

Forum on Mobility in the Horn of Africa: Outcome Document

Horn of Africa Regional Programme (HARP): Life & Peace Institute

Executive Summary

In the global migration discourse in general and in light of the current European migration crisis in particular, the Horn of Africa (HoA) is often portrayed, more often than not, as a source of refugees and migrants.¹ However, the reality is that of the 3.12 million refugees from the Horn of Africa in the world, 2.46 million refugees (78.8%) actually never reach Europe's shores.² Remarkably, over 75%³ stay in the HoA and are hosted by neighbouring countries. Ethiopia, for example, hosts 665,000 refugees and if the number of refugees per 1 USD GDP per capita is taken, Ethiopia is the number one refugee host country in the world while Uganda and Kenya would come 4th and 5th respectively.⁴

While the above figures focus on refugees and displaced populations, an increasing number of people in the region move around voluntarily and in search of economic opportunities. Solid figures on voluntary migration within the Horn are hard to come by, but labour migration to South Sudan following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 and in the wake of South Sudan's independence was a case in point of the rise in intraregional labour migration.

The Horn of Africa Bulletin (HAB) Forum on 'Mobility in the Horn of Africa' presented the primarily positive contributions of labour migration, by taking the case of South Sudan as an example. The HABForum recommended the development of new and /or implementation of existing regional policy frameworks and mechanisms that consolidate efforts for further cooperation in managing migration in the region, facilitate trade, cultural exchange, tourism and cooperation for HoA states. The Forum further recommended that well managed labour migration within the region should be supported as it will lead to regional integration, economic dependency, and peaceful relations among communities and states in the Horn.

The Forum concluded that there is a great need for scientific data that depicts the true nature of intra-regional migration in the Horn, and recommended the development of strong migration information systems and national migration profiles, as a basis for evidence-based policy formulation on migration.

1 Refugees are persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution.

Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government.

<http://www.unhcr.org/55df0e556.html>

2 UNHCR Global Trends 2014, A Year of Crises,

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e4838e6&submit=GO>

3 Ibid

4 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Data on International Migration, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.shtml>

Introduction

In the realm of migration, the Horn of Africa is often seen solely as a source of migrants and refugees. However, a more critical view of the figures shows that the region hosts many of the migrants and refugees that originate from within the HoA region. At the beginning of 2015, more than 630,000 refugees were being hosted, mainly in camps, throughout Ethiopia; 460,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Sudan⁵; 650,610 in Kenya⁶; 536,610 in Uganda⁷; 27,500 in Djibouti⁸ and 269,850 in South Sudan.⁹

While these figures challenge the typical lens through which migration in the HoA is viewed, the type, cause and pattern of migration in the HoA is more complex, dynamic and less studied. In fact, the Horn as a region and many of the countries as individual units present a migration paradox where they serve as sources, transitory routes and final destinations all at the same time, for hundreds of thousands of migrants.¹⁰

A case in point for an alternative view of migration in the Horn is South Sudan. Since the signing of the CPA in 2005 and South Sudan's independence in 2011, economic migrants from the Horn sought opportunities in South Sudan and contributed significantly to the reconstruction of the country by providing their services as skilled and unskilled workers. When in 2013 conflict broke out and thousands of refugees fled the country, many of the economic migrants stayed in South Sudan, in particular in Juba and continued to be key economic players in the country.

The Horn of Africa Bulletin (HAB) Forum on "Mobility in the Horn of Africa" held on October 1, 2015 brought representatives of diplomatic missions, academics, civil society organizations, and regional organizations to discuss the state of intraregional migration in the HoA, by taking South Sudan as a case study, with the aim of shedding light to the understudied issue of intraregional migration.

The significance of the Forum was three fold. First, it challenged the dominant narrative that portrays HoA solely as a source of migrants by highlighting that the region also serves as a host to migrants and refugees. Secondly, it showed a different dimension to migration ie. voluntary labour migration in the region. Thirdly, the Forum drew attention to migration – which is an important dynamic in South Sudan, which is more often than not overshadowed by the ongoing conflict in the country. In light of these three overall objectives, the Forum discussed why people migrate within the region, the challenges they face, their contribution to the host country, the different challenges and opportunities that voluntary labour migrants face, and the regional policy frameworks that are in place in the HoA. Participants put forth general recommendations on how migration can contribute to regional integration, development and peace in the region; and how regional policy frameworks on migration could facilitate this process.

5 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Sudan, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483b76.html>

6 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Kenya, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483a16.html>

7 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Uganda, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483c06.html>

8 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Djibouti, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483836.html>

9 2015 UNHCR country operations profile - South Sudan available from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4e43cb466.html>

10 http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/35038/MPC_2015-04_PB.pdf?sequence=1

The different face of migration: Labour migration in South Sudan

Voluntary migration of people to South Sudan is characterised by labour mobility, trade and repatriation of refugees. These movements are embedded in not only economic opportunities but also social and cultural ties partly because of prior political, economic, and social inter-linkages between the sending and receiving countries. Labour migrants decide on South Sudan as a destination depending on the following major factors as discussed in the Forum.

Pull factors for labour migrants

Political Factors

Political relations between countries determine the composition and direction of migration flows. This is true to the Horn as well where labour migration to South Sudan was partly fostered by close political ties between political leaders of South Sudan and countries of origin from the time of the Sudan People's Liberation Army's (SPLA) struggle for independence, the signing of the CPA, to post-independence developments.

Government policy

South Sudan inherited one of the weakest border and migration management regimes in Africa following its independence¹¹ and is yet to develop a policy framework on labour migration and migration management. South Sudan is also waiting to enact a Labour Bill into law.

While this situation may have created shortcomings in labor and migration management, the government has adopted a migration-friendly praxis including providing incentives such as tax free importation of goods for investors, providing tax breaks and easing the requirements for acquisition of land for construction purposes. According to Forum participants who are currently working in South Sudan, the process of legal registration to get a work permit from the Ministry of Migration and Interior is one of the most efficient in the region.

Social networks

Social networks play a major role in labour migration to South Sudan from within the region. The repatriation of thousands of refugees within the first months of the signing of the CPA from around the region strengthened the social ties between the host nations in the Horn and South Sudanese returnees. This explains why labour migrants in South Sudan are mainly from Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia which were the main host countries for South Sudanese refugees for two decades. Furthermore, labour migrants in South Sudan maintain their connection to their home countries which can also serve as another incentive for their kin to seek opportunities in South Sudan.

Social networks provide useful information about South Sudan in general, the demand for labour, skills, expected wages, the existence of jobs in various sectors, proximity and ability to organise travel, which plays a major role in the decision of labour migrants to go to South Sudan.

Economic factors

Given the decades of marginalization and neglect of Southern Sudan pre-CPA, South Sudan had very limited infrastructure and local capacity (labour, capital, technical know-how, etc) to

¹¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM). Border Management, <http://southsudan.iom.int/programmes/border-management/>

catalyse development after its independence. Therefore, there was a great demand for labour, a wide array of job and investment opportunities, higher wages and reasonable work conditions. These economic dynamics have resulted in South Sudan becoming a major destination for labour migrants since the signing of the CPA in 2005 facilitated the new oil economy.

Sectors for labour migrants

Current patterns of labour migration to South Sudan are characterised by both skilled and non-skilled labour movements. Many professionals such as teachers, medical workers, mechanics, accountants and development workers are attracted by higher wages in South Sudan. Non-Governmental Organisations especially attract a large number of skilled personnel to South Sudan and act as intermediaries in intra-regional migration of labour. Today, South Sudan is home to over 160 national and 140 international NGOs¹² the roles of which in attracting skilled labour is significant, yet largely understudied.

The demand for imported consumer goods, clothing and capital equipment, offer a large and lucrative market for food products and consumer goods. This has created a vast opportunity for the informal sector, which attracts a sizeable number of labour migrants engaged in several activities, especially trade. South Sudan attracts both male and female labour migrants. The demography though not scientifically researched, is clear where women dominate in the hotel services, trading, and petty business and men are employed mostly in the construction sector and as chauffeurs.

Contributions of labour migrants in South Sudan

The contribution of labour migration to South Sudan's development and growth, poverty reduction, and impact on the local labour market, the GDP, public finances and social services, and the way it transforms social relations in South Sudan remains largely unstudied. However, in light of the lack of capacity and skilled labour force evidenced in post-independence South Sudan, labour migrants in South Sudan have contributed to development of the country in terms of employment creation, tax revenues, skills transfer and advancing the service sector.

Lessons learned from labour migration in South Sudan

South Sudan provides different lessons with regards to labour migration to the country. Some of those as discussed in the Forum are presented below.

Cultural exchange and tolerance

It is a matter of common observation that receiving countries rarely mention the positive contributions of migrant workers to their economies and societies. In fact, xenophobia has become a significant political force, pitting political parties against each other around the world as a mechanism for gaining popular support. South Sudan however serves as a great example, by welcoming outsiders into the country and valuing their contribution to the development of the nation. The process of labour migration from the HoA to South Sudan has resulted in many nationals working, living and cooperating in South Sudan. This has helped in bringing down stereotypes between nationals in the region – an opportunity for positive people-to-people exchanges, despite the political differences their countries of origins may pursue.

¹² The Guardian, South Sudan risks "catastrophe" with new aid agency law, warn NGOs, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/may/14/south-sudan-aid-agency-law-risks-catastrophe-warn-ngos>

At the same time, the perception that migrant workers ‘steal’ jobs from the local population, engage in criminal activities and introduce various immoral cultures into South Sudan has begun to be a point of controversy. However, an astute observation that arose from the Forum indicates that migrant workers do not compete with nationals as they are currently filling the gap in the local labour market and/or are employed in sectors that are shunned by locals. In the future however, when South Sudanese have acquired the necessary skills and when some jobs are no longer shunned by locals, tension may arise between labor migrants and locals who compete for the same jobs.

Free movement of people

Migration is not an unusual phenomenon, but rather a necessary and inalienable component of the livelihoods of millions of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the HoA region, which is also characterized by divided communities among different countries within the region.

In a 21st-century globalized economy, migration can be a significant engine for growth if it is managed effectively. In this regard, there are free flows of manufactured goods and services, free flows of technology and intellectual property rights, and free flows of capital. Yet the flow of labor, the most important component, is severely restricted. South Sudan has been a good example as to how free movement of border communities and labour migrants could contribute to the economy of the receiving country.

Conclusion and ways forward/recommendations

South Sudan has attracted a wide array of labour migrants. Demands for skilled labour in various sectors, business opportunities and improved security prior to the start of the current conflict in 2013, have all attracted labour movements to the country. These movements have also been influenced in part by prior linkages between the sending and receiving countries through ethnic, social, economic, historical and political ties.

Though it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which each of these factors contributes to migration due to lack of researched data, the Forum has however showed that the linkages are dynamic and keep changing in relation to individual and state interests. The participants also agreed that there are costs and benefits as well as positives and negatives to migration. The challenge is and will always be to find a balance between the two.

Moreover, the Forum has identified specific and general recommendations that will at least enrich the dialogue on labour migration within the region and at best result in concrete policy implications. These recommendations include:

A shift in perception

Migrants are more often than not considered to be sources of insecurity, a strain on the infrastructure and services, a threat to national identity, and a burden on social services within host countries.

While migrants are often depicted to be part of the challenge, the Forum highlighted the need for a shift in perception about migrants. Migrants are often to be found among the service providers, the entrepreneurs, job creators, innovators, among others. As members of a global diaspora, migrants can act as bridge-builders, traders, business partners and humanitarian

supporters between countries. Yet oftentimes migrants' contributions go unrecognized, or at best are measured only in terms of the remittances they send back home.¹³

Thus, stakeholders need to understand the complex nature of migration in the HoA and strengthen opportunities while working to tackle the challenges it presents such as human rights violations, human trafficking, and drug and arms trafficking.

Common policy and mechanism for migration management

The free movement of people is important at a time where more countries in the HoA are undertaking the development of major infrastructure projects aimed at physically connecting their countries for economic integration. These projects include the Mombasa/Nairobi/Addis Ababa Road Corridor Development, Djibouti-Ethiopia railway development, and Upgrading of Dobi-Galafi Road to name a few. The development of physical infrastructure would enhance regional economic and social integration by facilitating the movement of people.

Regional policy frameworks and mechanisms would consolidate efforts for further cooperation in managing migration in the region; facilitate trade, cultural exchange, tourism and cooperation for IGAD states. These policies and frameworks would facilitate legal migration, maximising the development impact of migration and mobility through concrete initiatives; assist in improving national capacity building in migration management in all its components and addressing irregular migration, promoting cooperation on protection and rights of migrants, preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants and in general limiting the negative consequences of migration. It will also help facilitate the free movement of people in a way that promotes peace and security in the region.

The IGAD Draft Protocol on the Free Movement of People calls upon countries in the IGAD region to commit towards the gradual removal of barriers to free movement. The free movement of people entails:

- Confronting negative public attitudes towards migrants.
- Providing and harmonizing procedures for acquiring work permits.
- Mutual recognition of professional and academic qualifications. This would lay the foundations for *Mutual Recognition Agreements* of specific professions and professional bodies.
- Agreement on the right of establishment and residence of nationals from within the region.

There is a need to implement common regional policy frameworks where they exist, and to revise and/or to develop new ones where existing ones are lacking. In this regard, the Forum recommended the critical review of, popularization, operationalization, and dissemination of major policy frameworks and strengthening mechanisms at the continental and regional levels.

At the continental level, African Union member states have committed themselves to undertake measures to gradually attain the Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence

¹³ International Organization for Migration (IOM). Migration Initiatives, 2015, Regional Strategies: Migrants and Cities, http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/Migration_Initiatives2015.pdf

and Establishment under Chapter Six Article 43 of the Abuja Treaty of the AU Framework of Cooperation.¹⁴ Other major policy frameworks and declarations on migration include:

- Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA),
- Ouagadougou Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings Especially Children and Women,
- African Common Position on Migration and Development,
- The Kampala Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa adopted in 2009,
- AU Border Program, and
- The EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative: the Khartoum Process

In the HoA region, the IGAD Minimum Integration Plan (MIP) aims at tracking the regional integration process. Efforts are underway to strengthen inter-regional connectivity through the Horn of Africa Infrastructure Project which is part of the MIP. The IGAD Protocol on Free Movement of Persons is also aimed at accelerating the integration process in the region. Other major policy frameworks and declarations on migration in the IGAD region include:

- The Regional Migration Policy Framework (RMPF) adopted in 2012,
- The draft action plan to operationalize the Regional Migration Policy Framework (RMPF),
- IGAD Regional Consultation Process (RCP) (organized by IOM/UNHCR),
- Regional Migration Coordination Committee (RMCC) composed of Heads of Immigration of Member States for the IGAD region, and
- A ministerial committee to add to the political process.

The Forum further recommended that IGAD member states develop a national migration architecture to feed into the regional-level migration policies.

Migration, regional integration and peace

The general consensus that arose from the Forum with regards to migration and peace and security in the HoA is that policy frameworks and mechanisms at the continental, regional and national levels will lead to cooperation on migration and border management. This will in turn help address security concerns related to illegal migration, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illegal trade, trafficking in persons, arms, drugs and human rights abuse.

In addition, labour migration and informal markets that migration creates is important for regional integration as it will lead to economic dependency between countries in the IGAD region. This will directly contribute to peace through making war/conflict especially costly by making countries economically dependent on each other.

Research and documentation on intra-regional migration

There is notable lack or absence of reliable data on labour migration flows in the region and many knowledge gaps. Therefore, a first step for a regional strategy on labour migration and mobility should be the development of strong migration information systems and national migration profiles, as a basis for evidence-based policy formulation. It should also be disaggregated by gender and other demographic categories.

Currently, there is a labour migration survey and attendant report that is ongoing at the continental level in collaboration between the AU, ILO, and IOM that is hoped to cover some of the knowledge gaps on migration.

Sources

The Guardian. *South Sudan risks 'catastrophe' with new aid agency law, warn NGOs*, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/may/14/south-sudan-aid-agency-law-risks-catastrophe-warn-ngos> (accessed 3 October 2015)

International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Border Management*, available from <http://southsudan.iom.int/programmes/border-management/> (accessed 3 October 2015)

International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Migration Initiatives: 2015. Regional Strategies: Migrants and Cities* available from http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/Migration_Initiatives2015.pdf (accessed 3 October 2015)

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Data on International Migration*, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.shtml> (accessed 22 August 2014).

UNHCR *Global Trends 2014, A Year of Crises*, available from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e4838e6&submit=GO> (accessed 22 August 2015).

UNHCR *Sudan Country Operations Profile, 2015*, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483b76.html> (accessed 3 October 2015).

UNHCR *Kenya Country Operations Profile, 2015*, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483a16.html> (accessed 3 October 2015).

UNHCR *Uganda Country Operations Profile, 2015*, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483c06.html> (accessed 3 October 2015).

UNHCR *Djibouti Country Operations Profile, 2015*, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483836.html> (accessed 3 October 2015).

UNHCR *South Sudan Country Operations Profile, 2015*, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4e43cb466.html> (accessed 3 October 2015).

