

Knowledge Platform for Migration Governance in Africa

Platform Policy Brief 04

Migration Governance in Africa: The State of Play

This is the fourth policy brief of the Knowledge Platform for Migration Governance in Africa¹ produced by the African Diaspora Policy Centre. The platform is devoted to strengthening the interface between research, policy, and practice in the area of migration governance at continental, regional, national, and local levels. The motto of the platform is: organizing a knowledge network for better migration governance in Africa. It contributes to the migration and mobility dialogue from the perspective of Africa. Additionally, it is committed to contributing to a better migration governance system that works to the benefit of all. The platform organized its fourth webinar in October to shed light on the state of play in migration governance on the continent. The webinar also provided an opportunity for the platform's network to convene virtually, since they cannot meet face-to-face as long as the Covid-19 pandemic rages across countries.

Introduction

This policy brief is the product of a webinar organized by the Platform to shed light on the state of play in migration governance on the continent. The experts examined the topic from the point of view of the available knowledge, developed policy frameworks, and the extent to which existing policy instruments are practically implemented. The corpus of available knowledge was appraised in terms of an overview of the subjects covered. In the process, gaps in the data were identified and new research topics that have not received sufficient attention within the context of Africa were proposed. Regarding policy instruments, a migration governance model was presented and deliberated. As will be discussed in detail below, the elements of a migration governance model that embody institutional capacity are: migrants' rights; safe and orderly migration; labour migration management; regional and international cooperation and other partnerships.² The essence of the migration governance model was discussed in the particular context of the framework of existing AU migration policies, such as the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA), updated in 2018. Finally, the webinar reflected the challenges of translating AU migration policies into a more effective migration governance system on the continent. Among the challenges highlighted were the difficulties of moving from policy formulation to implementation,

¹ A project assisted by the German Government via the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The content reflects the author's views, and the GIZ is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

² IOM 2015.

including lack of migration data, capacity, and resources. Nonetheless, it became clear in the discussion that an effective implementation mechanism for the current MPFA will require greater coordination and collaboration among diverse stakeholders at all levels, within and outside of government in any given country in Africa. In short, reflecting on the state of play in migration governance in Africa attests that while, previously, the topic of migration was a low priority for African governments, it has gained traction as a strategic policy area for the continent in recent years. Despite this, more needs to be done – in terms of knowledge development, increased institutional capacity for policy, and corresponding practical actions in the short-, medium- and long-term – in order to realise an effective migration model on the continent.

Knowledge Development

Knowledge development in the field of migration governance within the context of Africa remains highly deficient and unevenly developed. This is a consequence of policy priorities that set the research agenda in the field. The dictates of narrow policy priorities make it difficult to undertake a systematic and holistic production of knowledge in the field. It also neglects to address sufficiently some of the pressing dynamics of the migration reality in Africa currently experienced by many countries on the continent. For instance, most countries in Africa are now simultaneously origin, transit, and receiving destinations for migrants and have to cope with the many and complex challenges of migration dynamics. This is despite the fact that governments in Africa frequently lack sufficient policymaking capacity, institutional experience, and resources to deal effectively with the growing complexity of migration and mobility. Yet, pressing issues on migration within the continent receive scant research attention as the available knowledge in the field attests.

Knowledge development in the field within the context of Africa can be broadly categorized under the following rubrics: migration management; Diaspora and development; and Africa-European Union (EU) relations with respect to migration matters. Hence, most available publications on this subject fall under these three rubrics. For instance, topics covered under migration management include data of cross-border movements and human trafficking and people smuggling. There is also attention for scenarios of future migration trends in Africa towards Europe as well as the return and reintegration of migrants expelled from European countries to their homelands in Africa. Generating fact-based knowledge on these topics is important but they largely serve the policy needs of external stakeholders and actors. It is equally important to generate knowledge that informs African governments about how to develop effective policy tools, enabling them to deal with the growing complexity of migration in their countries. Governments can effectively deploy such policy tools to facilitate the integration processes of refugees and migrants in their countries, and to develop job creation schemes and vocational training programmes for the large numbers of young people who see no future other than leaving their countries. These policy tools can also be used to design better mechanisms to support the reintegration of returning migrants, expelled from Europe, into local communities. During the webinar, migration experts repeatedly articulated the need for these aforementioned aspects to receive closer research attention. Likewise, there are a large number of evidence-based publications

dealing with Diaspora and development in the field. Yet, most data in this area is focused on the remittances that Diaspora members transfer to their homelands in Africa. The growing literature in this area relates to the policy priorities of many African governments that acknowledge migration as a main driver of development. This is for the simple reason that, over the past two decades, Diaspora communities have evolved as strategic development actors in development cooperation relations between Europe, Africa, and beyond. Still, more policy-oriented knowledge needs to be developed in this area in order to further harness the potential (i.e. capital, knowledge, and networks) of Diaspora communities. Valuable research has also been done under the rubric of the Africa-EU relations with regards to migration matters. This has materialized following increased European Union investment in migration related issues on the continent since 2015, specifically the establishment of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). According to the experts in the webinar, most of these publications address the promotion of EU-Africa dialogue on migration and mobility between the two continents. Moreover, the literature tends to convey a European perspective, i.e. the need to curb migration flows from Africa, based on the prevailing view that demographic growth in the continent will inevitably lead to an exodus towards EU countries. But a closer look at the reality of migration flows from and within Africa points to a different picture. Projections by the United Nations and research institutes indicate that, in future, migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are likely to represent at most 3–4 per cent of the population in the Global North.³

This policy brief provides an overview of the broader rubric under which knowledge in the field of migration is produced with regards to Africa. It also delineates those topics prioritized for research that has been selected based on policy interests at any given time. This policy-dictated approach to data collection is not conducive for the systematic production of knowledge in the field. It is also not conducive to addressing the deeper challenges that the dynamics of migration manifest in African countries. This is because any localized challenges resulting from the pressures of migration fall under the radar due to prevailing domestic and international policy priorities. Consequently, there is an urgent need for a systematic literature review of the available publications in the field in order to identify and address any gaps in the data. Policy interests alone should not dictate the production of knowledge in the field within the context of Africa. Knowledge must also be gathered on, for example, the impact of migration on the social fabric of host societies, integration challenges, and on how governments in migrant-receiving countries can put in place policies and programmes to effectively address the diverse and multi-facets of migration.

The aim of this policy brief is to start a broader conversation about the sort of knowledge developed thus far in the field, whose interests are advanced by this knowledge, and what can be done to anchor it in the reality of domestic dynamics going forward. It also aims to articulate a new research agenda that serves specific policy needs of African institutions at different levels grappling with the complexity of the current migration dynamics. The experts joining the webinar recommended that the Platform pay particular attention to this aspect.

³ Adam, Ilke, Florian Trauner, Leonie Jegen, and Christof Roos. 2019. *West African Interests in (EU) Migration Policy*. Policy brief 4, United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies, United Nations University, Brugge.

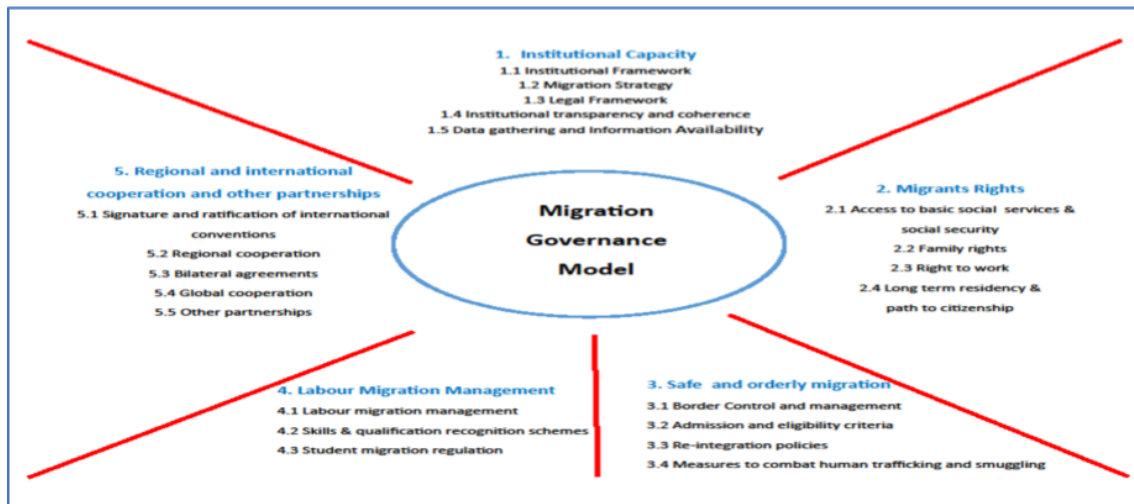
Heeding this call, the Platform will commission one of the aforementioned experts to produce a comprehensive report on the current status of knowledge in the field within the context of Africa. This is in line with the Platform's objective to strengthen the interface between research, policy, and practice in the area of migration governance at continental, regional, national, and local levels.

Policy Development

Policy development in the field seems significantly advanced within the context of Africa. Continental migration policy has been in place since 2006, first adopted in Banjul, the capital of Gambia. This continental policy framework was developed to provide comprehensive and integrated policy guidelines on migration to AU member states and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Subsequently, African migration policy has been further refined, revised, and updated over the past decade. In 2018, the AU adopted an advanced Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) with a Plan of Action (2018-2030). The core objectives of this advanced policy framework are threefold: firstly, to address the challenges posed by migration and to ensure the integration of migration and its related issues into the national and regional agenda for the sake of security, stability, development, and cooperation as a whole. Secondly, to work towards the free movement of people and to strengthen intra-regional and inter-regional cooperation in matters concerning migration based on the established processes of migration at the regional and sub-regional levels. Thirdly, to create an environment conducive to facilitating the participation of migrants, in particular those in the Diaspora in the homeland development. Translating the policy into an action plan, activities were formulated in a number of critical areas such as: the free movement of persons on the continent; labour migration; remittances; Diaspora engagement; border governance; irregular migration; forced migration; migration and trade; migration governance, etc. The policy provides guidelines to the member states (MS) and REC) and develops a comprehensive approach to migration management including the adoption of national laws and policies based on international and regional principles. These principles include: the harmonization of sub-regional migration policies; strengthening of policies aimed at preventing trafficking and developing regional counter-measures; the development of transparent and comprehensive labour migration policies; and the formulation of a strategic policy on the management of internationally displaced persons (IDPs).

Hence, the current MPFA provides a basis for a good migration governance model for the continent. But we are not there yet. As noted in the introduction, a good migration governance model, as outlined by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) goes deeper than listing a host of thematic areas with an action plan. Crucially, a good migration model requires the existence of significant institutional capacity that makes it possible for the development of an effective institutional framework, migration strategy, and legal framework. It also requires having in place a framework for institutional transparency and coherence, data gathering systems, and mechanisms that facilitate information availability

to all stakeholders. For more insight, the table below details a good migration governance model developed by IOM in 2015.



Nevertheless, the current MPFA provides comprehensive policy tools that can be adopted at continental, regional, national, and local levels. It also makes it possible for the continent as a whole to respond to the dynamics of migration in a collective manner. More importantly, having a continental-wide migration policy framework empowers the continent to set its own agenda on migration based on its own priorities, both internally and with respect to international relations. Hence, strengthening the effectiveness of the policy is imperative so that it can instrumentalize the development of a good migration governance model for the continent. In short, the existence of the current Migration Policy Framework for Africa is a testimony of how the continent has been toiling since 2006 to develop a comprehensive policy framework on migration with a Plan of Action (2018-2030) that can be implemented in the short, medium, and long-term.

Practical Implementation

Unfortunately, the practical implementation of the continental policy framework remains a challenge in many ways. A key challenge is the deficiency of institutional capacity at national and local levels that can translate the policy into meaningful actions. Moreover, appropriating the continental Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) at a national level has been a slow process in many instances. For example, many governments on the continent have not yet developed national migration policies. Having a national migration policy is key to translating the policy into doable actions at the local level. It will also help to facilitate the creation of national migration coordination mechanisms that can bring together relevant migration stakeholders to share ideas and good practices (policies and programmes) in the field. According to the experts in the webinar, there are diverse reasons why governments are too slow to adopt the MPFA, not least a lack of awareness about the very existence of a continental policy. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of political will to prioritize migration at the highest level of government in some instances. Even when

there is political will, many governments lack the resources and expertise to develop a migration policy at country level. To this end, the experts in the webinar proposed that the AU should develop a programme that offers workshops aimed at increasing awareness of the continental MPFA among member states. The AU should also establish a training programme for policymakers of the member states that enhances the capacity and knowledge to develop their own national migration policies based on the context and specific needs of their domestic reality. In addition, the AU can facilitate peer learning across African governments and thus strengthen effective collaboration with the countries on the continent.

The challenge of the practical adaptation and implementation of the continental migration policy at the national and local levels is compounded by other factors. One factor is the limited human personnel many governments task with dealing with migration related issues both at the national and local levels. Another factor is the meagre budgets allocated by governments for migration issues. A third factor that hinders the practical implementation of the continental migration policy at the national and local levels is a tendency for governments to be overambitious and initiate bigger and complex actions that they do not have sufficient resources for or enough human personnel to achieve them. To overcome this problem, governments can start translating a migration policy by focusing on easier and more realizable actions that are doable within the existing human capacity and also less costly. Another solution to this implementation problem is the promotion of stakeholder partnerships so that diverse actors can join forces and work together on a given task. The advantage of mobilizing diverse stakeholders from different institutions and sectors at national and local levels is that they can pool their resources, knowledge, expertise, and practical experience for the implementation of a given action from the policy tools. These are some of the steps that can be prioritized in the efforts to implement the MPFA at national and local levels.

The implementation challenges of the migration policy on the continent demand greater attention than they are currently receiving. They must also be addressed head on at different levels. Firstly, appropriating and implementing widely the current continental migration policy should be recognized as a challenge that cannot be easily resolved through short-term technical support. Rather, it requires the mobilization of political, financial and human capital in a substantial and sustainable manner. The reality is that the problems of implementing the migration policy in any given country in Africa can only be resolved when the institutional capacities are improved, sufficient human personnel are trained and recruited, and stakeholder partnerships are mobilized and instituted at national and local levels. There is still a long way to go to achieve this in many countries in Africa. In short, having in place a continental Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) without the institutional capacity in most member states to develop and implement it at the national level inevitably means it will not serve its intended purposes. It will remain a document in name only. For this reason, the webinar experts proposed that the AU and its international partners, e.g. the EU and others, should pay renewed and, indeed, extra attention to the implementation challenges of the continental migration policy at the national and local levels. This requires doing something tangible beyond statement and policy declarations.

Conclusion

A review of the state of play in migration governance in Africa makes it clear that more needs to be done to further strengthen the interface between research, policy, and practice in the field. To that end, research needs to be undertaken that produces knowledge that informs policies targeted to address the complexity of migration dynamics on the continent in a systematic and holistic manner. Currently, the knowledge developed in the field within the context of Africa is largely piecemeal in nature and its production is dictated by fleeting, narrow, and short-term policy interests. Consequently, the production of knowledge in the field in this haphazard manner often serves the policy interests of external actors and not the needs of local entities. Hence, the webinar experts recommended that the Platform should pay the matter greater attention in its future endeavors in the area. With regards to policy development in the field, the experts observed that the current Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) adopted by the AU in 2018 is very timely. It lays the foundations for a good migration governance model for the continent. Yet, the translation of this continental migration policy into specific national policies and implementable actions still poses formidable challenges that must be given appropriate attention in the foreseeable future. However, achieving this will require significant investment in strengthening the interface between research, policy, and practice in the area of migration governance at continental, regional, national, and local levels.

The analysis in this policy brief is informed by the knowledge, experience, and expertise of the African migration policy experts who participated in the fourth webinar organized by the Knowledge Platform for Migration Governance in Africa. The added value of the African migration policy experts in the policy discussion devoted to strengthening the institutional capacity of migration governance is tremendous. The experts articulate a less familiar African narrative in the discussion, closely informed by insider observation, local perspective, specific country experience, and deeper understanding about the complexity and challenges of the multi-facets of migration and mobility dynamics on the continent, which receive little policy attention. The experts who participated in the fourth webinar of the Platform represented different partner countries in Africa, namely: Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia.