

Knowledge Platform for Migration Governance in Africa

Platform Policy Brief 05

Migration Governance at the National Level: The Case of Senegal

This is the fifth 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 fifth webinar in November to reflect on migration governance architecture at the national level. Senegal was used as a case study in this regard. The webinars provide 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 reflect on migration governance architecture at the national level. It takes Senegal as a case study.² The webinar examined the issue from the point of view of policy and practical implementations within the context of Senegal. Migration has been inherent to Senegalese history. In recent decades, Senegal has increasingly experienced the multi-facets of migration and mobility dynamics. For instance, Senegal is now simultaneously an origin, transit, and a host country. This situation presents huge policy and institutional challenges for the government of Senegal as well as to many others on the continent at this juncture. Yet, many African governments lack sufficient policymaking capacity, robust institutional experience, and the resources to deal more effectively with the mounting challenges emanating from the different facets of migration and human mobility. The webinar reflected on how the government of Senegal has been addressing those challenges within the context of the country, the constraints encountered, and examining its process over overcoming these difficulties. It is expected that the experience of, in this case, Senegal will highlight lessons

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 This policy brief has been drafted by Mr. Badara Ndiaye, an expert from Senegal and a member of the Platform.

regarding policy and practical implications that may be of use to other governments on the continent dealing with similar situations.

Evolution of Migration Governance in Senegal

In order to gain a proper understanding of the Senegalese government's approach to migration governance, a brief overview of its evolution is warranted here. From a geographical and historical standpoint, and as a member of ECOWAS, Senegal has a notable economic and social experience in terms of migration matters. In the post-World War II period, there were two major migration movements by Senegalese nationals: movement directed towards other parts of West Africa, such as Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, and Congo; and movement directed towards Europe, with France as the main destination. Additionally, there was a well-developed and noteworthy circular trade movement between Dakar and Casablanca in Morocco. These different movements were driven largely by environmental, economic, and social shifts. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, drought and changes in agriculture pushed many Senegalese people to look for new livelihood opportunities within and outside the continent. In this period, around 75 per cent of the Senegalese Diaspora was in Africa and the intensity of these population movements ushered in a process of greater urbanization in Dakar and other cities within Senegal. In colonial times, Dakar, the capital city, inevitably developed more than the rest of the country. However, the post-war migration flows that flooded into the capital further expanded the urbanization of the city as incomers built new properties, started new businesses, and established flourishing private companies. Likewise, some Senegalese migrants found new destinations outside the continent, for example, in Italy, Spain, and the United States. Recently, the movement of Senegalese migrants further expanded to South America and the Middle East as it became more difficult people to reach Europe.

Lately, migration from Senegal has largely been a response to work-related demands by private companies abroad and, in some instances, lures by unscrupulous human traffickers. These new flows have considerably increased the Senegalese Diaspora population in Africa to 90 per cent with the remaining ten per cent spreading to Europe and beyond. Conversely, since the 2000s, Senegal has experienced a wave of labour migrants, mainly from Guinea, Mali, and Gambia, coming to Dakar for informal employment. From 2006-2010, Senegal also experienced an influx of youth transiting through the country on their way to Europe. This brief overview demonstrates how Senegal became simultaneously a host, origin, and transit location, making it an appropriate case study with regards to migration governance at the national level³.

³ The Platform is very grateful to Mr. Badara Ndiaye, an expert from Senegal who provided a presentation of the case of Senegal during the webinar. Dr. Ndiaye is a former consultant for ECOWAS on Regional Migration Policy Engagement. He is also an expert in the field of labour migration, migration policies, governance of migrations, and diaspora engagement. Mr. Ndiaye is active within Senegalese civil society as President of DIADEM (Diaspora Development Education Migration) and as President of the West African Platform on Migration (MIGRAFRIQUE).

Multi-faceted Nature of Migration in Senegal

The multifaceted nature of migration makes a case in the context of Senegal that the policy of migration governance need to be widely reformulated, especially when a significant number of the population works outside the country. This means that the government of Senegal has had much to address in terms of providing social protection of the Senegalese population abroad through regulations and bilateral agreements with other countries in Africa and beyond. At least in the case of the Senegalese population abroad, the government of Senegal began a process of formulating different migration governance mechanisms, policies, and strategies, which have already produced some positive results. For instance, Senegal was the first African country to formally recognize the importance of Diaspora engagement as a key factor in Senegalese migration governance architecture by creating a Ministry of Senegalese Living Abroad in 1993. Subsequently, the government decided that 15 members of parliament should represent the interests of the Diaspora and be elected by the Diaspora community overseas. Likewise, the government, in partnership with highly qualified members of the Diaspora, developed strategies for solidarity and cooperation. The government has also created specific private and public funds that members of the Diaspora can access in the form of loans for investment purposes. The participation of the Diaspora in the government decision-making process further emboldens them to come up with their own initiatives and proposals, including establishing a Senegalese Diaspora Commission, similar to that of Mali⁴. These requests enhance representation through the election of Diaspora Members of Parliament (MPs) residing outside of Senegal, namely in Europe, America, Asia, and South America. Diaspora members can register to vote at Embassies/Consulates and can elect Diaspora candidates from various national parties as MPs. The influence of the Diaspora on national politics has been gaining ground for a while. For instance, the former president Abdoulaye Wade led a political campaign in favour of Diaspora in the context of their political influence on the voting patterns of family members back home. The impact of the political influence of the Diaspora was recognized in terms of the political outcomes of the national elections and subsequent economic, cultural, and social repercussions. As a result, since 2012, and notably during the Macky Sall government, elected Diaspora MPs have been granted the mandate to attend annual government meetings. This allows elected Diaspora MPs to air their views, concerns, and interests from the point of view of the Diaspora at the National Assembly meeting. Among the issues raised include the protection of Diaspora and migrant rights, as well as the acquisition of Senegalese passports for those abroad. It should be noted that while Diaspora members do not significantly impact the policies of the national assembly, their political influence is often sought when certain issues and decisions need to be pushed forward.

Recently, there has been an interesting project in the country to create a virtual council, composed of Diaspora and local associations, in the city of Kolda. The council performs the role of a consultative mechanism at a local level. At the national level, there are a number of ministries, such as the Ministry of Labour, Vocational Training and Internal Affairs, that are becoming more involved in policy decisions related to the process of improving migration governance in the country. This affirms the need for powerful representatives from these different ministries with specific functions to coordinate all actions, across departments, related to migration matters. Furthermore, the Reception, Orientation and Follow-up Offices

⁴ Haut conseil des Maliens de l'extérieur (HCME).

(*Bureau d'Accueil, d'Orientation et de Suivi, BAOS*) were established to support and guide Senegalese abroad and returnees. At the regional level, ECOWAS parliaments also play a role in the protection of Senegalese Diaspora in the region, per its protocols. This is in combination with the national initiatives such as the creation of a secretariat in charge of Senegalese abroad, composed of a general directorate including Diaspora MPs and ECOWAS MPs. In addition, the government of Senegal is committed to protecting the rights of Senegalese migrants wherever they are. Indeed, the government of Senegal has initiated bilateral agreements with a number of countries, namely, France, Mali, and Gabon, in which a significant number of the Senegalese Diaspora reside. In short, the policy of migration governance in Senegal has been built progressively over time in response to the emerging migration reality.

Nonetheless, there are certain challenges and limitations that need to be addressed. This includes, among others, that the migration policy strategy developed in 2018 has not yet been ratified by the government. Additionally, the process of developing a migration policy document was not conclusive. The external experts that evaluated the policy document indicated that Diaspora members had not been consulted in the drafting of the strategy. This is surprising given the aforementioned efforts undertaken by the government to incorporate the Diaspora in the policy process. In sum, while there is strong Diaspora engagement in the development of Senegal, the Diaspora still requires more space for meaningful cooperation with the government.

Relationship to other African countries and regional communities

The migration governance architecture enacted by the Senegalese government over the years has established an important foundation for reliable partnerships with other countries in the continent. For example, Morocco remains a transit country for many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, including those from Senegal, trying to reach Europe through the Strait of Gibraltar. In 2005-2006, more than 32,000 migrants passed through Morocco, with the Senegalese making use of a 1992 bilateral agreement with Spain. According to an expert member of the Platform from Morocco, the new wave of migration driven by COVID-19 has recently increased the number of migrants passing through Morocco to Spain and to Europe in general⁵. In the current migration policy framework, one of the pillars of the 2014 Moroccan policy strategy is to emphasize a humanitarian, rather than a security approach to migration, which defined earlier actions by the country's government. One aspect of this new policy strategy is the granting of permission to citizens from West African countries, including Senegal, to enter Morocco without visas. The aim is to foster more cooperation between Morocco and sub-Saharan African countries, namely Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Guinea, so that the security and dignity of migrants trying to reach Europe or returning back home are fully respected. The action of the Government of Morocco is also in line with the implementation of the 2018 Marrakesh Pact on migration, which opened opportunities for employment and citizenship in Maghreb countries.

⁵ For this part of the discussion, the Platform is very grateful to Dr. Mehdi Lahlou from Morocco for his contribution, deep understanding, and knowledge about the dynamics of the current migration policy of Morocco as well as its unfolding process in real time.

Another aspect highlighted by the experts in the webinar is the need for the Anglophone and the Francophone countries to learn from each other, overcoming language barriers and seizing opportunities to reinforce solidarity and cooperation with respect to policies related to migration and mobility issues. The experience of Ghana highlights the need for collaboration across language lines. For instance, in the process of establishing a national commission on migration to coordinate all migration policy related issues, the Government of Ghana has undertaken study tours in Nigeria and Kenya rather than Senegal, which could have been helpful in this regard. In response, the expert from Senegal noted that having a national commission in Senegal similar to that of Ghana would have helped to coordinate all policy matters on the issue. Hence, the current migration policy in Senegal remains piecemeal, ad hoc, and is generally limited to the social protection aspect of migration. Yet, Senegal offers Ghana important policy lessons with regards to bilateral agreements for the social protection of migrants abroad and particularly those in the Middle East and Gulf States, whose security the Government of Senegal has committed to protect.

Other aspects raised during the discussion revolve around strategies of cooperation between Senegal and the EU with regards to the impact of ECOWAS mobility agreements in the region. In this regard, the experts highlighted possible clashes between national strategies and local enactments in the process of addressing migration matters. For instance, agreements to control clandestine migration are defined by intention and not by means used, which makes it difficult to have a legal framework. In practice, the lack of clear parameters brings uneven judgement of migrants based on the number of stops along the path of their movement. There is also a need to reinforce bilateral social protection in West Africa in addition to what currently exists within the region. The 1986 protocol on the right to residence offers many possibilities in terms of access to healthcare, wages, and the right to transfer resources; however, there are occasional clashes due to political reasons. In the 2000s, most West African governments tried to establish more agreements with OECD countries on social protections, which have been neglected and not given enough weight in migration discourse. Finally, even with the 2013 ECOWAS general convention on social security, reviewed in 2017, few West African countries have considered social protection for nationals in the Diaspora, posing challenges for people trying to return.

Conclusion

The discussion of the evolution of migration governance in Senegal makes clear that migration has been inherent to the country's history. Yet, during the webinar, the issue of the Diaspora largely dominated the discussion, especially in terms of the importance of the remittances that they transfer, which are crucial for reducing poverty at the local level in many countries in Africa. In Senegal, remittances are now worth more (estimated to be around 15% of the GDP) than the foreign aid received by the country, hence the government's increased focus on the Diaspora. This is also the reason that the Senegalese Diaspora has been given political representation in the government. However, as the expert from Senegal articulated, the elected Diaspora representatives in the Senegalese parliament lack sufficient influence on many issues. Accordingly, the members of the Diaspora need to be more organized and should empower their elected representatives to promote their interests through Senegal's political system. It was noted that during the Diaspora Dialogue for Development held in Dakar in 2017, the government committed to creating a council for

the Diaspora whose representatives would have diplomatic passports; this has not yet been achieved.

During the webinar, the human dimension of migration governance was often raised, as the experts acknowledged the barriers posed by xenophobia and racism within Africa itself. While many agreements have been signed by African governments, more practical commitment is needed to address violations of human rights and migrant rights. In short, migration governance is a multi-level, multi-dimensional process that requires greater co-learning among government stakeholders as well as among migration policy experts across countries in Africa.

The analysis in this policy brief is informed by the knowledge, experience, and expertise of the African migration policy experts who participated in the fifth 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 fifth webinar of the Platform represented different partner countries in Africa, namely: Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, and Senegal.