

The complexity of the drivers of rural migration in SSA makes it impossible to predict how many people will migrate, why, who they will be, or where they will go. Yet, it is possible to explore how this complex system of interdependent forces could evolve, and to engage in proactive decisions and actions. SSA rural migrants are unlikely to be in a favorable position to migrate out of Africa. This poses a great challenge for the future prosperity of the continent: migration by necessity or by choice?

LONG-TERM, CLIMATE-RELATED MIGRATION PATTERNS

Climatic conditions are acknowledged as constituting a major driver of rural outmigration from SSA, because agriculture is a very weather-sensitive activity and will remain a crucial source of livelihood support and employment. A long-term (50 years and beyond) deleterious effect of climate change arises from temperature increase. Anticipated effects of climate change could trigger different and simultaneous patterns of migration. The first pattern is moving towards the poles. In Africa, it would mean more migration towards South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. The second pattern, moving towards the coasts, would mean migration towards coastal Western and Eastern Africa and the southern coast. And the third pattern, moving towards cooler central areas, would concern the plateaus and highlands of the Great Lakes region, Ethiopia and Southern Africa. These patterns will interact as migration towards already crowded coastal areas or areas affected by rising sea level could trigger a backflow towards central areas. These large movements of population would originate from rural areas where rises in temperature would adversely affect natural resources and the suitability of the natural environment for agriculture. They will be colliding also with the effect of other trends, like decreasing rainfall in Southern Africa. In the nearer future (10 to 20 years), climate variability, particularly the frequency and intensity of hazards such as droughts and floods, will play a more important role regarding how climate might affect migration.

MIGRATING WITHIN AFRICA UNDER DIFFERENT WORLD ORDERS

Rural migrants have three potential destinations: rural or urban areas in the same or another African country, or countries overseas. From a future-oriented perspective, the third one will be problematic as the SSA rural population would compete with other internationally migrating populations. Three typical world orders, commonly found in futures studies, can be used to describe this situation. One called “Continued growth” is the pursuit of current trends with economic growth being the driver of

development and the only pathway; one called “Collapse” displays economic, environmental, resource, moral, or ideological breakdowns, leading to a significantly lower level of wellbeing and growing tensions; and one called “Discipline” refocuses the economy and society on attaining fair distribution of wealth and cooperation. None of these scenarios provides a favorable context for international migration overseas from rural SSA, although this does not mean that attempts to migrate from there will stop. The “Continued growth” scenario would favor international migration of highly educated and skilled migrants who are valued for their manufacturing and service sector skills, which are not those possessed by rural people. Migration policies in destination countries will also deter rural migrants from SSA. In the “Collapse” scenario, the flows of migrants from Asia will outnumber SSA rural migrants. A “Collapse” scenario world is also unlikely to welcome large numbers of migrants. In the “Discipline” scenario, the divide between rural and urban, and developing and developed, areas is decreasing. The push-and-pull system would disappear and rural out-migration from SSA would be limited, based on individual choices and aspirations.

The bulk of rural migration will thus take place within Africa and could affect existing national boundaries. Its intensity and direction will be triggered, maintained and oriented by the interplay of convergent and divergent economic, political, social, environmental and technological factors. Climate change will affect water availability, soil quality and access to energy. The capacity of local farming systems for coping with climatic hazards and for providing employment, especially to the growing number of youth entering the labour market, increasing income and improving the use of natural resources is crucial. Rural populations that depend on ecosystems under growing stress, without palliative technological perspectives, will be under pressure to move out. Youth will represent the largest share because of their numbers, because their livelihoods need to be fostered – through inheritance or acquisition of production factors – and because they aspire to attain lifestyles that they cannot find locally. Local food insecurity, political instability, conflict and violence would combine with a socioeconomic environment that would encourage

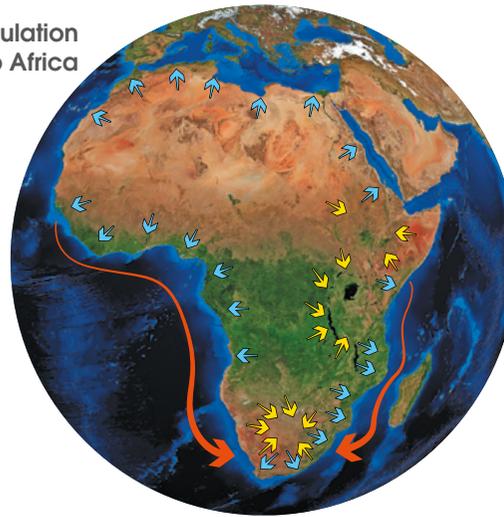
migration through rural and urban income per capita divides, failing local job markets for young people, or social constraints for youth and women. Ultimately, individual capabilities will determine who, and how many, among rural people will migrate. Existing intra-Africa social networks and diaspora, linguistic or cultural bonds will play a growing role regarding potential destinations for these migrants.

CHOICE OR NECESSITY? A PRO-ACTIVE APPROACH TO MIGRATION

A complex geography of migration in SSA is thus emerging. Crucial variables include the size of the rural population, the location and occurrence of extreme weather events (droughts and floods) and slow-onsets, the level of poverty and food insecurity, access to decent job opportunities, the quality of governance, and the attractiveness of human habitats. Rural migrants will go to African rural or urban “safe havens” that provide peace, stability, decent lives and livelihoods. It is impossible to predict where exactly these places will be found, but we can anticipate what could happen and act in consequence. There is a risk of a massive convergence of migration flows towards a limited number of “safe havens”. Once their maximum absorption capacity is exceeded, their social receptivity to migrants will fade, leading to conflicts that will threaten their existence, turning them into hostile places. More migrants would be forced to move and look for other options, returning to their places of origin or moving to less-populated areas with possibly limited opportunities and harsher natural conditions.

The futures of rural migration in SSA are shaped by combined trends and disruptions, which can be pro-actively managed to orient the future shape of human settlements. Options include a concerted approach to intra-African migration at national and regional levels facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration channels, the development of sustainable large cities, a stronger investment in intermediary cities, and the development of smaller rural habitats with provision of quality services. These options are complementary and they contribute to a more balanced approach of territorial development. The decision of a rural person to migrate should not be dictated by survival or search for a decent life, but inspired by an aspiration for new experiences. For that to happen the first step is a strong commitment in investing in agriculture and rural development and to institute territorial development strategies in order to multiply «safe havens» that offer an attractive life. SSA rural migrants would then migrate by choice, and not by necessity. This future has still to be created through political vision and inter-African cooperation.

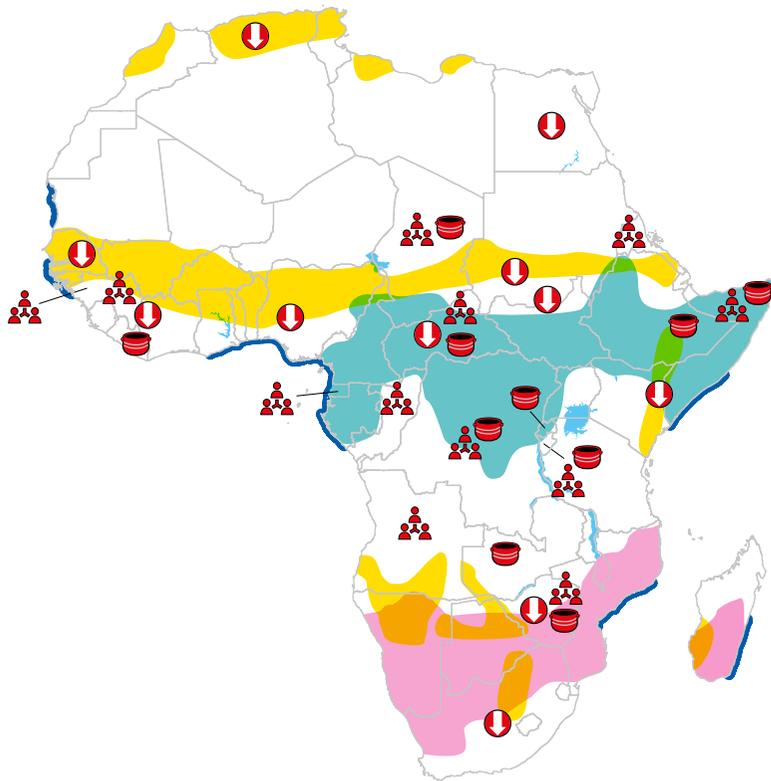
Fig.12.1: Global anticipated movements of population due to temperature increase applied to Africa



Types of movements

- To the coasts
- To elevated areas
- Toward the poles

Fig.12.2: Anticipated geography of migration drivers



Governance and food deficit

- Governance index < 45
- Governance index > 60
- Food deficit index > 100
- Food deficit index < 10

Climate change anticipated effects

- Less precipitation
- More precipitation
- Risk of desertification
- Sea level rise threatening cities
- Negative agricultural changes

Cities in 2030 (Million inhabitants)

- 1
- 2
- 5
- 7
- 10

Estimated population density in 2030

- Very low
- Very high

Anticipated orientation of rural migration within SSA

Fig.12.3: Anticipated geography of migration destinations

