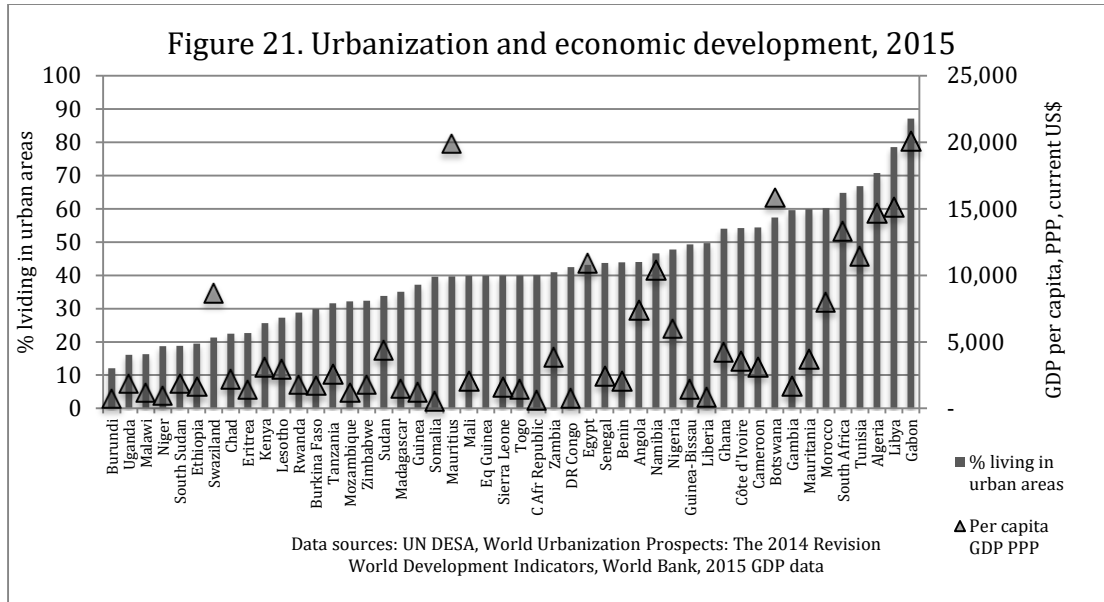
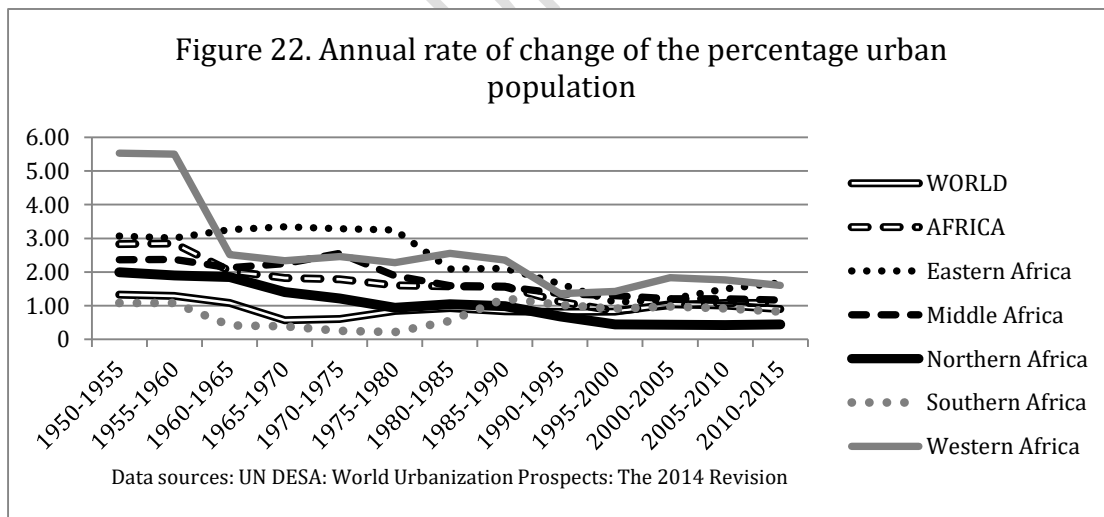


Figure 21 confirms this correlation between the level of urbanization and the level of economic development as measured by GDP per capita for African countries., but also shows that there is a high degree of variation. The correlation ratio between these two variables is 0.44. The least developed African countries tend to have the lowest urbanization rates. The main outliers are island or small states, which either have much lower urbanization rates (particularly Mauritius, Swaziland and Equatorial Guinea), or much higher urbanization rates (particularly Gambia and Liberia) than can be expected on basis of their GDP². If we take out these five outliers, the correlation ratio jumps to 0.78 – which means that for this set of countries about 60 per cent of the level of urbanization can be predicted with by taking GDP levels as a proxy.



As figure 22 shows, *rates* of urban growth have been slowing down in all African regions, although urban growth rates are still above world average, and tend to be highest in western and eastern Africa, and lowest in northern and southern Africa, which already reached relatively high levels of urbanization earlier on. While this shows that urbanization is in full swing across the continent, this shows that Africa has already gone

² This can potentially be explained by different definitions of ‘urban’ across countries.

through its peak phase of urbanization, and is now converging towards global urbanization rates.

The main source of urban growth in developing countries including Africa is natural population growth (Skeldon 1997), and migration only comes in second place. In developing country cities rural-to-urban migration is estimated accounts for approximately 40 per cent of urban population growth (Annez and Buckley 2009). For Africa, these percentages have actually been declining, from 41.2 per cent in the 1960s, 40.6 per cent in the 1970s to 24.9 per cent in the 1980s. However, we have good reasons to assume that rural-to-urban migration is the main source of migration on the African continent.

Based on the estimate that in developing countries rural-to-urban migration accounts for approximately 20 to 40 per cent of urban population growth (Annez and Buckley 2009), and based on 2005 and 2010 data on urban populations, Table 1 in the annex estimates yearly net rural-to-urban migration across Africa at an approximate level of between 2.7 and 5.3 million, which is 4 to 8 times higher than the totally annual emigration to Europe and North America which we estimated at 704,000 in the same period (see above)³. We have to take into account that this is an estimate of *net* rural-to-urban migration (rural-to-urban minus urban-to-rural migration), so real urban-bound mobility is much higher. Research in various African countries has shown that return and circulation rates between rural and urban areas tends to be very high (Beguy, Bocquier and Zulu 2010; Blumenstock 2012; Falkingham, Chepngeno-Langat and Evandrou 2012). This is in line with historical and contemporary patterns of rural-urban migration in other world regions (Hägerstrand 1957): for short-distance migration and in the absence of migration restrictions, circulation tends to be the rule.

To make data comparable, we would also have to estimate yearly net migration of Africans out of the continent. If we take the increase of migrant population ('stock') data as a rough indicator of *net* African overseas migration (emigration minus returns), we can estimate this at 538,946 per year for all migration out of Africa, and at 316,491 for African migration to Europe and North America⁴. Based on these net migration estimates, rural-to-urban migration would be 8 to 17 times higher than total net migration to North America and Europe and 5 to 10 times higher than total net migration out of Africa.

³ While for the whole of Africa, yearly rural-to-urban net migration rates are estimated at between 0.26 to 0.57 per cent, this is 0.21-0.42 per cent in Eastern Africa, 0.23-0.45 per cent in Northern Africa, 0.27-0.54 in Southern Africa, 0.37-0.75 in Middle Africa, and 0.38- 0.77 per cent in Western Africa.

⁴ Between, 2005 and 2010, the total estimated African migrant population living outside Africa increased with 2,694,729 from 11,696,332 to 14,391,061, while over the same period the estimated number of African migrants living in Europe and North America increased with 1,582,454 from 8,944,796 to 10,527,250. This makes for average annual increases of the African emigrant population of 538,946 for all non-African destinations and 316,491 for Europe and North America. Although these estimates do not account for death rates amongst migrant populations as well as unauthorized migration, and real emigration are therefore likely to somewhat higher, it seems safe to use these estimates to make assessments of the general magnitude of African international migration. Data source: *UN DESA Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2015 Revision*.

To put this further into perspective, drawing on UN DESA data, between 2005 and 2010 the total estimated international migrant population (including refugees) in Africa increased from an approximate 15,191,146 to 16,840,014, which is an increase of 1,648,868. If we take this as a proxy estimate of net migration, annual net intra-African international migration would amount to 329,774 per year for Africa as a whole. In addition, some of this cross-border movement is effectively rural-to-urban migration, such as for movement from Sahel countries like Mali and Burkina Faso to coastal West Africa. Although these are rough estimates that needed to be used with precaution, they illustrate the preponderance of urbanization – and underlying processes of economic, technological, social and cultural transformations – as a driver of African migration. High levels of economic growth generally accelerate urban growth and rural-to-urban migration, and a recent study of global migration data between 1990 and 2010 suggests that in those instances rural-to-urban migration may be a partial substitute for international out-migration (de Haas and Fransen forthcoming).

Rural-to-urban migration is a much more deeply rooted social process that goes beyond economic explanations alone, such as the intrinsic motivations of (young) people to live in cities, not only to acquire a job or study, but also to acquire particular lifestyles driven by changing notions of the ‘good life’ (see also Mabogunje 1970 for an earlier account of African rural-urban migration). All in all, this illustrates the structural trends towards urbanization and concomitant rural-to-urban migration (within and across borders) as an intrinsic part of broader processes of economic and cultural change that is currently affecting African societies.

At the same time, these cultural factors cannot be entirely dissociated from the economic rationale of rural-to-urban migration. Despite often challenging conditions in cities, urban wages tend to be significantly higher than rural wages, and the type of employment that educated youth is seeking is often not available in rural areas (see Elder *et al.* 2015 for survey-based evidence on several African countries). With the growth of urban industrial and service sectors, urban job demand is also increasing. The growing demand for domestic work has been linked to increased participation of women in rural-to-urban labor migration, which is partly linked to increasing education and labor market participation of middle- and upper-class women. Even without significant wage increases, there is evidence that it makes sense for rural families and households to diversify their income by having one or more members working in urban areas as part of a deliberate effort to spread income risks and, potentially, raise additional income (remittances) that can be used to improve living standards and wellbeing, to afford health care, send children to school and to invest in the farm or other businesses (cf. Awumbila *et al.* 2016; Awumbila, Teye and Yaro 2016). This highlights the important role of internal migration in sustaining and improving livelihoods in rural areas (de Brauw, Mueller and Woldehanna 2013; Ouchou 1996).

The migration-stimulating role of education

The growing desire to acquire an education and rapidly rising levels of literacy schooling across Africa has gained in importance as a driving force of mobility and migration. This often starts with local and intra-regional education. For instance, the absence of primary and secondary schools in rural areas is often a reason for children to migrate to towns, particularly when good transport is lacking, either by living in with family or community members already living there, or to by staying at boarding schools or other collective facilities. This often puts children of poorer households at a disadvantage, because of the costs involved in such migration. In patriarchal societies, this can particularly hinder the

education of teenage girls, because of perceived social and reputational risks attributed to their migration out of the parental home (de Haas 2010a).

The building of primary and secondary schools in villages and smaller towns can therefore be seen as a government strategy to boost school attendance as well as to prevent such educational migration of children and teenagers. However, it is theoretically uncertain whether, on the longer term, this will decrease internal migration, because secondary school tends to socialize rural children into different notions of what the 'good life' is about, which generally goes along with an increasing desire for urban lifestyles, urban jobs and higher material aspirations in terms of consumption goods. Particularly, if this is coupled with rural population growth and decreased access to land alongside mechanization of agriculture and, hence, a lack of rural remunerative employment, this typically tends to boost rural-to-urban migration of school leavers, either to seek an (informal or formal) industrial or service-sector job in towns and cities, or to pursue higher education.

For instance, one survey in rural Ethiopia found that only 9 per cent of the rural youth plan to pursue agriculture as their main livelihood (Bezu and Holden 2014). Another survey in a southern Moroccan oasis found that less than 5 percent of households exclusively rely on agriculture and generally combine local non-farm activities with remittance income, and that the vast majority of an increasingly educated youth aspires a non-agrarian future (de Haas 2003). With the exception of some professions such as teachers and baseline medical jobs, educated job seekers are unlikely to find jobs in rural areas that match their qualifications and desires. This is confirmed by research across a range of African countries that literacy education is positively associated with internal migration aspirations and that many young adults migrate to cities with the goal of working and/or pursuing education (cf. Elder et al. 2015; Erulkar et al. 2006; Henry, Boyle and Lambin 2003; Schewel 2014; Tegegne and Penker 2016).

This explains evidence from multiple African countries that a new generation of better educated youth is more migration-prone than older generations (Deshingkar, Godfrey-Wood and Bene 2013; Elder et al. 2015). This also applies for forms of migration and urban settlement that are often associated to destitution and extreme deprivation. For instance, a survey among 1000 adolescents aged 10-19 in slum areas of Addis Ababa, showed that many boys and, particularly, girls had migrated into the city for educational (besides work) work opportunities (Erulkar et al. 2006). This seems to be broadly in line with studies from other developing countries that while, on the short term, educational enrolment can retain potential migrants, on the longer term educational attainment tend to increase internal, rural-to-urban migration (Massey et al. 2010; Williams 2009), essentially because it tends to increase the desire to migrate in order to fulfill newly set material and immaterial life goals. Thus, on the longer term, increasing education tends to consolidate the overall tendency towards urbanization, although government policies to build secondary and higher education facilities in smaller cities can obviously affect the extent to which urban growth is concentrated in few primary cities or follows a comparatively more decentralized pattern.

This argument also applies to international migration, as increasing levels of secondary education can generate more international migration through demand for higher education. A recent study on African student mobility found that, in Africa, 5.8 per cent of enrolled tertiary students go outside their homelands for tertiary study; the highest share of outbound student mobility of all world regions, which can partly be explained by the lack of supply of suitable tertiary education places (Kritz 2015). The study found that student emigration is lower from African countries that have a better supply of tertiary training capacity and that strengthening tertiary education supply at home would be a

cost-effective way for African governments to retain 'human capital'. On the other hand, an increasing number of young Africans completing secondary school will inevitably sustain the demand for higher tertiary education, which is likely to sustain international student emigration, either to other African countries, such as South Africa and Morocco, or to destinations such as Europe, North America, Russia or China. It may also encourage people to migrate abroad for work, particularly if domestic economic growth and job creation levels are relatively low.

Environmental degradation, climate change and migration

Public debates and media representations of African migration have paid extensive attention to the links between environmental degradation, climate change and migration. Climate change is often seen as one of main drivers of contemporary migration from African and other poor countries. This has frequently led to dire predictions that tens, if not hundreds of millions of 'environmental refugees' will get on the move (Myers 2002). Also the recent increase in unauthorized crossings of the Mediterranean has often been attributed to a combination of climate change, environmental degradation and population growth. However, existing evidence suggests that also the role of environmental factors in migration processes is much more complex, subtle and indirect than popular discourses suggests. And, in short, there is little to no evidence that climate change directly effects migration patterns (cf. Kihato 2017).

First, it is important not to confound climate *change* with climate *variability*. Natural climate variability is the normal year-to-year or cyclical fluctuation in climate that occurs without human interference. For example, variability of rainfall in the Sahel was very large during the 20th century, which seems also part of the natural variability of semi-arid climates. In addition, climate scientists do not exactly know whether and what extent the climatic patterns of the Sahel are caused by global warming, or if they are just a protracted natural cycle; nor is there certainty or agreement as to whether overall rainfall in the Sahel has been increasing or decreasing. (Gianninia, Biasuttia and al. 2008; Jónsson 2010; Olsson, Eklundh and Ardo 2005)⁵.

Second, climate is only one dimension of people's environment, and environmental factors are but one of the many factors affecting people's livelihoods *and* migration behavior. For instance, a study on Burkina Faso found that a combination of socio-demographic factors and, to a lesser extent, environmental variables explain inter-provincial migrations in Burkina Faso (Henry, Boyle and Lambin 2003). It is therefore

⁵ Climate refers to the long term averages in terms of rainfall, precipitation, sunshine and humidity, and climate *change* can only be measured by tracking long-term changes in these averages. Climate change is a long onset process, and it is therefore difficult to attribute a particular climate event (such as a single drought, or a hurricane) to climate change. Another problem is model uncertainty about the specific local impacts of climate changes. For instance, although there is overwhelming consensus that the earth's atmosphere is warming up because of greenhouse gas emissions, how this will impact temperature and precipitation on the regional and local levels is rather uncertain. While global warming is likely to make droughts more likely in some African regions (and may lead to more rain in other regions) its exact regional impacts are difficult to predict because of the extraordinary complexity of climate modeling. For example, in the last report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), for much of the Sahel region different climate models provided divergent rainfall predictions in terms of whether the Sahel would become wetter or drier over the coming century. Uncertainty in climate change arises not only from model uncertainty, but also from different emission scenarios, as well as from the 'natural' uncertainty related to the chaotic nature of the atmosphere (see Black and Kniveton 2011).

misleading to suggest a deterministic link with migration. After all, if people can draw upon other resources, they can deploy possible adaptation strategies which allow them to stay at home, such as building irrigation systems, flood defences, or through changes in livelihood patterns such as creating non-agrarian sources of income or short-distance mobility in order to deal with environmental stress (Castles, de Haas and Miller 2014; Foresight 2011).

This is particularly important in a time where rural livelihoods in much of Africa are rapidly diversifying away from a quasi-exclusive reliance on subsistence agriculture (Batterbury 2001; Elder et al. 2015), a process in which internal and, to a lesser extent, international migration often plays an important role. It is therefore dangerous to single out environmental factors in relation to population pressure as “causes” of migration. Although environmental factors obviously play an important role in people’s livelihoods and migration decisions, they should be seen in relation to other political, economic, social, and cultural factors that eventually determine standards of living and inequality of access to resources. This shows the difficulty of singling out environmental factors as ‘causes’ of migration.

Third, environmental scarcity can stimulate *in situ* agrarian innovation leading to increasing productivity. Half a century ago Boserup (1965) already argued that ‘population pressure’ can provide social and economic imperatives to innovate and develop new technologies. So, resource scarcity does not necessarily increase poverty and/or conflict and therefore migration, but can lead to collaboration. For instance, based on extensive fieldwork, Adano et al. (2012) found that in dry-land Kenya the wetter the season, when pasture and water are abundant and when the livestock is in good health, the more people are likely to die in violent livestock raiding (cf. Witsenburg and Adano 2009). This exemplifies that the socio-political and migratory outcomes of resource scarcity are not pre-determined or automatic.

As Jónsson (2010) showed in her review of 13 case studies of the links between environmental change in the Sahel, many changes in the Sahelian environment cannot simply be blamed on the climate. Socio-political factors such as misguided development strategies, unequal distribution of resources, conflict and lack of rights turned out to be a major part of the explanation for whether and why people have become victims of drought and famine. The relevant question here is how environmental stresses affect the livelihoods of vulnerable people including their aspirations and capabilities to migrate in order to cope with such stress. In this sense, migration should be seen as one of the several ways to deal with environmental stress, which exposes the methodological impossibility to identify ‘climate migrants’ (Foresight 2011) ⁶. Another reason why we cannot

⁶ A major study on the climate change-migration nexus involving a group of prominent migration and environmental researchers published by the Foresight programme of the British Government Office for Science (Foresight 2011) concluded that estimates of the numbers of environmental or climate change migrants are methodologically unsound, as migration is a “multi-causal phenomenon and it is problematic to assign a proportion of the actual or predicted number of migrants as moving as a direct result of environmental change”. Therefore, a deterministic approach that assumes that “all or a proportion of people living in an ‘at risk’ zone in a low-income country will migrate neglects the pivotal role that humans take in dealing with environmental change and also ignores other constraining factors which influence migration outcomes” (Foresight 2011: 11).

automatically assume that environmental stress or shocks in the form of droughts, hurricanes or flood will lead to migration, is that deprivation may actually deprive people from doing so. As with poverty, deprivation and violence in general, most vulnerable, in fact, may become trapped *in situ*.

Last but not least, it is important to realize that mobility has always been an integral part of livelihood strategies (see also Hamro-Drotz 2014). In Africa, temporary and circular mobility have since long been an adaptation mechanism for to cope with natural climate variability such as scarce and irregular rainfall, particularly for nomadic and semi-nomadic population groups such as the Fulbe in West Africa (de Bruijn and van Dijk 2003), the Aït Atta and other Imazighen ('Berber') groups of southern Morocco (Hart 1981), the Hawaweer pastoralists in northern Sudan (Haug 2002), or the Wodaabe in southeast Niger (Schareika 2001). We therefore need to understand how such mobility patterns are disrupted, modified or extended in response to environmental (or other) stresses. Rather than seeking to artificially generate crude estimates of the numbers of 'climate migrants', a more sensible approach is therefore understand how and why existing mobility patterns may change in the future, depending on the sensitivity of existing migration drivers to climate change in specific regional contexts (see Black, Kniveton and Schmidt-Verkerk 2011 for such an analysis of the Ghanaian case).

A longitudinal study on the effects of drought on population mobility in the rural Ethiopian highlands indicate that during periods of drought men's (internal) migration increases but that marriage-related moves by women decrease (Gray and Mueller 2012). There is a growing body of evidence that adverse environmental conditions can, but do not always, increase mobility, but that they can also reduce long-distance mobility by depriving people of the necessary resources to move. Corroborating the idea that adverse environmental conditions mostly affects local and temporary moves, and effects can also occur in the opposite direction, another study found that higher (lower) soil quality reduced (increased) temporary internal labour migration in the Kenyan highlands, but that it marginally increased (decreased) migration in southern Uganda, which could indicate a possible poverty trap (Gray 2011)

A survey-based study on migration determinants in Burkina Faso highlighted the importance of distinguishing the destination and duration of migration. The study did not find an effect of rainfall conditions on the likelihood of first migration from rural areas when no distinction by destination or duration was made. While short-term, short-distance rural-to-rural migration between villages in drier areas increased in periods with rainfall deficits, drought reduced the likelihood of international long-term moves from Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire (Henry, Schoumaker and Beauchemin 2004). The finding that drought is rather related to short-distance and often short-term) migration then long-distance movement is corroborated by a study on Mali, where the average migration rate during the 1983-1985 drought did not increase. While short-distance, circular mobility of relatively poor people increased, established patterns long-distance migration of Soninke groups from relatively well-off families remained unaffected (Findley 1994). In fact, during episodes of drought migration to Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire and, particularly, France *decreased* because of the tightening of credit constraints.

In the same vein, an analysis of nationally representative data from Malawi's 2004/05 Integrated Household Survey showed that while in general migrants tend to move to areas with lower rainfall variability and drought probability, rainfall shocks had a *negative* association with individual rural out-migration (Lewin, Fisher and Weber 2012). Drawing on survey, interview and focus group data from rural and urban dwellers in Malawi, a recent study (Suckall, Fraser and Forster 2017) found that while climate change

may increase migration aspirations, its negative effects make it less likely that people would (at least in the short term) be able to do so because environmental stresses made them poorer (see also Kihato 2017). A household interview-based study in four rural sites in northwest Ethiopia showed that while short-term migration is largely driven by food insufficiency and locational advantages such as agricultural productivity, the propensity for long-term, generally longer distance migration increases for households with a higher educational level (Tegegne and Penker 2016). This suggests that wealthier families tend to be less vulnerable – and less responsive – to environmental stress or climate variability.

Altogether, such evidence challenges bold claims that environmental degradation and climate change are significant drivers of international, let alone inter-continental migration within and from Africa. Although such factors do play a role, their effects on migration are complex, and environmental stress may effectively immobilize the most vulnerable populations by depriving them of the capability of migrating as an adaptation strategy. This is also corroborated by a recent statistical analysis of global bilateral stock data from 1960 to 2000, which found no direct effect of long-run climatic factors on international migration (Beine and Parsons 2015).

Violence and political oppression

Mobility deprivation also explains the complex effects of violence and political oppression on trends and patterns of migration. The recent history of African migration exemplifies the relevance of violent conflict and political oppression in generating significant population mobility. Although the vast majority of Africans primarily for reasons of work, family, or study, even in regions known for refugee migration (such as the Great Lakes region, see Bakewell and Bonfiglio 2013) violence and political oppression plays an important role in generating refugee migration and internal displacement, particularly in regions such as the Great Lakes district, the Horn of Africa and certain areas in West Africa (such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, and parts of Nigeria) and, until the 1990s, in Southern Africa.

However, the relation between violence and migration is a complex one. While images of masses of African refugees on the move and vast refugee camps dominate media images, this is only one part of the reality. First, many refugees move on their own initiative. Second, this agency means that many refugees do not fit within the ‘passive victim’ stereotype, which means that they make active choices about where to go, and particularly the more resourceful refugees may often avoid camps and prefer to settle in rural and urban areas where they can more easily blend in and start a new life, such as Bakewell (2000) has shown for Angolan refugees in Zambia and Whitaker (2002) for refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo in western Tanzania.

Third, while violence and oppression can obviously motivate people to get on the move, the same factors that motivate their flight can also prevent them from fleeing. On the one hand, this can be linked to personal factors, such as the wish to stay with and care for family members who are not able or who do not wish to flee, or to protect crops, livestock or a business from neglect, destruction and pillage. On the other hand, this can be linked to a lack of money, knowledge and personal connections that are needed to migrate and to build a life elsewhere. In the same vein, people living under authoritarian regime may more often wish to migrate, but authoritarian states may also have a higher willingness and capacity to control and restrict emigration, for instance through exit visas and selective passport issuance policies (de Haas and Vezzoli 2011). Conflict and oppression can thus simultaneously increase aspirations but decrease capabilities to migrate, and

both effects may thus cancel each other out. This may explain why a study of global migration data did not find a clear correlation between the level of political freedoms and levels of emigration (de Haas 2010b).

Based on the case of wartime migration in Mozambique, Lubkemann (2008) argued that the common focus on people who actually manage to flee conflict conceal a large category of people who suffer from 'displacement in place' through 'involuntary immobilization' because warfare trapped them in the places they wanted to leave. As also seems to be the for environmental factors and extreme poverty, the most vulnerable are less likely to be able to flee conflict and, if they are able to move at all, they are likely to migrate over relatively short distances, less likely to derive long-term benefits from their flight (Van Hear 2014), and more likely to suffer from harassment by officials, to be exploited on labor markets and suffer other forms of discrimination and racism.

Besides conflicts and persecution, forced migration can also result from the effects of development projects, such as dams, mines, airports, industrial areas, golf courses, and middle- and upper-class housing complexes (Castles, de Haas and Miller 2014). On a global level, development-induced displacement is often thought to be the largest single form of forced migration, and the number of internally development-displaces people is estimated at levels of 10-15 million people per year. Such displacement often mainly affects disempowered groups such as indigenous peoples, other ethnic minorities and slum-dwellers (Cernea and McDowell 2000). Unfortunately, no Africa-specific estimates of development-induced displacement exist, but it is likely that rapid urban growth, road construction, dispossession or privatisation of collective agricultural lands for cash-cropping, commercial cattle farms and other forms of agribusiness are displacing hundreds of thousands if not millions of Africans per year (cf. Terminski 2013). A well-known example of this phenomenon is the internal displacement caused by oil induced environmental degradation in Nigeria's Niger Delta (Opukri and Ibaba 2008).

Conclusion

Understanding the drivers of migration within the African context will help to clarify policy choices and also enable efforts to encourage safe, orderly and regular migration while discouraging irregular and other forms of involuntary migration. The commitments outlined here demonstrate the need for states on the continent to focus on long term development efforts in line with the SDGs goals, environmental protection initiatives, and conflict resolutions efforts in order to create the necessary environment in which the rising Intra-African migration takes place with a view to harnessing the catalytic role of migration in development. Because the drivers are often operative at local or community levels the implementation of the commitments ought to be at these levels.

Actionable commitments

- States should commit to better management of free movement of people with a focus on mainstreaming migration in development planning and implementation targeting vulnerable groups including women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. The emphasis is to harness the catalytic role of migration in development such as when traders cross borders and either establish themselves or engage in circular movements. The development approach should include support to diversify economies and industrialize.
- Ensure that development financing and support mechanisms should be grassroots based in order to raise capacity of devolved governments to create diverse livelihoods opportunities.

- Ease restriction on cross border procedures and acquisition of travel documents to discourage the use of traffickers, smugglings and other exploitative practices by labour recruiting agencies targeting those seeking work opportunities in countries such as the Gulf States.
- Facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration with a special focus on places with crises or conflict by enhancing institutional capacity to handle the entire value chain of migration from sound policy formulation touching on various aspects of migration including labour migration, prevention of conflict, implementation of sustainable development programs and putting into place adequate mechanisms for monitoring, early warning, research and monitoring and evaluation.
- Improve governance in order to stabilize socio-economic contexts through environmental protection, conflict prevention, sustainable agricultural practices including urban agriculture, and other rural and urban livelihoods support interventions.
- Enhancing the capacity to respond to disaster and developmental and livelihoods needs of communities. This includes institutional and technical capacity to use evidence based approach to implement development programmes in support of goals in the SDGs. The evidence should be based on sound data analysis, research and dissemination.
- Implement the Paris Agreement of 2016 on climate change to reduce the impact of climate change on migration.
- Stop political and military interventions in Africa by outside forces that lead to conflict producing large scale migration.
- Implement effective migration information initiatives using relevant channels to counter the rapid dissemination of misleading social media based enablers that lead to irregular migration.

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