

# *Overview on South-South Migration and Development in Kenya*

## TRENDS AND RESEARCH NEEDS

### Country Overview

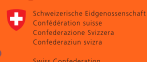
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OBSERVATORY ON MIGRATION  
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***Overview on South-South Migration  
and Development in Kenya***

**Trends and Research Needs**



## Introduction

Migration has become a major concern for policy makers in eastern Africa and particularly in Kenya. Indeed, in this African subregion, migration is considered as an integral part of the labour market (SAMP, 2006) and an adaptation strategy for environmentally vulnerable communities as well as an income diversification strategy for low income households (Leighton, 2010; Crush et al., 2006). In Kenya, migration dynamics are mainly dominated by a long history of rural-urban, circular and cross-border migration within the eastern Africa subregion, mainly for the search of economic opportunities and education as well as trade (Omondi and Ayiamba, ND; Black et al., 2004; Masinjila, 2009; Bell and Muhidin, 2009). Furthermore, many Kenyans have left their country to seek better labour opportunities in other African countries and out of the continent. Recently, Kenya has experienced a high level of rural-urban migration especially among the youth due to high levels of rural youth unemployment (Min-Harris, ND; IMF, 2010). Kenya has also witnessed a large flow of refugees and asylum-seekers from surrounding countries. In addition, violence that occurred in the aftermath of the 2007 presidential election has generated a large number of internally displaced people (IDPs; IDMC, 2010; Kenyan Human Rights Commission, 2007).

According to the Kenyan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IMF, 2010), migration brings to Kenyan society many challenges in terms of security, labour opportunities in urban areas, HIV risks, small arms and trafficking in persons, environmental pressure in urban areas as well as large scale emigration of the highly skilled. However, despite the aforementioned negative impacts of migration, several studies suggest that rural-urban and international migration as well as cross border trade have had numerous positive impacts on the wellbeing of Kenyan households and on poverty reduction (Ogut, 1997; Lucas, 2007; Masinjila, 2009, UNDP, 2009). Furthermore, there is an increasing recognition among both the public authorities and civil society about the potential of Kenyan diasporas to contribute to the country's development (Republic of Kenya, Nd; Ghai, 2004; Okele et al, 2008; Kiiru, 2010).

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of key migration challenges and opportunities in Kenya by focusing on the migration-development nexus. More specifically, this paper aims at assessing and identifying existing data gaps and areas that are under-researched, based on a South-South perspective; that is, by focusing mainly on migration towards and from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In conclusion, some recommendations are provided. These

proposals are hoped to support the discussions at national level among the migration actors with a view to capitalize the positive potentials of migration, to inform and develop policies and to minimize its negative impacts.

## **I. Context: Data and key migration and development trends**

Kenya has been the subject of many studies exploring the link between migration and development. However, a review of those studies shows some key data gaps in specific areas. For example, recent survey data on migration, both internal and international, are unavailable. In contrast, a lot is known about the impacts of climate change on environmentally vulnerable communities as well as their strategies to protect and diversify their livelihood assets. Other areas related to the social impacts of migration, both internal and international, are under-researched. Other areas in need of more analysis include: Kenyan diasporas and highly skilled migration. For the former, reliable estimates of their number and studies on their contribution to the development of the country are scarce, while the latter shows critical information gaps in relation to the availability of human capital in the most affected regions (Shitundu, 2006). Information gaps have been also noticed on areas like irregular migration and socio-economic impacts of internal and international remittances as well as cross-border trade.

### **I.1 Population and immigration**

Kenya is an important destination country for migrants coming from Central and Eastern Africa as well as other continents. In 2010, the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN PD) estimates the stock of international migrants residing in Kenya to reach 817,747 persons, or 2 per cent of the total population (UN PD, 2009). According to the same source, female migrants stood at 415,688 or 50.8 per cent of international migrant stock. This rate is slightly higher than world average (49%) and requires more attention. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct a qualitative study in order to better understand the phenomenon.

Overall, the stock of international migrants in Kenya as a share of total population is decreasing.<sup>1</sup> In 2005, with a total of 790,071 persons, international migrants represented 2.2 per cent of the total population (UN PD, 2009). Compared to 2010, it can be noticed that the rate has decreased slightly from 2.2 to 2 per cent. Furthermore, according to statistic data released by the Development

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<sup>1</sup> In 2010, the total population was estimated to have reached 40.86 million, having increased by almost 10 million since 2000 (31.44 million; UN PD, 2009).

Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty (Migration DRC), in 2005, the total number of non-Kenyan residents was estimated at 327,444. There is a striking difference (50%) between data by UN PD and estimates by the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty (DRC). This may be due to differences with respect to the definitions and methodologies used by each institution. Therefore, in order to enhance the contribution of research to migration management policies, there is a need to harmonize research methodologies and definitions both at national and regional level. The overall majority of these migrants, or 79 per cent of the total, came from a great variety of sub-Saharan Africa countries. The top twelve countries of origin were Nigeria (7.90%), the Republic of the Congo (7.61%), Eritrea (7.50%), Burundi (6.31%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, 5.76%), Mozambique (4.25%), Somalia (4.30%), Chad (4.3%), Sudan (3.81%), Rwanda (3.59%), Senegal (2.78%) and Mali (1.72%; DRC, 2007).

Since December 2009, Kenya hosts more than 350 000 refugees and about 18,958 asylum-seekers from neighbouring countries (UNHCR, 2010). Refugees are mainly from Ethiopia, Somalia and Southern Sudan, whereas asylum-seekers are mainly from eastern areas of Democratic Republic of the Congo. Furthermore, in 2007, about 265,700 refugees were residing in Kenyan territory, representing 33.6 per cent of international immigrants stock and 1.9 per cent of the total of world refugees. Indeed, Kenya has long been considered as transit country for refugees seeking resettlement (Crisp, 1999; Lindley, 2007). This well known status of the country was not affected despite the political and economic instability it has witnessed in recent years (IOM, 2010; UNHCR, 2010).

Regarding population and urbanization, in 2010, the UN Population Division estimates rural population in Kenya at 31.8 millions, while urban population are estimated at 9.1 millions, representing a rate of 22.2 per cent (20.2% in 2005; UN PD, 2008). Estimates for 2020 indicate an increase in urban population, reaching 13.8 millions, or a rate of 26.6 per cent (24.1% for 2015). Indeed, Kenya is witnessing an increase in urban population due partly to population growth and disparities in term of labour opportunities between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, high population density in urban areas creates increased pressure on available services and resources and expands informal settlements while risking the creation of slums in urban and peri-urban areas. Therefore, it will be of great interest to conduct a study aiming at assessing the inter-causality between migration, urbanization and the environment.

## **1.2 Emigration**

High rural unemployment, intercommunity inequality, environment factors such as droughts and rainfall unpredictability, high population growth as well as political instability can be considered as the main drivers of emigration in Kenya in recent years. Many Kenyans have emigrated abroad. However, it is hard to find accurate quantitative data on the numbers and trends of Kenyan diasporas (Ghai, 2004).

According to the estimates of the Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty from Sussex University (based on census data for the period 2000–2002), in 2005, the stock of Kenyan emigrants was estimated at 912 890. The United Kingdom, with 14.5 per cent of Kenyan emigrants is the main destination country, followed by Tanzania (13.5%), the United States of America (4.98%), Uganda (3.67%), and Canada (2.2%; Migration DRC, 2007). The same source indicates that over the period 2000–2002, 41.5 per cent of Kenyan migrants were residing in Africa, 37.9 per cent in Europe, 14.4 per cent in North America, 4.2 per cent in Asia, and 0.2 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. From these data, it can be inferred that more than half of Kenyan emigrants live in Europe and North America, followed by South-South migration within Africa and to other developing countries.

Regarding Kenyan refugees and asylum-seekers, by the end of 2009, they were estimated at 9,620 and 2,979 respectively (UNHCR, 2010). Kenya has also witnessed a high number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially in the aftermath of the 2007 presidential election. In late 2009, their number was estimated at 399,000 persons (UNHCR, 2010). This raises important protection issues. More needs to be known about their profiles to design adequate policy and programmatic responses.

## **1.3 Labour migration**

Several studies have covered topics related to labour migration in Kenya and eastern Africa (Munya, ND; Macharia, 2003; Shitundu, 2006; Makoffu, 2010; Achacoso, 2010). Indeed, labour migration, including the emigration of large numbers of highly skilled workers, are among the main concerns of policymakers, researchers and civil society in Kenya. Researchers argue that high youth unemployment in rural areas as well as social and economic inequalities are among the main drivers of internal and cross-border migration in the country. According to a study conducted by Miguel and Hamory (2009, based on data collected by Kenyan Life Panel Survey in 1998, 2003/2005 and



2007/2008), work opportunities are higher in urban areas than in the rural ones. This study further reveals that unemployed men generally search for paid occupations in both rural and urban areas, whereas women tend to migrate to urban areas for employment.

Furthermore, there is clear evidence of 'brain drain', or negative effects of the emigration of tertiary educated, in the country (Kaba, Shitundu, 2006; Oyelere, 2007; Mwaniki and Dulo, 2008). According to Clemens and Pettersson (2007), the Kenyan health sector is the most affected by migration of skilled workers. According to their findings, in 2000, around 51 per cent (3,975) of Kenyan physicians resided in OECD countries. The main receiving countries include: the United Kingdom (2,733), the United States of America (865) and Canada (180). During the same year, 8 per cent (2,372) of Kenyan nurses lived in OECD countries.

Furthermore, many other Kenyans from different educational backgrounds reside in Member States of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). According to statistical data released by this organization (OECD, 2009), among the 198,100 Kenyans residing in this part of the world, most are academics (36.9%), followed by those with secondary education (1 out of 3, or 32.7%) and primary education level (26%). From this data it can be inferred that overall the skill level of Kenyan emigrants is relatively high. The same source indicates that 54 per cent of Kenyans living in OECD countries were employed, while the total unemployment rate among them was estimated at 7.1 per cent for both sexes. These figures suggest that Kenyans are well integrated in labour market in OECD countries and may therefore constitute a significant pull factor for Kenyan skilled workers.

On the other hand, cross border migration for trade and the search of better opportunities has become a main concern for policy makers, academics and civil society in the region (Masinjila, 2009). Indeed, East African Community (EAC) Member States have committed to better manage scarce resources they have at their disposal, including the labour force (Musonda, 2006; IOM and Ministry of Labour, 2009; Makoffu, 2010; Munyae, ND). In this respect, witnessing the human development potential of migration for both sending and receiving countries, Kenya has replaced the work permit system through the regional labour market protocol. This protocol, which came into effect in July 2010, allows free movement of labour, capital, goods and services within the region. However, Kenya as well as other EAC Member States need to amend their national legislations before full application of the protocol.

With respect to Kenyan students, statistics released by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009) reveal that a large number of Kenyan students studies abroad. According to this source, in 2007 alone about 13,313 Kenyan students were enrolled in universities, mainly in the USA (48.7%), the United Kingdom (20.7%), Australia (9.6%), India (3.3%) and Germany (2.5%). This mobility highlights the relative ease at which the tertiary educated can migrate, while these opportunities hardly exist for people with lower education levels. No figure is provided for international students residing in Kenya and nor the number of Kenyan students in ACP countries which would bring an interesting insight into South-South student mobility.

## **1.4 Irregular migration**

Kenya has long been considered as a hub for immigration and emigration as well as for trafficking in persons. In 2005, a total of 817,747 international migrants were staying in Kenya. Some studies report that irregular migration is an important pattern of international migration in Kenya (IOM, 2010). However, there is no accurate data on irregular migrants. This phenomenon entails many challenges in terms of vulnerability to HIV, small arms and trafficking in persons, especially of women and children (IOM, 2009). The number of irregular migrants is assumed to be high, partly because of the increasing number of porous border points, especially in Lamu and Msambweni.

## **1.5 Remittance flows from and to ACP countries**

A number of studies have focused on remittances sent by Kenyan emigrants to their home country (Azam and Gubert, 2006; Gupta et al, 2007; Fix et al., 2009; Kiiru, 2010). This may be due to the fact that Kenya is one of the most important recipients of international remittances in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, data related to remittances from and to ACP countries as well as on internal remittances are scarce.

According to the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK, 2010), in July 2010, the level of international remittances was estimated at EUR 39 millions.<sup>2</sup> According the same source, Kenya receives an average of EUR 38.5 millions<sup>3</sup> per month since January 2008. The annual amount of remittances recorded in 2009 was

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2 Euro amounts calculated on the basis of the European Central Bank exchange rate for 31 July 2010 (USD 50.7 millions).

3 Euro amounts calculated on the basis of the European Central Bank exchange rate for 31 July 2010 (USD 50 millions).

estimated at EUR 423 millions<sup>4</sup> and EUR 439 millions<sup>5</sup> for 2008. In 2009, the World Bank (2010) estimated the total remittance inflow in Kenya at EUR 1.17 billion<sup>6</sup>. These data indicate a striking difference (more than 50%) between data provided by the Central Bank of Kenya and the World Bank during the same year. Indeed, the international estimates of remittances may vary from one source to another because of the methods and definitions used by different institutions. As a result, it is difficult to extract reliable information from the comparison of such estimates (United States Government Accountability Office, 2006). Furthermore, it is worth to mention that these estimates of remittances do not take into account money sent via informal sector. The true size of these remittances, including unrecorded flows through informal channels is believed to be even larger (IOM, 2006; Kiiru, 2010).

Kenyan diasporas of North America and Europe are the main contributors of remittances with respectively 55 per cent and 27 per cent of the total amount (CBK, 2010). Although most of Kenyan emigrants reside in Africa, the most important flows of remittances are transferred from emigrants in developed countries linked to the greater wage differentials. On the other hand, according to the World Bank (2010), in 2007, the inflow and outflow of remittances were estimated at EUR 1 billion<sup>7</sup> (representing 5.4% of the GDP) and EUR 11 millions<sup>8</sup> respectively. During this year, the total remittances inflow recorded was more than the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Kenya (124.5%) but a bit lower than the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI; 2.2%). The main remitters were Kenyan diasporas residing in Europe (61%), in North America (27.2%), Africa (8.8%); Oceania (2.6% and Asia (0.4%). In contrast to the indication of the Central Bank of Kenya, it can be inferred from the above data that Kenyan migrants of Europe are the main contributors of remittances, followed by North America.

A quick look of the figures above gives us insights on how important the contributions of Kenyan emigrants are for economic development of the country. However, these figures do not tell us anything about the impacts

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4 Euro amounts calculated on the basis of the European Central Bank exchange rate for 31 December 2009 (USD 609.156 millions).

5 Euro amounts calculated on the basis of the European Central Bank exchange rate for 31 December 2008 (USD 611.241 millions).

6 Euro amounts calculated on the basis of the European Central Bank exchange rate for 31 December 2009 (USD 1.69 billions).

7 Euro amounts calculated on the basis of the European Central Bank exchange rate for 31 December 2007 (USD 1.58 billions).

8 Euro amounts calculated on the basis of the European Central Bank exchange rate for 31 December 2007 (USD 16 millions).

of remittances on human development in Kenya and of emigrants abroad. Accordingly, it would be advisable to conduct a study focusing on the main aspects beyond financial remittances both from the sending and receiving end. In addition, since a South-South focus is often overlooked, a specific study on remittances to and from the ACP countries could be conducted.

## **1.6 Migration and the environment**

The links between migration and environment are well documented in Kenya (United Nations, 2001; UN-Habitat, 2009; Leighton, 2010). Studies conducted in relation to this topic have identified crop failure, natural disasters, lack of wood for cooking, land degradation, inadequate access to safe drinking water, drought, and lack of rainfall/drought as well as floods as the main environmental factors inducing population movement in Kenya. However, a survey realized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat, 2009) in Nairobi revealed that environmental factors were not the sole driver of rural-urban migration. About 76 per cent of 500 interviewees mentioned the search for more income opportunities as the main reason of their movements. Every interviewee mentioned at least one environmental factor in addition to economic factors; thus, drought and rainfall unpredictability were mentioned by 43 per cent while floods were mentioned by 17 per cent. The study therefore concluded that drought and flood were the main environmental drivers affecting Kenyan population. More studies are needed in order to better understand the human development impacts of this type of migration.

## **2. The impact of migration on human development**

Migration, whether internal or international, present both positive and negative impacts for human development in Kenya. Positive impacts are associated with the positive role attributed to remittances sent by Kenyan emigrants to their families as well as internal remittances sent by migrants from urban to rural areas. At macro level, remittances are considered to be a significant source of foreign exchange for the country. In 2007, the total remittances inflows accounted for 5.4 per cent of GDP and largely outnumbered Official Development Assistance (ODA; remittances accounted for 124.5% of ODA) and were only second to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI, remittances represented 2.2% of FDI). Similarly, at the micro level, money and equipments sent by Kenyan Diasporas and urban migrants to their families are often allocated to income generating activities and expenditures related to education, health,

housing and food (Azam and Gubert, 2006; IOM, 2006; Sherbut, 2007; World Bank, 2009; Kiiru, 2010). Therefore, remittances play the role of a social safety net at the household level, while generating a multiplier effect (IOM, 2005). Moreover, cross-border trading is assumed to provide a significant income earning opportunity for women (SAMP, 2006).

However, migration brings challenges to Kenyan society as well. For instance, on the one hand, increasing rural-urban migration is assumed to raise pressure on available job opportunities and to be responsible for the development of densely populated informal settlements in urban areas (IMF, 2010). On the other hand, cross border migration is assumed to foster small arms and trafficking in persons. Furthermore, migration of teachers that occurred in the post election violence of 2008 is considered to have had negative impacts on the educational sector. Migration is also considered to have negative impacts in the fight against HIV/Aids (Crush et al., 2006). There is also evidence that remittances may increase income and social inequalities within the society (Black et al., 2004; Crush et al., 2006). In Kenya, remittances tend to increase the degree of inequality in income distribution among the population, especially in rural areas as not everyone receives funds from family members abroad (OECD, 2006). Indeed, in some rural areas migration seems to be selective by age and sex. That is, young men migrate more than women and remit to their parents in expectation of a subsequent inheritance (Black et al., 2004).

### **3. Recommendations: Possible research and capacity-building priorities**

In this paper, we have sought to take a broader view of key migration challenges and opportunities for Kenya by focusing on the migration-development nexus from a South-South perspective. The focus has mainly been on the assessment and identification of existing data gaps as well as areas requiring more research and capacity-building. Furthermore, prior to the elaboration of this document, several meetings took place between the ACP Observatory on Migration and migration and development actors in Kenya. These meetings aimed at assessing the priorities of different stakeholders in relation to migration issues. Therefore, based on this analysis and the outcome of these meetings, the following observations and recommendations can be made.

A number of studies have focused on migration issues in Kenya. However; this field still faces some data gaps and weak policy analysis. Furthermore, most attention has been paid to South-North migration. In contrast, available

statistical data revealed that emigration of Kenyans is largely an intra-regional phenomenon. Likewise, almost four out of five immigrants in Kenya are Africans. **Capacity-building** is needed in areas such as data collection and analysis on Kenyan diasporas in ACP countries and on international migrants as well as on assessment of the effectiveness of migration-related policies. Due to increasing concerns related to trafficking in persons, it could be appropriate to suggest trainings for relevant national agencies and civil society on the protection of victims of trafficking and prevention of child labour and exploitation of migrants.

Considerable progress has been made by the Kenyan Government towards mainstreaming the **role of Kenyan diasporas** in the national development agenda. However, there are still critical information gaps related to their size, motivations, skill levels, challenges they face and activities they engage in. Therefore, in order to fill these data and information gaps, it could be advisable to conduct a qualitative and quantitative research focusing specifically on **Kenyan diasporas in ACP countries**.

Lack of coordination between institutions and agencies dealing with migration issues can lead to duplication and incoherence in terms of policy planning. In this regard, it may be useful to conduct a study focusing on **policy assessment** with a view to the implementation of the new Dual Citizenship Provision.

Remittances sent to Kenya are analysed in several studies. However, this research has focused to a large extent on the economic aspects of remittances without paying a lot of attention to their social and **human development impacts**. Therefore, it could be advisable to conduct a study focussing on human development and the social impact of both internal and international migration to be able to disseminate this information to the wider public. Furthermore, some studies indicate that more and more women are involved in informal cross-border trade in eastern Africa. Researchers argue that this kind of migration has positive impacts on poverty reduction. In this regard, it can be appropriate to study the links between gender, cross-border trade and human development in order to better understand this phenomenon and its impact on human development in Kenya.

It has been also highlighted that migration was partly the cause of increasing numbers of slums in urban and peri-urban areas; while rural–urban migration can be caused by environmental factors. A study could be conducted on the interrelation between **urbanization, migration and climate change** in order to better capture their inter-causality.

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