

# INTERNAL MIGRATION IN NIGERIA: *A positive contribution to human development*

Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi

Although there has been increased attention given to migration by the Nigerian Government since the country's return to democracy in 1999, there has been **very little concern for internal migration**. Concerns for migration, both in governmental and academic institutions, have weighed heavily on international migration with a focus on issues such as brain drain/gain, remittances and diaspora organizations. This gap in the literature has led to a situation whereby **internal migration is seen essentially as a planning and developmental problem**.

Although **internal migration in Nigeria may have negative impacts, it is also a positive contributor to human development**.

**The average age of most internal migrants in Nigeria is between 14 and 65** (46% of internal migrants aged between 20 and 34 years old), **and internal migration involves both genders**. In addition, **internal migration in Nigeria is not dependent on education and skill**, as both the educated and uneducated, the skilled and unskilled migrate. Although the states used for this study are evenly selected to cover Northern and Southern Nigeria, internal migration in Nigeria has many, different flow patterns, and instances of movement between and within ethnic groups exist.

**Two generations of internal migrants exist in Nigeria**. The first generation includes the first movers and their dependants, who may move with them or join them later on. The second generation of internal migrants includes only those who were born in the places of destination to which their parents have migrated. **A wide range of factors lead to internal migration in Nigeria**, and the motivations and expectations of the different generations of internal migrants vary and may, sometimes, overlap.

Although this study found **rural-urban migration flows to be the most predominant, other migration flows are equally important and ongoing**. For the most part, economic factors drive internal migration across Nigeria.

Other **drivers of internal migration include educational opportunities, marriage, civil service (in-service) transfer, National Youth Service (NYSC), freedom from parents, human trafficking, among others**. As with other sources identified in this study, the civil service and NYSC offer dependable data on internal migration.

**Internal migration occurs due to a complex array of interacting economic, social, cultural, and psychosocial factors**. Some of these factors are directly related to and/or contingent upon prior migration, while others are related to the wider socioeconomic and political circumstances in the source areas, which necessitates and drives layers of migrants. These layers of migration involved first and second generation of internal migrants. For these generations of internal migrants, motivation differs and so does the internal migration impact on them. While first-generation migrants may have prior education or work experience before migration, second-generation migrants may not have. The sheer fact that dependants and spouses of first-generation migrants migrate to join their spouses, fathers or brothers also makes their cases different in terms of motivation and thus impact. For these dependants, prior education or work experience means that they are able to compare source and destination areas and therefore assess the impact of internal migration in terms of contribution to their lives.

The situation of second-generation migrants is different and more complex. Being born in the destination areas and therefore lacking any prior experience or education, they may as well be considered as native to these destination areas. While **an understanding of the impact of internal migration on human development can assist migrants, irrespective of generations**, to better utilize internal migration to their advantage, the study found that **government policies and programmes capable of harnessing internal migration's potential are lacking**. A good example of this is the indigenization laws, which prescribe that only natives of particular areas can hold political positions. It is the considered view of this study

that residency rather than indigenization should be the rule. **With emphasis on indigenization, internal migrants, as the study has found, are often placed at a disadvantage** and therefore cannot challenge the wider socioeconomic and political circumstances within which internal migration occurs. As the literature also showed, internal migration, especially in government and policy circles, is still regarded as an economic and policy planning failure rather than a contributor to human development that should be properly harnessed.

Through an analysis of findings from the existing literature, the IMS 2010, and the opinions and views expressed by a selected number of internal migrants across twelve states, this study has thus found that a broad range of causal factors exist for internal migration, factors which frequently intersect in complex ways. Indeed, several factors combine to stimulate internal migration in the cases herein discussed. **In some cases, internal migration occurs where socioeconomic progress abounds. In others, socioeconomic backwardness drives migration.** Consequently, there are lessons to be learnt. Internal migration has potential negative consequences for migrants if the circumstances necessitating migration in the first place persist. As discussed, internal migration may not always sufficiently fulfil the migrants' aims and objectives. However, policies and programmes aimed at harnessing internal migration's potential need to address the immediate factors necessitating migration in the short term, but also, fundamentally, the broader socioeconomic contexts in which migration occurs. This includes the development of policies and programmes that deliberately facilitate migration for those who, due to socioeconomic push factors, need to migrate in order to secure employment. It also includes the development of local economies and infrastructure to make migration a choice, through the establishment of local employment opportunities for communities that may be vulnerable to migration as a necessity.

Sometimes, **internal migration may occur because people are not able to access the necessary social, economic, educational and other resources in their communities of origin.** Where people are unable to achieve their goals, migration becomes a necessity and

where, even in destination areas, migrants are unable to attain their goals; further migration becomes inevitable. This may also hinder the chances of return.

**Internal migration has links with the socioeconomic and political situations of the destination areas and as well as ease of movement between source and destination areas.** There is also the need to change the perspective that internal migration is a reducer and not a contributor to development. As this study has found, **internal migration is a poverty alleviation strategy, which cuts across gender, ethnic and religious divides, and urban and rural divide and other state-specific circumstances in Nigeria.** Perceiving internal migration from any other view-point is like allowing a head of steam to pass without harnessing its horse-power. It is a sheer vacuity from which nothing is gained. As the study has shown, the flow of gains from internal migration depends on the circumstances in both the source and destination areas. In other words, the ramifications of the internal migration experience are far-reaching and the effects on migrants, source and destination areas often continue and, for the most part, foster the migration of others.

**Migration, as this study has also shown, also occurs where there is poverty, a severe shortage of viable employment and educational opportunities, or where there is uneven development.** Undoubtedly, the consequences of internal migration can be complex and far-reaching. In general, the solution lies in addressing those circumstances that made migration attractive. It is subsequently necessary to concentrate policies and programmes on finding sustainable ways to challenge wider global, local, gender and ethnic inequalities, which underpin most migratory phenomena. At the same time, **it is important to ensure safe, legal and humane migration practices in both source and destination areas.** There is also the need for up-to-date migration monitoring, evaluation and data collection.