

YOUTH MIGRATION FROM AFRICA: ADDRESSING CAUSES AND FINDING SOLUTIONS

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Over the years, the development and expansion of human resource has remained a leading focus of governments across the globe. This is due to an increasing demand for intellectual and skilled workforce which is capable of driving national development in various sectors. In Africa however, corporate efforts geared towards achieving this goal are constantly being impacted and redefined by various factors which largely target youths - the category of citizens that largely comprise the workforce in African countries. One of the major factors and one which results in severe brain drain is migration. This is the movement of people from one place to another with the intention of settling down permanently.

Why youth migration? The answer to this is not far-fetched. Most youths in African countries migrate with a view to championing a new life outside of their countries; a new life which is envisaged to be promising and capable of affording better opportunities that is not locally available. African youths seek gainful

employment, decent shelter, quality healthcare backed up by an environment that diminishes exposure to health risks, quality education, efficient power supply, political stability, and better standard of living.

The desire for better standard of living is one common to all humans irrespective of race. But what differentiates the Western world from Africa considering this common desire? Arguably, the economies of African states have proved to be unstable and largely unable to meet up with the task of addressing these demands, even as Africa's population continues to increase. It therefore becomes

clear that we cannot separate youth migration from Africa's economic condition, the same which influences personal incomes and, thus, drives Africans' ability to satisfy a bulk of their daily needs.

This imbalance has led to an influx of Africans into Western countries and the number of these immigrants has increased significantly over the years with statistics showing that a great percentage are youths.

Although not all migrants turn out to be successful, many of such journeys usually begin

with optimism but end in disappointment. A lot of youth migrants are faced with inhuman treatments that break them down along the way. These include robbery, assault, rape and verbal abuse. It is recorded that, yearly, thousands of African youth lose their lives in Sahara desert and on the Mediterranean Sea.

Despite being aware of this fact, more are willing to undertake the same risk. This raises our curiosity.

Some migrants who are

fortunate to reach their destinations in western countries face constant racial discrimination while others end up in illegal drug deals, dipsomania, gambling, theft, and prostitution.

This becomes a conspicuous dent on Africa's image as a continent; especially amid the increasing rate of migration, the same which has recently begun to stretch the population of the foreign countries as well as further consume their resources. They, surely, tend to spontaneously respond to this challenge. Examples of this response are imprisonment and repatriation of some migrants, most of whom have been physically, psychologically, and

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sexually battered. This becomes a cumbersome task for Africa in a bid to reform them through conscious and steady rehabilitation efforts. Many who go abroad abandon their sources of livelihood and sell off belongings in order to afford the cost of such trips. When repatriated, their reestablishment is often a source of worry to their families and governments.

These underlying effects of migration make it imperative that those at the helms of affairs in African states wake up to their responsibilities as leaders. If governments in Africa improve on economic development in conformation with campaign promises, the rate of migration will arguably decline. The buoyancy of our economies needs to be restored. This can be done through the introduction of regulatory and reform measures cutting across all sectors. Funds should be properly channeled from the surplus units to the underfunded sectors, towards goals that directly influence the state of the economy and improve the lives of youths. By proper channeling of resources, I do not mean focusing government investment on a particular ethnic group or geopolitical zone according to personal affiliations, but through even investment as this is the only way to reach the bulk of African youths who should urgently be dissuaded from migrating.

For many of these youths, being fed daily and being unable to afford decent shelter has become a greater need than education.

Financial constraints have also kept a great number of male adults from having families of their own. This is the extent at which the standard of living of many African youth has diminished. Therefore, in order to curb migration, the various national governments must adopt ways of improving standard of living of citizens through empowerment programmes and creation of sustainable employment opportunities.

The government is not unaware of the needs of the youth. We cannot completely obliterate the intentions to migrate from the mind of a youth

who is willing to go to school and obtain formal education, yet impeded by institutional problems from gaining admission into higher institutions of learning, even after success in schools' exhausting screening examinations. This is a disappointment that affect the emotional and mental health of most African youths. It is true that some of these youth are gradually forced to abandon their educational pursuits and are slowly becoming liabilities, roaming the streets and growing to be irresponsible.

However, we must address these discrepancies in our education system. We must, in addition, improve the infrastructure in many government-owned schools. We have come far enough to be able to renovate dilapidated secondary schools. If not taken care of, these youths will continue to go to the other side of the Mediterranean Sea in a bid to find out whether the grass is greener there. Some of these youth migrate in an attempt to escape the consequences of their criminal actions. This is

common among those who have been involved in cultism, even at young ages and, so, we must check and eradicate this and related vices.

Moreover, academic systems should be streamlined in order to meet up with international standard. Graduating from many programs in Africa can be tagged as "Survival of the fittest". Some observers have argued that many youths who migrate to western countries are school

dropouts. The condition of teaching and learning in African countries also has a role to play in socio-economic development. Thus, effective mode of teaching and learning amid extensive practical as observed in developed countries will do great good if implemented in African countries.

Furthermore, African youths need to be assured of gainful employment after graduation from educational institutions. Self-sufficient job opportunities should be created through industrialization and reviving of factories that have been abandoned, especially due to poor

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maintenance culture. We must revive our industries and, in turn, revive our economy. Skill acquisition centers should be created as these will employ many, and empower more youths. We should establish a framework that provides the needed capital for businesses via grants and loans at low-interest rates.

In addition, agriculture should be improved through the supply of varieties of crops, fertilizers, and machinery. This will go a long way in encouraging youth involvement in agriculture especially in the rural areas, even in the midst of crop production that is becoming increasingly prone to climate change. Involvement in agriculture will enhance Africa's food production, increase exportation, and gradually transform the agriculture sector into a base for wealth creation.

Empirical evidence has shown that a jobless youth is a frustrated youth, and such individuals can only slightly be prevented from making attempts to migrate because it becomes a natural inclination to seek alternatives. Even a change of air may appear as a huge relief especially in the face of depression, intimidation, and societal pressure. We must tackle the challenge of unemployment if we truly desire to end geographical drift because we cannot insist youths stay in Africa when the states are unable to help them evolve and engage their talents and inherent abilities. We cannot rule out provision of social amenities needed to guarantee the well-being of the youth. Our hospitals should also be reequipped with a view to improving currently dwindling standard of healthcare.

A critical examination of these issues provides that not all of these youth are spurred by defined personal ambitions. Rather, some migrate in a bid to escape pressure from their families, and this is because a great number of individual belonging to the older generation of people who believe that migration is an easy channel out of poverty and perceived irrelevance. These people, therefore, tend to inculcate the same mindset in their children and

set them enroute to foreign nations while they stay back and expect returns amid pride and satisfaction.

In many African communities, people are fascinated by the presence of natives who checks in from countries overseas. People are thrilled by meager gifts from such visitors even when it is beyond obvious that such items can be produced and purchased here in Africa. This is traceable to poverty and illiteracy, and when it comes to connecting the dots between these two, the lines are clear. Amid the long-imbibed mindset of "we must go abroad", which like a

persistent stain, has eaten deep into the very fabric of our existence; it becomes clear that we cannot curb incessant migration if we do not recognize the need to be informed. Education is an indispensable tool in the mastery of the human mind.

According to Diogenes L., "the foundation of any state is the education of its youth." In line with this, we should create awareness and seek to educate young people on their self-esteem. It is important they

understand that youths should be proud of their origin and be willing to invest themselves into the growth and enhancement of their country. Thereafter, we should collectively seek to educate our youth on self-dependence as a way of motivating them to work, taking active part in the continent's commercial and industrial drive. This is with the understanding that they are capable of leading the transformation they seek and can live their dream in their own countries. Moreover, they should be taught that their lives can be better than those who have crossed borders in search of greener pastures. People should be made to understand the truth; that they do not need to be away from home by all means possible before they can achieve greatness.

The media should be engaged in this fight against youth migration too. As much as the alarming rate of migration may suggest poverty, it remains true that some of these youth can afford mobile phones and data plans alongside

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access to radios and televisions. Insightful publicity should be made with a view to conveying easily understood messages that decry incessant migration. Also, stories of migrants who were fortunate enough to return home should be shared in order to enlighten others on the dangers likely to be encountered if such journeys are embarked upon. Non-governmental organizations should wake up to this huge responsibility and organize free seminars for youths since a lot of them are exposed to this danger.

In conclusion, I believe that migration can be successfully combated if we all work together and counsel one another. We should never be the reason a youth goes home to think deeply and arrive at the conclusion that migration is a preferred option for survival.

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