

Policy Paper

Jobs and Migration: An African Perspective

March 2020

Global Perspectives Initiative in cooperation with
the International Organization for Migration and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation

With special thanks to the African Institute for Development Policy and
IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GERMAN POLICY-MAKERS

Germany will play a key role in 2020 and the years ahead in supporting a mutually beneficial management of migration between Africa and Europe. By working closely with its African counterparts to improve economic and private sector collaboration, and strengthening multilateral partnerships, the German government can set milestones in developing sustainable migration policies that benefit both continents during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) in the second half of 2020 and beyond. This endeavour takes place against the backdrop of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), whereby Member States, including Germany, reinforced their commitment to better manage migration at local, national, regional and global levels. The following recommendations are based on the expert opinions presented in this paper.

Promote an evidence-based migration narrative

Migration management can only be successful if it is based on reliable facts and on a full understanding of the drivers and impacts of migration. A fact-based public and political discourse on migration is essential and should be supported by the promotion of independent and accurate media reporting, in line with Objective 17 of the GCM. Eventually, a more realistic and constructive discourse on migration will contribute to the design of sound and balanced migration policies with benefits for all involved.

Enhance the collection, analysis and dissemination of reliable data on migration and labour opportunities

Poor data lead to poor political decisions. Migration data must therefore be improved to support evidence-based policies that address migration between Africa and Europe. Germany should step up investments to improve migration statistics in Africa, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the GCM. At the same time, labour market analysis and forecasting in Germany should be expanded in order to develop a long-term understanding of labour and skill needs and increase the supply of skilled employees in Germany.

Increase private sector engagement to support Africa's economic progress

The creation of jobs in the formal sector is the best answer to economic hardship in origin countries and contributes to making international migration a matter of choice rather than of necessity. Germany should support job creation on the African continent by scaling up private sector investments and making fair economic cooperation with Africa a priority for the upcoming Presidency of the EU Council.

Understand and plan in line with demographic trends

Understanding and addressing Africa's demographic trends is key to unlock the vast potential of the continent's future social and economic development. Reproductive health and self-determined family planning systems should become political priorities to revert the imbalance between the continent's increasing population and its economic growth.

Expand legal migration channels

Additional legal and safe channels for labour migration from Africa to Europe are urgently needed. Migration policies should harness the positive contributions of migrants and avoid unnecessary barriers to documented migration. In particular, a humane labour migration framework at the EU level is necessary, which provides legal alternatives to the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean, also for unskilled workers.

FOREWORD

Armin Laschet, State Premier of North Rhine-Westphalia

What is the impact on the society and on each individual, if people migrate in large numbers from other continents to Germany and Europe? A discussed topic that is dominated not so much by facts, as by concerns and fears. So when we talk about immigration, we need one thing above all else, and that is greater objectivity – plus an undistorted view of reality. Because there is no escaping the fact that we need immigration. Amongst African immigrants, too, there are many who have the skills badly needed in Germany and Europe. The new “Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz” is the way forward when it comes to giving immigration a proper legal framework, for the benefit of both immigrants and the host population.

Germany and Europe are best advised to always consider the African outlook on migration, economy and development. Whilst traditional aid to African countries will doubtlessly continue to play an important role, we need to give those on the ground genuine prospects for the future. In other words, they must be enabled to shape and sustain their lives and their country under their own steam. A case in point is North Rhine-Westphalia’s commitment to its partner nation, Ghana. Just recently, for example, the State Government has embarked on a programme to foster the exchange of start-up businesses and the competitiveness of newly established Ghanaian enterprises.

To those coming from countries in Africa, Europe is set to remain an attractive destination. The European Dream is just as strong as the American Dream. Now it is time for Africa to have an “African Dream”.



Armin Laschet



Migration has been part of human history for thousands of years with proven positive effects. Nevertheless, in some parts of German and European societies, migration is increasingly perceived and portrayed as not beneficial. This picture, however, is inaccurate and even counterproductive. Data show that the majority of African migrants mainly search job opportunities – primarily within Africa itself. This young, often well-educated workforce also bears great potential for European labour markets.

In order to promote African perspectives within the political debate in Germany, the Global Perspectives Initiative (GPI) hosted a high-level conference in Berlin in November 2019. The event provided a platform for African and European leaders to discuss facts about migration, the need for a sustainable labour market and the potential of the growing African youth in order to find new political approaches that benefit both continents. The State Premier of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet, held an insightful keynote at the event, and provided the preface for this paper, for which we are very grateful.


An important basis for the conference was the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's (MIF) 2019 report "Africa's Youth: Jobs or Migration?". Besides providing data for resetting the narrative on African migrations, the report highlights the links between a growing population, the lack of economic prospects and the future of job markets. It also looks at how an increasingly integrated Africa can positively impact social and economic development, and provide opportunities to retain human capital on its own continent.

With around 10 to 12 million youth wishing to enter the African job market each year, the increasing population is a challenge for the continent's economies, but also an opportunity. In their contribution to this paper, experts from the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) explain how the growing youth bulge can turn into a success story for Africa.

While economic prospects and job creation are crucial for the African continent, Europe also needs to make legal immigration channels more accessible to migrants. This will not only save the lives of migrants otherwise set to attempt the dangerous routes to Europe, but in the end also support social and economic development in destination and origin countries alike. With the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2018, the German government has committed to creating legal and safe migration channels for job-seekers in other countries. The new Skilled Labour Immigration Act is a first step in this direction. However, much remains to be done in order to establish a holistic legal migration framework from Africa to Europe, as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) argues in our paper.

By joining forces for this publication, our aim is to provide impulses for the future course of migration policies and contribute to a much-needed change in the narrative around migration from Africa.

Sincerely yours,


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The global debate around African migrations, whether referring to economic migrants or refugees, is currently triggering emotional and political reactions. Misperceptions mixed with incomplete and partially presented data are particularly harmful, as distorted data lead to inadequate policies. In fact, while migration has risen to the top of many countries' political and media agendas, the lack of a common definition of migration and the paucity of migration data remain key issues. Hence, it is worthwhile reviewing the most relevant facts and figures available on this topic, de-linked from any partisan agenda, to reset the narrative on African migration.

Migration: a complex phenomenon

The difficulty to define migration status is a key issue with organisations and countries applying different operational or statistical definitions. Migration status can vary in length, composition, motivations and legal situation. It includes refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification. Moreover, migration status is not fixed and changes over time.

There is no 'recent critical hike' in migration numbers

Migration is not a 21st century crisis, but a key dynamic of human history that has shaped most nations in their socio-economic development. Since 1990, migrants worldwide increased only marginally in relation to the world population from 2.9 percent to 3.4 percent in 2017. African migrants over the continent's total population decreased from 3.2 percent in 1990 to 2.9 percent in 2017. The figures thus show that there is no recent critical hike in migration numbers.

African migrations are not 'overwhelming' the world nor Europe

Contrary to common perceptions, African migrations are not 'overwhelming' the world. In fact, the 36.3 million African migrants represented only 14.1 percent of the world's total migrant population stock as of 2017. This is a lower percentage compared to the shares of Asia (41.0 percent) and Europe (23.7 percent), respectively.

The number of migrating Africans is often overestimated.

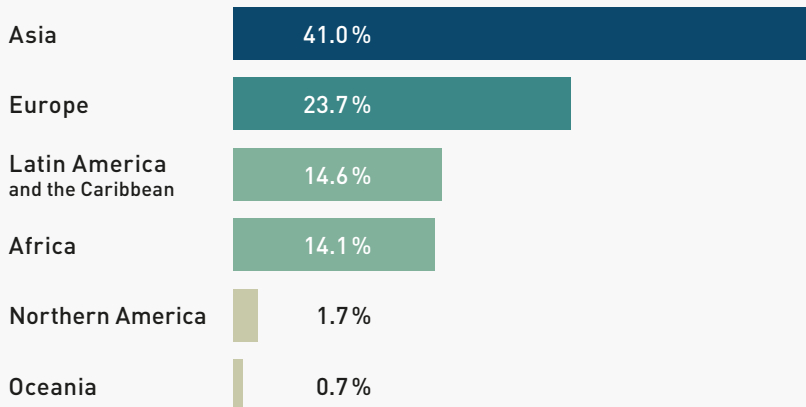
Africa is not a continent of massive exodus

African migrations are predominantly intra-continental. As of 2017, more than half of African migrants had not left the continent and were living in another African country, and only a fourth had left for Europe. There are important regional differences: while the overwhelming majority (almost 90 percent) of North African migrants had left to Europe or Asia, more than 70 percent of sub-Saharan African migrants had chosen an African country.

More than half of the African migrants did not leave the continent and are now living in another African country.

Illustration 1
Global emigrant population shares by origin region (2017)

Africa accounts for only 14.1 percent of the global migrant population.



Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019) based on UN DESA

Africa itself hosts a growing part of the global migrant population

In 2017, Africa hosted 9.6 percent of the international migrant stock (24.7 million), which is less than Asia (30.9 percent), Europe (30.2 percent) or Northern America (22.4 percent). However, it is the region with the highest increase in the number of received migrants since 2000: +66.6 percent.

African migrations are mainly about aspirations not desperation

Improved economic and social prospects are the main drivers behind African migrations, while insecurity is not the major trigger: refugees account for only around 20 percent of African migrants and most of these refugees are hosted by African countries themselves.

Migration has positive impacts for origin and destination countries

Migrants are a valuable and sought-after resource in terms of filling labour shortages and contributing to the economy of their host countries. Contrary to common belief, they do not pose a burden for local public services and welfare. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that each 1 percent rise in the share of migrants over the total adult population in advanced economies can increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita by up to 2 percent in the long run. In 2018, remittances constituted 3.5 percent of Africa's total GDP and more than the net 2017 Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Migration may fill labour gaps and increase the GDP in receiving countries.

* Data and analysis in this chapter are based on the 2019 Mo Ibrahim Foundation's report "Africa's Youth: Jobs or Migration?".

Gains from migration for destination countries

A positive impact on structural transformation and GDP

By allowing the reallocation of resources from lower to higher productivity activities, both between and within sectors, migrations foster economic structural transformation and generate a potential contribution to GDP per capita in Africa that is expected to reach USD 3200 in 2030. The estimated contribution of migrations to GDP is at 19 percent in Côte d'Ivoire, 13 percent in Rwanda and 9 percent in South Africa.

Improved labour productivity

A larger share of the working-age population enables higher productivity, especially in sectors that experience relatively high migration rates (agriculture, manufacturing, mining, construction and services). High-skilled migrants engaged in skill-intensive sectors can play an important role in fostering innovation, enabling entrepreneurship and stimulating job growth, as well as skill transfers and technology flows.

Filling labour gaps

Migration often addresses labour gaps in destination countries or fills occupations neglected by locals. In Rwanda, the policy to attract migration from East African Community (EAC) countries has increased its labour supply in sectors with shortages, while contributing to the development of education, engineering, finance, hospitality and financial services through the exchange of skills.

Higher level of consumption and a larger tax base

Migrations also contribute to a destination country's development through consumption, with migrants spending approximately 85 percent of their incomes in their destination country. In addition, migrants typically pay significantly more taxes than they receive in benefits, in part because they are usually educated elsewhere and go back to their origin country before retirement.

No evident strain on poverty levels and public services

There is no evidence that higher migration flows result in higher poverty levels: there is no significant distinction in poverty levels between countries receiving large and small shares of migrants.

Government expenditure on education is on average higher in destination countries than in origin countries. However, the performance of education services does not seem to be linked to the number of migrants hosted: the correlation between the total migrant stock in African destination countries and their performance in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance sub-category "Education" is weak ($r = -0.2$). In addition, there seems to be no connection between changes in health expenditures and immigration over time, which suggests that immigration does not put a strain on public health expenditures.

Restricting migration comes at a high cost

At least 2.5 million migrants were smuggled worldwide in 2016, according to the Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). This generated an income for smugglers of up to USD 7.0 billion, equivalent to the amount spent by EU countries on global humanitarian aid in 2016. Heightened restrictions on crossing borders and reduced legal channels out of and within the continent, have led migrants to use precarious routes, playing into the hands of smugglers and traffickers and increasingly contributing to human rights abuses.

Illustration 2

Migrant smugglers' income compared to EU countries' humanitarian aid (2016)

The 2016 estimated income of migrant smugglers globally equalled the 2016 total humanitarian aid of EU countries.

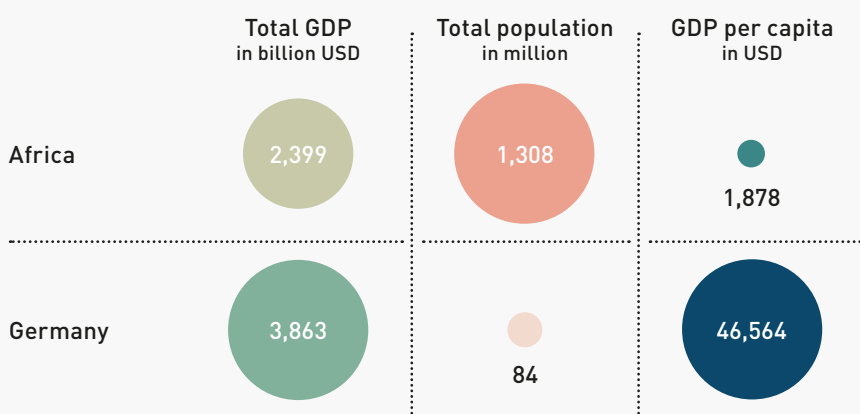


Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019)

Camilla Rocca, Head of Research & *Ines Schultes*,
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Despite Africa's strong macroeconomic growth between 2008 and 2017, the 2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance report shows that this did not translate into progress in "Sustainable Economic Opportunity". Africa's continental GDP is considerably smaller than that of Germany. Its population, however, is more than 15 times larger, resulting in a GDP per capita almost 25 times smaller. This imbalance between the size of the continent's population and of its economy is unlikely to be reverted by the projected GDP growth, however impressive.

Illustration 3
**Comparison of GDP, total population and GDP per capita
between Africa and Germany (2019)**



Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019, based on IMF and UN DESA)

A jobless growth

Africa's economic growth in the past decade has been mainly commodity-led with only little diversification of its countries' economies. As a consequence, between 2000 and 2014, employment expanded by less than 1.8 percent a year, far below the nearly 3.0 percent annual growth of the labour force. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, while 18 million new jobs would be needed annually to absorb new entries in the labour market, only 3 million are currently being created each year.

Due to this lack of formal jobs and social safety nets, many young Africans have to find an alternative in the informal sector, making it difficult for them to become financially independent and create a better future for themselves or their families. The creation of jobs in the formal sector remains a major hurdle for most African economies. This needs to be addressed – otherwise Africa's brain drain is likely to continue: according to Gallup, if all people wishing to migrate were to do so, 40 countries in Africa would experience large net losses in their youth population.

The creation of jobs in the formal sector remains a major hurdle for most African economies.

The value of the manufacturing sector in Africa has grown slowly or even decreased in some countries.

There is an increasing disconnect between the level of education and the skills needed by businesses in Africa.

The majority of the African youth believes that governments do a bad job in addressing their needs.

A premature deindustrialisation?

Over the past decades, industry-driven growth had the largest impact of all economic sectors on employment, according to data from 20 African economies. However, industry's shares of employment and value added to the GDP have grown very slowly in recent years. For 25 countries, the GDP share of the manufacturing sector has even decreased between 2008 and 2017. The 2019 African Economic Outlook argues that the reallocation of labour has instead mainly tilted towards services, thereby inhibiting the growth potential of the manufacturing sector.

Moreover, Asian and other exporters have penetrated domestic markets in sub-Saharan African countries, making it hard for them to build competitive manufacturing sectors.

Africa is not investing enough in human capital

The World Bank's Human Capital Index measures the lost productivity of the next generation of workers as a consequence of insufficient investments in human capital, in particular in health and high-quality education. Only two African countries obtain a score higher than the world average: Seychelles and Mauritius. In addition, the five worst performing countries globally are African: Chad, South Sudan, Niger, Mali and Liberia respectively.

Several challenges impact human capital development in relation to the labour market. There is an increasing disconnect between the level of education and the skills needed by businesses in Africa. Additionally, unemployment rates for those with better education are often higher than for those with basic education. Lower educational standards and the lack of adequate facilities are driving the brightest African students outside the continent: almost 80 percent of African students leaving to study abroad choose a destination outside the continent – and might not return after graduation. Within Africa, limited or weak frameworks for educational mobility in Africa, as well as recognition and compatibility of skills and qualifications across national borders remain a key issue. This hinders the ability of migrants to enter and effectively engage in continental labour markets.

African political leaders overlook youth

According to Afrobarometer surveys, about 60 percent of Africans, and especially the young population, think that their governments are doing a very or a fairly bad job at addressing the needs of the youth.

In addition, opportunities for formal youth representation and participation in political institutions are lacking: Afrobarometer surveys highlight that young Africans are interested in participating politically, but they do not have the means, nor seem to know how to access different modes of participation. This disenfranchisement of youth in politics goes hand in hand with an overall worsening of democratic governance on the continent.

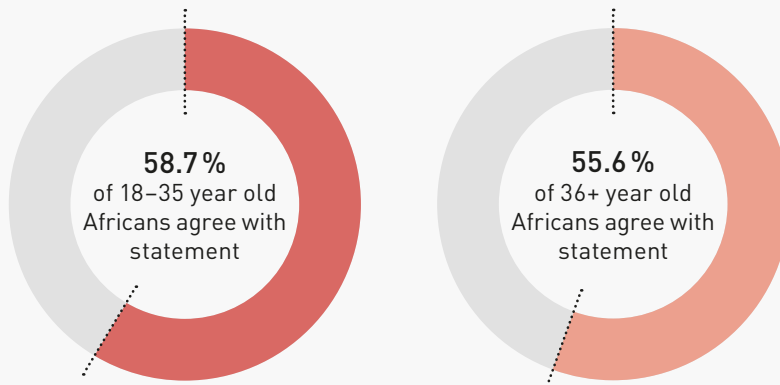
* Data and analysis in this chapter are based on the 2019 Mo Ibrahim Foundation's report "Africa's Youth: Jobs or Migration?".

Results from the 2018 Ibrahim Index of Governance show that the civil and human rights situation has significantly worsened in Africa.

Illustration 4

Satisfaction of surveyed African population with government performance (2016/2018)

“The government is doing a very bad or fairly bad job at addressing the needs of the youth”



Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019) based on Afrobarometer

Africa can unlock hidden potential in tech and agriculture

The 4th industrial revolution (4IR): job killer or job creator?

Expected to affect job markets and skills demand globally, the 4IR and technological advances could mitigate some migration incentives by providing better livelihoods in home countries.

Both the 4IR and technological advances have the potential to boost job creation and improve living standards. The productivity effect from new technology could lead to an increase of output and the creation of more jobs for skilled labour. Applied to education, health and financial services, new technologies can improve the access and quality of services, at an often reduced cost.

For the 4IR to effectively foster economic and social progress and boost job opportunities, the new technologies will need to become both accessible and affordable. To this end, African governments need to address the digital divide, expanding access to and quality of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the wider society, as in Africa more than 60 percent of the population are still offline.

The ‘gig economy’: a game-changer for the nature of work

Technology is disrupting how people work and introduces fluidity in the work location. The rising ‘gig economy’ hires independent workers for short-term engagements, often via online work platforms, paying them for each transaction or ‘gig’ they complete.

The 4IR and technological advances have the potential to boost job creation and improve living standards.

In Africa more than 60 percent of the population is still offline.

On-demand services encompass a long list of activities ranging from delivering groceries and offering driving services to more sophisticated tasks such as accounting and editing.

The stable '9 to 5' way of working is already far from reality in low income countries, where only a small fraction of workers have access to formal jobs. Overall, McKinsey estimates that 63 percent of Africa's total labour force takes part, at least to a certain extent, in some form of self-employment.

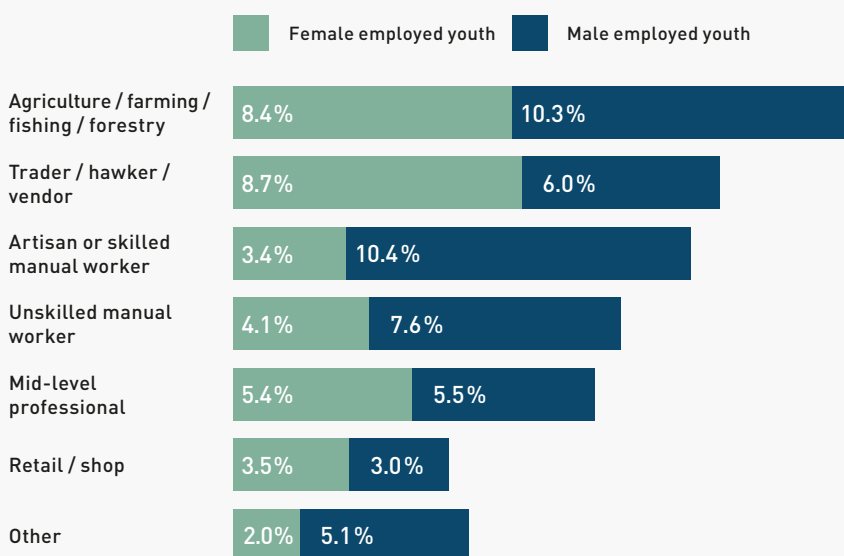
Agriculture: Africa's biggest employer and a tangible opportunity

Currently, the farming sector accounts for up to 60 percent of African jobs and roughly a third of the continent's GDP. Despite this, Africa's agriculture is highly underexploited and dependence on food imports in Africa is as high as 90 percent for some countries and expected to grow from USD 35 to 110 billion between 2015 and 2025.

Harnessing the potential of agriculture is key, as this sector could play a critical role as the main pool of employment for youth in sub-Saharan Africa, even though for the majority of the youth, agriculture is still often seen as outdated, unprofitable and hard work.

Many simple technologies could solve some of the main challenges currently faced by African farmers, like the access to markets, information about commodity prices, weather or pest forecast or newest research. This tech perspective would in turn attract more young people, paving the way for innovations in agriculture and moving slowly away from mere subsistence farming.

Illustration 5
Occupations of employed youth (aged 18–35) in African countries by gender (2016/2018)



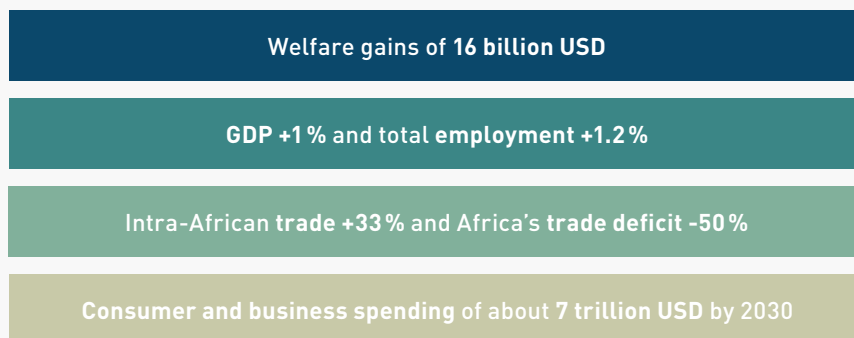
Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019) based on Afrobarometer

**The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA):
a genuine milestone**

As a trade agreement between African Union (AU) member states, the AfCFTA aims to create a single continental market for goods and services as well as a customs union with free movement of capital and persons. With the ratification of the required number of AU member states in 2019, the AfCFTA entered into force, potentially becoming the world's largest regional trade agreement in terms of participating countries. Its full implementation is likely to generate an unprecedented growth of intra-African trade. Expanded markets and removed barriers may accelerate industrialisation, economic diversification and technological development and improve human capital.

To strengthen African businesses' competitiveness in the context of the AfCFTA, the priority, according to the framework document, is to invest in human capital in two concrete ways: training the workforce in future-ready skills including in industries such as tourism, ICT and agro-processing as well as promote policies that favour the migration of workers across the continent.

Illustration 6
Economic potential of the AfCFTA



Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019)

Dr Eliya Zulu, Executive Director & Dr Bernard Onyango, Senior Researcher and Policy Analyst at African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP)

Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to contribute to more than half of the growth of the global population between 2019 and 2050, adding over one billion people over this period. It makes Africa the fastest growing continent in the world. This is, among other things, due to a relatively high fertility and a significantly reduced child mortality. Although there are important regional differences, Africans are having an average of 4.4 children per woman compared to the global average of 2.5 children per woman.

The anticipated growth of Africa's youth population poses challenges as well as opportunities for the continent's economic development.

While this might turn into a significant challenge for African economies, as states have to focus their investments on basic services for children and adolescents rather than on long-term infrastructure development or improved economic productivity¹, the anticipated growth of Africa's youthful population could also boost economic development if managed successfully.

More people, more migrants?

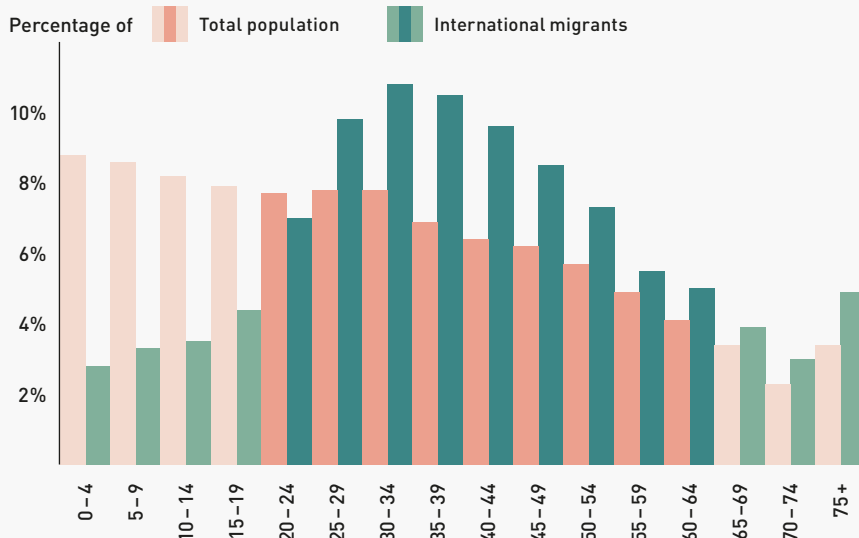
As fertility rates are particularly on the rise in rural areas, where resources – such as arable land or water – become scarce, there is a high likelihood for increased migration from rural to urban areas in search for better living conditions. In fact, Africa already has the fastest urbanisation rate worldwide, with urban centres on the continent projected to be doubling over the next 25 years. Inadequate policy responses to fulfil the youth's needs for education and decent jobs can lead to a vicious cycle of poverty and might also cause increased insecurity, social unrest and disorder, especially in urban areas. In addition, cross-border migration is also likely to increase, considering that the drivers of migration predominantly affect the youth and working-age population.

Towards a lower dependency ratio: prospects for a demographic dividend

In recent years, prospects for economic transformation in Africa have increasingly focused on the conditions under which countries on the continent can harness the demographic dividend, a temporary economic benefit created by a considerable increase in the ratio of working-age adults to young and elder dependants.²

It should be emphasised that the dividend does not appear automatically. In fact, this year, Africa is expected to have the highest dependency ratio in the world with 78 dependants (children aged 0–14 and people 65 or older) per 100 working-age people (aged 15–64).³

Illustration 7
Age distribution of global population vs. international migrants (2019)



Note: Share of the total population in working age (20–64) = 57 percent.
Share of international migrants in working age (20–64) = 74 percent.

Source: UN DESA (2019)

The demographic dividend

According to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019), the demographic dividend refers to the economic surplus generated by a decline in birth rates, a decline in the number of young/elder dependents and an increase in the proportion of working-age adults. The projected larger workforce can lead to a boost in economic productivity, savings and investments. Africa could expect its annual GDP per capita to grow by up to half a percentage point by 2030 if the dividend is harnessed.

While the creation of jobs is vital in this context, African countries also need to reduce their fertility rates in order to benefit from the potential of their young population. The AU’s African Youth Charter rightly notes that Africa’s youth is the continent’s biggest resource and, if the right investments are made, Africa’s growing youth population offers enormous socioeconomic potential for the continent.

Triggering the demographic dividend is crucial to profit from economic impacts

In order to reduce the young age dependency burden and profit from its subsequent economic and social impacts, the starting point is to ensure that both birth and child mortality rates decline rapidly. This, however, requires unprecedented and large-scale investments in largely three policy fields:

First, African states need to focus on voluntary and rights-based interventions in sexual and reproductive health and family planning. This includes a considerable expansion of child survival programmes such as immunisation, nutrition and the eradication of Malaria, as well as universal access to high-quality contraception and health care for all.

Second, it is necessary to start a massive campaign for education, with particular emphasis on female education. Keeping girls in school, providing them with tertiary education and improving their access to science and technology has proven tremendously successful to reduce fertility rates and nourish a generation of highly qualified women and girls, who benefit their whole society. Strategic investment in education and skill development is vital in transforming Africa's large youthful population into a driving force to achieve the socioeconomic transformation articulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and national long-term development visions.

Lastly, harmful cultural practices that violate womens' and girls' rights such as child marriages, genital mutilation or gender-based violence have to be outlawed and combatted through policy and programming. This is closely connected to the need of providing women access to leadership positions in all parts of public life.

Female education must be promoted and harmful cultural practices be outlawed and prosecuted.

Improvements in these areas will put Africa's youth in a more advantaged position than the generations before, offering them better conditions in their own countries to thrive and advance human capital and economic productivity.

International cooperation must adopt a holistic approach

Many African countries would benefit from enhanced cooperation with development partners in order to translate the demographic dividend and other development frameworks into specific actions with clear targets and accountability systems. This could include, for example, increasing the capacity of grassroots organisations leading their own, context-specific solutions as well as supporting governments to integrate demographic dynamics in development plans and programmes and with funds for clearly defined interventions.

However, despite an unprecedented scale of commitments to achieve gender equality and access to health for all by 2030, the latest figures from 2016–2017 show that a meagre 1 percent of all gender-focused aid went to womens' organisations in the Global South and only 0.1 percent of all humanitarian funding accounted for programmes addressing gender-based violence.⁴⁵

Given these realities, it is important for policies that address African migration to adopt a holistic approach and refocus on the factors that drive mobility on the continent. While being a central determinant for youth emigration, demographic developments are largely neglected in the current debate around migration.

Demographic developments should receive more attention in the migration debate.

Emma Borgnäs, Data and Policy Analyst & *Marzia Rango*, Research and Data Officer at IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC)

African irregular migration to Europe is one small piece of a much larger story

Internal and intra-regional migration within Africa are by far the continent's dominating migration patterns.⁶ However, public and policy attention in Europe primarily focuses on migration from Africa to Europe. Over recent years, African nationals have been travelling through various routes to Europe for diverse and multiple reasons, ranging from lack of economic opportunities, poor governance and livelihood stressors to violence and human rights violations. Some of this migration happens irregularly, as individuals resort to smugglers to cross borders due to very limited and often hardly accessible pathways for African nationals to migrate regularly to the EU.

There are too few legal migration channels to Europe.

Irregular migration from Africa to Europe is one small piece of a much larger story and, among various reasons, also a result of insufficient legal migration channels, which are generally only accessible to selected groups of migrants. This could last be observed in the decline of the number of residence permits issued in the EU to African nationals for family, work or education reasons. This number dropped by almost 20 percent between 2010 and 2016, before levels picked up again in 2017. Even more noteworthy is the fact that the total number of EU residence permits issued for work reasons to Africans fell by more than 60 percent between 2010 and 2017 (compared to a 30 percent decrease for all other nationalities) – a period of increased irregular arrivals by sea from Africa to Europe, with tragic consequences for migrants' safety.

The number of residence permits issued in the EU to African nationals for family, work or education reasons dropped between 2010–2017.

Risks and vulnerabilities induced by irregularity and the (inadequate) European response

Migrants who travel irregularly are exposed to great risks and are more likely to find themselves in vulnerable situations than migrants who travel regularly, especially when journeys involve crossing the Sahara or the Mediterranean Sea. IOM's Missing Migrants Project has collected information on migrant fatalities since 2014. Estimates from the project show that the Mediterranean Sea has seen the highest number of deaths, claiming the lives of more than 17,900 people since 2014.⁷ Apart from threats to their lives, migrants travelling irregularly face many other forms of vulnerability and risks, including exposure to abuse, exploitation, torture, human trafficking and other human rights violations. A multi-level analysis of over 16,000 interviews with migrants conducted over a one-year period in seven European countries showed that more than one third of the migrants reported a personal experience related to human trafficking or other exploitative practices along the routes.⁸

Meanwhile, European migration policies have primarily focused on security and border controls, including an increased criminalisation of smugglers. In addition to establishing coordinated international efforts on missing migrants and to save lives, as called for by Objective 8 of the GCM, easing the conditions of entry would reduce the demand for smuggling services in the first place. Improving the availability and accessibility of regular migration channels between Africa and Europe arguably represents the most effective way to fight criminal networks operating between the two continents and decrease undocumented migration. The horrifying reports on the situation of detained migrants in Libya and elsewhere as well as the deaths and disappearances of migrants on their journeys are a stark reminder that approaches to migration management that uphold the fundamental human rights of migrants are urgently needed.⁹ IOM is convinced that more can be done to expand legal pathways for migration to Europe to help migrants avoid vulnerable situations. The enlargement of regular migration schemes and the effectiveness of these policies rely on strong partnerships between all relevant stakeholders,¹⁰ including states, employers, educational institutions and communities – and the active involvement of migrant workers.

Easing the conditions of entry would make smuggling irrelevant.

Any new approaches to migration management must uphold the fundamental human rights of migrants.

Germany's Skilled Labour Immigration Act: creating legal pathways for Africans while closing labour gaps in Germany

Germany's recent Skilled Labour Immigration Act ("Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz"), enacted on 1 March 2020, is a step in the right direction as it creates a framework for targeted and increased immigration of qualified, skilled workers from third countries to Germany.

According to estimates by the Federal German Government, the new rules will attract an additional 25,000 skilled workers to Germany each year. In the face of a lack of specialists – including but not limited to doctors, physiotherapists, nurses, IT specialists, engineers, technicians, craftsmen and construction workers – and an estimated 1.2 million unfilled positions in Germany, the new amendment to the immigration law is commendable. Aiming at individuals applying for a work visa, the law sends a strong signal that qualified job-seekers, including those from non-EU countries, with German language skills can come to Germany legally.

The German Skilled Labour Immigration Act is said to attract 25,000 additional skilled workers.

Yet, despite its promise to ease visa procedures and reduce red tape, the impact of the immigration act remains to be seen. The law comes with high hurdles, especially with respect to language proficiency and recognition of skills and diplomas. These in turn might effectively bar many African migrants from taking advantage of the law. Skills recognition already constitutes a major bottle neck for labour migration to Germany and with the law, this obstacle is likely to persist.¹¹

It is also important to move migration schemes for skilled workers away from one-sided arrangements, which tend to benefit communities and employers at destination, but are not necessarily beneficial for the migrant workers or for communities and employers in origin countries. These schemes may at times cause deficits in certain labour market sectors, with negative impact on development in origin countries.

Programmes in African countries could prepare potential migrants for their immigration to Germany.

Some of the potential downsides could be mitigated by programmes in African countries that prepare potential migrants for their move to Germany by offering language classes and vocational training, complement skills already acquired and help to prepare future immigrants for the demands of the German job market. Often referred to as “Skills Mobility Partnerships” (SMPs)¹² or “Global Skills Partnerships” (GSPs)¹³ such schemes are beneficial for all parties involved, as they include training and education of prospective migrants and non-migrants alike as a key element.

Less qualified workers should not be excluded from legal migration channels, especially given the recognised need for low-skilled migrant workers in the EU. Research shows significant labour gaps in EU Member States, often in sectors such as agriculture, forestry, construction and domestic help. These sectors employ high proportions of migrant workers, who may often have irregular status. Multiple-entry visa schemes could be used allowing visa holders to come back to Germany regularly to perform specific labour. Such circular-migration schemes could for example be beneficial in sectors where labour demand undergoes seasonal fluctuations, such as in agriculture or the hospitality industry.

To ensure the use of regular mechanisms over irregular channels, measures must also be taken to raise awareness and build trust so that migrants perceive such options as realistic and viable alternatives. Information campaigns on the risks of irregular migration and the availability and procedures related to different legal channels for migration are key to increasing not only awareness but trust in bureaucratic mechanisms among people who intend to migrate.

Sustainable migration policies require robust data and analysis

Collecting and analysing data on migration and related topics is a prerequisite for evidence-based policies.¹⁴ Accurate and disaggregated data must inform sustainable approaches to managing migration between Africa and the EU. To date, there are no data available on the skills of migrants or their employment type. It is difficult to learn more about what type of employment African migrant workers are involved in. Some information on high-skilled labour migration exists: for example, only about 10 percent of the total of 92,885 EU Blue Cards – a work permit initiative designed for high-skilled non-EU/EEA migrants – issued between 2012 and 2017 went to African nationals.¹⁵ Data on low-skilled African migrant workers in the EU are also largely unavailable.¹⁶ This is partly because many low-skilled migrants in the EU do not have regular status and thus remain statistically invisible. The little data available on low-skilled migrants can be misleading as many high-skilled migrants perform low-skilled jobs and are thus counted as low-skilled migrants. Collecting data on migrants’ educational attainment would help improve this. Additionally, there are very few EU-wide harmonised policies regarding low-skilled migration, which can impact relevant data pooling, too.

To date, there is no data available on the skills of migrants or their employment type.

The limited evidence base is a key constraint to the design of effective and forward-looking policies and programmes. To better understand skill and labour needs across the EU, particularly in fundamental sectors, systematic labour market analyses and forecasting in specific industries could be undertaken, bringing together employers and policy-makers.

Dr Ingrid Hamm, CEO & Founder of Global Perspectives Initiative (GPI)

In an environment where migration issues are instrumentalised to provoke a polarised political debate infused by emotional reactions, it is important to return to facts and data in order to counter the current misperceptions around migration from Africa to Europe. It is clear that migration is not a new phenomenon. Human mobility is, and has been for centuries, an important driver of progress and sustained wealth in most countries. The German “Wirtschaftswunder” in the 1960s would not have been possible without millions of migrant workers.

Now, we are once again at a crossroads: if Germany wants to remain an economic powerhouse, the development of a comprehensive framework for legal migration from third countries is necessary to satisfy the needs of the job market. The enactment of the new Skilled Labour Immigration Act provides a first step in turning migration from Africa to Germany into a success story for Germany and the many people who will benefit from it. It should also serve as a starting point for discussions about how to spread these benefits more broadly, and how other EU Member States could learn from the German example. Not only is it necessary for the EU to replenish its declining workforce, but the very core of European ideals is blemished by the current European migration policies that directly or indirectly cause huge suffering at the external borders and sustain the business model of smugglers.

Germany should take the opportunity during its 2020 EU Presidency to lead a discussion on expanding regular migration channels to Europe. This discussion should be guided by the overall objective to create a comprehensive and responsible framework for migration, which reduces vulnerability of migrants and maximises benefits for all, in line with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Furthermore, the way forward for Germany and Europe should be about openness and trade through fair economic and political cooperation with Africa. Eventually, this will not only help overcome poverty and unemployment and thereby expand choices for people who are considering to migrate, but also build a strong trading partner on our doorstep.

We gratefully thank our partners – the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the African Institute for Development Policy as well as the International Organization for Migration and its Global Migration Data Analysis Centre – for their tremendous support in developing this publication. Their data and research are an inalienable resource without which we would not have been able to publish this paper.

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- ³ MIF 2019. Ibrahim Forum Report "Africa's Youth: Jobs or Migration?". See https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019_Forum_Report_2.pdf
- ⁴ International Rescue Committee 2019. "Where is the money?". See <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3854/whereisthemoneyfinalfinal.pdf>.
- ⁵ OECD 2019. "Aid to Gender Equality". See <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts-2019.pdf>.
- ⁶ This is especially true for West Africa, with 70 percent of migratory movements mainly linked to employment taking place within the sub-region. See for example https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf; [iom.int/west-and-central-africa](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf).
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- ⁸ *Galos, E., Bartolini L., Cook H. and Grant N.* 2017. "Migrant Vulnerability to Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Evidence from the Central and Eastern Mediterranean Migration Routes". International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.
- ⁹ Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Objectives 7 and 8.
- ¹⁰ IOM Director General António Vitorino at <https://www.iom.int/news/first-iom-member-state-forum-comprehensive-approach-resettlement-and-complementary-pathways>.
- ¹¹ <http://doku.iab.de/stellungnahme/2019/sn0619.pdf>.
- ¹² <https://governingbodies.iom.int/system/files/en/scpf/25th/S-25-5-%20Skills-based%20migration%20and%20partnerships.pdf>.
- ¹³ Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Objective 18.
- ¹⁴ Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Objective 1.
- ¹⁵ EU Blue Cards by type of decision, occupation and citizenship database. See <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>
- ¹⁶ "A less or low-skilled worker is considered to be a person who has received less training than a semi-skilled worker or, having not received any training, has still acquired his or her competence in the job." See http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/9f6bf74f-59ed-4c86-83c7-f876b1006d13.0001.03/DOC_2. https://gmdac.iom.int/sites/default/files/03_-_residence_permits-bbb.pdf.

Illustration 1–6: Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2019 Ibrahim Forum Report "Africa's Youth: Jobs or Migration?". See https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019_Forum_Report_2.pdf

Illustration 7: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019. "International Migrant Stock 2019". See <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>.

African Institute for Development Policy

The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) is an African-led, regional non-profit policy think tank established in 2010 to help bridge the gaps between research, policy and practice in development efforts in Africa. The aim is to contribute to the realisation of sustainable development by enabling the formulation of sound policies and programme interventions. The Institute focuses on three policy areas: Population change and sustainable development; reproductive, maternal, new-born, child, and adolescent health; and education and skills development.

Global Migration Data Analysis Centre

The Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) of the IOM was set up to respond to calls for better international migration data and analysis. Data is key to inform migration governance, improve programming and promote a better public understanding of migration. GMDAC aims to a) strengthen the role of data in global migration governance, b) support IOM Member States' capacities to collect, analyse and use migration data, and c) promote evidence-based policies by compiling, sharing and analysing IOM and other sources of data.

Global Perspectives Initiative

The Global Perspectives Initiative (GPI) promotes and supports the discourse on a sustainable and balanced global development and strongly encourages Germany to increase its international responsibility for global challenges. We bring together stakeholders from politics, business, media and civil society in high-level events and inform, discuss and work together to develop new approaches.

International Organization for Migration

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the leading inter-governmental organisation in the field of migration. IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.

Mo Ibrahim Foundation

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation (MIF) is an African foundation. Established in 2006, it focuses on good governance and leadership in Africa. In addition to its prestigious Ibrahim Governance Weekend, the Foundation contributes to sound African governance and leadership through its research publications – the Ibrahim Index of Governance, the African Governance Report and the Ibrahim Forum Report – and Ibrahim Prize for Excellence in African leadership, as well as scholarships and fellowships for emerging African leaders.

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

Policy Paper
Jobs and Migration

Published by

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