



The push factors and Africans migration to the west: the Nigerian experience

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 15 October 2014;

Received in revised form:

10 December 2014;

Accepted: 23 December 2014;

Keywords

Economies,
Mono-export,
Asylum.

ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s, African economies especially those from the least developed and developing countries were prostrate owing to dwindling fortunes in the international market, and in the process industries closed shop, prices of commodities in international market fell, with much impact on mono-export countries such as Nigeria. The effect was job cuts that led to increased poverty and worsening living conditions of the people. Children were withdrawn from schools, health conditions of people traumatized and the economies plunged into doldrums. African nations extended their 'begging' bags to the International Monetary Fund IMF and the World Bank not minding their harsh and stringent conditionalities. Life became unbearable and prompted many people to seek for an improved standard of living outside Africa. In the process these immigrants entered Europe and America etc legally and illegally and sought for asylum in the host nations. The trend is still on today. The paper discovered that people migrated because of worsening human development record as a result of unemployment, poor education, poor functional democracy, lack of access to functional medical facilities, insecurity of lives and property among others. The paper concludes that governments should muster the necessary political will and begin to address the problems – create job opportunities, improve and fund education; put a functional democracy where the rule of law prevails; and above all, provide adequate security for the people and property. The paper used historical analysis as its methodology.

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Introduction

Nigeria and indeed African economies suffered a heavy set back in the 1980s owing to severe economic crisis across sub-Saharan Africa *vis-a-vis* the world economy. It became worst for African countries owing to the structure of their economies. Most African states are mono-export nations with agriculture raw material base. Meaning that any change in the prices of their export commodities adversely affect their budgets and create room for deficits. That has been the trend since the 1960s and it has not appreciably changed today except, perhaps, South Africa that is industrialized. The external economic 'shocks' exposed the vulnerability of African development. Exports volumes fell sharply because of recession in developed country markets, and the terms of trade improvements were short-lived as demand for commodities fell. The result was a severe balance of payment crisis in many African states thereby generating economic stagnation and decline. Nigeria like other African nations usually suffered from these economic decline thus creating problems for the citizens. To keep the economy afloat these countries usually shop around for a bail out in Western financial houses such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Paris and London clubs not considering their harsh interest rates. The conditionalities from these houses usually dislocate and puncture institutional structures thus leading to or worsening human development. It does appear that no African country that has borrowed from these Western financial houses has ever improved her economy. In this connection, the deteriorating standard of living caused by this inverted economic, democratic and social values force many to migrate and seek for improved standard of living in Europe, America and Asia. Some Nigerians even migrate to sister African states they consider more favourable than ours. However, most Nigerians and African when in host

countries usually seek for an asylum. What should be noted is that International law and custom distinguish migrants from refugees. This is so because refugees are usually displaced persons either through political persecutions, war, environmental mishaps such as earthquake, tsunami, etc and may be granted asylum to stay in the new state. Often illegal migrants may claim to be refugees in order to be allowed to stay, when really they are seeking better economic opportunities and by extension better and improved welfare (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2008).

Indeed, better and improved human conditions led (Goldstein and pevehouse, 2008) tens of thousands of migrants and refugees from sub-saharan Africa to Morocco, climbed over razor-wire fences to enter Spain between 2004 and 2006. Once one is on Spanish soil, they could not be sent home if they kept the authorities from determining their nationalities. In Germany, with lax regulations for asylum seekers (migration becomes the yardstick) they could live for years at state expense while applications for refugee status were processed. Not until recently, Germany was a favoured destination for growing numbers of immigrants-most of whom were not political refugees. The paper is divided into three sections: section A deals with the introduction, concepts of push factors; section B focuses on forces or reasons Nigerians seek for asylum abroad and the impact on Nigerian economy; section C seeks ways in which government should improve the conditions of people to avoid migration; and section D concludes the work.

Conceptualizing Push and Pull Factors

Push factor is seen to be an outgrowth of the deprivation of people of basic needs for their existence and by extension, modern indices for development-good food, shelter, clothing, education, security, health, water, and other facilities etc. Other factors may be displacement from land, and urbanization. This

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has been the scenario and biggest political issues affecting north-south relations; migration from poorer to richer states (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2008). On the other hand, (Brom, Mackintosh, Brown and Wuyts 2004) see push factor as a concept of economic decline which pitch the population of people against extreme hunger and poverty, unemployment and underemployment. It is also a condition where people cannot afford basic food, having no access to good shelter, water, education and health among others. The hope for a better living not in sight thus forces those who can to flee. Another corollary sees the push factor as a factor in human development where environmental condition that is determined by economic policies inflict hardship on the people thus leading to drastic decline in the living standards-which in the long run force people to migrate with the intension of seeking improved living conditions elsewhere (Akpan, 2010).

Pull Factor

The concept of pull factor lay emphasis on the provision of basic needs of man to make life worth living and bring comfort to the people. Such basic needs include food and its sustainability, adequate shelter, good and sustainable water supply for man and animals, provision of basic education and affordable to all, basic medical facilities and its accessibility to all people, putting in place good security for all persons within the environment. (Akpan 2012).

Forces or Reasons for Asylum by Nigerians Abroad

Yearly, thousands of desperate Nigerians still seek asylum especially in Western countries. Besides asylum seekers, many Nigerians are illegally entering the United States, Europe and Asia every year. However, the push factors that placed Nigerians 7th in the world among asylum seekers behind Afghanistan include unemployment, insecurity, lack of access to adequate medical facilities violence, lack of opportunities and frustration arising from leadership crisis, lack of social amenities and indeed extreme hardship. Indeed, the unemployment ratio in Nigeria is alarming, though we may not have adequate statistics to really back up the ratio, it is believed that over 70 million Nigerian youths are unemployed.

Influence of Unemployment

Unemployment and underemployment are found both in developed and developing economies. The Federal Office of Statistics lacks precise number of unemployed Nigerians because not many unemployed registers with it. But it is estimated that over 70 million Nigerians especially the youths are unemployed. The number keeps increasing because of the number of graduates from tertiary and secondary schools that are being turned out yearly. Again many Nigerians are underemployed, or better still exploited because they lack alternative for a living. Good employment translates to better living conditions which adds growth and value to health. Good health in turn gingers or motivates one to contribute to the economy. It is our belief system that it is better overseas than home (Nigeria), hence some of these jobless and exploitative class would do everything to leave for the west. However, access to other amenities such as good water, good power supply have added impetus for migration of Africans and indeed Nigerians to the west. For instance, having access to safe water would make life comfortable and raise the hope for a better tomorrow. Water is life. It has been estimated that 40 percent of the Nigerian population have no access to portable water, and only 63percent have adequate sanitation. The question to be answered is that if people can live without access to safe water, life in itself is worth nothing since water is the life orbit. It is in this group that push factors apply (Akpan, 2012).

Insecurity Problems

Insecurity is one of the thorny issues in Nigeria today. Before now it was the Niger Delta that was boiling as it constituted one of the 'hot beds' of the world as a result of the activities of the cult-men and local militia that took Nigerians and expatriates for ransome. The militias are still on the prowl smoking, blowing up oil instillations, kidnapping and holding oil workers hostage. Besides the activities of militia is the armed robbery menace that has taken over our cities and villages, making life difficult for some dwellers. Banks, private homes, highways are the usual targets. There is also the problem of incessant communal clashes, electoral violence and other related disturbances (Akpan, 2008). Today, violence in the form of bombing of strategic buildings, police posts, churches are becoming a feature caused by Islamic fundamentalists called Boko Haram. The Boko Haram group is changing and charging Nigerians firmament killing people and destroying property at will in Bornu State, Gombe State, Bauchi, Abuja, Kaduna etc. This organized killing and destruction is sending wrong signals to Nigeria's development in addition to human insecurity. In this connection, those who cannot withstand this scenario and the 'new game' of insecurity are leaving Nigeria daily to the West and other parts of the world. There is also the political killing because of struggle for public offices in local government councils, states, and at the federal levels. All these are challenges which many people are not really comfortable with the age where bullets and tanks do not discriminate the victims. For instance in Akwa Ibom State many politicians lost their lives because they wanted to contest with the incumbents.

Health Factors

The health situation of Nigerians is very poor. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Achal and Achalu, 1999).

International Agencies such as the World Health Organization point to the fact that, Nigeria is still far from achieving the minimum required health standard. For instance, Susan Grant, Country Director, Save the Children, an arm of the World Health Organization (WHO) pointed out that one million Nigerian children die at birth out of the nine million of infant deaths recorded globally. WHO also added that Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world and the highest in Africa. The statistics from the WHO also indicated that 53,000 women die annually in Nigeria of pregnancy related illnesses (Uffot, 2010).

In another corollary, the Bretton Woods institution analyzed that children in Nigeria which represent 20 percent die before the age of five as against 0.6 percent recorded in the United Kingdom, and about 800 women in 100,000 die during child birth. The worsening health condition according to them is caused by poor leadership and corruption and by extension, non-commitment towards the development of health care services. For instance in 2007, N400 million of unspent budget was shared among the top officials of the Ministry of Health including the Minister Adenike Grange: whereas that sector was 'begging' and still is 'begging' for improvement.

In 2003, the International Development Agency (IDA) gave a grant of N17.4billion to the federal government to develop the health sector in the 36 states of the federation. Today, there is nothing to show that such fund went for the purpose it was meant. In 2009, the federal government secured a loan of N 13 billion from IDA for the development of the health sector. Again there is nothing to show except the worsening state of health centres in Nigeria. These scenario, among other things, are

responsible for the migration of Nigerians to the West. Everyone needs longevity and the West can offer facilities with less stress (Uffot, 2010).

Educational Challenges

Education is the bedrock of development. It liberates the mind and provides the tool that prepares manpower to meet the requirements of the modern world in areas such as agriculture, security health, etc. Research indicates that about 45 percent of Nigerians do not have access to basic education. Good or meaningful education is the most potent instrument for alleviating and eventually abolishing poverty. Poverty has handicapped many Nigerians, handicapped such that they cannot afford school fees for their children. The Nigerian tiers of government (federal, state, local), only pay lip service to education. To break the poverty bond, Nigerians in this (poor) bracket tend to seek for better educational facilities and conditions outside the shores of Nigeria (Akpan, 2010).

Periods and Number of Nigerians Seeking Asylum Abroad

It is difficult to come out with the exact number of Nigerians seeking or that have been granted asylum in Western or Asian countries. However, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, in 2008, 12,573 Nigerians applied for asylum mainly in European countries. The breakdown is as follows: in that 2008, the highest number of people seeking asylum in Italy were Nigerians made up of 5,333 applicants; about 1,008 applied to Ireland; 970 to the United Kingdom; 765 to Canada; 801 to Spain and 500 to Germany. In that same year 2008, 27 Nigerians sought Togo to South Korea; 56 to Hungary; 76 to Finland; 42 to the Czech Republic and 19 to Poland; and even to one of the coldest places on this planet, Iceland, 5 desperate Nigerians sought for asylum it is difficult to comprehend how one from a tropical region would cope with extreme climatic conditions of the Northern Hemisphere in the polar region.

In 2009, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees put it that 12,307 Nigerians also applied for asylum status in European Countries. The UNHCR also added that Nigeria accounted for about 3.26 percent of the 377,000 asylum applications worldwide in 2009.

Consequences

Many Nigerians are still very desperate to leave the shores of this country. Those who are already out there need the asylum status desperately. They lie, cheat, prostitute themselves and take extreme risks to seek residency, even in hostile nations. In April 2010, Nigerians were deported from Sudan. Is it not very shameful to learn that 58 Nigerians were deported from Sudan a country embroiled in civil war for over thirty years. In October, 2009, 50 men and 9 women were deported or bundled out of Spain and dumped at the Lagos airport (Sunday Punch, 2010). It is reported that the Spanish action against those Nigerians was that about 55 entered the country illegally while the remaining were convicted criminals.

Indeed, it is difficult to ascertain the number of Nigerians and even other nationalities who perished in the Sahara Desert and the high seas in a bid to get to Europe. On the other hand, the image of the country is at stake that perhaps explains the reason Nigerians are not regarded or respected in foreign countries. Nigerians are often been abused, maltreated, killed in foreign lands with impunity. Again, because the host nations know how desperate these immigrants are, they usually offer them menial jobs and are paid less than the normal wages.

Impact of Human Emigration for Asylum on Nigeria Economy

There are many Nigerians who migrate to Western and Eastern countries legally and illegally, and are offering skills in diverse fields such as medicine, engineering, education, entertainment, etc. But back home, owing to lack of skilled manpower, Nigeria is lagging behind in development. For instance, it is reported that Nigeria has 19 physicians for every 100,000 people. The painful aspect is that most of these professionals were either trained locally or overseas by the Nigerian government. These funds could have been used in the development of other sectors of the economy. It is reported that Africa loses as much as \$20,000 in training every skilled emigrant a year. In this connection, and by extrapolation; and based on the average skilled emigration of 20,000 Africans per year, Africa is subsidizing the technological development of the developed world by \$400 million every year. It means that the total cost of the \$250,000 African professionals and non professionals abroad is at least \$5million or perhaps higher today (NewsAfrica, 2001).

Besides the cost of training, Africa is denied the benefits of its skilled manpower in improving the quality of life in the continent. Considering the health sector, 19 medical doctors to 100,000 patients is pathetic. Health is wealth. When the productive population is weak as a result of poor health, the economy cannot grow since productivity will also be low. It is not only medical doctors that are emigrating, nurses and other professionals also emigrate for greener pastures. What should be known is that those migrating are youths and adults of productive age. Old people have no business migrating except on visits or invitation by their relations-whose stay is always temporary. Besides, poor people are not likely to migrate because it takes much both financially and psychologically to migrate to unknown and unfamiliar environments.

However, human capital flight is negative and usually slows down economic progress and lowers living standards in poor countries. Indeed, poor countries such as Nigeria usually lose their most enterprising and ambitious youthful population, thus stifling the development of a more dynamic private sector. For instance, African football leagues cannot progress because talented players are in Europe perfecting on their skills for higher returns. Human capital flight from a skill-scarce country leads to a prolonged loss of growth in income levels. African states, apart from South Africa, Egypt and Botswana, suffer from this paradigm. In effect this reduces the growth rate of the effective capital that remains behind in the economy and to a large extent generates a prolonged reduction in per capita income growth in the home country (Ekoriko 2001; Ndulu 2004).

Indeed, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), educational skills lost through human capital flight are not easily replaced given the limited capacity to fund higher education and training in developing countries; and the paucity of the means of acquiring these elements elsewhere (UNDP, 1992).

The UN High Commission for Refugees (2001) estimates that the educational capital embodied in highly skilled graduates who emigrate to the United states in 1990s alone was \$ 640 million. It concludes that this emigration represents a significant transfer of resources from poor countries to the rich. The UN Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on its part, estimates that the annual cash value of each African professional migrant, based on 1979 prices, stood at N184, 000 (Oyowe,1996). With an estimated 21,000 professionals in the

US alone, Nigeria for instance, is losing about US \$4billion annually through human capital flight. However, it is argued that these estimates do not necessarily represent the opportunity cost of the loss to Nigeria as it is not certain whether the skilled emigrants would have been gainfully engaged in their professions at home. This is either plus or minus. This is so because there exists cases of internal brain drain, through which professionals engage in petty trade to supplement poor remuneration in their own lines of work. This is partly the reasons for asylum seekers who flee the nation.

Nigeria is by all standards a rich country, yet majority of her population lives below \$1 dollar a day. Nigeria has the potentiality of being one of the strongest economies but the challenge is that the managers of the economy are corrupt to the marrow and the leadership too weak to make things work. By the volume of oil sold in international market, Nigerians should be better off than the experience of today. The challenge Nigeria has is curbing corruption and placing the right people in the right position for things to change. Secondly, the attitude of our leaders towards the management of the nation's resources and cordiality with corrupt officials both in public and private sectors are worrisome. Our leaders are not bold enough to tackle the hydra called corruption because their hands are equally 'soiled'. For instance how do we treat the oil thieves and illegal miners?. How do we treat the governors who steal and launder the commonwealth in foreign lands?. Why do we celebrate thieves in the corridors of power and even award them national honours? All these need examination.

Back to the basics, to reduce the migration of Africans and indeed Nigerians to Western and Asian countries, and to make the economy more functional, improve the socio-economic conditions of the people, the pull factors should be reconsidered. The consideration should centre on the funding and improvement of education by considering the United Nations Education and Scientific Cooperation (UNESCO) and the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980s by setting aside 26 percent of the yearly National budget for education and 1 percent of the Nations GDP respectively. In the areas of health, health facilities should be free and accessible, affordable and subsidized to all Nigerians. Security is the nucleus for development, Nigeria has enough insecurity challenge. That explains the reasons many investors especially foreigners are reluctant coming to Nigeria; and some who were here have relocated to areas they consider safe for their businesses to thrive.

Indeed, the informal sector of an economy is the prime of development especially at the grassroot. For a long time now, this sector has remained in a coma owing to poor energy (power) supply. Power supply is pivot to homes and industries, and for sometime power supply has been in a coma and has been posing a challenge to Nigerian development. In this connection, to steam the economy and to address the informal sector, the power sector of the economy should be made functional and sustainable. The paucity of power supply is making the economy unhealthy thus increasing the unemployment ratio of the country.

Good and affordable water is a potent factor in human living but the government has not given any thought to its improvement –power and water. Individuals in Nigeria are responsible for the supply of water to their households and industry-and only a very insignificant number in the population can afford it. Again, only very few people within the population have access to good drinking water. Others depend on borehole water which often times not treated. This too has a correlation with health, since impure water has the potential of causing

many sicknesses thus impacting in the reduction of man hours of productivity.

However, the number of youths that are unemployed or underemployed is alarming. The government at all levels should create job opportunities for these youths because they are the future leaders. Most of our industries have closed shop, yet those materials produced by these industries are being imported into the country. Such industries that have closed shop and yet the demand for their similar products are textiles, ceramics, asbestos etc. Unemployment is responsible to a large extent, for insecurity in Nigeria and manifests itself through kidnapping, armed robbery, political thuggery, human trafficking, among others.

It is also known that poverty reduction programmes are put in place by the federal government, but it would appear that such programmes are ineffective because of corruption. Again empowerment of individuals through money is often counter-productive. It is believed that empowerment should take the form of education or skill acquisition and provision of workable capital (machines) for production. Genuinely thought, a very insignificant percentage of the people is able to use financial capital for self improvement through setting up business places for productive or business development.

In Nigeria today, it would appear that there is no rule of law. People and organizations, the government-and the general public have violated human rights, and the social contract with the state have been seriously undermined. There is need for government to keep the state and entrench the rule of law so that the rights of individuals are not undermined unduly. Everyone is equal before the law, and no one is untouchable even when punishable crimes are committed by them. The law should not be made only for the poor as it is today. A clear example is the case of the former governor of Delta state, Mr James Ibori that "committed no crime" in Nigeria only to be jailed for the same crime that he was exonerated because of the corrupt judges and interference of the government of the day.

Nigeria is a very rich country by all means-an arable land and abundant natural resources such as petroleum and natural gas, tin and columbite, coal, bitumen, limestone and iron ore, as well as rich flora and fauna. These products make waves both locally and internationally. Nigeria ought to be economically bouyant. But years of waste, inept leadership corruption and maladministration have continued to place agriculture at subsistence level, infrastructure in decay, fostered unemployment, seething and frustrated population. According to World Bank figures, 80percent of the country's graduates were "unemployable", lacking skill and basic entrepreneurial abilities. There has been prolonged unrest in the Niger Delta region, while some parts of the North intermittently erupt regularly in sectarian strife and internal displacement. Recently, northern Nigeria has experienced a different form of violence caused by Boko Haram-an Islamic fundamentalist group –altering the values and norms of the Nigerian society.

Most Nigerian cities and rural areas such as Abia, Imo, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Enugu, Abuja. etc are constantly under the siege of armed robbers, kidnappers and rapists. The failure of the government to provide security and to grow the economy to absorb the unemployed is contributing to the exodus of Nigerians and indeed Africans to the West.

Recommendations

Nigeria is on the race of becoming one of the twenty strongest economies by 2020AD. The race is not strong enough to see her through-reasons. Nigeria is still facing many problems-food and environmental insecurity, human insecurity,

the health of the people is very poor, education and its development is treated with kid-gloves. Nigeria as a matter of urgency should develop the health and education sectors of the economy. Set aside the UNESCO recommendation of at 26 percent of her GDP for education. It is believed that if education sector is funded, other sectors would grow. There is need to provide adequate energy in the economy for the formal and non-formal sectors to grow. One of the reasons for the low investment by prospective investors outside is its power failures. It is on record that one of the problems of Nigeria's development is that the informal sector is starved of power and by extension increase the poverty ration of the country.

The government must, above all else, muster the necessary political will to address the problems facing the Nigerian nation in areas of the entrenchment of democracy and the rule of law. Nigerians are embarrassed by the growing frustration of the international community with Nigeria's worsening human development record_ (check Nigeria's worsening human development). Job opportunities should be created by dismantling state monopolies in the power and energy sectors. Stadiums and other recreational centres should be built at local and state levels to broaden the access of the nation's large youth population to recreational facilities. A functional democracy where the rule of law prevails should not produce political exiles or citizens facing political persecution as in the cases of former anti-corruption helmsmen, Nuhu Ribadu, and former Federal Capital Territory Minister, Nasir el-Rufai, who claim that they were being victimized for their political beliefs.

The government under Jonathan should as a matter of urgency work towards strengthening all the state institutions in order to inspire a sense of belonging and well-being among the people. A situation where the mass of the people have lost faith in the ballot box as a means of electing their own leaders at all levels defeats the democratic ethos and alienates the citizens. Jonathan should press for electoral reforms to ensure the emergence of credible leaders through transparent elections.

Competence and merit must determine appointments to public office, not patronage; while a strict adherence to the rule of law must be entrenched. Health Education, provision of infrastructure and security should be given the priority attention they deserve to make life more meaningful for Nigerians and encourage them to remain in their country

The police should be made to function effectively while communities across the country should be encouraged to set up vigilante groups to complement the efforts of police.

In order to release more funds for development, the government should be firm and release more in pursuing the anti-corruption crusade. All corrupt officials who make life unbearable for other Nigerians should be brought to justice. To halt the exodus of Nigerians, efforts are required to grow the real sector for massive job creation.

The government at all levels should tackle the problem of insecurity in the country. No business can grow in the climate of insecurity. Whether it is ethno-religious, communal, political crisis, Nigerian government has all it takes to bring about peace in Nigeria. This can be done through economic and political justice on these their rights have been violated.

Other infrastructural facilities that can make life worth living should be put in place for Nigerian citizens to enjoy. All these would retain our brains for Nigeria to develop.

Conclusion:

The paper has attempted to discuss the push factors that are responsible for the incessant migration of Nigerians to the West. The reason for these movements are anchored on poor conditions of the people following years of denial of good things of life through poor leadership. Those things considered as push factors are poor education, unemployment, poor medical and inaccessible facilities, insecurity, poor and inaccessibility to good drinking water for man and animal; poor power supply, poverty and lack of the rule of law corruption poor and inept leadership. The paper also gave the tentative number of immigrants and added that the number cannot be ascertained since they migrate through different routes and lack of records. The migration has a very negative consequence on the economy as those who migrate are of productive ages of between 15 and 45 years. The paper concludes that the pull factors be replaced with push factors to ease development and bring about growth within the economy and improve the socio-economic conditions of the people. That push factors are anti development. If the Nigerian state would act and change, Nigeria can still be a place of hospitality for her citizens and indeed Africans.

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