

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE GAMBIA

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Abstract

This article examined International Migration and Economic Development in The Gambia. Since at least the emergence of the Westphalian state, migration from one country to another has been primarily regulated by the decisions of the sovereign nation regarding who is allowed into and out of their national boundaries. Migration therefore has become an important economic activity that has lifted the lives of many migrants, though with some hiccups in the country of their migration. The Gambia has experienced a high rate of international migration to developed European and American countries, with some accruing economic benefits. The study employed qualitative approach using content analysis of secondary sources to

meet the study objectives. It has been discovered that economic reasons more than any other reasons stand topmost in precipitating international migrations in The Gambia and the strength of the push-pull factors always emanate from their filial country. The author submits that in order to stem and mitigate the spate of migration in The Gambia, the government of the day in the country should create meaningful and rewarding job opportunities for the youths and employable adults.

Key words: Migration, The Gambia, International, Development, Remittances

Introduction

International migration is defined by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as “the movement of persons who leave their country of origin or the country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily in another country” (International Organization for Migration 2005). Since at least the emergence of the Westphalian state, migration from one country to another has been primarily regulated by the decisions of the sovereign nation regarding who is allowed into and out of their national boundaries. The principle of Westphalian state system stipulates that a system of states or international society comprising sovereign state entities possess the monopoly of force within their mutually-recognized territories. The Global Commission on International Migration highlighted the fact that “controlling who enters and remains on their territory is an integral part of the sovereignty of states” (Global Commission on International Migration 2005, 66).

Migration is a major aspect of the nature of humans and it is also as old as mankind itself. There is a significant correlation between poverty and migration. The Gambia is relatively a poor country with no known viable natural resources to explore and harness. Most times the few available resources are not being fully explored. This is

one of what could be several factors pushing many Gambians to extreme poverty. As poverty is biting harder and the population is increasing, the people seek for various strategies to survive. One of such strategies, pursued mainly by the country's youth population, is migration, an age-old strategy for human survival. Migration and its processes are usually heterogeneous and should be addressed uniquely (Bell et al., 2010).

International migration has been a veritable instrument of national economic development in most African countries for both home and receiving states. It has been tellingly so, as it facilitates migrants' remittances which have surpassed both Foreign Direct Investment and Net Official Development Assistance inflows (World Bank Report, 2020), and is one of the major inflows of foreign earnings to The Gambia, which helps to reduce poverty of households and makes a positive impact on the economy. Migration also delivers major economic benefits to receiving countries. While migrants spend most of their wages in their host countries – boosting demand there, they also tend to send money to support families back home. Such remittances, which in some instances have been known to exceed official development assistance, could make a significant contribution to the national economy. Thus, international migration all over the world may be very important for the national economies of both countries. The patterns of cross-border migration (international migration) change the size, structure and efficiency of labour markets, affect the demographic, social and political situations, as well as the culture of receiving countries (Koczan, 2021).

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In The Gambia, many factors are responsible for migration overseas. The Gambia is a small, poorly developed economy, with a very narrow economic base. The external sector is heavily dependent on re-exports, tourism, and remittances from overseas. Import and export procedures are relatively simple and efficient compared with many other developing countries. Discussions surrounding migration deem it everything, ranging from a human rights issue to that of an inaccessible privilege, and is often labelled a 'crisis' and a catalyst for political turmoil. But even as an issue that is so hotly debated, few understand its main drivers. However, the push and pull of migration have been aptly captured as a journey of escaping from dire socioeconomic conditions, hardships, conflicts, and persecution, to seeking a better life, employment, studies, economic reasons – remittances etc. Generally, push factors “push” people away from their homes and include things like war, while pull factors “pull” people to a new home to seek for better opportunities (greener pastures). The reasons people migrate are commonly economic, political, cultural, or environmental (IOM, 2022).

Despite the obvious trappings and attractions of international immigration, The Gambian diaspora is constrained by a lot of challenges. Some of these challenges could be summed up as difficulty in speaking and learning native languages for many of them arriving in countries where English is not spoken or who did not speak it in The Gambia, securing jobs and accommodation, accessing services, transportation, acclimatization, cultural barriers, etc. While most refugees and immigrants are happy to take whatever job that is available when they first enter the country, finding a good job, and slowly moving up the ladder, is incredibly difficult. Additionally, refugees and immigrants are easy victims of discrimination and exploitation in the workplace. Some employers recognize the sense of urgency and desperation among these groups to keep their jobs, so they will have them take the less desirable and even dangerous roles in some cases.

It is instructive to note that economic hardship has been a primary driver of emigration from The Gambia, located in West Africa and the smallest country on the mainland African continent. Despite having a decade-old, extensive diaspora mainly in Spain, the United States, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo (DR), the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, the rest of the Scandinavian countries and the Middle East, the Gambian government has only very recently begun to reach out to its citizens abroad (Kebbeh, 2013). Against this background, this study seeks to explore international migration and

economic development in The Gambia, the reasons for international migration and its impact on Gambia's economic development. The study was conducted using mainly secondary sources by reviewing relevant migration literature to analyse the content of the work. Secondary sources are relevant and germane in this work because they help explain new or different positions and ideas about primary sources. More so, secondary sources provide a variety of expert perspectives and insights. This research argues that economic reasons stand topmost in precipitating international migrations in The Gambia. The strength of the push-pull factors always emanates from their home country.

Theoretical Framework

International migration as a concept in human activity dates back to human origin. According to the United Nations Population Division, there are nearly one hundred and ninety-one million (191m) migrants (persons living outside their countries of birth) in the world. Wickramasekara (2008) contends that these are combinations of people who move to get jobs in other regions and are later joined by their families, refugees, and possibly asylum seekers. The study of the concept of migration is multidimensional and can be undertaken according to Li et al (1995) from variable sources and angles. However, there are empirical studies to suggest their mutual exclusiveness (Massey et al 1993). These interpretations are suggestive of common agenda in the theories of migration which are underlined by the fact that they share similar sentiments of intentions. However, one is bound to accept the fact that varying motives do occur within intentions to migrate. De Hass (2010) argues that the plethora of scholastic differences does not suggest that regularity or patterns could not be inferred in migration theories.

In order to interrogate the subject under investigation, some theories have been postulated to explain the reasons for human migration. One of these theories is the Neo-Classical economic theory of migration, which posits that migration takes place because of differences in labour wages paid in different places across the globe. It stipulates that these differences in wage payments are usually connected to supply and demand of labour in different geographical areas. In actual fact, migration has remained the core research issue in classical anthropological discourses. In spite of their criticism, these studies provided extremely rich and complex picture of the relationship between migration and changes in traditional societies. A cursory look at the Neo-Classical theories and the Structural theories, Bakewell (2007) shows that for Neo-Classical theorists,

the prime agent in migration is the migrant who takes decision to migrate on utility grounds, whereas the structural theorists believe that the migrant is responding to the social structure in which he/she finds himself/herself. It is concluded that the previous notion that migration is not profitable is changing, and currently, there is the hunt to achieve a win-win-win situation in which the nations of origin, nations of destination and the person migrating benefit from the migration process. Therefore, the goal of any migration study should be geared towards helping to achieve this win-win-win scenario (Bakewell, 2007).

Reasons for International Migrations in The Gambia

Most often than not, international migration, which is the movement of people across national borders, is a regular occurrence and a carefully planned project. This is because whether the migration is legal or illegal, it requires the assemblage of some traveling documents that would identify the migrant in the course of the journey. Many push and pull factors have been adduced for migration of people overseas or across their national borders in The Gambia. These migrants are sometimes confronted with severe problems in their filial homes, obviously due to the actions and inactions of their home government. However, those factors that force people to risk their lives are persistent and recurring.

Many reasons have been adduced why many Gambians decide to move from their place of abode (origin) to another environment (point of destination). Individuals usually move away from places of lack to places that are presumed to have opportunities or where there are greener pastures. Gambia, being a relatively poor country with no known tangible natural resources to harness, has occasioned a sizable number of their youthful age to emigrate to other countries. It is widely believed in the country that migration does not only transform the lives of the migrants but also the fallouts (largesse) are also extended to the immediate and extended families. Therefore, the migration of human beings involves movement of people covering long distances from their place of residence to another place where they intend to live comfortably.

The lack of access to employment opportunities among Gambian youth is widely cited as a major contributing factor to irregular migration. According to the 2018 Gambia Labour Force Survey, 95 per cent of Gambian irregular migrants surveyed cited "lack of work" as their primary reason for migrating. Most employable and workable Gambians cannot have access to good jobs. However, in response to this, the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

launched a vocational training programme aimed at equipping Gambian youth with the skills to engage in entrepreneurial ventures or seek employment. However, a large number of Gambian youths have not benefited from this largesse. The Gambian government's inability to maintain economic stability – including rectifying high unemployment especially among youth – has resulted in increased emigration among all segments of the population, in particular nurses and doctors. The main estimates of the global Gambian diaspora population are provided by three main sources. UN DESA estimated 118,485 in 2019, of which 71,987 or 61% are in Europe. A Gambian economist (Kebbeh, 2019) puts the number at 140,000. The Government of The Gambia stated in its National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21) that the diaspora population can be as high as 200,000, taking into account undocumented irregular migrants and the multigenerational diaspora (Gambia National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21).

Issues and or events on a country's political trajectory and development can constrain a person to emigrate to another country. Many Gambians emigrated to other countries by compulsion; either as economic or political migrants, especially during the country's Second Republic under president Yahya Jammeh, whose government was accused by his critics and political enemies of carrying out extra judicial killings, human rights violations and incarcerations. The current estimate is that there are about 140,000 Gambian migrants living in different parts of the world (Kebbeh, 2017). An estimated 281 million people, approximately 3.6% of the world's population, currently live outside their countries of origin, many of whose migration is characterized by varying degrees of compulsion (OHCHR, 2020). Notwithstanding that many Gambian migrants choose to leave their country of origin each year due mainly to economic reasons, many foreigners, especially from the West African subregion forced by unemployment and worsening economic conditions, continue to choose to leave their countries of origin and migrate to The Gambia and eventually settle there. Globally, an increasing number of migrants are forced to leave their homes for a complex combination of reasons such as political persecution and highhandedness of their leaders.

Whereas migration is a beneficial and an empowering experience for some Gambians, it is increasingly clear that most Gambians also emigrate due to economic, health and safety concerns. Now that most nations are grappling and saddled with insecurity within the sub-region, some Gambians travel for national security and political stability in destination countries.

Human rights or insecurity challenges force people to migrate. They migrate because they face problems in their home countries, especially when a dictator or an incompetent leader is in the saddle of leadership and rules with an iron fist or with no idea about how to turn things around. It is worthy to note that some Gambians emigrated to the Republic of Senegal for safety and health apprehensions. In fact, Senegal was regarded as a safe haven for Gambian political asylum seekers and alleged victims of political conscience during the second republic. However, a large number of Senegalese of all ages and works of life have continued to migrate to and finally settle in The Gambia due mainly to economic reasons. This development is not showing any sign of reverse.

Economic downturn is a major factor in many assignment and mobility decisions by some Gambians. The country, being a relatively poor country, grapple with lean resources to manage the affairs of the state. Most Gambians travel to alleviate the sufferings of their immediate and extended families. Migration has historically been a source of opportunities for people to improve their lives and those of their families. Today, the large differences in income between places – particularly countries – continue to motivate individuals to escape poverty through migration. The potential advantages of migration for the source countries are numerous. Through remittances, migration provides a means of improving income and smoothing consumption. It enables households to overcome the lack of credit and cushion the risks involved in engaging in more productive activities. Migration can also act as a coping strategy in times of distress. Remittances can be spent on investments, such as housing and schooling, and directly on household consumption.

The success story of Gambians who had emigrated mostly to Europe and the United States is always a motivation and catalyst for migration. There is a marked link between migration and poverty. Remittances and cars shipped from overseas back home (Gambia) serve as a motivation. When 'Semesters' (referring to Gambian returnees from overseas) visit their home country, the kind of ostentatious and flamboyant life styles they exhibit inspire more Gambians to emigrate. It is pertinent to point out that most Gambians who have emigrated to Europe and America have comparatively and appreciably done well. In particular, social media attract people out of their countries of origin by raising awareness of living conditions in the affluent world, albeit often grossly exaggerated, with the diaspora link also acting as an attractor (Castelli, 2018). War, poverty and persecution prompt people to become refugees,

asylum seekers and labour migrants. In most emigrant-producing countries, jobs are scarce or salaries are too low, obliging people to seek opportunities elsewhere. Among the 'macro-factors', the political, demographic, socio-economic and environmental situations are major contributors to migration. These are the main drivers of forced migration, either international or internal, and largely out of individuals' control (Castelli, 2018).

Migration is a well-entrenched tradition in West Africa, and is mainly shaped by kinship and religious networks, operating beyond the boundaries of national borders. Compounding factors, such as demography, security, and livelihood challenges also explain migration flows. People are also on the move in recent years because of challenges posed by Muslim extremist groups in Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. However, strong evidence is emerging that climate changes are compounding these trends. Above all, the idea to migrate to other countries is often borne out of personal willingness and decision. All the above drivers of migration act, with different strength in different places, to build the general frame at the macro-level of each specific geographical, economic and political situation. However, the influence of the ethnic group, the family support – both economic and societal – and the religious belief is of the utmost importance for a specific individual to make the final choice to migrate or to stay. The aspiration and desire to migrate is a crucial key factor that interacts with other external drivers of migration to build the final decision to actually migrate (Carling, 2017).

The search for 'precious stone' within the African continent is one of the major reasons while some Gambians, especially the Serahule, known as Soninkes, ethnic groups migrate to Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo DR, Nigeria, Ghana, Angola etc. The Serahule are known to be international business people trading in various commodities, including precious stones. Precious Stones are precious indeed and attract high financial value. The search for fabled Precious Stones within the African continent has continued to urge or motivate Gambians to travel out of their country.

The Impact of International Migration on the Economic Development of The Gambia

Migration is a veritable social and economic life transformation across many countries. It has important positive impacts on the Gambian society. Though, these effects can be controversial and debatable. The economic impact of migration is no exception. Benefit or burden, what is reality here is that migration impacts can be interrogated from many sides – the labour market, the

public purse, remittances, social and economic growth.

International migration in The Gambia has far-reaching effects on the country, so much so that the living standards of most Gambians have considerably and significantly improved. Overseas remittances of an estimated 140, 000 Gambians living abroad account for over 60 per cent of the country's GDP. Interim figures show that 2022 diaspora remittances to The Gambia stand at seven hundred and twelve million, four hundred and fifty thousand (712,450,000) US dollars, which amounts to 60% of the country's GDP (Sowe, 2023). Even though this represented a contraction of 8% relative to the previous year, it is significant. As Dr. Jallow, the First Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of The Gambia outlined, the contraction is partly due to increased utilization of informal sectors or channels to send money, because of Covid restrictions globally or higher transfer charges by formal channels. As a result, some of the remittances were not captured in the formal system in the Gambian official statistics,

The 2022 official diaspora remittances decreased compared to the year 2021, which increased to an unprecedented level of \$773.7 million, from \$589.81 million in 2020, recording an increase of 31.3%. The 2021 remittance volume was equivalent to D40.65 billion, which represented 62.9% of the country's annual GDP. In 2018, total remittance represented \$277 million, with 18% growth in 2019 which was \$328 million, or 31% of the GDP (Sowe, 2023). Remittances help to lift recipients out of poverty, increase and diversify household incomes, provide an insurance against risk, enable family members to benefit from educational and training opportunities, and provide a source of capital for the establishment of small businesses. It enables close family members and spiritual leaders to embark on the holy journey to perform pilgrimage to the Holy Lands in Makkah Al-Mukarramah and Madinah Al-Munawwarah. (Senghore, 2018). In short, remittances now play an essential role in sustaining The Gambia's national and local economies. Remittances provide an important source of foreign exchange to the country, boost the capacity of the financial sector and help to attract subsequent investments. Remittances evidently provide the most direct and immediate benefits to the people who receive them, many of whom, the World Bank has established, are amongst the poorest members of society (Maimbo & Ratha, 2005). Recognition of the positive impacts of remittances on the economies of developing countries is important and must be promoted. In this context, the governments of sending countries must adopt sound exchange rate, money transfer, monetary and economic policies, and facilitate the

provision of banking facilities that enable the safe and timely transfer of migrants' funds. They should also promote the conditions necessary to increase domestic savings and channel them into productive investment.

Migration can have positive and negative impacts on both host and originating countries. It can lead to increased cultural diversity in a host country. Culture is the shared beliefs, values and traditions of a demographic group. This also extends to food, music, religion, art, dress and language. There are many different cultures across the world, and through migration, most prominently, international migration, these cultures can be shared and brought to new places. Migration can increase the cultural diversity of a host country, as an introduction of a new culture can bring a whole new market of products and services that were not available in the host country prior to the arrival of migrants. Migration in this sense, can have very positive impacts on the host nation. However, there can be negative impacts for the migrants themselves. For example, there can be a significant loss of cultural norms, as they may be entering a host country that has a completely different way of societal living from their country of origin. Most Gambian immigrants have been enculturated in their host countries by adopting very different European/Asian/American cultures. International migration creates spaces for discrimination and segregation. Gambian migrants, just like other African migrants, face covertly and overtly racial discrimination that often leads to physical assault and, sometimes, even death. Gambians with different ethnicity, religious practice, or cultural characteristics are often discriminated against by their host nations. They also experience language barriers and problems of adaptability and acclimatization to the temperate weather.

Brain drains, that is, the emigration of highly skilled and highly productive individuals, is the primary source of concern for The Gambia. In fact, brain drain has largely become an issue of concern in the country, with the share of highly skilled workers that have left the country reaching 40 percent in some small low-income countries (Artuç et al., 2015), and in general with the highly educated being two to three times more likely to migrate than the less educated (Grogger and Hanson, 2011). Brain drains affect the originating countries in many ways. On the most obvious level, it lowers the human capital of the country and produces a shortage of high skilled labour, thereby reducing productivity. Migration in The Gambia has also resulted in the loss of the most skilled intelligentsia and best educated human resources of the country. In other words, brain drain deprives The Gambian state of revenue and prevents it

from gaining an early return on the investment it had made in the education and training of those Gambians that emigrated. Most seriously, since most of the migrants are professionals in sectors such as health and education, migration has adversely affected the supply and quality of essential services in the country.

Some Gambians who return to the country after their overseas education and skill training have contributed immensely to the overall development of Gambia's socio-political and economic sector. Furthermore, new skills and education may be acquired at the place of destination and transferred back to the place of origin. Education remains one of the main driving forces for Gambian migrants. Regaining them can also bring valuable management experience, entrepreneurial skills and access to global networks. Acquiring knowledge and skills support development. Thus, education is a significant factor that complements and drives development at every level of the Gambia. Education is one of the key drivers for internal migration in the Gambia. To a lesser extent, young Gambians migrate to the United Kingdom and the United States for their higher education. Migration for education contributes to the intellectual development of migrants, but also to the economic and social development of their environment through increased human capital. In the case of an international migration, the Gambia will notably gain at the return of the migrant. Additionally, as mentioned above, the emigration of educated Gambians might incentivize more youth to study, resulting in a more qualified workforce. Even at personal development level, education is important for overall development from the way one thinks to the way s/he speaks and present him/herself. Education becomes a catalyst in a person's personality development. It introduces a person to different perspectives and thus, helps in providing a clear and broad vision to an individual. It equips one with a more solution-oriented approach and better understanding and analysing skills. With quality education and relevant skills, one can never be the same for the rest of his/ her life.

As a consequence of international migration, many Gambian migrants experience a large increase in income when they move to richer economies. Clemens, Montenegro, and Pritchett (2019) estimate the real (purchasing power parity, PPP) wage gaps between immigrants in the United States and their observably equivalent national counterparts in 42 home labour markets in developing countries. They calculate the average lower bound on this wage ratio (weighted by the working-age (15-49) population of the home countries) to be 5.7. This ratio exceeds 16 for some developing

countries in the sample. There is, therefore, a very large potential monetary gain from migration. The younger the migrant is, the larger the gains from migration. This is because younger migrants have a longer lifetime ahead of them to benefit from the extra income; hence the present discounted gains from migration are higher (IMF, 2020 WEO). Other factors include the level of education and skills that are in high demand in the destination countries. These factors drive the selection of people who migrate, with younger, more educated, and more skilled individuals being among those with a higher probability of emigration. Large potential monetary gains have developed an industry around migration, with recruiting firms and brokers engaging in fraudulent and abusive practices. Some unsuspecting Gambians have become victims of unscrupulous agents who extort money from them in a bid to help them pass through the 'Back Way', as is fondly called in The Gambia.

The impact of migration on health is complex on the migrant himself/herself. Migrating to a more developed country should lead to improved health through an increased access to health care and better life conditions. On the other hand, migration, especially when it is irregular, can also endanger the migrant's health through increased sanitary risks (dangerous travel conditions, violence, prostitution, living irregularly). At the community level, migration can have a positive impact when returnees spread good health practices, when the diaspora builds hospitals or clinics, when migrants send remittances to pay for health care or when they invite relatives to receive health care abroad. Nonetheless, the loss of health-care professionals through migration can challenge the overall health-care system. The loss of health-care professionals through migration has posed a challenge to the overall health-care system in The Gambia. The proportion of nurses in the Gambia is 3.2/10,000 population which is below the WHO's minimum threshold of 23 doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population (Sisawo, 2017). Brain drains could contribute to this low ratio: data from 2014 suggest that 54 per cent of physicians and 66 per cent of nurses born in the Gambia may be working abroad. Of note, some academic papers suggest that the lack of health professionals in developing countries is not mainly due to brain drain, but results from other factors such as a weak management of health staff and unequal geographical distribution of health care in the country (Clemens and Pettersson, 2006).

Traditionally, migration in West Africa is considered as a largely male phenomenon, with women mostly following men. However, the region recently experienced an increased number of women moving to fulfil their own

economic needs, which can be partly explained by the increased demand in richer countries for home care services, nursing and other professions traditionally occupied by women. Today, 41 per cent of Gambian emigrants, and 53 per cent of non-Gambians above 15 living in the Gambia, are women. Still, the first reason for the internal mobility of women in the Gambia remains marriage, not work (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The migration of men who serve as heads of households can also give women the opportunity to enter the domestic labour market out of economic necessity. As a result, women take on more responsibility as the new head of household, accessing roles from which they might have been previously excluded (Adepoju, 2004). Over all, if irregular migration, forced displacements or trafficking in persons can endanger the life of migrants, most voluntary and legal migration present a high development potential for the individual by offering him or her new professional, educational and personal opportunities. Beyond the potentially positive impact that migration can have on the individual choosing to migrate, the impact of migration on communities of origin and host communities is complex as well (Gambia Country Profile, 2017).

The most prominent impacts of emigration are remittances and “brain drain”, each supposedly having opposite effects on the economic growth of the country of origin (The Gambia). The effects of these phenomena are however not clear-cut: remittances are not fully channelled to promote inclusive growth, and the emigration of highly educated Gambians can have positive effects. Migration also interfaces with several aspects of social development, notably in terms of education and health, as already mentioned above. They finally impact the environment and gender dynamics. One of the noticeable challenges of some Gambians once in their destination country is that the migrants have to undergo a difficult and often conflicting integration process in the host community. From the health standpoint, newly arrived migrants are mostly healthy (healthy migrant effect), but they may harbour latent infections that need appropriate screening policies. Cultural barriers may sometimes hamper the relation between the migrant patient and the health care provider. The acquisition of western lifestyles is leading to an increase of non-communicable chronic diseases that require attention.

While migration is a positive and empowering experience for many, it is increasingly clear that a lack of human rights-based migration governance at the global and national levels is leading to the routine violation of migrants' rights in transit, at international borders, and in

the countries they migrate to. While Gambian migrants are not inherently vulnerable, they can be vulnerable to human rights violations. Migrants in an irregular situation tend to be disproportionately vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and marginalization, often living and working in the shadows, afraid to complain, and denied their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights violations against migrants can include a denial of civil and political rights such as arbitrary detention, torture, or a lack of due process, as well as economic, social and cultural rights such as the rights to health, housing or education. The denial of migrants' rights is often closely linked to discriminatory laws, practices and to deep-seated attitudes of prejudice or xenophobia (OHCHR, 2022). It should be noted that migrants who leave their countries in search of work are currently not adequately protected by international law. This is a cause for concern as migrants deserve a better treatment in their various places of residence, whether they are illegal or legal migrants.

Young Gambian men and women risk everything, including their lives, to take on the perilous trip across dozens of borders and the treacherous waves of the Mediterranean Sea in search of a better life in the North. Some die along the way, some are turned back and some who finished the journey realize that life may not be easier across the frontier. But with few jobs and dim prospects at home, millions of youths and young adults in The Gambia and elsewhere around the continent still choose to migrate, often clandestinely. Ebrima Drammeh, a Gambian Migrant Rights Activist and member of the Migrant Rescue Watch Association (MRWA) has claimed that his organization has recorded names of ninety-five (95) Gambian Migrants who died in different countries through the 'Backway' journey to Europe in 2022 (Manneh, 2023). Most Gambians who had emigrated outside the shores of their country experience all manner of human rights abuse that are considered inhuman and degrading treatment. Both Gambian legal and illegal immigrants suffer from persistent financial, social and psychological hardships at the hands of their fellow humans obliged by international law to protect them. Human rights violations against migrants can include a denial of civil and political rights such as arbitrary detention, torture, or a lack of due process, as well as economic, social and cultural rights such as the rights to health, housing or education, decent pay, and similar remunerations (OHCHR, 2022). They are therefore in dire need of international protection and must be protected under all circumstances.

Migration can be and is definitely a potential source of abuse and disregard for human rights and freedom of

vulnerable groups such as immigrants and minorities in instances or cases where those rights would seem to be in conflict with the political and development agenda of a given polity, or with the selfish interest of an employer. Generally speaking, all people of colour are affected by the racist attitudes of their host country(ies) of Europe and America, and some parts of Asia. Among the most important rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration are the right of the human person to respect and protect his/her dignity and worth as a human being, the right to life, liberty and security of person, the right to the fundamental freedoms of expression, movement, assembly, association and freedom of belief, the right to privacy, the right to education, the right to health, the right to establish a family, the right to shelter and to nationality or to identify with a community, and a couple of other rights. However, this does not contradict the fact that states and government systems across the world are under international obligation and also, in some instances, duty bound by their respective domestic constitutions to ensure that they exercise their rights and privileges and carry out their duties within the limits of international law, and most especially international human rights law. No state or government can under any circumstances be justified to undermine or abuse the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals found in their territories, citizens and non-citizens alike, and regardless of the manner of entry/exit, under the pretext of regulating its domestic affairs (Article 30 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948).

It is therefore imperative and pertinent for states and government systems to recognize and abide by the rules and principles of international law that protect the rights and freedoms of refugees, immigrants and other vulnerable groups, which include the right to life, liberty and security of person as well as the right to protection and entitlement to the benefit of the principle of *non-refoulement*, which directly addresses the situation of refugees and immigrants. This legal protection guaranteed by international law to the rights and freedoms of refugees including immigrants is irrespective of status, race, culture, nationality, creed, manner of entry into a country's territory or any other consideration.

Recommendations

Based on the issues and challenges of International Migration in The Gambia, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- That the Gambian Government (G.G.) working closely with the UN agencies, international NGOs concerned with youth empowerment and development and international development

partners should create the enabling environment to convince the youths to stay at home in order to stem the scourge of migration.

- A focus on creation of training and employment opportunities for young people in The Gambia could be an effective way of keeping them at home.
- Basic infrastructure such as electricity, pipe-borne water, schools, adequate health care services and income earning facilities should be installed in all the nooks and crannies of The Gambia to reduce the instances of rural-urban migration and minimize the risk of attempting to go the 'back way'.
- Strengthen protection mechanisms that protect the human rights of all migrants living in various places out of the country, particularly those most vulnerable, irrespective of their migration status and economic conditions.
- Any action that would eradicate or alleviate poverty will go a long way in containing both legal and illegal migration.
- The government of The Gambia joining hands with other African countries and global partners must do everything humanly possible to break the smuggler networks that currently grossly exploit young people.
- Rehabilitation of returning Gambian migrants who have gone through the harrowing ordeal of trying to cross the Sahara and Mediterranean only to be held in detention centres and mistreated is strongly recommended.
- Increased resource allocation by governments to ministries supporting youth development and empowerment and gender equity is strongly recommended, as the youths make up the largest constituent in The Gambia's population, and therefore the most affected.

Conclusion

International migration is an important channel of material improvement for individuals and their offspring. The movement of people across country borders, especially from less developed to richer countries, has a substantial impact in several dimensions. First, it affects the migrants themselves by allowing them to achieve higher income as a result of their higher productivity in the destination country. It also increases the expected income for their offspring. Second, it affects the destination country through the impact it makes on labour markets, productivity, innovation, demographic structure, fiscal balance, and criminality. Third, it can have a significant impact on the countries of origin. It may lead to loss of human capital, but it also creates a flow of remittances and increases international

connections in the form of trade. However, Gambian migrants face a lot of challenges such as inability to regularize their stay, inability to get documented jobs as only menial jobs are available for them, and persistent covert racial discrimination and abuse of their human rights.

Migration flow is now a structural phenomenon that is likely to continue in the next decades in The Gambia. While many migrants from low-income countries aim to reach more affluent areas of the world, it is to be appreciated that a similar, or even bigger, mass of people migrates to neighbouring low-income countries in the same geographical area. In fact, The Gambia is also hosting a large number of migrants of this category from the neighbouring countries of the West African sub-system. It has been proven in this study that many Gambians migrate overseas for so many reasons. Some move in search of work or economic opportunities, to join family, or to study. Others move to escape conflict, political persecution, or human rights violations. Still, others move in response to the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters, or other environmental factors. It has also been briefly recognized in this study that The Gambia is a receiving country and as such, hosting a large number of migrants from the sub-region such as Nigerians, Sierra-Leonians, Ghanaians, Liberians, Guinea Conakry and Guinea Bissau.

The causes for migration in the country can be classified as “economic migration, social migration, political migration, and environmental migration”, and the factors for migration can be summed up or called summation of various “Push (reason to leave The Gambia)” and “Pull (reasons to move to the area)” factors. However, it is submitted in this work that economic factors are uppermost as the trigger of international migration in The Gambia. It is further posited here that if the Gambian Government (GG) would adequately create employment opportunities and provide the enabling environment for business and other economic-related activities to thrive at home, the high spate of migration will astronomically reduce.

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