

POVERTY AND MIGRATION: DIMENSIONS IN DEEPENING THE UNDERDEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

Clement Chimezie Igbokwe, PhD

Dept. Of history and international relations

Abia State University, Uturu

E-mail:chimbest@yahoo.com

&

Clara M. Austin Iwuoha, PhD

Department Of Religious Studies

Imo State University

Imo State, Owerri

ausiwuoha@yahoo.com (08038979420)

Abstract

Much of the current data suggests that the wave of poverty induced migration compounded by the heightened level of herdsmen uprisings and insurgencies are on the increase and constitutes a worrisome dimension in the economic development of Nigeria. Suffice to re-echo the opinions of many scholars observing that the banes of Nigeria's economic development besides corruption are the issues of poverty and migration. Poverty and migration are bed mates given the fact that most migrations are poverty orchestrated. Although in recent times, most migrations are forced due to conflicts and insurgencies leading to internally displaced migrations or migrations beyond the frontiers of Nigeria. In this paper, the writers are investigating the degree to which poverty and migration are compounding the underdevelopment milieu of Nigeria. The writers shall adopt a thematic approach in the conduct on this research. The paper identifies that poverty as the lack of productive resources, income and capacities which contributes to individual or group isolation has contributed immensely to migrations towards Europe and the America in search of greener pasture. Poverty no doubt subjects individuals or groups to vulnerable position, making them powerless economically, politically and most often socially discriminated.

Keywords: Poverty, Migration, Underdevelopment

Introduction

Migration and poverty remain two undeniable dimensions that have continued to deepen the underdevelopment of Nigeria and undermine the little development efforts. This is due to insecurity leading to forced migrations and

poverty necessitating the productive population's migration into Europe, America and Asia in search for greener pasture. This fact cannot be wished away without a consideration of the consequences on the economy. An overwhelmingly higher number of people prefer to migrate rather than die of poverty or engulfed by conflict situations. The question of why the increase in volume of international migration can best be understood when x-rayed in juxtaposition with the level of poverty and insecurity in the country. It is unfortunate that this productive population undertake sometimes the most dangerous journey in a bid to escape poverty or insecurity. It is high time that research attention is focused towards this direction with a view to raising awareness and draw government attention to the consequences.

Whether as displaced people or voluntary labour migrants, millions of Nigerians join the desperate, massive population movements across national boundaries to the West and Americas. In search of livelihood, they often face rejection and victimization within new nations struggling with declining economies and population pressure.

Domestic politics and government insensitivity are major factors why this in recent time is on the increased. The bulk of these migrants provide cheap labour in the receiving countries thereby growing their economy while a lesser percentage are skilled personnel who are offered a better working condition and welfare package.

Another element worth considering is the concern about the consequences of human-capital flight. This fact cannot be ignored. This and other factors add up to a heightened consciousness about the consequences of poverty and migration as forces deepening the underdevelopment of Nigeria.

Furthermore, most writers argue for the benefits of migration but the balance of costs and benefits accruing to the source countries from migration appear to be controversial. The argument usually comes down to one of remittances versus "brain drain," and the evidence on the side of remittances to these researchers are weak. Human capital and intellectuality cannot be compared to remittances. "Teach me to fish with a net rather than giving me fish" comes readily handy to help nourish our understanding of the enormous gap between remittances and brain drain.

Suffice to re-echo the opinions of many scholars observing that the banes of Nigeria's economic development besides corruption are the issues of poverty and migration. Poverty and migration are bed mates given the fact that most migrations are poverty orchestrated. Although in recent times, most migrations are forced due to conflicts and insurgencies leading to internally displaced migrations or migrations beyond the frontiers of Nigeria. In this paper, the writers are investigating the degree to which poverty and migration are compounding the underdevelopment milieu of Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Poverty

The definition given by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states that poverty is the lack of productive resources, income and capacities which contributes to individual and/or group isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness, economic, political and social discrimination and participation in unsustainable livelihoods. Poverty has various manifestations, including hunger and malnutrition, ill health and limited or no access to education, health care and safe residential and occupational environments (UNDP, 1996).

According to WordIQ.com, Poverty describes a wide range of circumstances associated with need, hardship and lack of resources. For some, poverty is a subjective and comparative term; for others, it is moral and evaluative; and for others, scientifically established. The principal uses of the term include:

- Descriptions of material need, including deprivation of essential goods and services, multiple deprivation, and patterns of deprivation over time.
- United Economic circumstances, describing a lack of wealth (usually understood as capital, money, material goods, or resources especially natural resources). The meaning of "*sufficient*" varies widely across the different political and economic areas of the world. In the European Union, poverty is also described in terms of "economic distance", or inequality.
- Social relationships, including social exclusion, dependency, and the ability to live what is understood in a society as a "normal" life: for instance, to be capable of raising a healthy family, and especially educating children and participating in society (WordIQ.com).

For the purpose of this paper, we will adopt the World Poverty Copenhagen Declaration that describes poverty as “a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.” (UNDP, 1996). The World Bank identifies “extreme poverty” as being people who live on less than \$1 a day, and poverty as less than \$2 a day (World Bank Report 2001).

What is Development?

To these researchers, it became imperatively pertinent to define development as a basis for a better understanding of the concept of development.

According to Carl Pearson (1957:6), “development is an ancient concept but one which, in our modern age, has acquired new meaning and purpose. Its pursuit unites two strands of human thought: the belief in progress and the conviction that man can master his destiny” Development has varied interpretations depending from the scholar’s viewpoint. The concept of development and in this case rural development in Nigeria lacks a unified definition as different scholars tend to view it from varying perspective. While some scholars look at rural development from the aspect of educational training, others view it from the angle of availability of infrastructure within a community.

Koffi Annan (2003), a former United Nations Secretary General, provides a good example of an international relations scholar who suggested in a 2003 *“United Nations Human Development Program Report* that “development embraces human rights and good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual in rural and urban areas has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential” Annan’s opinion no doubt underscores the very essence of establishing the local government system as a third tier of government, hence development cannot occur where individuals at the rural level are not giving opportunities to fulfill their potentials. No matter what may be said about development, it has become clear that the concept of development has undergone profound changes over the years. The very meaning of development has been altered from an almost exclusive pre-occupation with national income to a broader interpretation that encompasses the questions of poverty, inequality and unemployment. For this study, Olatunbosun’s conception of the term is perhaps most suitable; according to him,

Rural development is based on the need to balance the pattern and direction of government for the benefit of both the urban and rural sectors and provide

technical requirements for speeding up economic growth in the development (Olatunbosun, 1976:89).

Development in agreement with Olatunbosun will mean addressing material imperatives of the people i.e ensuring the basic needs of the people such that facilitates their wellbeing and shows improvement is realized. These materials include quality education, primary health care, clean environment, decent shelter, etc. The Second is freedom from misery or servitude and lastly development entails enjoying respect and self worth as a result of mastering our destiny and environment as conceptualized by him. But despite this assertion, the rural areas in Nigeria are grossly neglected as far as development projects and infrastructures such as hospitals, roads, schools, markets, etc are concerned. For instance, in terms of level of economic development, quality of life, access to opportunities, facilities and amenities, standard of living and general viability, there is ample evidence to underscore the level of under-development (Adebayo, 2014, 98).

Having extensively discussed development, it will be easier to properly comprehend the concept underdevelopment. According to Walter Rodney (2009:16), underdevelopment is not the absence of development because every people have developed in one way or the other and to a greater or lesser extent. He further argues that underdevelopment makes sense only as a means of comparing levels of development and it is tied to the fact that human social development has been uneven which to him resulted from the exploitation of one country by another as was the case of the European exploitation of Africa. Africa and particularly Nigeria was developing independently until the incursion of the imperialist and the colonialist exploiters who plunged justice into the astronomical underdevelopment of the African societies. Sam Ezeanyika (1999) corroborates Walter Rodney's view when he observes that underdevelopment is pejorative as it connotes lack of potential for development but suggest the usage of developing as a more appropriate concept when referring to the third world countries.

Migration

A person who moves from their home because of natural disaster or civil disturbance may be described as a refugee or, especially within the same country, a displaced person. A person seeking refuge from political, religious, or other forms of persecution is usually described as an asylum seeker. The

distinction between involuntary (fleeing political conflict or natural disaster) and voluntary migration (economic or labour migration) is difficult to make and partially subjective, as the motivators for migration are often correlated. Migration is a passive response to the economic, social and political environment which is beyond the individual migrant's control (Amin 1974).

Human migration is the movement of people from one place to another with the intentions of settling, permanently or temporarily at a new location. The movement is often over long distances and from one country to another, but internal migration is also possible; indeed, this is the dominant form globally. People may migrate as individuals, in family units or in large groups. It is imperative to observe that migration could either be voluntary and involuntary.

It includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants. Internal migration refers to a move from one area (a province, district or municipality) to another within one country. International migration is a territorial relocation of people between nation-states. This is exactly the case scenario witnessed in recent times in Nigeria.

These definitions are all embracing as it captures different categories of migrants who leave the country because of political persecution, conflicts, economic problems, environmental degradation or a combination of these reasons and those who do so in search of conditions of survival or well-being that does not exist in their place of origin.

Theoretical Construct

Relative deprivation theory

Relative deprivation theory states that awareness of the income difference between neighbours or other households in the migrant-sending community is an important factor in migration. The incentive to migrate is a lot higher in areas that have a high level of economic inequality. In the short run, remittances may increase inequality, but in the long run, they may actually decrease it. There are two stages of migration for a worker: first, they invest in human capital formation, and then they try to capitalize on their investments. In this way, successful migrants may use their new capital to provide for better schooling for their children and better homes for their families. Successful high-skilled

emigrants may serve as an example for neighbours and potential migrants who hope to achieve that level of success (Jennissen, 2007).

World Systems Theory

World System Theory looks at migration from a global perspective. It explains that interaction between different societies can be an important factor in social change within societies. Trade with one country, which causes economic decline in another, may create incentive to migrate to a country with a more vibrant economy. It can be argued that even after decolonization, the economic dependence of former colonies still remains on mother countries. This view of international trade is controversial, however, and some argue that free trade can actually reduce migration between developing and developed countries. It can be argued that the developed countries import labour-intensive goods, which causes an increase in employment of unskilled workers in the less developed countries, decreasing the outflow of migrant workers. The export of capital-intensive goods from rich countries to poor countries also equalizes income and employment conditions, thus also slowing migration. In either direction, this theory can be used to explain migration between countries that are geographically far apart (Jennissen, 2007).

Marxist perspectives offer a long-tradition of analysing links between migration on the one hand, and poverty and development on the other, mostly in terms of post-colonialism, apartheid, and uneven capitalist development. Partly in the context of urbanization and debates on the informal sector, but also with its focus on migrant workers within rural areas, this tradition explicitly challenged the individualistic assumptions underlying models like Todaro's, and have described migration as an inalienable part of transition toward or development of capitalism (de Haan 2006).

With respect to international migration too, this tradition has emphasized the exploitation of migrant workers, as beneficial to capital and richer nations, at the cost of labour and poorer nations and regions. Moreover, similar to neoclassical approaches to migration,

Marxist models focus exclusively on economic factors. Migration processes can be understood adequately only as the outcome of interaction of a diversity of

factors, including social-cultural and economic forces, and gendered and childhood norms and rules – and how migration in turn alters these factors.

An important theme cutting across the different analytical traditions is why people participate in migration – still a relatively rare event at the population level – and this has led to theorization of migration as a selective process. The rational choice framework in labour migration theories suggests individuals with better education, skills and labour market experience are more likely to migrate because of their greater ability to capture its rewards (Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler 2003).

The poorest are assumed to be selected out of migration because they cannot afford it, and because, their lower human capital implies lower expected rewards. The “new economics of migration” suggests the poorest do not have access to migration opportunities because of their lower capacity for risk-taking, and literature on kinship networks in migration suggests the poorest lack social capital that facilitates migration. Although the evidence is limited and mixed (Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler 2003), there appears to be acceptance of an “empirical regularity” that the poorest and richest have lower migration propensities. The severely poor are believed to be almost unable to migrate, or migrate under such bad terms – for example, in bonded labour – that migration does not improve their well-being or makes them worse off (Mosse et al. 2002).

Effects of Poverty and Migration on Deepening Underdevelopment in Nigeria

Identifying with greater precision the effects of both factors on development is necessary in order to come to any confident conclusions about the impact of migration and poverty as contributing factor to the underdevelopment of Nigeria. There are, however, many other predisposing factors that militate against the development of Nigeria but our interest is on examining the above identified factors. These researchers strongly believe that migration impose costs and confer benefits, and it is important to observe that the costs significantly outweigh the benefits.

Suffice to highlight that migration leads to brain drain. Although there are questions about the fundamental relationship between poverty, migration and underdevelopment, irrespective of the argument in favour of migration as a means of creating wealth, the fact remains that human capital cannot be traded

on the platform of mere remittances. Let us examine briefly the impact migration has on host countries.

Impact on the Host Countries on Initial Arrival

Forced displacement typically takes place in a relatively short time frame and involves large numbers, unlike the more regular inflow of voluntary migrants. As mentioned, the refugee crisis affects specific countries and regions disproportionately, while the vast majority of advanced and developing countries receive very few refugees in a given year; this is a case where initial conditions and the size of the shock matter, and they matter greatly. Over and beyond the labour market impact discussed above, forced displacement can constitute a large demographic shock causing a sudden mismatch of supply and demand of public services and housing in the host community. In countries or regions where the investment climate is inauspicious to start with and where the inflow of foreigners disrupts established social and political equilibria, business expectations can be adversely affected. This can delay or indefinitely impede the private investment response to rising demand for housing and services. Fiscal constraints can limit the required investment in public services, and, in extreme cases, balance of payments constraints can lead to exchange rate devaluation and make the import of food, fuel and other necessities more expensive.

The Costs and Benefits from the Perspective of Poor Countries of Origin

There is little doubt that voluntary migration from a poor to a rich country almost always benefits the individual migrant, who may easily find himself or herself earning in an hour what he or she earned in a day in the country of origin. The question is whether the benefits to individuals (and, commonly, their relatives left behind) aggregate to a general benefit to the home country. The evidence is contradictory and fragmentary. Much of the research that supports beliefs about the overall costs and benefits of migration is based on "micro" studies and cannot conclusively demonstrate the validity of "macro" conclusions. Now let us consider these costs and benefits under the following variables:

Remittances

The most often cited support for the positive side of the argument is the observation that remittances from international migrants play an extraordinary role in the economic accounts of many developing countries, far more important than official development assistance. Worldwide, remittances are estimated at

about \$100 billion per year, and approximately 60 percent of this sum goes to developing countries which Nigeria is a part. Overseas development assistance (ODA) from the 23 countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Development Assistance Committee was \$54 billion in 2000. Remittance estimates are notoriously imprecise, however, because remittances often move through private, unrecorded channels. The question yet to be answered is the extent to which remit aggregate to a general benefit to the home country

Many scholars believe that labour migration does not significantly improve the development prospects of the country of origin. Source countries have had great difficulty in converting remittance income into sustainable productive capacity. In addition, most are able to exercise little control over the composition of their labour exports rather, it is determined by the foreign labour markets, and may bear no relation to "surplus" labour at home. A few countries, such as the Philippines and India, have focused quite deliberately on "producing" skilled labour for foreign markets, but most are passive in the face of international supply and demand.

In addition, it is argued that remittance income is rarely used for productive purposes. Remittances go in small amounts to poor people and are used mostly to support direct consumption as well as some housing, healthcare, and education. A very small proportion of remitted funds seem to go into income-earning, job-creating investment.

Far from being productive, remittances may increase inequality, encourage consumption of imports, and create dependency. They are often delivered with stunning inefficiency; as much as 20 percent of their value is said to disappear, commonly through high transfer fees and poor exchange rate offerings. The benefits of remittance income to source countries do not necessarily explain the full impact of remittances on poverty. Remittances may not constitute a rising tide that raises all boats, but they do have a very important effect on the standard of living of the households that receive them, constituting a significant portion of household income.

They are an important social safety net for poor families, possibly reducing additional out-migration in particularly difficult times. Studies in the Dominican Republic showed that residents at all economic and social levels received

remittances, but that the poor relied on them most heavily, as one would expect. In the aftermath of the devastating Hurricane Mitch in 1999, the government of El Salvador asked the United States government not for additional humanitarian aid, but for extended permission for Salvadoran immigrants to stay legally in the United States so that they could send money to storm-affected relatives back home.

The relatively small portion of remittances that are used for investment (apart from human capital investment through education and health spending) reflects not only the immediate consumption needs of poor families, but also the discouraging investment climate for the poor. Until such problems as poor infrastructure, corruption, lack of access to credit, distance from markets, lack of entrepreneurial skills, and disincentives to savings are tackled, it is unrealistic to expect remittances to solve the problem of low investment in poor communities. In the meantime, remittances may lift many recipients out of poverty, if only for as long as remittances continue but cannot guarantee development.

Brain Drain

If remittances are the major benefits of migration from the point of view of the source countries, the loss of human resources particularly highly skilled people is the most serious cost. The market for advanced skills has become truly a global market, and the most dynamic industrial economies are admitting sometimes even recruiting significant proportions of the highly trained professionals from poor countries. *The Economist* in a September 2002 article about emigration assembled the following random snapshots of the brain drain:

- About 30 percent of all highly educated Ghanaians and Sierra Leoneans live abroad
- 12 percent of Mexico's population with higher education is in the United States, and 30 percent of its PhDs
- 75 percent of Jamaicans with higher education are in the United States
- Albania lost one-third of its qualified people in the decade after the fall of communism
- Half of all foreign students who get PhDs in the United States are still there five years later

No doubt, a greater percentage of Nigerians professionals and highly skilled individuals are scattered all over the globe.

Ironically, emigrants from countries in which a very small proportion of people gain tertiary education are not only better educated than their compatriots, but also tend to be much more highly skilled than the people of their destination countries.

The loss of skilled people imposes several different kinds of costs on their countries of origin. The most obvious is perhaps the cost of the education itself, which in almost all cases has been heavily subsidized by the state. The emigration of the educated thus represents a transfer from the poor country to the rich. There are also fiscal costs associated with the brain drain, in that the country of origin loses the tax revenue that these potential high-earners would have paid into the national coffers.

The net developmental losses of the brain drain are more difficult to estimate. Losses of highly skilled professionals may, in the extreme case in which dire economic mismanagement, conflict, poor working conditions, and low levels of reward conspire with opportunities abroad cripple entire institutions and sectors of an economy. The developmental impact of the brain drain is most severe in source countries with weak human resource bases, where educational systems are not capable of replacing those who emigrate. A "musical chairs" game of replacement migration from other countries is thus set in motion.

Sub-Saharan African countries such as Zambia, Liberia, or Zimbabwe represent an extreme. For countries in crisis, the brain drain is only one manifestation of a more general problem of an economy in free-fall. Nigeria undoubtedly is among the many other countries that are seeing high levels of skilled and professional immigration. The earlier the Nigerian government started addressing issues leading to mass exodus migration the better for the economy.

Migration and Displacement Challenges on Development,

"(...) forced displacement of people threaten(s) to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades."- Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, 2015.

The above opening statement helps in nourishing our understanding of the ripple and devastating effect of human displacement. The degree to which this impacts on the economic development of Nigeria no doubt, cannot be overemphasised.

UNDP has been a key international community partner on displacement since the 1980s, and has accumulated a wealth of knowledge inventories of disasters and conflict-related acute and protracted refugee and internal displacement situations, and key think pieces focused on the Organization's value proposition and core strengths (UNDP, 2014).

Recently, the issue has become a corporate priority, calling for a commensurate investment in the development of guidance and capacities on this topic.³² There is growing recognition that a development approach is critical at the outset of a crisis to prevent displacement from becoming protracted, and as part of resolving protracted displacement situations, through targeted investments in prospective return areas (UNDP, 2014).

The humanitarian and development communities widely recognize the importance of refugee and migrant response going hand in hand with supporting the communities, many of which are vulnerable themselves. Many migratory movements of the last thirty years have occurred in areas of repeat conflict or areas that are disaster-prone or feeling the effects of a rapidly changing climate, thereby increasing the risk for repeated displacement, environmental degradation, and social stress across generations. Therefore, development solutions must be designed to integrate both short and long-term needs, thereby creating solutions to migration and displacement with a net positive effect for the hosts and strengthening the resilience of the locality and those displaced

IDMC recorded 18.8 million new displacements associated with disasters and 11.8 associated with conflict and violence in 2017. Nearly 40 million people in more than 50 countries were living in internal displacement because of conflict or violence as of the end of the year. Efforts by governments, the international community and civil society to respond to the needs of internally displaced people (IDPs) have often taken the form of emergency humanitarian assistance. This is indispensable, but it does little to address the causes of displacement and prevent future crises. (IDMC, 2018).

The Boko Haram insurgency and its spill over into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger have caused the displacement of over 2.7 million people in the region. The overwhelming majority, 2.1 million, are internally displaced in Nigeria, while some 155,000 Nigerian refugees have sought asylum in

Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The refugee hosting countries also have sizeable IDP populations (Cameroon: 200,000; Chad: 110,000; and Niger: 127,208) (IDMC-IOM, 2018).

Communal conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the Middle Belt intensified in 2018 and further exacerbated the security situation in the country. At least 1,600 people were killed and another 300,000 displaced as a result of the violence. (Human Right Watch, 2019)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Poverty is usually defined as the lack of subsistence. Third World countries which Nigeria is a part, find themselves in the doldrums of self-perpetuating poverty and the situation is compounded by the high level of involuntary migration in search of greener pasture. Unfortunately the result evidentially is yet to prove to a significant degree the positive outcome traceable to development of the countries of origin of migrants. The paper therefore identified various negative effects that are associated to migration and was able to also establish that most of these migrations are involuntary. While some are poverty orchestrated others are as a result conflicts.

Many students of migration agree that these intra or transnational movements in the guise of migration are today not the most important developmental resource. No meaningful economic growth can be achieved in the face of insecurity and conflicts which are the inducing factors why people are either displaced or are migrating. Our government must as a matter urgent importance look into the security architecture of this country with a view to restructuring it in all ramifications. Until this is done Boko Haram insurgency and the new wave of herdsmen crises will continue to compound the poverty situation of Nigeria. And no doubt lead to mass exodus migration which will continue to deepen the underdevelopment of the country.

Anecdotal evidence has repeatedly highlighted the links between displacement and low levels of socioeconomic development, and the need for governments to invest in preventive solutions if they want to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. More systematic, quantitative evidence though is needed, however, to demonstrate the short and longer-term economic impacts of internal

displacement at the local, national and international level and generate the political will to address the phenomenon.

The researchers also advocate employment generation by the various levels of government. Suffice to state that when people are gainfully engaged with jobs poverty will be drastically reduced and there will be less interest on migration.

Furthermore, we also suggest better welfare packages to Nigerian professionals and improvement on security to encourage Nigerian entrepreneurs to operate and thrive this will help forestall brain drain and capital flight. In the long run encourage foreign direct investments.

Government's insensitivity to the plights of Nigerian workers should change if they are serious in curbing the high wave of involuntary migration and this must start with full implementation of all agreements reached with the different sectors of the Nigerian workers especially the academia, labour, doctors, etc.

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