

YOUTH MIGRATION FROM AFRICA: ADDRESSING CAUSES AND FINDING SOLUTIONS

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A good child is a blessing, not only to his/her family, but also to his/her entire nation for he/she strives within the limit of his/her capability to move his/her nation forward. Therefore, the youths of various nations have great role to play in making their country a strong and virile one. Emigration is the relocation of people from one country to another. Increased rate of emigration does not foster nation-building. Patterns of emigration have been shaped by numerous factors in Africa. The reasons or causes of youth emigration from Africa are multifaceted, ranging from family pressure, to environmental influence, unemployment, lack of adequate education, low socio-economic status, political instability, and corruption.

First, family pressure is an increasingly important factor in explaining migration flows in most African societies. It has become almost like a norm nowadays for some families to send their children abroad with or without their children's opinion. Youths have been raised in a family setting that puts pressure on them to travel abroad whether by hook or by crook, and even against all odds.

Parents and family members who do not yet have children abroad have not relented on making efforts to do so because there is a strong conviction that the family's future and betterment depends on it. This mindset and its accompanying unhealthy practices have led to youth migration from Africa, compelling them to resort to illegal migration when they do not want to be the odd-one-out. Even young adults travel across restricted European and American borders or commit preposterous act like handing over their children to people who specialize in illegal migration business. These people are colloquially referred to as "sharons" or "trolleys"

in an environment like Benin City, Nigeria. These youths are then made to work for their traffickers on arrival as payment to cover the cost of their trip.

One of the effects of this is that youth migrants start menial jobs, while some resort to illegal occupations. On the other hand, youths who refuse the idea of migrating from Africa are sometimes subjected to the continual disdain from immediate family members. Therefore, family pressure is a major factor in determining youth migration in Africa.

Secondly, peer pressure is now very important, and probably the most prevalent factor in our society in recent times.

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Youths are beginning to give up formal education for migration because it is now believed that even those that have acquired higher education later fall back to the streets and live

from hand to mouth. An average child in Benin City has lost interest in pursuing meaningful goal and ambition in life because of economic hardship. In other words, there is decadence in our moral and social values. Youths are no longer strategically thinking about doing what will make them gain global relevance and territorial influence, let alone strive to become visionary leaders that will pilot the affairs of the nation.

More so, social influence tends to represent an irresistible compelling force on every youth who has seen their age-mates returning from Europe or America with so much affluence to show off. Social influence has gained relevance in our society today, so much so that both educated and uneducated youths have considered migration from Africa as the "light at the end of their tunnel". There are certain areas where

there is a high prevalence of this social influence as a factor or determinant of youth migration. For instance in Nigeria, it is now a culture to leave the shores of the country as one grows up in search of greener pasture overseas. Social and peer influence remain significant to the extent that in March, 2018, the Oba of Benin, had to make a decree on African youth migration and human trafficking. Therefore, social influence increases youth migration from Africa.

Also, lack of unemployment and entrepreneurial opportunities is another cause of youth migration from Africa. Majority of secondary school leavers and university graduates are either unemployed or underemployed because there aren't enough jobs.

Even when the jobs are available, employment is based on favouritism, ethnicity or tribal consideration. The result is that the unqualified applicants are employed to the detriment of qualified ones who have the intelligence and competence to do the jobs. Interviews are merely conducted by employers just to fulfill some government recruitment regulations while people with social connections use other means to secure such jobs.

One other concern about unemployment which deters entrepreneurship opportunities is poor supply of electricity. For the average youth who aspires to venture into entrepreneurship, constant source of power supply is essential. The current condition of epileptic power supply in most African countries is detrimental to the development of small and medium scale enterprises, hence such businesses fold up and unemployment sets in. In addition, one other cause of unemployment is lack of employable skills among youths. Many graduates often overlook the need to acquire useful skills that would further enhance their chances of getting a job. All these causes of unemployment result in low standards of living for youths which

consequently make them vulnerable to external pull factors.

Furthermore, inadequate education has overtime been associated with migration of youths in Africa. This prevents uneducated youth from competing with their peers for global and universal relevance. Youth migration has been fostered by the realization that youths without formal education are bound to be shortchanged in the labour market meanwhile, a few exceptions are satisfied with the menial jobs they. For those who would not settle for less, they travel overseas where the menial jobs are more lucrative.

Another important reason why youths migrate from Africa is because of low socio-economic status of the African state. Every country's economic state is supposed to create a favourable and fertile environment for foreign and local investments that would, in turn,

provide youths with entrepreneur skills and capacity development.

This has not been the case in many African countries because most are underdeveloped or developing, and their economies wallowing in corruption, and maladministration which result in youth striving for greener pasture elsewhere. There are little or no initiatives that the government has put in place to empower youths in many African states in order to encourage them

and make their environment pleasant and promising.

Also, as many sub-Sahara African economies are growing, many countries continue to have high unemployment rates and relatively low wage rates. While the job market looks unlikely to improve anytime soon, the population of these developing economies is growing; this means that more people have to compete for limited employment opportunities.

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Against this background, sub-Saharan African youths could see migrating to countries with more and better paying jobs as a means of improving their personal economic prospects. Besides, many workers do not receive adequate financial motivation in terms of salary increase and promotion from their employers. They go-through-the-mill and suffer untold hardship. They are not able to provide good food for their families because they earn pittance. They are so frustrated that they would hardly think twice when they have options and opportunity to emigrate.

Finally, political instability and corruption have become the lethal social evil that is threatening to the foundation of most African society today and has made itself manifest in all sectors of the society. These social aberrations have inflicted injuries on the economies of many African nations. Unfortunately, so many African youths have engaged themselves in these unwholesome acts in one way or the other. More so, political leaders have gone out of their way to enrich themselves at the expense of their nations' economic development which should have fostered a better living condition for citizens.

To conclude, the solutions to youth migration from Africa can be tackled from different angles. One of the possible solutions is that parents should be well educated and enlightened about the struggle and hustle to travel across borders, especially when it involves illegal route. Again, some parents are too hard on their children. For instance, a child who is unable to pass the Senior School Certificate Examination at second or third attempt is seen as a curse to the family by most parents. Such student is constantly nagged and castigated. The person who sees himself/herself as a cast-off or as a never-do-well takes to thinking and planning to seize any opportunity to migrate from Africa, especially when he/she would not like to do menial jobs. It is important to get parents and the youths acquainted with the untold hardship that migrants face when they

eventually arrive at their destination. This will hopefully discourage youth emigration.

More so, the entire society in which youths grow cannot be exonerated. The society is hostile and insensitive to the yearning and desire of youths. The influence and pressure exerted by the society on these young people is overwhelming. Therefore, governments at all levels should provide scholarships for those who would love to have formal education and also organize youth empowerment programs for those in need of entrepreneurship and capacity building. This youth empowerment program would provide a friendly environment for youths to grow.

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This program could also provide incentives to youths by pairing them with life coaches or mentors in their line of ideas. Also, to reduce youth migration and save African nations from imminent skills labour shortage, governments at all levels should re-orientate members of the public on the connection between

migration, brain drain and economic development. They should be made aware that probity is the vehicle needed to move their respective nations forward. Furthermore, in each country, the state and local government administrators should set up a committee on youth migration matters or a task force committee to regulate the incessant migration of African youths. Workers' welfare should also be given top priority by the government. That is, workers efforts should be adequately compensated in terms of salary increase. This will, undoubtedly, reduce corruption and attract local and foreign investors that will increase employment opportunities in the continent.

Finally, favouritism and social connection should no longer be the encouraged as means for securing employment. It should not be the yardstick for appointing people to key positions in African society. Honesty, moral rectitude, intelligence and patriotic acts should be the qualities to be eulogized and admired by the members of the society and corporate bodies in African states.

Reference

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