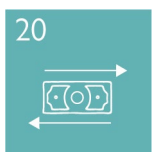


## 21.

Migration across West Africa:  
development-related aspectsPeter Quartey,<sup>1</sup> Mary Boatemaa Setrana,<sup>2</sup>  
Cynthia Addoquaye Tagoe<sup>1</sup>19  
MIGRANT AND DIASPORA  
CONTRIBUTIONS20  
REMITTANCES AND  
FINANCIAL INCLUSION

**Abstract:** This chapter investigates the linkages between migration and development in West Africa. The Economic Community of West African States Protocol relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment of 1979 aims at promoting development through the free movement of persons, goods and services. Since its implementation, the region has witnessed increasing labour migration due to infrastructural development, increasing production of cash crops, the development of the mining sectors, and oil discovery. Contemporary migration trends, including the feminization of migration and transnationalism, contribute to development across West Africa. With the effective implementation of migration policy frameworks, developmental benefits – such as brain circulation, investment in different sectors of the home countries' economies and remittances – can be maximized.

## 21.1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration brings development through the benefits accruing to the migrant sending and receiving countries as well as social and economic costs (IOM, 2009). With the appropriate policies in place, these benefits are maximized and the cost minimized to the development of both countries of origin and of destination. For instance, some emigrants have later either returned with higher dividends from their stay abroad or maintained their contacts with the origin countries. This has allowed them to bring their expertise to bear on the development of their countries of origin in various ways. This paper focuses on the linkages between migration and development in the West African context.

## 21.2. Migration and development

One key point of the discourse on migration and development is the fact that the impact of migration is felt at different levels of development. The migration hump theory, for instance, suggests that migration will increase rapidly as the level of

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development increases, because people want to migrate in order to better their lives and have greater capabilities to move; however, at more advanced stages of development, immigration is usually greater than emigration (Martin and Taylor, 1996; de Haas, 2010). It is therefore prudent to interrogate the West African migration discourse with the view that, no matter the level of development countries could reach, their citizens will still migrate, although with different motives, impact and volumes.

Another factor that has significant impact on the migration and development nexus is the internal and international migration dynamics. The predominant narrative focuses on international migration, despite the high numbers of people moving internally. For example, international migration and development was very much highlighted in the outcomes of the United Nations Global Commission (2003), in Stephen Castles and Mark Miller's *Age of Migration* (1998), and in Tonah and Setrana's *Migration and Development in Africa* (1997), among others. Yet, the creation (in 1975) and institution (1979) of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the adoption of its Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, all aimed at promoting development and exchange among Member States. Since the implementation of this Protocol, the region has witnessed increasing labour migration, also due to infrastructural development and increasing production of cash crops (coffee, cocoa and groundnut), the development of the mining sectors and oil discovery. For example, many labour migrants moved from the Sahelian countries – in some instances, with families – to the plantations in Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria (Addoquaye Tagoe, 2013; Adepoju, 2005). While Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire mainly attracted labour migrants from Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and the Niger to their cocoa farms, Senegal and the Gambia provided work on their cotton and groundnut farms for migrants from the rest of the continent. Nigeria's oil discovery and exploration also made the country attractive for many West African migrants (Adepoju, 2005; Arthur, 1991). Citizens of ECOWAS are able to move, reside and work in other ECOWAS countries, although they are confronted with challenges (ICMPD and IOM, 2016). Some Member States have worked or are working on migration policies to have a holistic approach to managing migration.

Initial discourses linking migration and development did so with a unidirectional idea (either pessimistic or optimistic), with the linkages between “here” and “there” not being considered within these discourses. The discourses were also related strongly to the ideas of development as an economic measurement, without considering the welfare and social dimensions of development (Stark, 1960) and migration as having either negative or positive impacts. Contemporary migration discourses argue beyond the extreme positions to more sophisticated arguments that reflect the trends, patterns and complexities of current migration, which culminate in development from brain gain, brain circulation, transnational businesses and return migration (de Haas, 2007; Tonah and Setrana, 2017). These patterns are further discussed below.

### 21.2.1. Brain drain, brain gain and brain circulation

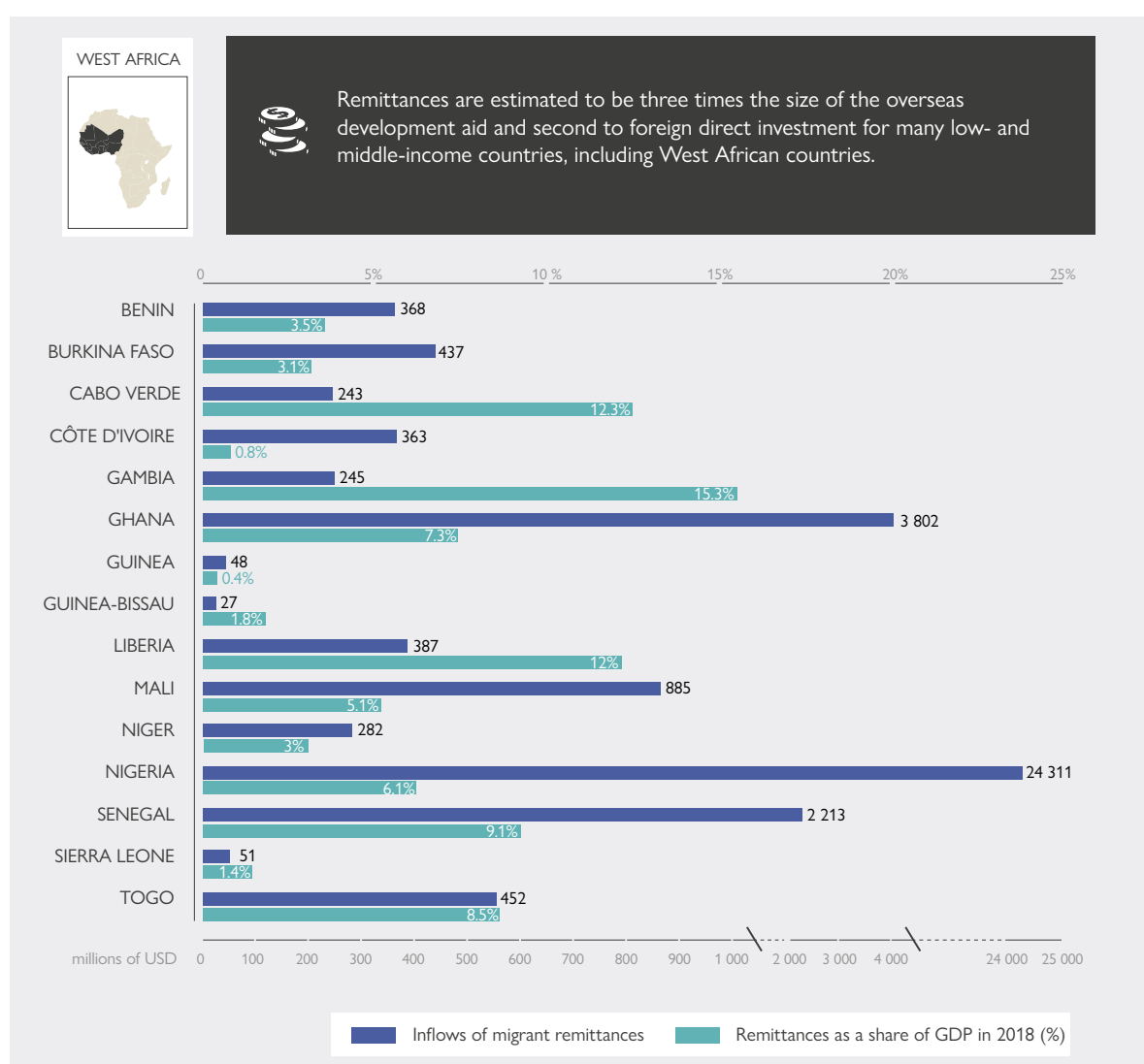
In some cases, the negative perception of migration stems from the fear that it may deprive developing countries of their brightest and best brains, and further deepen the inequality gap between the Global North and Global South, or between urban and rural contexts (Castles, 2001, 2010). In the agricultural sector, concerns have been raised regarding the migration of the young and energetic persons, who happen to be the stronghold of farm production. In the education sector, the government spends USD 4 million every year on hiring consultants and expatriates to fill national vacant positions due to the emigration of its professionals (Oduba, 2000; Benedict and Ukpere, 2012). In the case of Sierra Leone and Togo, women with tertiary education living outside these countries were as high as 10 per cent in 2010/2011 (OECD and UN DESA, 2013). Within the sub-Saharan African region, the West African countries have the highest emigration of health professionals compared with other regions, although the sector has the greatest need of personnel (WHO, 2006; Teye et al., 2014). About 30,000 nurses and midwives educated within West Africa and sub-Saharan Africa work in the Global North (WHO, 2006).

However, migrants abroad acquire new skills, knowledge, norms and values, which help them to contribute to development in various capacities (Setrana and Tonah, 2016). These benefits of emigration support the optimistic views of Easterly and Nyarko (2008) and Clemens (2015), considering that benefits of migration to the home region are greater than the costs therein. West African returnees who are highly skilled can be useful for the development agendas of their respective countries. Women, who increasingly migrate independently to further their education or work, can become economically independent to support themselves and their households.

## 21.2.2. Impact of remittances on development

Remittances represent significant contributions to development and a source of foreign exchange, supplementing household income for purchasing basic needs. Remittances are estimated to be three times the size of the overseas development aid and second to foreign direct investment for many low- and middle-income countries, including West African countries (World Bank, 2016). In 2019, the amount of remittance inflows to West Africa was USD 35.6 billion an increase from USD 31.439 billion.<sup>3</sup> A majority of the top 10 recipient countries of remittances were in West Africa, with Nigeria as the top recipient country, with USD 24.3 billion (World Bank Group and KNOMAD, 2019). In West Africa, remittances represent a greater share of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the following countries: Cabo Verde (12.3%), Liberia (12.0%), Senegal (9.1%), Togo (8.5%), Ghana (7.3%) and Nigeria (6.1%).<sup>4</sup> In more than half of the countries in the subregion, remittances represent at least 5 per cent of their GDP (World Bank, 2019). The 2018 figures notes Nigeria as the country with the highest remittance inflow (USD 24311million) (see figure 21.1).

**Figure 21.1.** Migrant remittances in West Africa



Source: World Bank Data Sheet, 2019.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

<sup>3</sup> Figures represented as at October 2019.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank Data Sheet for remittance inflows April 2019.

Remittances sent to West Africa are mostly invested in accommodation, health, education, businesses, farming and agricultural equipment, purchasing of land, and as a form of insurance for unforeseen circumstances in migrant households. Quartey (2006) and Mohapatra and Ratha (2011) recognized that migrant households make savings with financial institutions as an insurance strategy. Remittance inflows to international migrant households are higher than internal migrant households, although internal remittances are more frequent. Similarly, male migrants remit higher amounts than their female counterparts (Adepoju and van der Wiel, 2010), although women appear to remit more frequently than men.

The high cost of transferring remittances limits the actual amount sent to the household, while also encouraging the use of informal channels, which are relatively cheaper and have better exchange rates. These challenges have received attention at the global policy level through indicator 17.3.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which focuses on increasing the volume of remittances; and SDG indicator 10.1, on reducing the cost of sending remittances.

### 21.2.3. Migrant associations and development

West Africa is known for its diaspora associations and internal migrant associations, which are often formed along the lines of ethnicity, religion or profession, and aim at supporting development in origin communities, including through return migration. These associations contribute both in cash and in kind to their countries and communities of origin. They contribute towards infrastructural development such as schools, hospitals and community centres, among others. An example of such associations is the Senegalese Diaspora Association in France, which has supported vocational training through the establishment of vocational training centres in Senegal – for instance, for carpentry and bakery – providing young people with entrepreneurial skills and creating jobs for the communities, which have ripple effects on the country as a whole (Moser, 2018). Another prominent association is the Council of Ewe Associations of North America, which aims to promote the socioeconomic and cultural development of countries of origin, namely Benin, Togo and Ghana (Kothior, 2013). In the educational sector, scholars based in the Global North transfer their knowledge to the home country on a more short-term basis.

Beyond the international migrant associations of West African origin, internal migrants' associations are mostly formed in urban centres across the region, and contribute to development in the communities of origin. In Ghana, the Kwahuman Association in Accra mobilizes resources for the development of Kwahuman in the Eastern Region of Ghana (Okyerefo and Setrana, 2018).

### 21.2.4. Transnational linkages, return migration and development

West African migrants connect with their home countries in various ways. Social remittances including “democratic remittances” are major means of ensuring their continuous and constant link with the home countries. For instance, migrants often support the strengthening of democracy in the countries of origin through the formation of external party branches of the home country political parties, campaigning, resource mobilization and sometimes returning to occupy certain political positions once their parties are in power (Setrana and Kyei, 2015). In Sierra Leone, diaspora associations intensified campaigns for the amendment of their Citizenship Law to allow for dual citizenship (Heath, 2009). Migrants have also created transnational businesses in the home countries, creating jobs and paying taxes in the country (see, for instance, Setrana and Tonah, 2016; and Smith, 2007). To maximize these benefits, many governments in West Africa have implemented policies to ensure greater engagement with their citizens abroad, as well as those who make the decision to finally return home, in order to maximize the developmental benefits of migration.

International organizations also fund the temporary return and engagement of West African migrants to contribute to development in the region. For instance, IOM, through the Migration and Development for Africa Project, collaborated with the Ministries of Health in Ghana and Nigeria to engage their countries' diaspora in the health sector to contribute to filling the skills gap in this sector. The Centre for International Migration and Development collaborates with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) and the German Federal

Employment Agency to run the diaspora and return experts programme in several other African countries, including Nigeria and Ghana<sup>5</sup> (Setrana, 2019).

Although return migration can be beneficial, it is unfortunate that some highly educated West African migrants at destination find jobs only at the periphery of the labour market with low pay, and this stalls their potential contributions to national development upon eventual return.

### 21.2.5. Migrants' contribution to development of destination countries

Contributions of migrants to the development of their host countries come in different forms and are seen in the economy and cultural sectors in particular. Businesses created and operated by migrants in their host communities provide job opportunities for the unemployed, and also allow them to maintain a cultural connection with their home countries. These businesses include restaurants that provide employment and cater to the migrant communities' identification with their home countries in the form of special native cuisines, among others (Sassen-Koob, 1985). This role contributes to migrants' integration into the host countries with "a taste of both worlds". These businesses have related activities that necessitate the connection to both the host and origin communities, such as the import–export business, shipping, air cargo, travel and tourism companies, and money transfer businesses. Migrants get to be "cultural brokers" and contribute to the cultural diversity of their host nations (Glick Schiller et al., 1995).

## 21.3. Conclusion

Migration across the West African subregion brings enormous benefits to both the sending and receiving countries. Some of the gains include brain gain or brain circulation, remittances, transnational linkages and development, as well as investments in health, education and housing, to mention but a few.

Recognizing the changing face of migration in West Africa, the transnational nature that allows for engagement with West African migrants, irrespective of where they are and the benefits for development, many governments have put in place migration policies to better engage with their citizens abroad and to create the enabling environment for their successful return and integration.

Efforts towards addressing challenges associated with migration either to or from the subregion and intraregional migration are key to promoting the interlinkages between migration and development. Governments have put in place various measures, such as national migration policies, dual citizenship laws and diaspora engagement policies for effective migration management broadly, which have been successful to varying degrees (ICMPD and IOM, 2016). Additionally, Governments are encouraged under the SDGs to increase the volume of remittances (SDG indicator 17.3.2) and reduce the cost of sending remittances (SDG indicator 10.1). The global average cost of sending remittances is USD 200 which is still high for West African countries and can be reduced further.<sup>6</sup> Given the importance of the diaspora in national development across the region, it is suggested that governments harmonize policies across the subregion to address the benefits and challenges associated with regular and irregular migration. Finally, national governments should deepen their engagements with the diaspora through homecoming visits and fundraising activities such as diaspora bonds (eg. Mangala, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Some relevant links are: (a) Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN); Bringing Talents Home to help in Liberia's Reconstruction, available at [www.undp.org/content/dam/liberia/docs/docs/Transfer%20of%20Knowledge%20through%20Expatriate%20Nationals%20Report.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/liberia/docs/docs/Transfer%20of%20Knowledge%20through%20Expatriate%20Nationals%20Report.pdf); (b) MIDA Ghana Health project, available at [www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/MIDA-Ghana-Health-Project-2012.pdf](http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/Country/docs/MIDA-Ghana-Health-Project-2012.pdf). Centre for migration and development (2019). Employers – Placement of returning experts. Retrieved on [30th September, 2019] from [www.cimonline.de/en/html/fur-arbeitgeber\\_rf.html](http://www.cimonline.de/en/html/fur-arbeitgeber_rf.html); [www.cimonline.de/en/html/returning-experts.html](http://www.cimonline.de/en/html/returning-experts.html).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history).

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