

# Unmitigated Migration and the Implications for Migrants and their Countries of Origin: The Nigerian Experience

**Emmanuel Ikechi Onah**

*Department of Political Science*

*University of Lagos, Nigeria*

[eonah@unilag.edu.ng](mailto:eonah@unilag.edu.ng)

&

**Vera Amaechi**

*Department of Political Science*

*University of Lagos, Nigeria*

[vamaechi@unilag.edu.ng](mailto:vamaechi@unilag.edu.ng)

## Abstract

*Migration is ordinarily a positive factor that aids the free flow of goods and services, and the exchange of ideas, talents, and technology across the world. However, when migration is unplanned and massive, it creates problems for the countries of origin and destination, as well as for the migrants themselves. This work interrogates the consequences of unmitigated migration on migrants and their countries of origin, using Nigeria as a case study. The study traces the history, trends, patterns, and causal factors of unmitigated migration, alongside its consequences and policy implications. It adopts the descriptive method, relying on readily available and reliable secondary data from various news outlets and mass media channels. The study is guided by an eclectic theoretical framework that utilizes the push-and-pull theory, the world systems theory, and the modernization theory to address different aspects of the topic. The paper argues that unmitigated migration out of countries like Nigeria has resulted in the loss of essential human resources (i.e., brain drain) and a significant depletion of the labour force due to the movement of the country's best skilled and professional hands in search of greener pastures. While there are gains, especially for the individuals and families involved, such benefits are not significant enough in real terms for the countries of origin, as the conditions that motivated these movements have yet to abate. The paper therefore recommends structured migration that ensures backward integration of benefits substantial enough to propel the countries of origin out of the quagmire of unmitigated migration and underdevelopment.*

**Keywords:** *Brain Drain, Globalisation, Migration, Remittances, Underdevelopment*

## 1. Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon considered as old as humanity itself (Dubey and Mallah, 2015). It has always been part of human history; in prehistoric times, hunters and food gatherers migrated in search of new areas containing plants and wildlife necessary for survival. Even after humans historically settled in designated societies, prehistoric migrations continued, as archaeological findings demonstrate (Chimanikire 2005). This is how whole continents, including Africa, eventually came to be populated. To the present day, African societies retain migration stories in their myths and lore.

Migration is defined as the movement of people between regions or countries of the world. When people move out of their countries, it is called emigration; when the movement is into a country, it is known as immigration. The economic history of Africa records periodic movements of large populations, particularly out of the continent.

This study arises from the increased pace of migration today. The number of international migrants worldwide has shown steady growth, rising from 173 million in 2000 to 258 million in 2017 (IMR, 2017). African emigration has increased steadily over the past 20 years, growing by about 13 million migrants since 2000 (UN DESA, 2020). Between 2015 and 2020, Africa recorded an average annual increase of 800,000 new emigrants (IOM, 2022). By 2020, 40.6 million Africans were living outside their country of birth, with about 21 million (52%) living in other African countries. Today, large numbers of people depart from African countries daily on the migration route. Migrants include high-skilled and low-skilled individuals, first and second-generation migrants, and those who move for various reasons, including family reunification and asylum. The lure of diaspora networks also accounts for significant numbers of migrants.

*Fig. 1: Top Migration Destinations outside Africa*

Region/Destination	Estimated African Migrants (2020)	Main Countries
Europe	11 million	France, Italy, UK, Spain

*Unmitigated Migration ...*

Region/Destination	Estimated African Migrants (2020)	Main Countries
Middle East	3.5 million	Saudi Arabia, UAE
North America	2.5 million	United States, Canada
Asia	1.1 million	India, China, Malaysia

(Source: UN DESA, 2020; IOM, 2022)

The history of periodic movements of large populations from Africa has been driven by a number of reasons, including the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and, later, colonialism (Rodney, 1972). Colonialism opened a new vista of movement from Africa into Europe, mainly for educational and administrative purposes. This trend increased after Nigeria's independence in 1960 but was primarily for academic work and business (Mberu & Pongou, 2010). In the post-colonial period, violent conflicts also became a major reason for movement out of Africa.

However, international migration was hardly an issue in Nigeria for the first almost four decades after independence (Akusoba 2014). More recently, factors like poverty, ecological degradation, and population pressures have been the primary drivers (Kohnert 2007 p.4). Since the 21st century, the era of increased globalization has made people highly aware of living standards and lifestyles elsewhere (UK Essays, 2015), leading to massive migration. Economic problems coupled with political instability, social inequality, unemployment, economic liberalization, and heightened issues of insecurity (Akusoba 2014) have driven the massive movement of Nigerians—professionals and others—outward to the United States, Canada, Europe, and many other destinations.

International migration is a growing phenomenon, both in scope and complexity, that continues to affect almost all countries, especially their respective economies (Faini 2006). Patterns of movement over the years have contributed to changing the size, structure, and efficiency of labour markets, culture, political situations, and demographics across the globe (DFID 2007).

It is this massive movement of people out of Nigeria and similar countries that we term unmitigated migration—the unplanned and unforeseen movement of people out of and into countries. While history

suggests that normal migration tends towards an equilibrium (the number of people moving out roughly matches those coming in), unmitigated migration has created a dichotomy: some countries have become countries of emigration (sending countries/countries of origin), while others have become countries of immigration (receiving countries/destination countries).

This dichotomy necessarily disrupts the old equilibrium, resulting in a disparity where some countries witness massive emigration without substantial immigration, and others see a massive influx of migrants. Consequently, most of the unmitigated migrants are often described as irregular or undocumented (Okome, 2016), having followed illegal routes and often arriving without the necessary documentation. This disparity—and the numbers it implies—is the problematic core of unmitigated migration: countries of origin are losing nationals (skilled and unskilled, young and old), and destination countries are unprepared for the large numbers breaching their borders.

## **2. Problems and Method**

This paper seeks to study the chaos of unmitigated migration. Although this phenomenon has implications for destination and origin countries, as well as for the migrants themselves, this research concentrates on the consequences for the countries of origin and the migrants. Nigeria serves as the case study.

Most literature on migration is often overtly concerned with documenting either the benefits (Darby, 2007; Raffaele, 2006) or the dangers (deHaas, 2008; Collyer, 2010) of the phenomenon. This paper, however, attempts to explain the phenomenon and trend of unmitigated migration out of Nigeria. The specific objectives are to understand the history, trends, patterns, and causal factors of unmitigated migration, as well as its consequences and the way forward. The paper also seeks to explain the impact of linkages between international migration dynamics and the society in sending countries, including the effects on migrants' families and communities.

As this is a new work on migration trends, the paper makes allusions to the migration policies in Fortress Europe (Okome, 2016), especially when considering the migration policies in the sending countries. The work adopts the descriptive method, relying exclusively on secondary data. This use of secondary data is justified because relevant and reliable information is readily available on various news outlets and mass media channels. The data is analyzed thematically.

### *Unmitigated Migration ...*

This paper is divided into six sections: the Introduction; the Theoretical Framework; the Background to Unmitigated Migration out of Africa; Globalisation and the New Wave of Unmitigated Migration out of Africa; Unmitigated Migration and the Consequences for Migrants and the Countries of Origin; and the Conclusion.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The reasons people migrate can be explained theoretically. One of such popular theories is the push-pull theory also known as the Lee Model. This theory was first propounded by an English geographer named Ravenstein in 1889 when he developed a ‘Law of Migration’ and concluded that migration process was guided by the principle of push-and-pull, a process where comfortable situations in an external area “pull” people away from their current abode, while the uncomfortable situations in a place “push” people out of their home country (Akusoba, 2014). The ‘push-pull’ theory is based on the fact that there exist uncomfortable situations which force people out (push) to where there are comfortable situations (pull) simultaneously. These push factors compel people to move out of their locality to another in search of better opportunities, including employment, good living conditions, security, and order. In the Nigerian setting, certain factors like, ethno-religious conflicts, political conflicts, weak institutional structures, high rate of poverty and inability of the government to protect the lives and property of the people, are key drivers in the decision to leave Nigeria (Crawley, Düvell, Jones, McMahon, & Sigona, 2016).

The most challenging factors in recent times however, have included the rise of insurgency, especially Boko Haram, causing the magnitude of problems that Nigeria has not faced before, particularly in the north-eastern region of the country (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2011), the proliferation of insecurity, including banditry in the North-west, kidnapping in the South-east and farmers-herdsmen clashes in many parts of the country. The situation has been exacerbated by the economic down-turn in the country which has almost wiped out the livelihoods of Nigerians in recent times. The pull factors are those factors in the destination country that attract the individuals or groups to leave their homes and seek succour in the new countries (Akusoba 2014). Pull factors include better job opportunities, better living conditions, political freedom, religious freedom, advanced technology, well-developed economy, high standard of living, better education and medical care which attract people to move to the developed countries of the world.

Another theory that explains the reasons for increased international migration in third world countries like Nigeria is the world systems theory. The World Systems theory argues that international migration is basically a by-product of global capitalism. The core capitalist countries, i.e. developed countries, have created more opportunities due to its industrialisation, and this has encouraged labour from the periphery countries (developing states) to migrate to the core nations (ILO 2010). This World Systems theory focuses not on labour markets in national economies, but on the structure of the world market—notably the “penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, non-capitalist societies”, which takes place through the concerted actions of neo-colonial governments, multinational firms, and national elites. International migration is generated as land resources, raw materials and labour in areas of origin are drawn into the world market economy (Chimanikire, 2005).

This system shows a power hierarchy that boils down to the disruption of traditional systems and the exploitation of the periphery region of the World System (represented by the weak and poor nations) by the core region symbolised by the wealthy and powerful nations (Chimanikire, 2005). The central factor that shows the position of a region in the system is technology. This is readily available in the core countries but lacking in the periphery. The subordinate status of periphery countries (less developed countries) is therefore structurally designed in a type of development that reinforces the status quo of their subordination. The powerful nations enforce and multiply the differential flow of surplus to the core region (developed countries) and this differential is necessary to reinforce and maintain the system as a whole. As it concerns international migration, the possession of surplus by the core means that labour will have to move from the periphery to the core countries.

Whereas the push-pull theory and the world systems theory help us to explain the causal factors for the trends and pattern of migration, it is necessary to add another theory that will help explain specifically, the impacts of migration. Modernisation theory, as propounded by Almond and Coleman (1960), would see unmitigated migration as a result of the greater differentiation in the world, arising from increased system capacities and potentials. As modernisation increases, new patterns of integration and resource distribution are institutionalised, with labour and other resources moving to places of greater need and capacity for utilization, ultimately leading to the attainment of a modern world

*Unmitigated Migration ...*

culture. Seen from this perspective, migration is a response to the different capacities in the origin countries of migrants and the destination countries. Migrants are simply striving for access to the benefits of modernity which exist in the destination countries.

Part of the proceeds from these desperate journeys could be regularly remitted to the home country to help improve the standard of living in the country as well as the living conditions of members of the migrants' families and communities. It is no wonder then that the structure of international migration in recent times shows that the trend is for migrants to move out of poor regions such as Africa into rich regions such as Europe. High-income countries host almost two thirds of all international migrants. As of 2017, 64 per cent of all international migrants worldwide - equal to 165 million international migrants - lived in high-income countries (IMR 2017; UNDESA 2016).

#### **4. Background to Unmitigated Migration out of Africa**

Historically, migration dynamics followed a trend that had people moving essentially according to the place of need. During the trans-Atlantic slave trade, people were taken from Africa as slaves to work in the agricultural fields of the Americas and European colonies. Although movement at this time was involuntary and forced (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum, & Abejide, 2008), the movement was nevertheless controlled to ensure that there was no disequilibrium in the supply and demand conditions. The demand for slaves was therefore according to the labour demands in the working fields. The peak of this period was in the 15th century when 12 million young and able-bodied people were forced to migrate from Western, Central, and Eastern Africa to the European colonies and the Americas to work in plantations (Mberu & Pongou, 2010).

When next Europe and the Americas needed migrant labour, it was for their industries. Capitalist industry in the West had entered a stage where it needed cheap labour, and they looked towards Africa and other underdeveloped regions for the supply. This ultimately dovetailed into colonialism, when Europe physically acquired territories outside of Europe. The colonial system itself was in need of workers who would run the new system, and for a time even, there was a somewhat reverse migration into Africa as for instance, Britain encouraging people from the European continent who wanted to work in their colonies to join the colonial administrations (Onah, 2012). African migration into Europe however increased during the 1960s as the colonies started gaining

independence, and political differences drove people out of their countries.

All this while, the net migration was in favour of African countries, and skilled migrants out of Africa were even dubbed “brain drain”. Migration out of Africa intensified in the 1980s however, as the promises of independence failed and African countries started imposing neoliberal economic reforms. The down-turn in the economies of African states drove significant numbers of the people out to Europe in search of better life. This intensification of African migration became more pronounced as economic crises took root and political conflict became the order of the day in African countries in the 1990s and the 2000s. By this time, net migration had become in favour of European countries, and migrants out of Africa included clergy, artistes, sports stars, academics and university professors, doctors and scientists and other experts “seeking fame, fortune, refuge and human and material security”.

About 60% to 70% of these migrants were usually aged between 15 and 34 years. These young people were the most dynamic part of the population and were more prone to move in search of new employment opportunities and better livelihood options (UN DESA, 2016; Woetzel et al, 2016). The popular destinations for these migrants were often the United States (US), Canada, a number of countries on the Persian Gulf such as Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Emirates and also a number of European countries namely France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Italy (IMR, 2015).

*Fig.2: Top Countries of Origin in Africa*

Country	Number of Emigrants (2020)	Key Destinations
Egypt	3.5 million	Gulf, Europe
Morocco	3 million	France, Spain
Nigeria	1.7 million	US, UK, Italy
Sudan	1.4 million	Middle East

(Sources: UNHCR, 2022; IOM, 2022; Pew Research Center, 2022)

This was the beginning of unmitigated migration. Nigeria has become a major source of unmitigated migration, and according to Clemens and Pettersson (2008), estimated data on Nigerian health care professionals alone who were living abroad in year 2000 was 4,856, that is, about

*Unmitigated Migration ...*

13.6% of Nigerian physicians were working outside the shores of the nation and out of this, 90% lived and worked in the USA and the UK. Over 12,579 nurses, or about 11.7% of professional nurses who were born and trained in Nigeria, lived and worked abroad. Between 2000 and 2010, migration of youths out of Nigeria was mainly for education. After 2010, there was a rise in youth migration due to insecurity in the country (Boko Haram, banditry), unemployment, and frequent strikes in the universities (World Bank, 2023). In more recent years, there has been a spike in migrations due to the “Japa” syndrome, leading to mass youth exodus to Canada, UK, and UAE. In 2022 alone for instance, a total of 2,115,139 people emigrated from Nigeria, and in the first three quarters of 2023, another 1.57 million people emigrated from the country (IOM, 2024).

## **5. Globalisation and the New Wave of Unmitigated Migration from Africa: the ‘Japa Syndrome’ in Nigeria**

Beginning from the late 2010s, there emerged a rush to migrate among Nigerians of all age categories and gender. Before now, Nigerians who desired to migrate were mostly youths and males. But beginning from around 2016, Nigerians of every age category and gender became desirous to migrate out of the country. Globalisation contributed to this latest wave of large numbers of Nigerians moving to developed countries for a better life. Globalisation may not have delivered on the expectation that it will build a harmonised global economy (Onah, 2010), but it has certainly done well in creating a somewhat global village, in which information is available to everyone at once on what is happening across the world. Thus, in today’s globalised and liberalised era, just as there is no restriction on the movement of capital, goods, technology and information (Kohnert, 2007), there is certainly free information on the situation of labour demand and supply in several places of the world.

In this context, it is common knowledge that in the fight for market shares and under the pressure of growing global competitiveness, the developed countries are looking for the best and brightest minds to work in their industries. With a well-educated and large workforce, Nigeria has been an important provider of highly-skilled specialists for many developed economies including EU countries, which have become increasingly popular destinations (Stalker, 2000). Nigerian professionals and skilled workers in all fields are moving out of the country to the industrialised nations in search of better life and opportunities (Siddiqui 2012). Not too long ago, the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA)

reported that out of the 75,000 registered doctors in Nigeria, about 40,000 of them have left the country for greener pastures and about 80% of the remaining 35,000 doctors present in the country are constantly looking for opportunities to leave the shores of the country in search of greener pastures.

Apart from the need for skilled specialists, the free access to information has also enabled others to know that there is a dire need for manual labour in Europe and the Americas. As fewer citizens are available for such manual jobs, trained migrant labour such as carpenters, mechanics, plumbers and other artisans have come in high demand in these countries, and this has also contributed in fuelling the rush to migrate among young Nigerians. The immigration rush was however stalled by the coming of Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 was as sudden as it was devastating, especially in Europe and many other parts of the world. Although the disease was not debilitating as such in much of Africa, particularly Nigeria, it was generally a shock that affected many things in the world. The lockdown that it necessitated in some cities in Nigeria was an elixir that exposed people, especially the young ones to how precarious life had become in the country. With economic activities brought to a standstill for a while and no cure available at first, people actually feared the worst.

There was also no palliative from the government at the initial period of Covid-19, and when such was eventually promised, distribution turned out to be very shoddy. The manner of sharing of Covid-19 palliatives at such a desperate time seemed ultimately to expose the hopeless inability of the Nigerian state institutional apparatuses to function adequately or perform effectively and ended up even sparking looting by desperate mobs. This situation showed the stark reality of the governance deficit that confronted the country, and not a few youths apparently became convinced that there was no alternative to moving out of the country. The desire to leave continued to be stalled while Covid-19 lasted as most of Europe and other destination countries remained under lockdown. Because of the pandemic and to prevent contagion, these destination countries scaled down embassy duties including issuance of visas and refused entry to most categories of immigrants. Most would-be immigrants were thus held up in their countries for some time extending to well after the pandemic was contained.

There was also the issue of the 2019 general elections which took place in the midst of the frustrations of the Covid-19 pandemic. The

*Unmitigated Migration ...*

results of the elections, in which the youth participated in their numbers was particularly disputed by politicians and was not acceptable to many people. In the end, the results only seemed to increase the resolve of the youth to leave the country. Any hope for redress in the manner of elections in Nigeria was even dashed further by the 2023 presidential elections which many claimed did not reflect the true wishes of the electorate. With no hope for real change in the country and economic prospects very bleak, it became suddenly apparent to people that even life itself was not guaranteed, and people were literally on their own. This realisation that the country held no future for its youths was a major push in the migration situation in the country.

Suddenly, panic set in, and with it, desperation to leave. People suddenly wanted to leave to some other climes where the host country, mostly offers rich opportunities, political stability, freedom, a developed economy and better living conditions. This desperation to leave has led to what has been dubbed “the Japa Syndrome” in Nigeria, loosely referring to the desperate situation since around 2020, in which massive numbers of Nigerians have migrated out of the country every year in search of better life. In the years since, the Japa Syndrome has become a run for life itself, in which Nigerians, especially youths, but also others of every gender and every age category, have tried to flee by all means possible. With the deluge of migrants, Europe has been alarmed, and destination countries have taken measures to stave off new migrants (Okome, 2016).

Official travel routes have become increasingly restricted. Even official Europe, particularly the European Union has warned potential migrants to stay away and not to come to Europe (Afanasieva and Karagiannopoulos, 2016, cited in Okome, 2016). Undeterred, intending migrants have literally even invented other, precarious, routes. Illegal migration often involves smuggling and human trafficking networks, with varying costs for different stages of the journey. The new routes have involved, either moving anti-clockwise first to a visa-friendly country from where the intending migrant will make a disguised dash into Europe, or the intending migrant will embark on a trail that involves a land route through the Sahel region from where he/she will make a quick dash in a boat through the Mediterranean Sea into Europe (Okome, 2016). Two well known routes are used by these desperate immigrants, namely, the Central Mediterranean Route, and the Western Mediterranean Route (IOM, 2020).

The Central Mediterranean Route is the migration path starting from North Africa (mostly Libya and Tunisia) to Europe, specifically Italy and Malta across the Mediterranean Sea. It is a deadly route, controlled by smugglers and traffickers, although very popular since the new wave of emigrations from Africa. The Western Mediterranean Route is the migration trail starting in North Africa, from particularly Morocco and Algeria and going to Spain, either by sea across the Strait of Gibraltar and the Alboran Sea or by land to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. There is also the Eastern Mediterranean Route, which goes to Greece, Cyprus and Turkey, and is used mainly by migrants from Syria and Asia (Brenner, Forin and Frouws, 2018). Despite the fact that these desperate moves have involved numerous deaths of intending migrants, as well as several indignities for the migrants even when they succeed in entering Europe, Japan and other desperate migrations out of Africa have continued unabated. In fact, in a recent survey of Nigerians aged between 18 and 35 years, over 70% expressed a desire to relocate if given the chance (Eze, 2025).

*Fig. 3: Top Destination Countries for Nigerian Migrants, 2020*

COUNTRY	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF NIGERIANS
United States	461,000
United Kingdom	220,000
Canada	120,000
Italy	80,000
Germany	60,000
South Africa	35,000
Ghana	30,000
UAE	20,000

Sources: IOM, 2022; UN DESA, 2022; World Bank, 2023

## **6. Unmitigated Migration and the Consequences for Migrants and the Countries of Origin**

The migration trail is followed essentially because of the benefits that migrants hope to get by their endeavour. Migration has many benefits, to the migrants and to the countries of origin, just as migration also has many negative consequences for the individual migrant as well as for the countries of origin. In fact, despite the significant benefits of migration,

### *Unmitigated Migration ...*

migration remains a risk to the lives of individual migrants. The horrors experienced by many illegal or undocumented migrants on the journey to Europe are better imagined. Many of the migrants have lost their lives in the process, and others have become permanently disabled in their bodies. Many others have become mentally impaired in the course of the horrors of the migration journeys. Some migrants have been left to die in the desert trail just as many others have been thrown into the sea, while others have met their ends when their boat capsized and others who survive would have gone through numerous indignities, such as sexual abuse (BBC, 2014; Collyer, 2010).

For those who survive the arduous journey, many have been subjected to numerous indignities on arrival at destination Europe. Many migrants have been crowded into camps while awaiting “processing” for deportation or some perilous life in the margins of Europe (Okome, 2016). Even when some of them have settled in Europe, many continue to face loss of dignity in the various European countries from the law and from various citizens. Some migrants remain among the most vulnerable members of society. Migrants are often the first to lose their jobs in the event of an economic downturn. Some work for less pay, for longer hours, and in worse conditions than native-born workers (Siddiqui, 2012). Some migrants endure human rights violations, abuse and discrimination. Migrants also experience a high level of racism and marginalisation, based on ethnic group, religion, gender, language or simply because they are foreigners and the locals may be xenophobic as is mostly the case in Europe. Migrants, particularly women and children, may fall victim to human trafficking and the heinous forms of exploitation that it entails (Sriskandarajah 2005). For the country of origin, unmitigated migration

Yet, for the individual migrant, migration is often a conscious choice by mostly poor households to improve their livelihood and increase their source of income (deHaas, 2008; FAO 2017). Migration is often an empowering experience, and can thus, transform the individuals who move and the societies they leave behind (Sriskandarajah, 2005). For many people, emigration could be the first step in a process that would ultimately enable the immigrant acquire a permanent residency or even the citizenship of his destination country. This will immediately transform his status in his new country and give him far-reaching and wide-ranging opportunities to live the good life in the new abode. If this happens, the immigrant could move from the margins to the mainstream of the economy in the new country.

Migration also provides opportunities for those who succeed, to obtain status symbols at home, such as new lands, houses or cars (Ore, 2010). Cross-border migration can be profitable for the migrant as he is able to earn good money in foreign currencies which he may be able to send as remittances to his family in his home country. Remittances are important in the discourse about migration. Individual Nigerian migrants, who are working abroad and earning foreign currencies, often send back money to their families. Individual remittances are also used for investment purposes at home. Most remittances are used at micro levels for investment in businesses and human capital development, and for family contributions, weddings, donations to charitable organizations, tithes in churches and festive celebrations (Darkwah, and Verter, 2014).

A major part of individual migrant remittances is calculated as capital for national development. In fact, a primary impact of migration on the home country is conceived in terms of remittances. Global remittances have grown steadily and have come to be a major source of international finance for developing regions. In 2015, migrants contributed \$6.4 trillion-6.9 trillion (9.4%) of the world's gross domestic product (Woetzel et al, 2016). In 2016, migrants from developing countries sent home an estimated US \$413 billion in remittances. Migrant remittances into Nigeria increased from \$1 billion in 2003 to \$20.6 billion in 2012. These remittances on the long run can even surpass the flow of FDI and net official development assistance (ODA) to Nigeria (IOM 2017). In 2018, diaspora remittance to Nigeria was \$24.31 billion, before it plummeted down to \$21.97 billion in 2019 and \$17.27 billion in 2020 amid Covid-19 woes. It started rising again in 2021 to \$19.4 billion and stood at \$20.1 billion in 2022. In 2023, following the fears that accompanied the general elections in the country, it came down marginally to \$19.5 billion, but rebounded to \$20.98 billion in 2024. It is expected that the figure will witness a climb in 2025 to an all-time high (Olujobi, 2024; IOM, 2024, Moses-Ashike, 2025).

Migration can also positively impact on the countries of origin of migrants in many other ways. Migrants can accumulate savings, and upon return, migrants can establish businesses which generate wealth and create jobs, as well as use their developed skills and expertise for the growth and development of their home country (Kohnert, 2007). Migration can benefit the origin countries in the form of 'brain gain'. This is obtainable when migrants maintain networks linking business, scientific, and technical groups at home with their migrant counterparts

### *Unmitigated Migration ...*

abroad. This is possible because migrants are known to develop their own communities in the destination countries where they often engage in specific economic activities peculiar to each community. When proper networks are maintained between the diaspora communities and their home countries, new businesses and entrepreneurship can emerge. This can lead to transfer of knowledge and of productive and technological know-how.

Notwithstanding the actual and possible benefits of migration to the origin countries, whether migration can make a net contribution to the national development of origin countries will ultimately depend on some factors, such as the forms of migration taking place, and whether origin countries are introducing policies to manage migration beneficially. Unmitigated migration leads to loss of human capital for the origin countries, following the departure of skilled and educated individuals in search of greener pastures. It also creates border management challenges as the emigration trail overwhelms the departure points, and as many who are found out at any point in the trail to lack the proper travel documents are deported. Most unmitigated migrants are undocumented migrants, and even for those who succeed in getting into the destination countries, it means that for as long as they are undocumented, they will remain in the margins of the economies of the destination countries.

Being in the margins will imply that such migrants may not easily have access to well-paying jobs, nor be able to take advantage of beneficial economic policies available to citizens. Because the origin countries do not have the right policies, it means that the unmitigated migrant does not have protection from criminal gangs and security agents who often fleece these migrants of much of their earnings, thereby curtailing their ability to save and invest. Because of the lack of the right policies too, migration has not led to any significant development in the origin countries (Docquier & Rapoport 2006; Faini 2006; ILO, 2010; Ore, 2010).

## **7. Recommendations**

This paper maintains that the way forward in the migration quagmires is not to scare about unmitigated migration, or to build fortresses around countries in order to prevent emigration or immigration, or to demonise migrants, but to coordinate policies between origin countries and destination countries that will ensure orderly migration such that will benefit all that are involved. This paper recommends generally that the

developed destination countries must necessarily actively cooperate with the origin countries to transform the economies of the later, such that they will be able to provide the basic life needs for their citizens. This cooperation will help the origin countries to address the root causes of unmitigated migration and remove the desperation on the part of people in the origin countries that is presently driving unmitigated migration.

Then, both the destination countries and the countries of origin must promote legal migration pathways. Both must necessarily cooperate to build a structure of migration, in which the origin countries will be part of sourcing the labour needed in the destination countries, while the destination countries will undertake to integrate the migrants into their economies and support them to invest their earnings wherever they like as well repatriate their savings to their countries of origin if they like. Both sets of countries must constantly engage in public awareness campaigns that will always make clear to the public the risks of unmitigated migration and the options to it. Origin countries must intensify measures to combat human trafficking, while destination countries will continue to strengthen security measures at their borders to help curb the entry of undesirable elements into the society.

The paper also makes the following specific policy recommendations:

1. *Strengthen Governance and Institutions:* Nigeria must address the root causes of unmitigated migration by improving governance, security, infrastructure, education, and healthcare. Strengthening institutions and public trust is essential to reduce the desperation driving migration.
2. *Promote Legal and Safe Migration Pathways:* Bilateral agreements with destination countries should be established to create structured, mutually beneficial migration programs. These should prioritize labor rights, migrant protections, and return opportunities.
3. *Enhance Diaspora Engagement:* Policies should encourage diaspora contributions through investments, skills transfer, and professional networks. Government-backed platforms can facilitate partnerships between Nigerian institutions and diaspora professionals.
4. *Invest in Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship:* Providing meaningful employment and business opportunities for Nigeria's young population is critical. This includes vocational training, access to finance, and business incubation programs.
5. *Public Awareness and Migration Literacy:* Citizens must be educated on the risks of irregular migration, legal alternatives, and

### *Unmitigated Migration ...*

- the socio-economic impacts of brain drain. Public campaigns and school curricula can incorporate migration awareness.
6. *Develop a Comprehensive Migration Policy:* A national migration strategy is needed to coordinate efforts across ministries and agencies. It should address migration governance, border management, remittance facilitation, and reintegration support.

## **8. Conclusion**

This paper has examined the phenomenon of unmitigated migration out of Africa into Europe. It has shown that this migration results from people's desperation to leave poor economic situations and prospects in their home countries and seek better life prospects in foreign lands. Because of the vast numbers involved, both the countries of origin and the destination countries appear to be overwhelmed. The study finds that while unmitigated migration carries negative consequences, it also yields many positive outcomes for both individual migrants and the countries of origin. The paper concluded that the conscious effort to reorganize international migration is necessary, ensuring the process becomes mutually beneficial to all parties involved.

## **References**

- Afanasieva, D and Lefteris, K. 2016. "EU's Tusk urges Migrants to stop coming to Europe." Reuters.com. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-tusk/eus-tusk-urges-migrants-to-stop-coming-to-europe-idUSKCN0W50ZM>.
- Afolayan, A. Ikwuyatum, G. and Abejide, O (2008). Conceptualising Dynamics of Traders' Mobility. In African Migrations Workshop. The Contribution of African Research to Migration Theory. <https://www.imi.ox.ac.uk>.
- Akusoba, C. (2014). Understanding Brain Drain in Nigerian Universities. Lund University Graduate School Master of Science in Development Studies, Department of Sociology Course: SIMV98 Term: Autumn.
- Almond, G. A. and Powell, G. B. (1960). *The Politics of the Developing Areas*. Princeton University Press.
- BBC. (2014). "Mapping Mediterranean migration." BBC.com. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24521614>.
- Chimanikire, D. (2005). "Brain Drain: Causes and Economic Consequences for Africa". Harnessing the Partnership of the

- Public and Non-state Sectors for Sustainable Development and Good Governance in Africa: Problems and the Way Forward. African Association for Public Administration and Management, 27th AAPAM Annual Roundtable Conference, Zambezi Sun Hotel, Livingstone, Zambia, 5th – 9th December, 2005.
- Clemens, S. and Pettersson, G (2008). “New Data on African Health Professionals Abroad”. *Human Resources for Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1478-4491-6-1>
- Collier, M. 2010.”Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey.” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 1: 273-293.
- Crawley, H. Duvell, F. Jones, K. McMahon, S. and Sigona, N. (2016). Understanding the Dynamics and Drivers of Mediterranean Migration. In 2015, [www.compass.ox.ac.uk](http://www.compass.ox.ac.uk).
- Darby, P. 2007. “Oof Africa: The Exodus of Elite Fotball Talent to Europe.” *Journal of Labour and Society*, 10 (4): 443-456.
- Darkwah, S and Verter, N (2014) Determinants of International Migration: The Nigerian Experience. Department of Territorial Studies, Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies, Mendel University, Czech Republic. *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis*, 62 (2): 321327. <http://dx.doi.org/10.11118/actaun201462020321>.
- deHaas, H. (2008). International Migration, National Development, and Role of Government. The Case in Nigeria. In Adepojuu, A., T.V. Naerssen and A. Zoomers eds. *Migration and National Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Viewpoints and Policy Initiatives in the Countries of Origin*. Afrika-studiecentrum Series, vol.10:161-181.
- Department for International Development (DFID) (2007). “Moving Out of Poverty - Making Migration Work Better for Poor People”. London. [www.migrationdrc.org](http://www.migrationdrc.org).
- Docquier, F and Rapoport, H (2005). The Economics of Migrants and Remittances. Discussion Series, IZA Working Paper, No.1531.
- Dubey, S. and Mallah, V (2015). Migration: Causes and Effects. International Conference on Issues in Emerging Economies (ICIEE). *The Business & Management Review*, Volume 5 Number 4 January 2015.
- Eze, C. 2025.NIS: Over 3.6m Nigerians grated in Two Years to ther Countries in Search of Better Opportunities. Thisday Newspaper, 16 July.

*Unmitigated Migration ...*

- Faini, R. (2006) Remittances and the Brain Drain. *University of Rome Tor Vergata, LdA, CEPR and IZA*, Bonn, Germany. Discussion Paper No. 2155.
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2004. *World Employment Report*. [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org).
- International Labour Organisation (2010). *Global Employment Trends*. [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)
- International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2017) Enabling a Better Understanding of Migration Flows and (its root-causes) from Nigeria towards Europe. Desk Review Report. Displacement Tracking Matrix (dtm), April 2017.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2022. World Migration Report 2022. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int>
- IOM UN Migration .2024. World Migration Report, 2024. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int>
- Isiugo-Abanihe, U. (2011) Adolescents Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour: What We Know. In Okonofua, F.E. and R. Imade, eds, *Identifying Priorities for Research Documentation on Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health*. pp.22-37. Benin City: WHARC.
- Kohnert, D. (2007) African Migration to Europe: Obscured Responsibilities and Common Misconceptions. German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), GIGA Research Programme: Working Papers. Transformation in the Process of Globalisation. N° 49 [www.giga-hamburg.de/working\\_papers](http://www.giga-hamburg.de/working_papers) accessed on 14th April 2018.
- Mberu, B. and Pongou, R. (2010). Multiple Forms of Migration in Africa's Demographic Giant, Nigeria. In Migration Policy Institute, 2010. [www.migrationpolicy.org/article/ng](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/ng).
- Moses-Ashike, H. 2025. Diaspora Remittances to Nigeria hit new level under Cardoso: Highest in 5 years. Businessday, 10 April.
- Olujobi, B. 2024. World Bank Predicts Bigger Diaspora Remittance for Nigeria in 2024. Businessday, August 12.
- Okome, O. O. (2016). *Breaching Fortress Europe: By Any Means Necessary: The Complications of African Migration to Europe*. New York: Brooklyn College, CUNY.
- Onah, E. I. (2010). *Introduction to African Government and Politics*. Lagos: Concept Publications Ltd.
- Onah, E. I. (2012). *Public Personnel Management and Administrative Practice in Nigeria*. Lagos: Concept Publications Ltd.

- Ore, G. (2010). The Effects of Immigration on Host Countries. University of Milan Graduate School in Economics, Politics and Social Sciences. Department of Economics, Business and Statistics.
- Poli, R. 2006. "Migrations and Trade of African Football Players: Historic, Geographical and Cultural Aspects." *Africa Spectrum* 41 (3): 393-414.
- Rodney, W. (1981). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications; Dar-es-Salam: Tanzania Publishing House.
- Stalker, P (2000) *Workers without Frontiers: The Impact of Globalisation on International Migration*. International Labour Organisation, 2000.
- Siddiqui, T. (2012) Migrating out of Poverty. Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU) Research Programme Consortium. Working Paper 2.
- Sriskandarajah, D (2005) Migration and Development. A Paper Prepared for the Policy Analysis and Research Programme of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), Institute for Public Policy Research. [www.gcim.org](http://www.gcim.org).
- UK ESSAYS (2015). Effects of Globalisation on Migration. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essay/cultural-studies/migration-in-the-era-of-globalisation-cultural-studies-essay-.php?>
- United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA) (2016). Understanding Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants.
- United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 2017. On Migration.
- United Nations International Migrations Report, 2015
- United Nations International Migrations Report, 2017.
- UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs - UN DESA. 2020.
- International Migrant Stock 2020. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/>
- UN DESA. 2022. International Migrant Stock Database. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/>
- World Bank. 2023. Migration and Development Brief 38. <https://www.knomad.org>
- Woetzel, J, Madgavkar, A, Rifai, K, Mattern, F, Bughin, J, Mayinka, J, Elmasry, T, Lodovico, A, and Hasyagar, A. (2016). Global Migrations: Impacts and Opportunity. McKinsey Global Institute.
- Yermi, B., Forin, B. and Frouws, B. 2018. The Shift to the Western Mediterranean Migration Route: Myth or Reality. [mixedmigration.org/shift-to-the-western-mediterranean-migration-route/#](http://mixedmigration.org/shift-to-the-western-mediterranean-migration-route/#)