



Knowledge Platform for Migration Governance in Africa

Platform Policy Brief 08

Migration Governance in Urban Cities in Africa: The Case of Lagos

This is the eighth policy brief by the Knowledge Platform (KP) for Migration Governance in Africa¹ coordinated 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, the platform is committed to contributing to a better migration governance system that works for the benefit of all. The platform organized its eighth webinar in May 2021 to reflect on migration governance in urban cities in Africa: the case of Lagos. 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 in May 2021 to reflect on migration governance in urban cities in Africa: in this case, Lagos in Nigeria. Migration from rural to urban cities in Africa has long been a defined feature. Urban cities in many countries attract rural migrants because they offer all kinds of employment as well as business opportunities not available elsewhere. As a result, migration from rural to urban cities has created mega-cities in Africa, such as Lagos, which today has a population nearing 20 million. Though the main driver of growth in Lagos over the past fifty years has been rural-urban migration, there has been evidence of urban-urban migration from within and outside Nigeria to Lagos. Migrants are found both in the booming formal and informal sectors of the Lagos economy with a variety of social opportunities to improve their quality of life via access

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 in this document.

to education, health care as well as social amenities such as water supply, sewerage, and electricity which are lacking for many in squatter settlements. The waves of migrants to the city create all kinds of challenges that need to be managed in order to make the city habitable for all of its residents. Lagos is selected as a case study for this webinar because it offers a window on how migration governance works in many urban cities in Africa, the challenges being confronted, and perhaps examples of best practices in its implementation process.

The webinar reflected on the nature of policies and practices that the city government and municipal administration in Lagos adopted to govern migration into the city and to facilitate orderly integration processes and ensure stable communal harmony. The role of the city's governing body was also discussed due to the fact that governors and mayors in certain cities in Africa have recently emerged as powerful leaders, preparing their cities for the future. Lagos is run by a governor and is the economic capital of Nigeria. It is also a dynamic and cosmopolitan city, thus providing a case study for other cities in Africa in terms of the ways that migration governance has been implemented and how it can be improved further. This is with the understanding that migration from rural to urban cities in Africa is likely to increase as the impact of climate change and related natural disasters, such as droughts, force more people to move to cosmopolitan cities with more economic resources, like Lagos.

Hence, a closer look at how the administration in Lagos governs migration in the city is crucial in helping us better understand the workings of the migration governance system in a mega-city and what needs to be done to improve it, including through policy interventions that may also be helpful to other mega-cities on the continent.

Lagos city in historical context

Lagos has long been an arrival city. Its strategic location as a port city made it an ideal place for trade and transportation, thus conducive to a business environment. In addition, Lagos was better developed than other cities in the country. It had a well-developed infrastructure and better health and education systems, primarily as a result of it being the capital of the British protectorate during colonial times. Lagos became the capital of independent Nigeria in 1960. Control of its hinterland was returned to the city in 1967 with the creation of Lagos State. However, Abuja replaced Lagos as the capital on 12 December 1991. Abuja was chosen for Nigeria's new capital because of its central location, easy accessibility, salubrious climate, and low population density, with the availability of land for future expansion and an escape from the very frustrating traffic gridlock in Lagos. Abuja or sometimes referred to as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is, therefore, the political and administrative capital of Nigeria. In spite of the move of Nigeria's capital to Abuja, Lagos remains as the center of national economic hub and categorized as the economic² and industrial capital of Nigeria. Consequently, people from every corner of the country, from rural villages and urban towns, began flooding into the city in large numbers in search of opportunities and better livelihoods.

² Lagos had a GDP of over US\$136 billion in 2017.

This migratory trend has continued unabated and, in the last three decades, the influx of people has increased tremendously. The migration pathway to Lagos is facilitated by the access to the city by land, by sea, and by air from the pre-colonial era putting Lagos in the first category of Nigerian states to achieve that giant economic and development status as the most prosperous and economically viable state in Nigeria. Consequently, the population of the city has grown to nearly 20 million, making it a mega-city in Nigeria. Indeed, Lagos is one of the fastest growing cities in the world. It is currently experiencing a big population growth because it has become a giant economic hub in the country. Moreover, today, Lagos is the fourth largest economy in Africa. In particular, Lagos has the largest informal economy and the highest internally generated revenue out of the 35 states in Nigeria. The city's economy has also diversified to include manufacturing, transportation, construction, wholesale retail, and culture, boosting its national and international profile. In the past two decades, migration sources have been both internal and external, bringing about more opportunities for growth as well as significant challenges. As a result, Lagos is now an origin, transit, and destination hub, attracting people from other regions in the country, neighbouring states, and beyond. Here, the notion of migration and development link is very active and evident in Lagos in terms of migrants' financial and social contributions to its overall growth and capital development. There is the need however for the state to build as well as strengthen structures on how more of labor migrants' and Diaspora contributions can further enhance future development - harnessing urbanization to end poverty and boost more prosperity in the state.

Lagos was designed to support a population of about 2 million, yet it is now managing more than 10 times that initial capacity. The challenge of preparing the city to cope with this exponential growth is huge, not least because the waves of arrivals are unlikely to subside. Yet, despite its the original inhabitants being the Yoruba, Lagos is generally seen as a "No Man's Land" due to the agelong tradition of integrating migrant socially, economically, culturally and politically in to practically all the strata of the society and city life. This is the result of its unique social dynamics and controls that ensure diverse migrant communities and ethnic groupings co-exist and live together in relative harmony in a culture of inclusion. As the migration policy experts from Lagos explained, it is the community and religious leaders from different ethnic backgrounds and from different waves of arrivals that ensure social stability in the city. Hence, despite Lagos experiencing the many challenges confronting all the world's mega-cities, such as housing shortages, water and electricity scarcities, and poor service delivery systems, it can still be considered a No Man's Land. Nevertheless, because of its locally generated economic wealth, Lagos continues to attract new waves of migration from within Nigeria as well as from countries in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region.

As the old waves of migrants settle and integrate into the social and economic life of the city and become Lagosian, new arrivals come to the city in search of a better life. This cycle of arrivals has long shaped the city. In addition, Lagos is also the port of entry for migrants returning from abroad. All these different arrivals present a huge challenge in terms of migration governance in this mega-city. As a result, today, many new arrivals are largely left to fend for themselves, leading to a situation in which many migrants struggle to survive and often live in very poor conditions. This is partially due to the fact that the cost of living in the city is exorbitant. Indeed, Lagos is now one of the most expensive cities in Africa (and in the

world for that matter). The poor and migrants bear the brunt of this dire situation. Good migration governance policy is one that is designed to take care of poor migrants until they can fend for themselves. This is what an administration of any urban city needs to pay more attention when implementing its migration governance policy. The case of Lagos presents particular experience worth reflecting on with respect to this issue.

Governing migration in the mega-city of Lagos

For a long time, the administration in the city has been run by the All-Progressives Congress political party. The management of the city is decentralized to make it governable. It is run by 17 Local Governments and 37 Local Council Development Areas, represented by counsellors who administer its various wards and districts.³ This decentralized administrative body is necessary as running a mega-city like Lagos with a huge population can be a cumbersome task. It is also worth noting that, as a result of the huge migration flows, the city now offers a refuge to more than 250 Nigerian ethnic groups and over 30 African nations, all converging in the city in search of a better life.

Furthermore, the city's administration has adopted national and regional policies to migration governance in the city. With regards to national policies, the administration applies the National Policy on Labour Migration (2014), the National Migration Policy⁴ (2015) and the National Diaspora Policy (2021). At the city level, policies such as the Residence Registration Agency are implemented, so all inhabitants, including new arrivals from the rest of the country, must register in order to obtain official residency. The administration uses personal identification to fight crimes and reduce insecurity in the city as well as a strategy for tax collection. More importantly, Lagos residency holders, whether long-term residents or new arrivals, are granted access to social services in the city. Despite the implementation of these policies, the influx of people and incidents of human trafficking pose tremendous challenges to the administration. At the federal level, there is a National Identity Number policy, which the government can use to monitor the numbers of people, but it has not yet been officially formalized by the government in Lagos State. In sum, these are some of the key policy instruments currently available to the administration to manage migration into the city from other parts of the country.

With regards to migration coming from outside the country, the administration has adopted the Protocol of Free Movement enacted by ECOWAS in 1979.⁵ The Protocol grants citizens of ECOWAS member states the right to move to other countries in the region and, once there, to acquire residence, employment, and establish businesses. However, the Protocol does not protect the rights of non-ECOWAS migrants from the rest of the continent. Nonetheless, recently, the city administration has been trying to implement a number of policy recommendations aimed at meeting the obligations of the Global Compact for

³ See: lagosstate.gov.ng/about-lagos/.

⁴ See: publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/national_migration_policy_2015.pdf.

⁵ See here the original documents of the Protocol: www.ecowas.int.

Migration (GCM) goals that many governments have formally signed.⁶ Meeting these obligations includes host governments or authorities providing access to basic services for migrants in their cities or countries. In the context of Lagos, this new policy is aimed at accommodating the needs of those migrants to the city coming from African countries that fall outside the ECOWAS Protocol. This, in effect captures though a seeming presence of 'top-down' multilateral framework for migration governance in Lagos. However, there is a rapidly emerging 'bottom-up' migration governance framework albeit with the absence of coherent state institutions. Lagos like many cities in Nigeria mostly manage migration by creating ad hoc forms of multi-level migration governance structure.

In essence, as will be explained in next section, an effective implementation of any migration governance policy will be problematic if it is not anchored in the institutional infrastructure of the city at all levels. This is particularly crucial in a mega-city like Lagos, which deals with a constant influx and successive waves of migratory movements from within and outside the country. There is the need for Africa, Nigeria and its state units to decentralize urbanization and urban assistance economically and politically to strengthen autonomy at the local administration at the local government levels for more tasks in urban management to impact unemployment, worsening income rates, and incidences in slums.

Lessons learned from Lagos

The lessons learned from the case of Lagos City are threefold. The first lesson is the importance of institutionalizing migration governance policy at the municipal level. For instance, Lagos City has 17 local governments but migration is not clearly specified in any of their social policies and programmes. The second lesson is the importance of making migration governance part of city planning in terms of housing and other social services, in order to make the city habitable for its population. An effective policy in this regard will relieve congestion and increasing numbers of squatters currently plaguing Lagos City. The third lesson is that it is crucial to make migration governance part of the development planning of the city. This requires setting aside resources, human power, and establishing targeted programmes aimed at integrating new migrants into the economic and social life of the city. To date, the administration in Lagos has not yet sufficiently addressed these three issues, which are crucial for a well-functioning migration governance system in any city, anywhere.

As discussed earlier, the huge challenge currently confronting the city of Lagos is dealing with two types of arrivals. The first is those migrants arriving in the city from different parts of the country. The second is migrants coming from outside the country. Both types of migratory movements pose different challenges and thus require different instruments of migration governance, not least because each category has different rights and a different status (citizen versus foreigner). That said, their needs are similar in terms of safety, personal security and protection as vulnerable individuals who find themselves in a new position in a new place. They require all kinds of support, including access to social welfare such as food

⁶ The document of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) was formally signed and adopted by 164 countries in Marrakech on 10 December 2018. See further: <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>.

stamps, medical care, housing, sanitation, etc. To this end, addressing the immediate needs of both types of migrants requires developing targeted policies at the local levels. Again, the current city administration has yet to achieve this in a meaningful manner. More importantly, it is observed that the sooner that new arrivals are assisted in integrating into the economic and social life of the host society, the better the outcome for the overall development of the host place. This is because migrants bring a new dynamism, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit to the economic life of their new residence. Lagos is a good example, as the local experts attested. The booming economy of the city of Lagos can be attributed partly to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of its new arrivals. It is clear that having in place a good and effectively implemented migration governance system is a win-win situation for both migrants and the economic prosperity of any city.

The experts from other countries who participated in the webinar also reflected on these issues. They cited experiences from other cities in different countries such as Mali, Senegal, and Tunisia, among others. A key point they emphasized is the importance of having a leadership committed to integrating migration-related issues into local development policy and practice. Achieving effective migration governance requires a strong political will, resources, trained manpower, and sufficient institutional capacity. As the experts highlighted, efforts to institutionalize migration governance at the city or at the municipal level remains at a rudimentary stage in many countries in Africa. This is a key lesson, vividly illustrated by the case of Lagos. It is clear that greater policy and research attention must now be paid to this policy issue in order to realize a workable, bottom-up migration governance system at the local levels. Furthermore, cultivating a robust migration governance system should be part of ongoing policy discussions on the pathways to achieving the development goals of the GCM at a country level. In short, according to the experts, the current experience on the ground in many countries attests that any efforts to impose a migration governance system from the top down will not be effective. Specifically, it will not work in terms of integrating migration into the urban and development planning either at the city level. It will also not be easy to effectively institutionalize the migration governance system at local levels.

Conclusion

The webinar illuminated the challenges of implementing a workable migration governance system in a mega-city like Lagos. Lagos is not exceptional, in this regard, but it provides a useful case in terms of the nature of migration dynamics confronting urban cities in Africa, many of which are not fully prepared to deal with its current magnitude. Today, Lagos city is an origin, transit, and destination for two types of migratory movements at the same time. Migrants coming into the city from inside Nigeria and those coming from the outside of the country. Different types of migration governance policies are necessary to manage these two types of migration flows better at the city and at the municipal levels. Yet, in both cases, the existing policies available to the administration of the city are not sufficient to integrate the new arrivals into the economic and social life of the host society. The result is an explosion of uncontrolled squatter settlements in the city leading to human misery, high risk of diseases, landslides, and flooding when it rains. Another negative repercussion related to the shortcomings of these existing policies is the increase in human trafficking from the city, which the local administration is struggling to combat. This is due to the limited policy

instruments available to the administration in a mega-city like Lagos. In this regard, the case of Lagos provides a window on the workings of the migration governance system in many urban cities and the challenges that increasing waves of migration pose to the institutional capacity of any city administration in Africa at this moment. The case of Lagos offers us an important lesson. It provides valuable insight that is worth considering within the ongoing policy discussions geared to improving the migration governance system in Africa at national, city, and local levels. It also raises the significance of undertaking more evidence-based research on the topic so that municipalities can learn from each other, and share experiences and best practices of good migration governance policies across 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 eighth webinar organized by the Knowledge Platform for Migration Governance in Africa. The added value of the African migration policy experts in the policy discussion in the field, 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 of 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 eighth webinar of the Platform represented different partner countries in Africa, namely: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia.