

Case Studies: Contribution of Diaspora Communities : African Communities in Switzerland

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The children of Africa come to Europe and jeopardize their lives here!

"The belly is Africa that devours everything that comes from Europe. There are huge amounts of money sent from Europe to Africa, and Africa devours that money without producing anything in return."

We have observed during the last ten years that migrants that come to Europe do not know why they came, and once they return home, they do not have the courage to tell people about the poverty they endure in Europe.

One of the main causes of migration from Africa is the economic situation. Many highly qualified Africans cannot find jobs in their countries. Since the agricultural sector is partially destroyed many people from rural areas migrate to cities to find jobs. This leads to increased growth of unemployment in the cities. As a result these people start thinking to migrate to Europe in search of a better life. They believe that it is the land of wealth, that it is paradise.

They get such an image about Europe through TV, films and other media sources which filter information about the real image of Europe. Due to the high illiteracy rate, majority of people do not even get information from the media. "When „illegal“ migrants come to Europe, in most cases they face harsh conditions. They take any risk for the sake of survival. And they often have nothing to lose, nothing to risk."

Migrants' images are often framed by prejudiced public perception and media coverage. "The difference between the good tourists and the evil illegal migrants on the shores of the European Union is seen as normal and immanent." Tourists are short-stay travellers, who come to enjoy the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. By contrast, illegal migrants are seen as barbarians who are suspicious and *not* of interest, who allegedly come in large numbers and threaten public order and security. In the media coverage of migration there is a citing of *floods, streams, masses*, and even *tsunamis* against which borders or walls have to be erected in order to prevent *flooding*,

We have identified two major factors which prompt people to move: pull (demand) and push (supply). Pull factors include changing demographics, labour market needs, higher wages and human security. Powerful economic and demographic factors in both south and north can be attributed to this. Some migration is necessary for the stabilization of the economies. As the European population shrinks, both skilled and unskilled labour has become necessary. Migrant workers are critical, particularly in sector where the reduction labour cost is vital for competitiveness.

These are some of the motivating factors:

- *The willingness of employers to hire irregular migrants for lower wages in spite of government anti migration policies is a key motivation.*
- *Europe's geographical proximity to Africa makes it very attractive destination. Sometimes determined migrants can reach Europe by foot.*
- *Availability and advancement in opportunities like further education, training and exposure are also a factor. There are several opportunities that do not exist in developing countries. Foreign tertiary institutions now periodically open admission exhibitions for prospective undergraduate or postgraduate studies. This has a profound impact on the desire to migrate.*
- *Sustained economic growth has led to the demand for well trained professionals in the developed world. Well trained professionals from developing countries are being enticed to go and work in developed countries with better salaries and working condition. This explains the exodus of doctors and other medical personnel from some parts of Africa.*
- *Advancement in communication and access to satellite images contributes in large measure to reinforcing stereotypes and perceptions of Europe as an area of affluence. Modern communication has also made the transfer of cultural influences like music and fashion at reach.*
- *Remittances accruing to individual migrant, family and community are the most important benefits of migration. They are often referred to as "the magic of migration". Over the last couple of decades there has been tremendous increase in remittances.*

Challenges:

Perhaps the question we should be asking is rather: "Is there a sincere political will from the European States to facilitate the process of integration for African migrants? To me, it seems like there is no such a will, if there was such a will, how can we explain the administrative inefficiency, the scandalous delay of legal proceedings, the disproportion between the high costs and exaggerated spending in



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border control, on the one hand, and the irrelevant quantities invested to offer job opportunities and housing to those people entering the country, on the other?”

What we should aim at is changing the problems at their roots, and we can only do that by gaining knowledge about the state of affairs in the origin countries. The designers of these policies could use some walking along the streets of cities like Bamako, Dakar, Lagos, Asmara or Yaounde; or perhaps visiting the houses where persons crowd together waiting for the moment to start the adventure of jumping into Europe, without giving a thought about the obstacles that documents and cultural differences represent, without even wanting to look around them to count the number of deaths among relatives and friends who had the same dream before.

How can we judge over asylum right without knowing closely the motives that pull the citizens of the Western, Eastern and Central Africans nations, and the Western Sahara now incorporated to Morocco to apply for it?

Politics cannot ignore reality and reality, which is very stubborn, tells us that the walls and barriers are not solutions. Let us save some resources that we have spent on the walls and barriers, then, and let us think about some more profitable investments.