



Migration

Africa's Untapped Potential

Mohamed Abdel Jelil, Samik Adhikari, Quy-Toan Do,
Heidi Kaila, Federica Marzo, Olive Nsababera,
Ganesh Seshan, and Maheshwor Shrestha

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Foreword

Migration has long played a crucial role in shaping Africa's social, economic, and cultural landscape. At the World Bank, we recognize the immense potential of migration to drive economic development, reduce poverty, and enhance social cohesion across the continent. Migration is a powerful force for change, propelled by individuals and families seeking economic opportunities, safety, and improved living conditions both within Africa and beyond its borders.

Despite this transformative potential, the benefits of migration for Africa's development remain largely untapped. It is essential to shift our perspective and view migration not merely as a challenge but as an opportunity to mobilize Africa's vast human resources for the continent's growth and prosperity—and for the global community as well.

Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its development journey, with a young and rapidly growing population poised to become a significant part of the global workforce. By 2050, one in three young working-age individuals will be born in Africa, offering an unprecedented opportunity to drive economic growth and innovation. To fully realize this potential, African countries, in partnership with the global community, must create environments that support and enhance the contributions of migrants to the prosperity of both origin and destination countries.

This companion report to *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies* underscores the need for policies that facilitate safe, orderly, and regular migration while providing protection to the forcibly displaced. It calls for concerted efforts by policy makers, communities, and stakeholders in origin, transit, and destination countries to implement strategies that leverage the economic potential of migrants and refugees. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of providing alternatives to distressed movements, which too often result in human tragedies during transit.

The World Bank is committed to supporting African countries in this endeavor. We believe that, by investing in education, infrastructure, and governance and by promoting regional integration, Africa can unlock the full potential of its human capital. Our role is to provide the necessary resources, research, and partnerships to help African countries harness the power of migration for economic growth and development.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of African migration patterns and offers actionable recommendations for policy makers. It highlights the need to protect the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, ensuring that migration is a safe and beneficial process for all involved. By embracing the potential of migration, Africa can address its development challenges and build a brighter future for its people.

The World Bank remains a steadfast partner in this journey, committed to working with African governments, regional bodies, and international partners to achieve a future where migration is a catalyst for sustainable development. Together, we can turn the promise of migration into a reality that benefits Africa and the world.



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Key Messages

Chapter 1: The State of African Mobility

1. Africans rarely migrate out of the continent.

Less than 1 percent of the region's population leaves the continent, well below the global average.

2. Africans who leave the continent are increasingly heading to North America and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries rather than Europe.

Three-fourths of African migrants who left the continent used to go to Europe. Slightly more than one-half do so today.

3. Many African countries are becoming destinations for migrants.

Northern African countries are increasingly emerging as destinations rather than merely transit points for migrants heading to Europe. Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and South Africa receive at least twice as many migrants as they send.

4. Irregular migration across the continent is the most dangerous in the world.

Close to 5,000 deaths of African migrants were reported in 2023, more than twice the number of recorded deaths of migrants from Asia and around four times that of migrants from Latin America.

5. Africa hosts one-fourth of the world's refugee population.

Most refugees move to neighboring countries, with nearly 90 percent hosted in just 10 countries.

Chapter 2: Overlapping Megatrends in Africa

1. By 2050, one in three youths (ages 15–34) will be African.

Africa is expected to add 600 million to its working-age population, while the working-age population in high- and upper-middle-income countries is expected to reduce by 200 million.

2. Africa's economic growth has been stagnating, failing to create enough jobs for its expanding youthful population.

Economic growth continues to lag population growth, with 9 out of 10 Sub-Saharan African children in learning poverty.

3. By 2050, an estimated 1.3 billion Africans will live in countries that are currently fragile or in conflict.

Nearly half of Africa's population lives in countries affected by persistent fragility, with instances of both conflict and violence and forced displacement rising sharply since 2010.

4. More than half a billion Africans are exposed to severe weather events, including floods, droughts, cyclones, or heat waves.

Climate change is an increasing threat to rural agricultural livelihoods and coastal areas, while African urban centers are struggling to cope with an expanding population and stresses on basic service provision.

Chapter 3: The Untapped Potential of Migration

1. African migration, as a source of prosperity for the continent, has been largely untapped.

Africans migrate in smaller numbers compared to other regions of the world, and a limited number move to countries where potential wage gains are significant.

2. The Great Demographic Divergence opens a window of opportunity for Africa to give greater prominence to migration in its development policy.

Key destination countries outside Africa face a shrinking workforce and will need to increase immigration from 14 percent to 77 percent of their existing population by 2050 to maintain their current working-age-to-elderly ratios.

3. Strategic management of migration enables both origin and destination countries to tailor migration to their mutual benefit.

Bilateral labor migration agreements are instruments to align skill development with destination needs, yet Africa lags in their use despite enduringly facilitating migration flows between countries.

4. Harnessing the economic potential of refugees and internally displaced people safeguards their dignity while lowering costs for host communities.

Economic integration, such as granting work rights and freedom of movement, empowers refugees and internally displaced people to become more self-reliant, thereby reducing the cost of hosting them.

Chapter 4: Harnessing the Productive Potential of African Mobility

1. Higher walls demand larger doors.

Fostering regular migration while disincentivizing irregular movements necessitates increasing the number of legal migration pathways.

2. Build and further strengthen migration systems in African countries.

Policies and systems are needed to support migrants and their origin and destination communities from departure, through transit, to destination, and eventually upon return.

3. Promote the regional mobility of Africans.

Lower barriers to free movement within regional economic communities, including for refugees, and improve the efficiency of regional labor markets by harmonizing skill acquisition and recognition.

4. Strengthen Africa's ability to leverage the Great Demographic Divergence.

Africa will increase the benefits from international migration by reinforcing mechanisms of collective action and investing in globally demanded skills both domestically and in coordination with destination countries.

Glossary

This glossary provides general descriptions, not precise legal definitions, of terms used in this report. However, the descriptions include legal and policy elements that are relevant to how the terms are understood and applied in practice. The glossary is adapted from World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies.

Africa's geographical core Countries in the West, Central, and East regions of Africa: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Africa's geographical periphery Countries in the North and Southern regions of Africa: Algeria, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, the Seychelles, South Africa, and Tunisia.

asylum or refugee status A legal status arising from judicial or administrative proceedings that a country grants to a refugee in its territory. This status confers on refugees international refugee protection by preventing their return (in line with the principle of *non-refoulement*), regularizing their stay in the territory, and providing them with certain rights while there.

asylum seeker A person outside their home country who is seeking asylum. For statistical purposes, it is a person who has submitted their application for asylum but has not yet received a final decision.

complementary (international) protection Forms of international protection provided by countries or regions to people who are not refugees but who still may need international protection. Countries use various legal and policy mechanisms to regularize the entry or stay of such individuals or prevent their return (in line with the principle of *non-refoulement*).

destination country/society The country to which a migrant moves.

diaspora The population of a given country that is scattered across countries or regions that are separate from its geographical place of origin.

distressed migrant A migrant who moves to another country under distressed circumstances but who does not meet the applicable criteria for refugee status. Their movements are often irregular and unsafe.

economic migrant A migrant who crosses an international border motivated not by persecution or possible serious harm or death but for other reasons, such as to improve their living conditions by working or reuniting with family abroad. This term encompasses labor migrants or migrant workers who move primarily to work in another country.

emigrant A person who leaves their country of habitual residence to reside in another country. This term is used from the perspective of the person's country of origin.

host country/society The country to which a refugee moves, temporarily or permanently.

immigrant A person who moves to a country to establish habitual residence. This term is used from the perspective of the person's destination country.

internally displaced persons (IDPs) People who have been displaced within a state's borders to avoid persecution, serious harm, or death, including through armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters.

international protection Legal protection granted by countries to refugees or other displaced people in their territory who cannot return to their home countries because they would be at risk there and because their home countries are unable or unwilling to protect them. International protection takes the form of a legal status that, at a minimum, prevents their return (in line with the principle of *non-refoulement*) and regularizes their stay in the territory.

irregular migrant A migrant who is not legally authorized to enter or stay in a given country (also called an *undocumented migrant*).

migrant In this report, those who change their country of habitual residence and who are not citizens of their country of residence. Such changes of country exclude short-term movement for purposes such as recreation, business, medical treatment, or religious pilgrimage.

non-refoulement The legal principle prohibiting countries from returning people to places where they may be at risk of persecution, torture, or other serious harm.

origin country/society The country from which a migrant or refugee moves.

refugee A person who has been granted international protection by a country of asylum because of feared persecution, armed conflict, violence, or serious public disorder in their origin country. The international protection granted by countries to refugees takes the form of a distinct legal status (refer to **asylum or refugee status**) preventing their return (in line with the principle of *non-refoulement*), regularizing their stay in the territory, and providing them certain rights while there, under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol or other international, regional, or national legal instruments.

regular migrant A migrant who is legally authorized to enter or stay in a given country.

stateless person A person who is not a citizen of any country.

Abbreviations

ACE	Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence
BLMA	bilateral labor migration agreement
BSSA	bilateral social security agreement
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	gross domestic product
GSP	global skills partnership
ICL	income contingent loan
IDP	internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MOU	memorandum of understanding
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REC	regional economic community
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHR	Window for Host Communities and Refugees

Introduction

Overview

African migration is a story of movement spurred by the pursuit of economic opportunities near and far, the quest for safety and security, the urgent need to escape environmental hardships, and the pull of familial bonds. Migration, both voluntary and forced, reveals the continent's resilience and adaptability, delineating pathways extending across Africa and reaching regions as distant as Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East. Yet, the transformative potential of migration to improve the lives of Africans remains largely untapped. Realizing the benefits of migration for Africa's development challenges calls for policy makers and communities in origin, transit, and destination countries to implement strategies to achieve the economic potential of mobility, while safeguarding the dignity and rights of all migrants and refugees.

The key to securing Africa's future lies in its ability to prepare its burgeoning youth population to tackle the continent's development challenges. Migration, a largely underutilized response, can greatly benefit the region. With nearly 60 percent of its population younger than age 25, youth are at the heart of the continent's economic, social, and political transformation. To harness its demographic dividend, Africa needs to confront the overlapping development challenges of an economic transformation that has yet to deliver on anticipated productivity gains, along with the impacts of climate change and the pervasive issues of fragility, conflict, and violence.

Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, is poised to become home to a significant portion of the global workforce. By 2050, one in three young working-age individuals (ages 15–34) will have been born on the continent. The challenge for Africa—and the world—is to create viable jobs by attracting capital and other resources to Africa's abundant labor or by facilitating African labor

movement to areas with these resources. This requires fostering and utilizing the productive potential of the labor force. Addressing these challenges will shape Africa's development. This report on Africa's cross-border migration explores how the continent can harness the potential of migration for economic opportunities within and beyond Africa.

The State of African Migration

To date, the rate of outmigration of Africans—in particular, citizens of countries in West, Central, and East Africa—has been limited compared to that of other regions of the world. Although African migrants make up close to 15 percent of the world's migration stock, less than 1 percent of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa migrates to a country outside Africa. The bulk of migration from Sub-Saharan African countries occurs between member countries in the same regional economic communities. For countries in North Africa, the rate of migration outside the subregion is closer to 5 percent.

Additionally, when it occurs, migration typically yields low economic returns for the migrants and the origin societies. Since outmigration is largely toward a neighboring country, West, Central, and East Africa receive the lowest remittances per capita among all regions. Relatedly, as of 2020, forced movements constitute 30 percent of total cross-border migration flows in Africa. Moreover, distressed and irregular movements put migrants, especially women, in vulnerable situations and test the resilience of host communities. Although irregular sea crossings to Europe are a small share of total entries, they impose significant human costs in terms of casualties at sea and human rights abuses along the route.

Yet, this retrospective view of Africa's migration hides a dynamic phenomenon wherein the destinations and compositions of the flows of migrants are changing. Although they traditionally moved to other countries in the continent or Europe, African migrants are increasingly diversifying their destination countries, with North America and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries gaining prominence. Moreover, the profile of migrants is also changing, as they are more educated and the share of female migrants has increased, reaching 45 percent across the continent. Meanwhile, countries such as Kenya, Morocco, and Tunisia are following the footsteps of others, such as the Arab Republic of Egypt and South Africa, by becoming destinations for a rising number of migrants, mostly from other African countries.

At the same time, the African continent hosts over a third of the global forcibly displaced population and over a quarter of refugees worldwide. An estimated 32.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 8.2 million refugees, and 1.1 million asylum seekers live in Africa. Chronic political instability and the effects of a warming climate put an increasing number of Africans at risk of being forcibly displaced, internally or across country borders. It is crucial to recognize that displacement situations are likely to be protracted and, therefore, require leveraging the economic potential of refugees and IDPs toward building sustainable protection systems and developing pathways for faster integration into current or future host societies.

Migration: Tapping Africa's Potential

Africa is at the confluence of global megatrends: a youth bulge paired with limited economic opportunities, increasing climate hazards, and state fragility. The consequences of the Great Demographic Divergence between the countries in West, Central, and East Africa and high-income and upper-middle-income countries is exacerbated by slow structural transformation, severe climate change effects, and chronic political instability plaguing many African countries.

Conversely, populations in high-income and upper-middle-income countries are aging rapidly. To maintain the current ratio of working-age population to the elderly in 2050, more than 130 million additional workers will be needed in the European Union, with an otherwise estimated loss of 12 percent of gross domestic product. Alternative policies, like raising retirement ages, increasing female labor force participation, and automation, cannot fully address the shortfall, especially in nontradable service sectors, where the scope for automation and offshoring is limited.

Yet, African workers face obstacles in their quest to seize the opportunities generated by the Great Demographic Divergence. Chief among these is the skill level of African youth, which is significantly lower than that of retiring workers in high-income and upper-middle-income countries. For instance, the average learning-adjusted years of schooling in countries in West, Central, and East Africa is 4.8, compared to 10.7 in key European destinations. Additionally, highly educated African migrants already in high-income Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries often work in low- or middle-skilled sectors or occupations due to a lack of recognition of their qualifications or a deficiency in language or sociobehavioral skills beyond formal education.

Moreover, immigration, especially from Sub-Saharan Africa, faces strong opposition from various constituencies in many destination countries. Immigration regularly tops the list of citizens' concerns, and recent national or European elections saw the rise of parties with strong anti-immigration platforms. While racism and xenophobia may drive some attitudes toward immigration, policies formulated by both origin and destination countries can harness African migration for the net benefit of both origin and destination societies.

Policies to Foster Better Migration: From Pre-Migration to Post-Return

For origin and destination countries, better migration implies ensuring a strong match between the migrant and the destination society. The gains from cross-border migration are the highest when migrants' skills respond to the demand in the labor markets of destination countries. Not only do migrants need to acquire skills and credentials prior to departure, they also need to be recognized in the destination country. However, information frictions are an important impediment to effective matching between supply and demand, and the regulation of private recruitment agencies and other intermediaries plays a critical role in ensuring that information is transparent for both migrant workers and their employers. Moreover, in destination countries, opening or expanding legal pathways that correspond to the needs of

the labor market helps to overcome current and expected skills shortages. Student migration offers potential solutions to several policy challenges, including skill recognition and social integration.

The match can be improved by providing alternatives to migration. Providing alternative coping mechanisms and labor market opportunities can improve the outside options for those considering cross-border migration, especially those contemplating irregular pathways. Although identifying the set of development policies that could generate attractive domestic alternatives to migration is beyond the scope of this report, targeting these to specific population groups or areas experiencing higher rates of emigration could have stronger impacts on the resulting composition of migration flows. Furthermore, agreements on labor mobility that facilitate movement between countries in the same regional economic community give migrants access to regional hubs where economic opportunities offer an alternative to irregular movements.

Complementary policies play a crucial role in ensuring that the migration experience is rewarding for migrants and beneficial for both origin and destination societies. The advantages of migration are maximized when migrants are granted the right to work, face no labor market discrimination, and enjoy decent working conditions and wages. This allows them to contribute to their fullest productive potential. However, integrating migrants into the destination society incurs certain costs, which can be mitigated by implementing policies that facilitate social integration, promote social cohesion, and address any distributional impacts on native populations. For origin countries, the benefits of migration are amplified by reducing remittance costs, creating mechanisms and incentive schemes for diaspora investment, and enacting social policies that support families left behind and prepare for the migrants' eventual return.

Making migration gains sustainable requires creating a policy environment that promotes reintegration and incentivizes returns. Temporary legal pathways are sustainable when all parties abide by the return provisions. Otherwise, the enforcement of immigration laws and provision of financial incentives are instruments available to policy makers in destination countries. For origin countries, promoting the reintegration of returnees into their origin communities entails recognizing the skills, credentials, and experiences acquired abroad and providing technical, administrative, and financial support to leverage returnees' economic potential, foster social cohesion, and ultimately incentivize returns.

From Policies to Results: National and Regional Migration Systems

Building migration systems is central for origin countries to collect information and formulate and implement policies to regulate market actors, both private and public. Coordination mechanisms are needed to alleviate the fragmentation of migration policy competencies across government agencies. These mechanisms help to identify statistical, financial, and human resource capacity needs to identify, formulate, and implement policies that promote *better migration*.

In addition, effective regulation of cross-border movement requires coordination between origin and destination countries, facilitated by policy instruments such as bilateral labor migration agreements (BLMAs). Policies to maximize the match between migrants and their destination countries and address the potential negative externalities of cross-border movements require specific investments, for example, in adequate training in origin countries and social integration policies in destination countries, which will take time to materialize. To incentivize both origin and destination countries to undertake such investments, instruments such as BLMAs offer a framework for such bilateral coordination to take place. Yet, although there has been a recent uptick in this type of coordination, countries in West, Central, and East Africa have engaged in few such arrangements.

Collective action mechanisms ensure that bilateral agreements fairly distribute the economic benefits of migration between origin and destination countries. By negotiating as a unified group rather than individually, African nations prevent a race to the bottom, thus achieving objectives like improved salaries and working conditions for migrant workers, greater involvement of destination countries in funding education and training in origin countries, and overall enhanced assistance from destination countries toward the development goals of origin countries. These collective action mechanisms can be integrated into existing regional institutions, such as the African Union and regional economic communities, or formed through ad hoc coalitions of countries, and can focus on specific sectors like health care or be more comprehensive. Although they are intergovernmental in nature, these mechanisms should involve worker and employer organizations and receive technical assistance from development partners.

Forced Displacement: Harnessing the Economic Potential of Refugees and IDPs

Africa has been a pioneer in the adoption of legal frameworks governing protection and assistance for refugees and IDPs. The 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention was the first regional instrument on refugees, introducing several important innovations in international law, and it remains the only legally binding regional instrument on refugees. Similarly, the Kampala Convention was the first and only legally binding instrument on internal displacement globally. It provides a comprehensive legal framework for addressing internal displacement in the Africa region. However, access to socioeconomic opportunities for the displaced is weak in practice. About 54 percent of the refugees in Africa still live in camps, and over 80 percent reside in rural areas with limited access to markets and restrictions on their mobility.

With an increasing number of refugees and IDPs in protracted situations and diminishing resources from host countries and the international community, promoting self-reliance among these populations offers a sustainable path forward. Creating conditions that leverage the economic potential of forcibly displaced people helps to preserve their dignity, safeguard their well-being, and enable them to contribute to the host economy. Policies aimed at sustainable protection systems strive to maximize refugee and IDP self-reliance while addressing relevant security and political economy issues. Humanitarian and development

assistance should focus on fostering self-reliance among refugee and IDP communities. This involves building their skills to meet the demands of host labor markets, mitigating any negative impacts on local workers, creating conditions for the private sector to employ these skills locally, or allowing forcibly displaced populations to move to opportunities within the country or even region, provided there are legal protections in place to ensure their continued safety.

The State of African Mobility

FIVE FACTS ABOUT AFRICAN MOBILITY

Fact 1. Africans rarely migrate out of the continent.

Less than 1 percent of the region's population leaves the continent, well below the global average.

Fact 2. Africans who leave the continent are increasingly heading to North America and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries rather than Europe.

Three-fourths of African migrants who left the continent used to go to Europe. Slightly more than one-half do so today.

Fact 3. Many African countries are becoming destinations for migrants.

Northern African countries are increasingly emerging as destinations rather than merely transit points for migrants heading to Europe. Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and South Africa receive at least twice as many migrants as they send.

Fact 4. Irregular migration across the continent is the most dangerous in the world.

Close to 5,000 deaths of African migrants were reported in 2023, more than twice the number of recorded deaths of migrants from Asia and around four times that of migrants from Latin America.

Fact 5. Africa hosts one-fourth of the world's refugee population.

Most refugees move to neighboring countries, with nearly 90 percent hosted in just 10 countries.

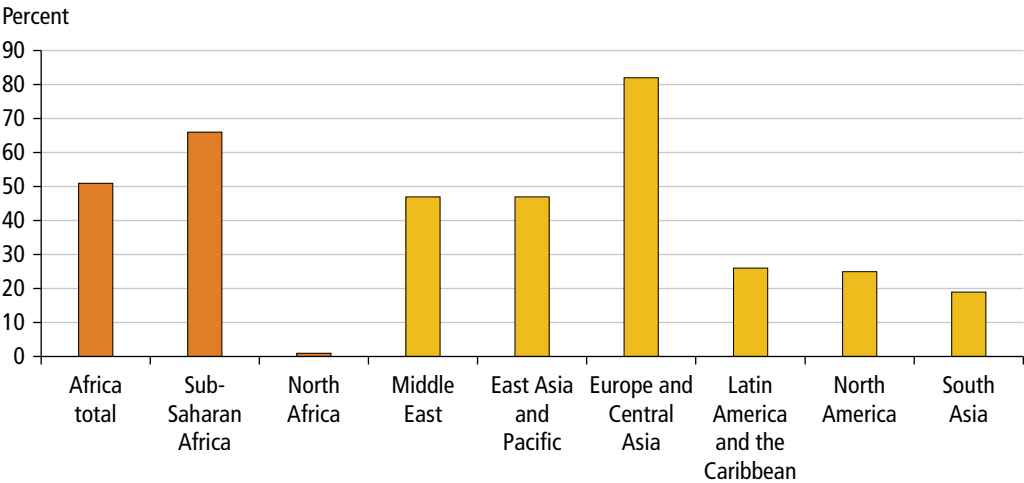
Africans Rarely Migrate Out of the Continent

The proportion of Sub-Saharan Africans who migrate out of the continent is low compared to global averages. Despite Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 85.3 percent of the continent's population, less than 1 percent of its residents migrate beyond Africa, which is below the world average of 1.7 percent for intercontinental migration. In contrast, regions like

Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia have higher rates, with 5 and 2 percent of their populations, respectively, relocating to other parts of the world. North African countries, unlike the rest of Africa, have about 5 percent of their populations living abroad, reflecting historical migration trends from Mediterranean countries to Europe and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. In 2020, approximately 60 percent of migrants from North Africa resided in European countries, around 30 percent in the GCC and other Middle Eastern countries, and about 7 percent in North America. In addition, while low in the aggregate, intercontinental migration from Sub-Saharan Africa masks considerable diversity. Some small island nations have experienced significant emigration over recent decades. In Cabo Verde, the Comoros, and São Tomé and Príncipe, the ratio of citizens living abroad to those residing domestically stands at 130 percent, 22 percent, and 18 percent, respectively; among the 700,000 Cabo Verdeans living overseas, the majority are in the United States and or in Europe (IOM 2024).

Despite evolving over time, most migration from Sub-Saharan Africa remains within the continent. As of 2020, 66 percent of people who had left a country in Sub-Saharan Africa moved within Africa, and three-fourths of those migrated to a neighboring country (figure 1.1). The degree of intracontinental migration is significantly higher in Sub-Saharan Africa compared to North Africa, where such migration is almost nonexistent, and other regions: only 26 percent of migration in Latin America and the Caribbean and 20 percent in South Asia remains within the region. Intracontinental mobility in Sub-Saharan Africa persists despite changing migration patterns, with an increasing share of migrants heading outside the continent.

Figure 1.1 Share of Migrants Staying in Their Region of Origin, 2020



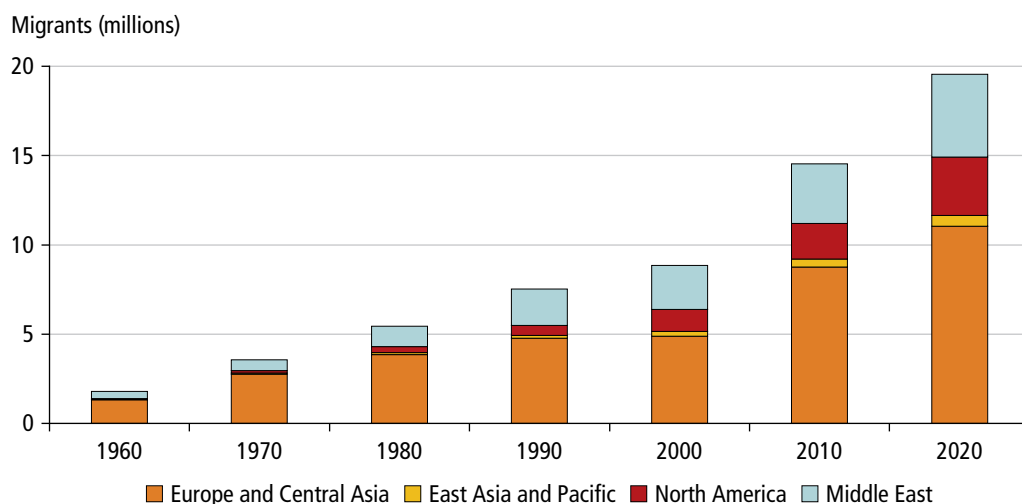
Source: Calculations based on bilateral matrix data from World Bank 2023c.

Africans Who Leave the Continent Are Increasingly Heading to North America and the GCC, rather than Europe

Among Africans leaving the continent, their destinations have become increasingly diverse, moving away from a focus on Europe. The share of African migrants settled in European countries decreased from 73 percent in 1960 to 55 percent in 2020 (figure 1.2). In the 1960s and 1970s, two-thirds of African intercontinental migrants moved to Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. This share fell below 40 percent by 2020.

Conversely, the proportion of African migrants in North America increased from 2 to 17 percent over the same period. This shift reflects a broader pattern with the emergence of new migration corridors: between 2010 and 2020, the number of African migrants to the GCC countries increased by 50 percent, exceeding 3.5 million. The GCC now hosts 20 percent of African migrants outside the continent, with increasing numbers, especially from East Africa. For example, in 2020, Ethiopians represented 18 percent of all migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in the GCC, up from 7 percent in 2000. The extent of migration to the GCC countries is likely underestimated given data limitations (box 1.1).

Figure 1.2 Africa's Outmigration Destinations, 1960–2020



Source: Calculations based on bilateral matrix data from World Bank 2023c.

BOX 1.1**Migration Data and Limitations**

Population censuses are the primary source of data for measuring global migration stocks. Yet, timeliness, comparability, and accessibility limit their effectiveness. In origin countries, censuses often underestimate emigration since they fail to capture emigrants when entire households have left. Additionally, with censuses typically conducted once every 10 years, they are insufficient for monitoring rapid changes in migration flows. Moreover, irregular migrants and refugees are frequently excluded from census counts. Despite these constraints, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank, and International Migration Institute's Database on Immigrants in OECD and non-OECD Countries and the International Labour Organization's Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers are examples of global migration databases.^a

Discrepancies in census methodology and timing across countries hinder accurate measurement. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 17 of the 41 countries covered by the 2010 round of censuses included questions about household emigration, and 30 included a question about country of birth.^b This means that international migrants are mostly recorded at their destination rather than at their origin. Additionally, some censuses report country of birth while others report country of citizenship. The census year can also vary significantly, complicating cross-country comparisons, especially when significant migration events have occurred. For example, Mozambique conducted its census in 2007, while South Africa did so in 2011, creating statistical differences between these two countries in data on migration. Nonetheless, recent regional statistics projects in East, West, and Southern Africa aim to harmonize data across groups of countries (World Bank 2021, 2023a, 2023b).

For data on irregular migration and refugee populations, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provide valuable supplementary sources, but with their own limitations. IOM uses Displacement Tracking Matrixes to monitor irregular and distressed mobility for humanitarian purposes, but these are not collected at the individual level and lack coverage in many countries, affecting representativeness. Some countries, like Libya, have multiple monitoring points, while many others do not. The information collected also varies by country and time period. UNHCR systematically collects data on refugees and other "persons of concern" but does not cover populations outside its mandate. Overlap between different data sources further complicates accuracy and consistency.

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Box 1.1 Migration Data and Limitations *(continued)*

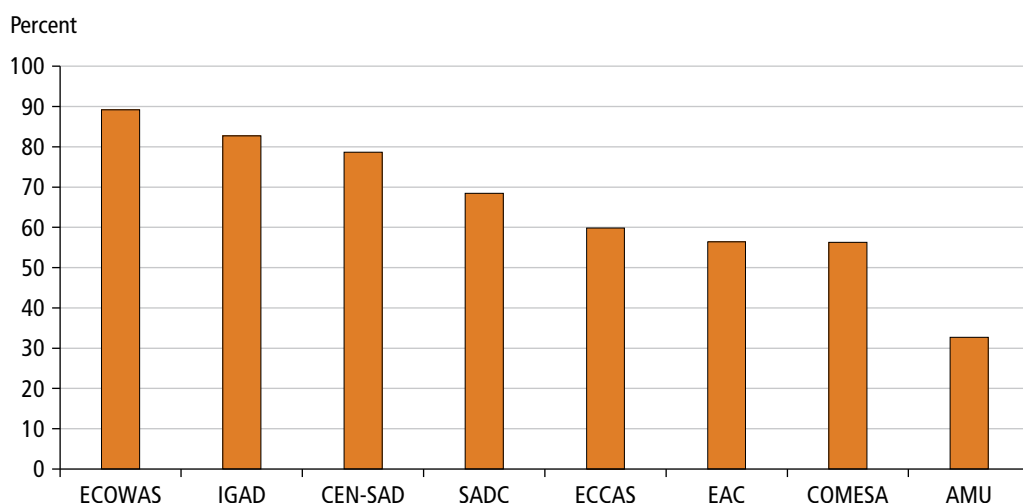
Reconciling different data sources, when they are available, is challenging, and most countries lack dedicated surveys, especially surveys that collect longitudinal and geo-localized data (Di Maio, Marzo, and Sciabolazza 2024). The Maghreb region in North Africa, which experiences diverse and rapidly evolving migration patterns, exemplifies such complexity. Most countries conducted a new census round between 2020 and 2024, but the new data are not yet available. Tunisia is organizing a census now. Although Morocco has provided some information on foreign-born individuals, which is currently publicly accessible, this is not the case for other countries in the region. Furthermore, Displacement Tracking Matrix points are only available in Libya, making it difficult to estimate and monitor the total migrant stock in the subregion over time.

a. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (<https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/oecd-migration-databases.htm>) and International Labour Organization (ILO) (<https://www.ilo.org/publications/ilo-global-estimates-international-migrant-workers-results-and-methodology>), respectively.

b. United Nations Statistics Division (UNSTAT) (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/sconcerns/migration/>) and UNSTAT (accessed June 19, 2024, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/censusdates/>), respectively.

Many African Countries Are Becoming Destinations for Migrants

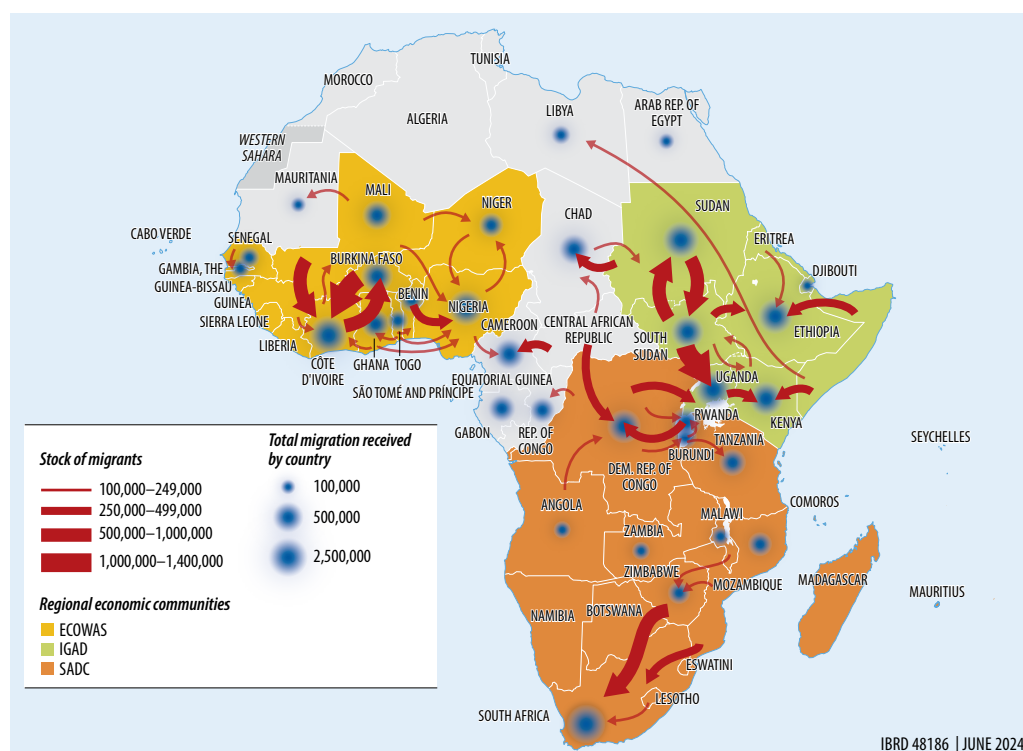
Until recently, migration within Africa primarily occurred between countries with economic ties and legal agreements for free movement. In 2020, there were 22 million African migrants on the continent, with more than 21 million from Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 95 percent of these migrants moved within their regional economic communities (RECs). Africa's eight RECs all consider the free movement of nationals a fundamental principle for regional integration, but limited implementation means that most movements remain informal. For instance, in 2020, about 7.6 million international migrants resided in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with over 89 percent coming from within ECOWAS (figure 1.3). This figure is likely an underestimate due to high levels of temporary and seasonal migration that are not fully captured in the data (box 1.1). Key destinations include Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, which attract migrants from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Mali (map 1.1). In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), migrants increasingly use informal and unregulated routes, later legalizing their movement through various practices. Migrants make up 2.1 percent of the SADC population, but only 1.0 percent when considering only migrants from within SADC. South Africa (7.1 percent), Botswana (4.7 percent), and Namibia (4.2 percent) have the highest shares of immigrants per capita.

Figure 1.3 Share of Migrants within an REC Who Originate from the REC's Member Countries, 2020

Source: Calculations based on bilateral matrix data from World Bank 2023c.

Note: AMU = Arab Maghreb Union; CEN-SAD = Community of Sahel-Saharan States; COMESA = Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; EAC = East African Community; ECCAS = Economic Community of Central African States; ECOWAS = Economic Community of West African States; IGAD = Intergovernmental Authority on Development; REC = regional economic community; SADC = Southern African Development Community.

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are already attracting more migrants than they send out. Today Kenya receives twice as many migrants as it sends, primarily from neighboring countries, including a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers. Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa attract twice as many migrants from neighboring countries as they send out. In Côte d'Ivoire, 9.7 percent of the population consists of cross-border migrants, one of the highest proportions on the continent (ICMPD 2022). South Africa has seen a growing share of the intraregional migrant stock, hosting about 77 percent of all Namibian migrants. The country now accommodates 60 percent of migrants from SADC countries, up from 31 percent in 1995 (Crush et al. 2022). Furthermore, Djibouti has increasingly become a transit as well as destination country for movements across the Gulf of Aden and beyond. In 2023, migratory movements increased by 25 percent compared to 2022, with a total of 278,272 migratory movements recorded in the country of 1.12 million inhabitants, the majority from Ethiopia (IOM 2023).

Map 1.1 Patterns of Mobility within Africa, 2020

Source: Calculations based on bilateral matrix data from World Bank 2023c.

Note: The map reflects the latest data available in 2020. In January 2024, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger announced their withdrawal from ECOWAS. ECOWAS = Economic Community of West African States; IGAD = Intergovernmental Authority on Development; SADC = Southern African Development Community.

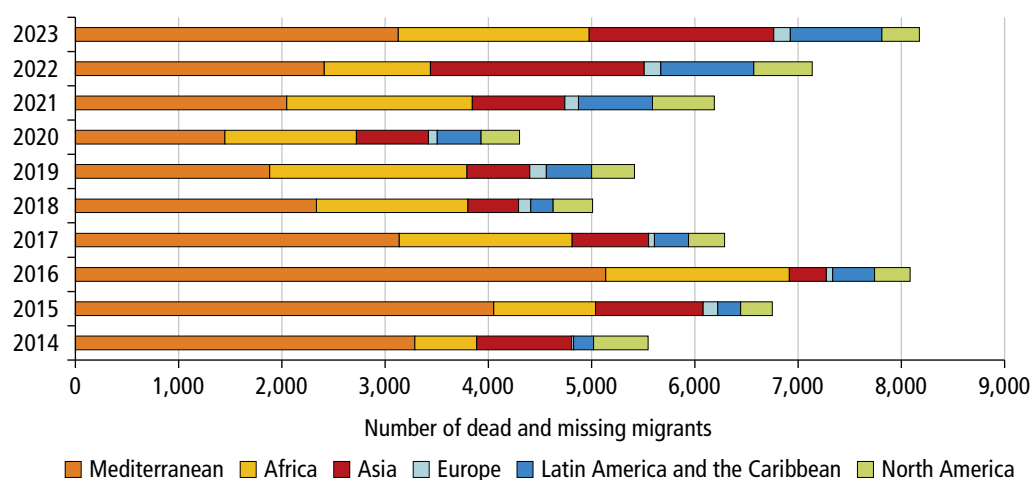
North Africa is gradually transitioning from a sending and transit subregion to a destination for more migrants. Traditionally a major source of emigrants, it still remains so today. By some estimates, the Arab Republic of Egypt hosted 9 million migrants in 2022 (8.7 percent of the population), while also having 10 million to 14 million nationals abroad (IOM 2022b). Although estimates by different sources can vary (refer to box 1.1), Egypt hosts the highest number of immigrants in the region, owing to its historical openness to migrants. A significant portion of Egypt's foreign-born population consists of refugees from Sudan, who account for almost half of the total immigrant stock according to the latest estimates. In other North African countries, except Libya, the number of immigrants represents a much smaller share of the population. In 2020, Morocco hosted 103,000 migrants and refugees (0.3 percent of the population), while 8.8 percent of Moroccans were expatriates (ETF 2021a). Tunisia had 7.6 percent of its population abroad, compared to only 0.5 percent of its residents being foreign-born (ETF 2021b).¹ Yet, between 2015 and 2020, the number of international migrants in North Africa grew by more than 1 million,

reaching 3.2 million international migrants—1.3 percent of the total population—with 61 percent coming from the African continent.² As North Africa's economy evolves and its youth population remains large, labor markets will become more segmented, increasing both immigration and the emigration of highly educated nationals (De Haas 2006).

Irregular Migration across the Continent Is the Most Dangerous in the World

Migration routes within Africa are evolving rapidly, often involving irregular migration and high risks of violence. These routes respond to legal restrictions and border controls imposed by transit and destination countries. Routes from Sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa include distinct paths across the Sahara Desert from West and East Africa. Migrants often start their journey using legal means but turn to smugglers when faced with increased law enforcement, legal restrictions, or lack of commercial transport (Di Maio, Marzo, and Sciabolazza 2024). This exposes them to significant hardship and human rights abuses, including kidnapping, trafficking, sexual violence, and exploitation. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has documented severe abuses, through 16,000 interviews in 2018 and 2019, reporting 1,395 deaths; 2,008 episodes of sexual and gender-based violence involving more than 6,000 people; and 4,468 incidents of physical violence along migration routes (UNHCR 2020).

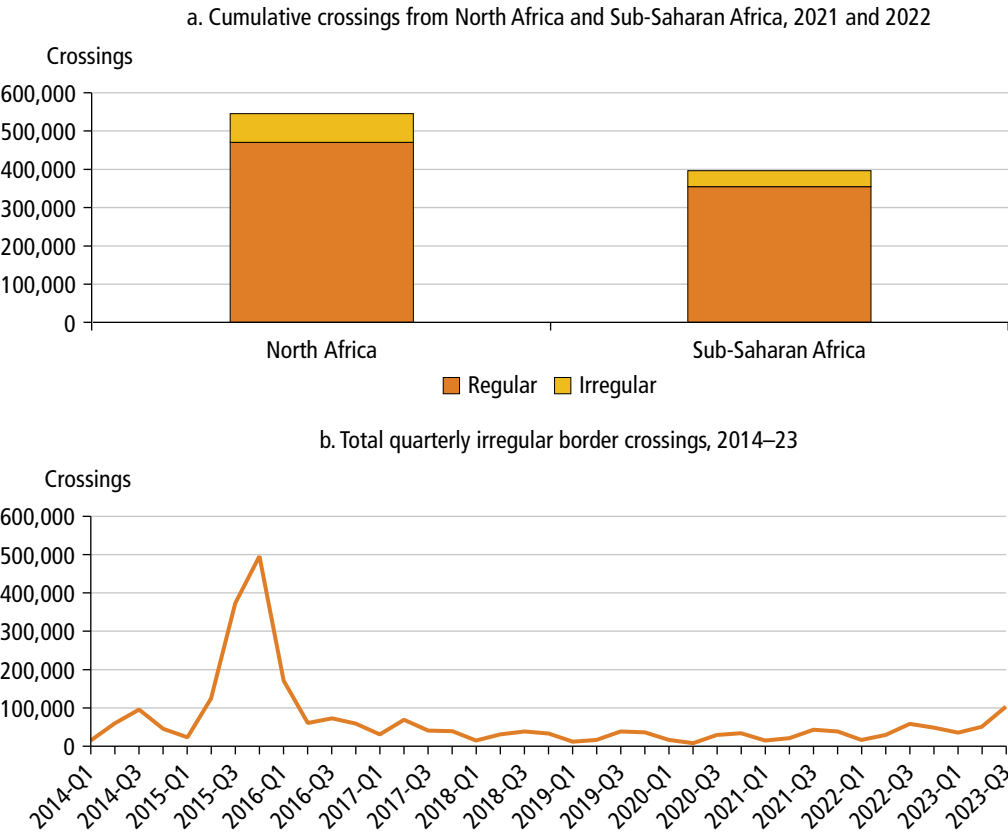
Irregular sea crossing is particularly perilous, with alarmingly high numbers of human losses. There are three main sea crossing points from North Africa to Europe: the Central Mediterranean route, with departure points in Libya and Tunisia; the Western Mediterranean route to Spain, mainly from Morocco; and the Canary Islands route. The relative significance of these routes has shifted over time, with some becoming more prominent and others becoming more difficult or hazardous. Almost 50,000 migrants are believed to have died worldwide while in transit since 2014 (IOM 2022a). Data on missing migrants show that in 2023, Africa had the worst outcomes compared to other regions (figure 1.4), with half of the fatalities occurring during attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Additionally, about 45 percent of those arriving in Italy in 2018 reported experiencing physical violence while in transit through African countries (Black and Sigman 2022; Busetta et al. 2021; IOM 2020; World Bank 2018).

Figure 1.4 Number of Dead and Missing Migrants, by Region of Incident, 2014–23

Source: International Organization for Migration Missing Migrants Projects data (<https://missingmigrants.iom.int/data>).

Yet, most migration from Africa to other continents happens through legal pathways, with irregular border crossings remaining relatively constant over time at a small fraction of total movements. In the European Union, the number of irregular arrivals has been largely constant since 2014, with the exception of the peak caused by the Syrian conflict in 2015. Although the data show a modest increase in irregular arrivals since 2020, with a 29 percent rise in irregular sea crossings in 2022 alone, these entries (both by sea and land) accounted for only 12.4 percent of total border crossings to Europe by African migrants in 2021 and 2022. North African nationals are disproportionately represented among irregular migrants, making up 1.8 times the number of irregular migrants from the rest of Africa and 60.8 percent of total irregular border crossings by all African nationals (figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5 Irregular Cross-Border Movements into Europe



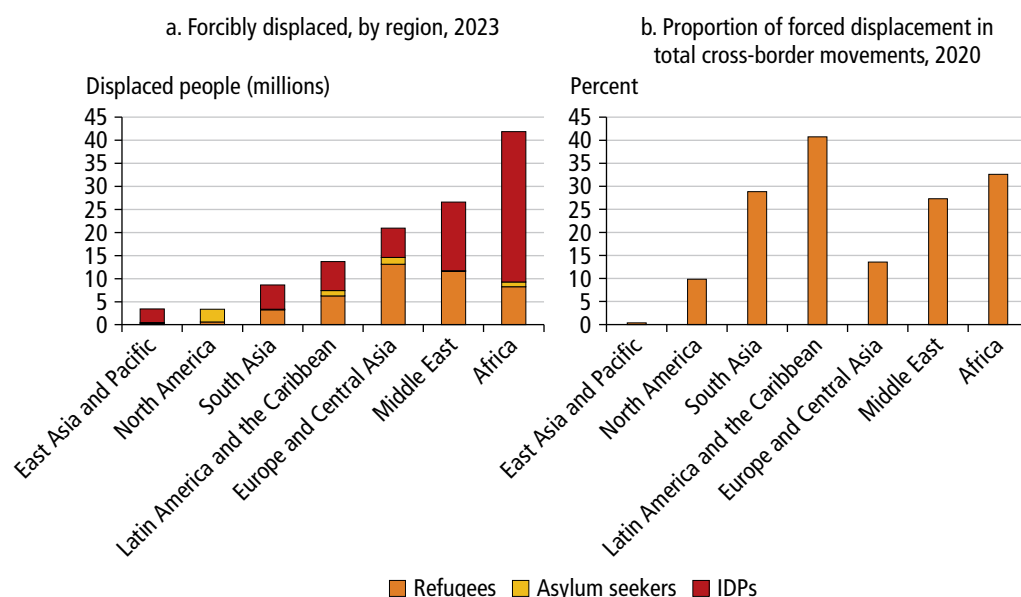
Sources: Data on regular entries (first residence permits) are from EUROSTAT; data on the number of irregular entries in Europe are from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Note: North Africa includes Algeria, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia; Sub-Saharan Africa includes all the other African countries.

Africa Hosts One-Fourth of the World's Refugee Population

African countries host more than 41 million forcibly displaced individuals, the highest number in any region globally (figure 1.6, panel a). Refugees constitute a large share of migrants within Africa, accounting for one-third of the continent's migrant stock (figure 1.6, panel b). By the end of 2023, 8.2 million of the 31.6 million refugees worldwide under the UNHCR's mandate were in Africa. Over 70 percent of the current refugees originate from just five source countries: the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan, as documented in Sarzin and Nsababera (2024). Conflicts have also affected some 32.6 million internally displaced persons facing specific challenges (box 1.2).

Nearly 90 percent of the refugees in Africa are concentrated in 10 countries, with Chad, Ethiopia, and Uganda hosting almost half. Over 60 percent of the refugees are in fragile and conflict-affected regions (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024). Since 2010, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and South Sudan have been

Figure 1.6 Refugees Make Up a Large Share of the Migrant Flows in Africa

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>).

Note: IDPs = internally displaced persons.

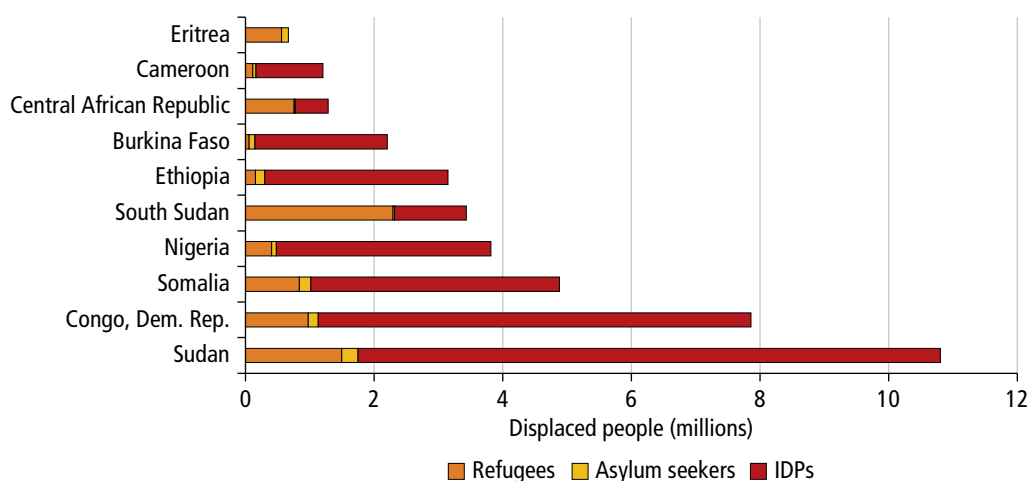
the main sources of Sub-Saharan Africans settling in North Africa. In 2021 and 2022, the primary countries of origin were Chad, Mali, and Niger. In 2023, the UNHCR registered 254,300 new asylum seekers in North Africa, primarily from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, South Sudan, and Sudan (UNHCR 2024). The crisis in Sudan has displaced more than 2 million people to Chad, Egypt, and South Sudan. Sub-Saharan Africa has a high proportion of child refugees, impacting child protection, health and education services, as well as self-reliance efforts (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024). Additionally, while many refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa live in planned or self-settled camps, an increasing number reside in individual accommodations (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024).

BOX 1.2

High Levels of Internal Displacement

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) constitute the majority of forcibly displaced people in Africa but often receive less support and attention compared to refugees. Over the past decade, IDPs have represented between 67 and 79 percent of the forcibly displaced population in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 80 percent of current IDPs have been displaced by conflict in just five countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024) (figure B1.2.1). Assisting this vulnerable

(continued next page)

Box 1.2 High Levels of Internal Displacement *(continued)***Figure B1.2.1 Significant Levels of Internal Displacement Are Concentrated in a Few Countries**

Source: Sarzin and Nsababera 2024.

Note: The figure shows the number of IDPs by country of origin. IDPs = internally displaced persons.

population is hindered by several factors, including the lack of legal status that mandates governments and international bodies to protect them, reluctance among some governments to acknowledge the presence of IDPs, restricted access to conflict-affected regions where many IDPs live, insufficient monitoring of rapid population movements, and limited media coverage (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024).

Climate-related disasters have emerged as a source of internal displacement.^a The longest and most severe drought on record triggered 2.1 million internal displacements in 2022 in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, with Somalia alone accounting for 1.1 million displacements.^b In 2023, floods hit the Horn of Africa after years of drought and triggered 1.7 million displacements in Somalia and 550,000 displacements in Ethiopia (IDMC 2023). Flood displacement has also affected other countries, with 2.4 million displacements in Nigeria in 2022, and 640,000 displacements in Kenya in 2023 (IDMC 2024). Tropical storms in Southern Africa triggered nearly 700,000 displacements across Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe in 2022 (IDMC 2023, 2024). In some instances, consecutive extreme weather events contribute to protracted displacement. For example, by the end of 2022, around 127,000 people were living in displacement in Mozambique as a result of three tropical cyclones and two tropical storms that hit Southern Africa earlier in the year, some of them previously displaced due to cyclones Idai in 2019 and Eloise in 2021 (IDMC 2023).

a. While displacement caused by conflict overlaps with demographic and economic forces, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that in 2023, conflict accounted for 13.5 million internal displacements, and disasters for 6.2 million (IDMC 2023).

b. "Internal displacements" correspond to the estimated number of movements over a given period. As such, the estimates do not represent the total number of people because the same individuals could have been displaced several times.

Notes

1. According to the Higher Council for Tunisians Abroad, the share of registered Tunisians living outside Tunisia amounted to 12.8 percent in 2022.
2. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

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Overlapping Megatrends in Africa

Introduction

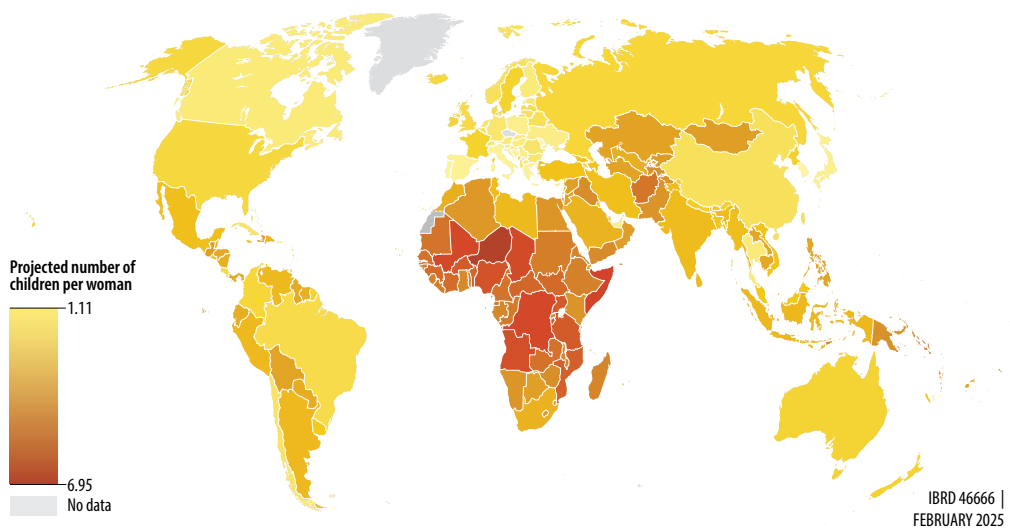
Africa is at a transformative juncture, where demography overlaps with low economic growth, conflict, and climate, factors known to drive the propensity to migrate.¹ The continent's population is set to grow from 1.5 billion in 2024 to 2.5 billion by 2050, with the working-age population increasing by more than 600 million. This substantial demographic shift contrasts sharply with high-income and upper-middle-income countries worldwide, where the working-age population will decrease by more than 200 million. However, Africa faces low productivity growth and declining relative incomes. Unless poverty reduction strategies alter the current trajectory, 89 million more people could fall into extreme poverty over the next three decades. Approximately 760 million people reside in countries that have been in a state of chronic fragility for over a decade, a figure that could nearly double by 2050. Additionally, two of every five people on the continent may face increasing severe heat risk by 2050.

Africa's Megatrends: A Tale of Two Subregions

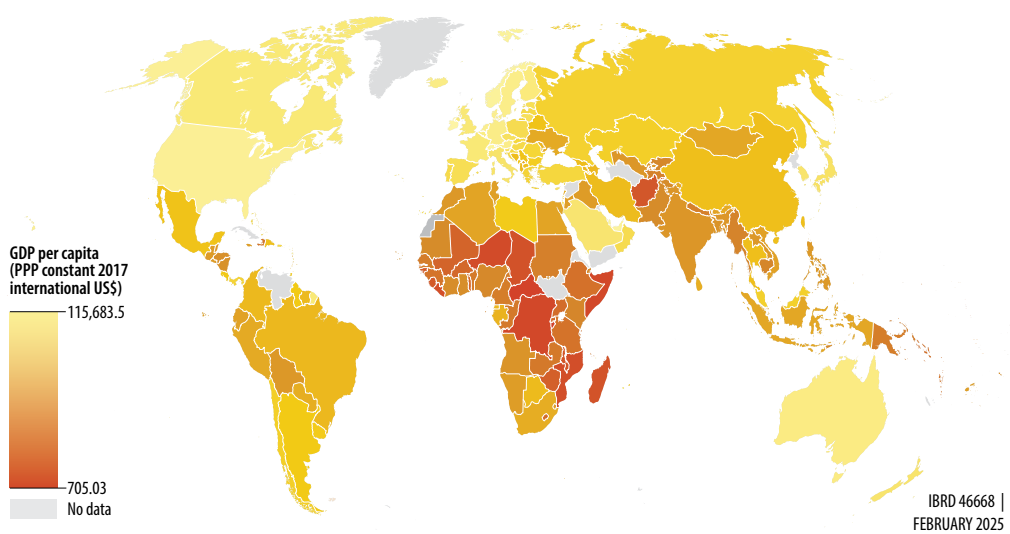
There is considerable variation within the continent. Some of the highest fertility rates in the world are in Africa, particularly in countries in East, Central, and West Africa (map 2.1, panel a). Most of these countries also have lower levels of development (map 2.1, panel b); they are among the countries most exposed to climate change (map 2.1, panel c); and many of them have been plagued by chronic political instability (map 2.1, panel d). By contrast, the countries in North and Southern Africa are further into their demographic transitions; have higher incomes; are relatively less exposed to some of the consequences of climate change; and, except for Libya, are free of conflict. While recognizing the uniqueness of each country, this report henceforth refers to Africa's geographical *core*, which includes the countries in the Central, East, and West subregions. These countries are home to 80 percent of the continent's population. The remaining 20 percent live in North and Southern Africa, which form Africa's geographical *periphery*.

Map 2.1 Confluence of Forces in Africa

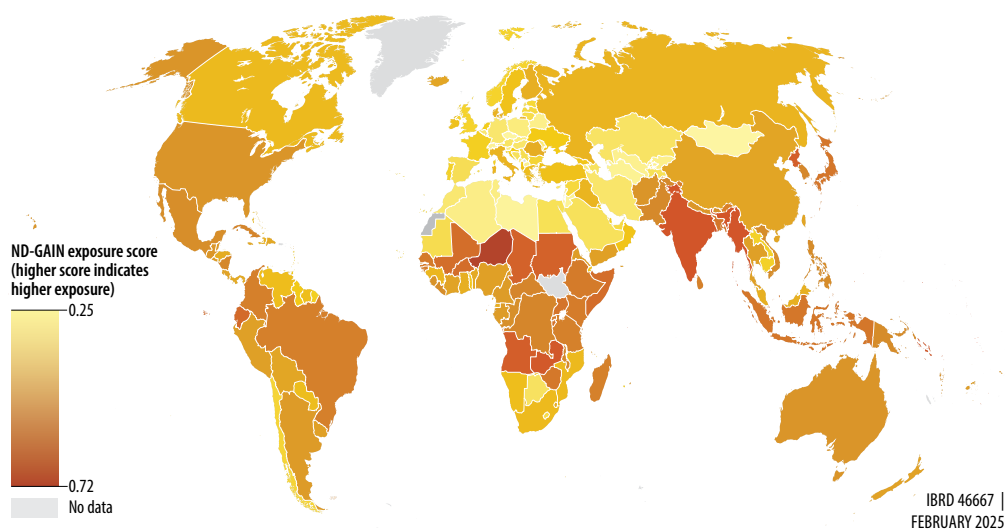
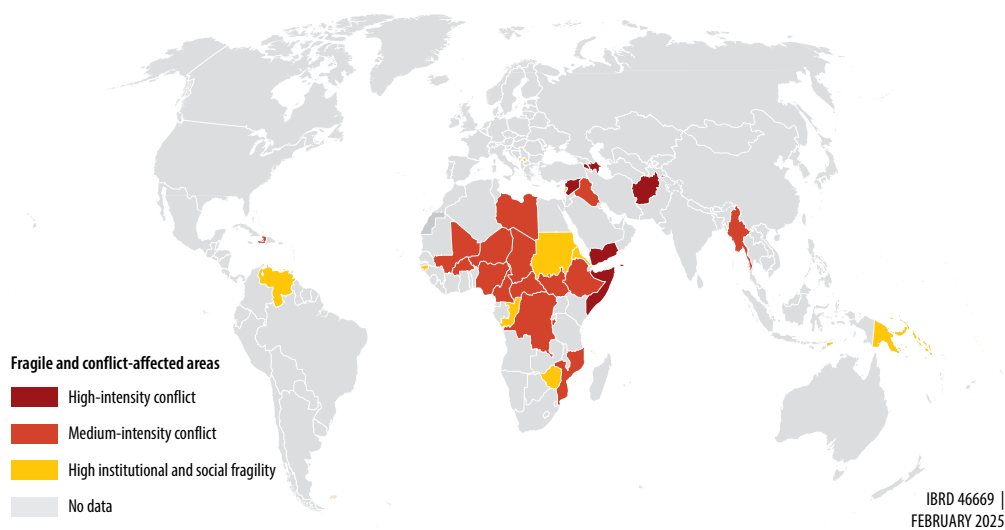
a. Total fertility rate



b. GDP per capita



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Map 2.1 Confluence of Forces in Africa (*continued*)**c. Climate vulnerability****d. State fragility**

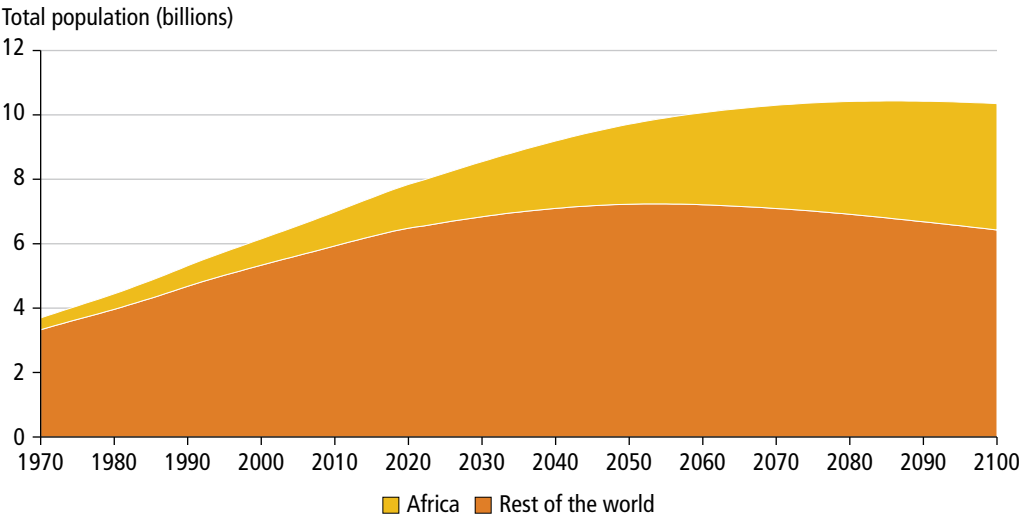
Sources: Panel a: United Nations World Population Prospects, Projections for 2015–2020. Panel b: World Development Indicators, World Bank, 2021. Panel c: ND-GAIN (Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative), Country Index 2019. Panel d: World Bank, List of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations 2022.

Note: GDP = gross domestic product; PPP = purchasing power parity.

Africa's Youth Boom Portends the Great Demographic Divergence

Africa hosts the world's fastest-growing population and is set to surpass other regions in sheer numbers by the middle of this century. By the next millennium, the continent's population is projected to *diverge* significantly from the rest of the world. With nearly 1.5 billion people in 2024, Africa's population is expected to reach 2.5 billion within the next three decades, while population growth slows elsewhere. Within Africa, countries in the geographical *core* have the highest fertility rate today, at 4.6 children per woman. Despite a downward trend over the past five decades, this rate will remain the highest globally by 2050, while all other world regions, including most of the countries in Africa's geographical *periphery*, will drop below the replacement rate. High fertility rates, along with falling mortality rates and rising life expectancy, are contributing to the continent's unparalleled population trajectory (figure 2.1). The countries in Africa's *core* house four-fifths of its population and are the main drivers of this surge. By 2050, these countries are expected to host 85 percent of Africa's overall population.

Figure 2.1 Africa's Population Will Be the World's Largest by 2050, Propelled by Elevated Fertility Rates, Rising Life Expectancy, and Declining Mortality Rates



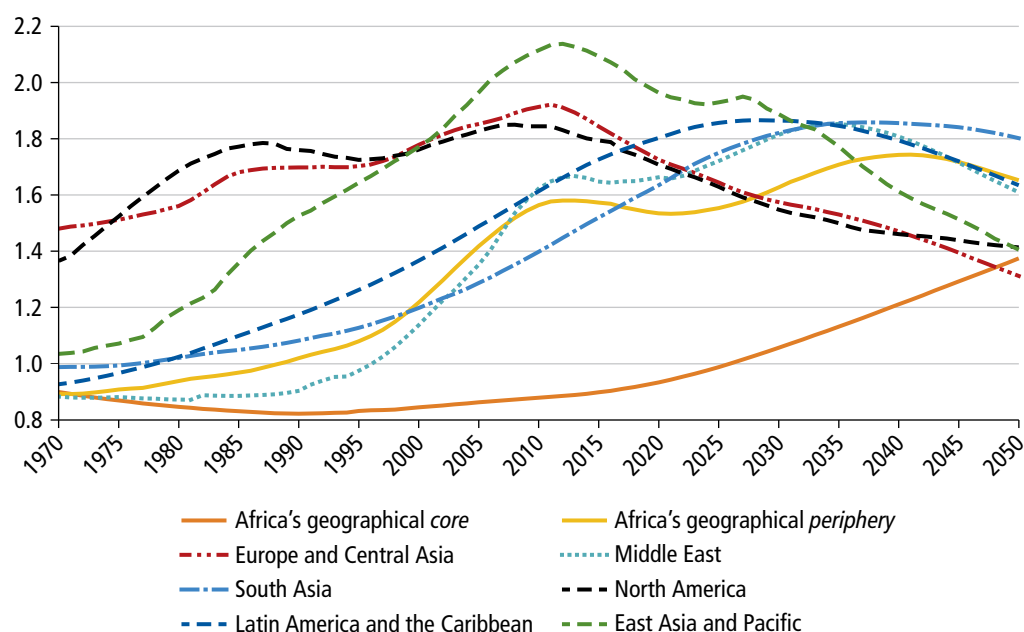
Source: Team calculations based on the medium scenario in United Nations 2022.

Note: The medium scenario projection corresponds to the mean fertility and mortality and median net migration of several thousand distinct trajectories of each demographic component derived from a probabilistic model of the variability in changes over time.

Africa is experiencing a demographic youth boom and, by 2050, nearly one in three young people globally will be from Africa. The number of youth (ages 15–34) in Africa will nearly double, from 499 million in 2024 to 846 million by mid-century. Simultaneously, the working-age population (ages 20–64) is expected to almost double to 1.3 billion. Africa’s potential for a demographic dividend is highlighted by the rising number of working-age individuals in the countries in its geographical *core* who can support young dependents and the elderly—a trend that is declining or plateauing in every other region of the world (figure 2.2). Longer-term demographic projections suggest that this ratio will continue to rise over the next 60 years, providing a window of opportunity that may extend well into the next century.²

Figure 2.2 Africa’s Rising Ratio of Working-Age Individuals to Children and the Elderly Presages a Demographic Dividend

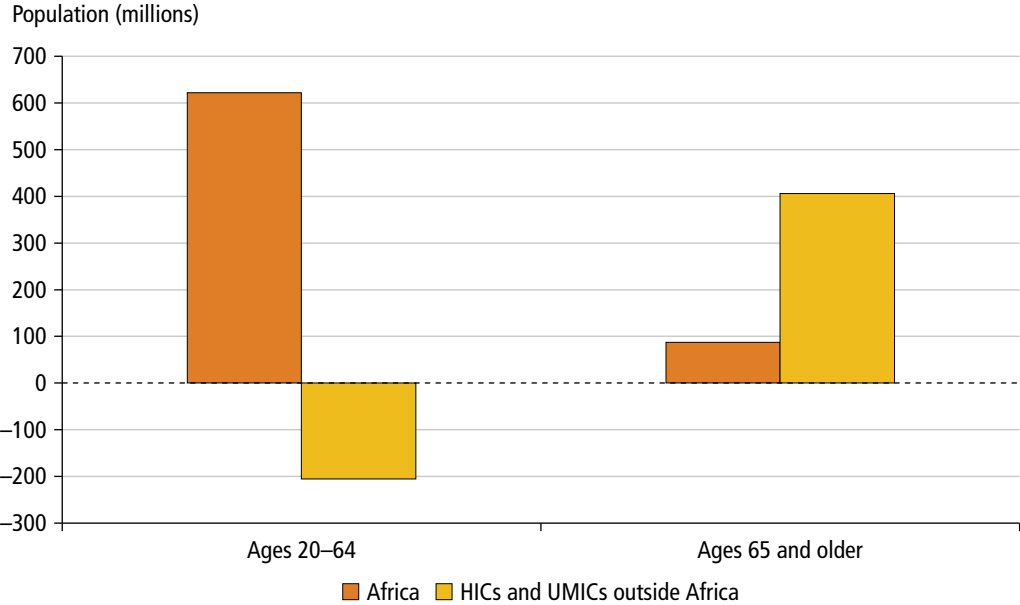
Ratio of working-age population to children and the elderly



Source: Team calculations based on the medium fertility scenario in United Nations 2022.

Note: Working age is 20–64 years; children, 14 years and younger; and the elderly, 65 years and older.

Figure 2.3 Between 2024 and 2050, the Working-Age Populations of High-Income and Upper-Middle-Income Countries Will Shrink as Their Elderly Populations Expand Rapidly



Source: Team calculations based on the medium fertility scenario in United Nations 2022.

Note: HICs = high-income countries; UMICs = upper-middle-income countries.

By contrast, high-income and upper-middle-income countries outside Africa are experiencing a decline in their working-age population due to accelerated aging. By 2050, the population ages 20 to 64 in these regions is projected to decrease by 207 million, while in Africa it will increase by 622 million (figure 2.3). The proportion of people ages 65 and older in countries outside Africa has surged from 8 percent in 1950 to 19 percent in 2023, and it is expected to reach nearly 32 percent by 2050. In the next two decades, the overall population of upper-middle-income countries is anticipated to decrease, with wealthier nations following suit after the mid-twenty-first century. This trend highlights the emergence of a Great Demographic Divergence between Africa and the rest of the world.

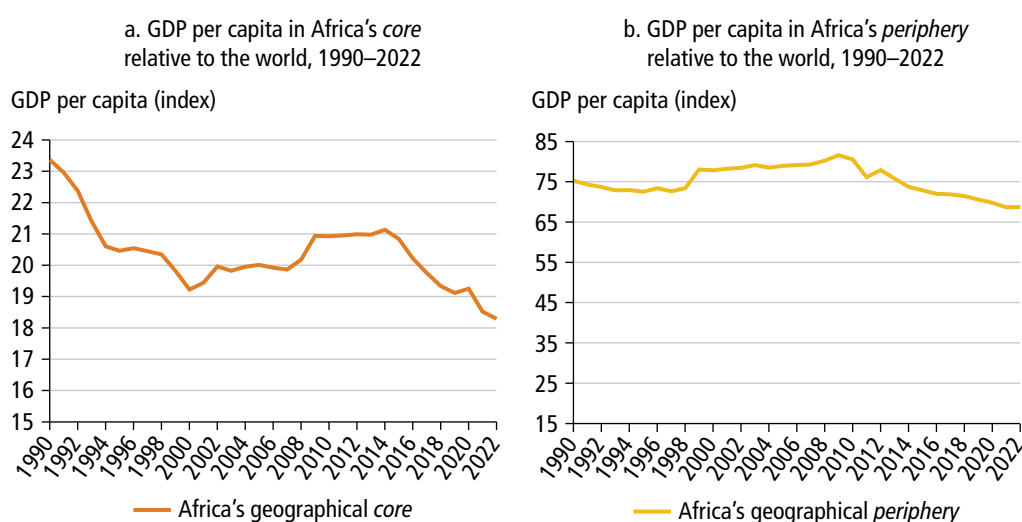
Slow Productivity Growth and a Stagnant Labor Market Hold Limited Prospects for a Burgeoning Population

While the growing demographic divergence presents a unique opportunity for the continent, its realization is impeded by economic growth that continues to lag behind population growth.³ Notwithstanding some progress in poverty reduction, incomes have remained low compared to the rest of the world. Despite global convergence in the levels of gross domestic product (GDP) since the start of this century, with most lower-income countries catching up with higher-income countries, incomes in the countries in Africa's geographical *core* have stagnated at below

21 percent of the world's average and have been declining over the past decade (figure 2.4, panel a).⁴ The economic slowdown post-2015 has been attributed to several factors, including shocks such as the renewed outbreak of conflicts in various countries, substantial debt burdens, energy shortages, and currency pressures (World Bank, forthcoming a). Disparities within the continent have also persisted, with a wide gap in living standards between countries in the continent's geographical *periphery* and those in its geographical *core* (figure 2.4).

While the poverty rate in Africa has decreased over the past two decades, the absolute number of poor individuals has risen due to rapid population growth. Extreme poverty—defined as living on less than US\$2.15 per person per day (2017 purchasing power parity)—in the countries in Africa's *core* fell from 55 percent in 2003 to about 40 percent in 2014, but the reduction slowed and the poverty rate was 38 percent by 2022.⁵ Despite the falling rate, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased from 367 million in 2003 to 434 million in 2022. In the countries in Africa's *periphery*, by contrast, the number of extremely poor people has remained relatively low and decreased steadily from 26 million in 2003 to 16 million in 2022 (figure 2.5). Limited economic growth and tight fiscal conditions make poverty reduction challenging, with 19 of the 42 countries in Africa's *core* at high risk of or already in debt distress in 2023 (World Bank 2023a, 2024, forthcoming a).⁶ Unless policies are implemented to alter this trajectory, extreme poverty on the continent may affect as many as 549 million people by 2050.⁷

Figure 2.4 GDP per Capita in Africa's Geographical Core Remains Less than a Fourth of the World's

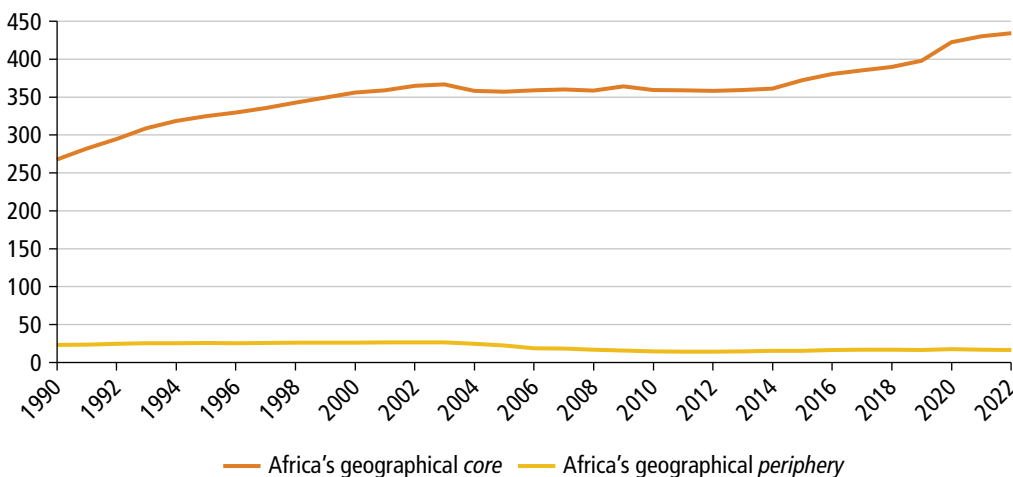


Sources: Team calculations based on World Bank 2024; World Development Indicators (GDP per capita, PPP [constant 2017 international US\$] and population statistics).

Note: Average world GDP per capita = 100. GDP = gross domestic product; PPP = purchasing power parity.

Figure 2.5 Extreme Poverty Remains High in the Countries in Africa's Geographical Core

Population in extreme poverty (millions)



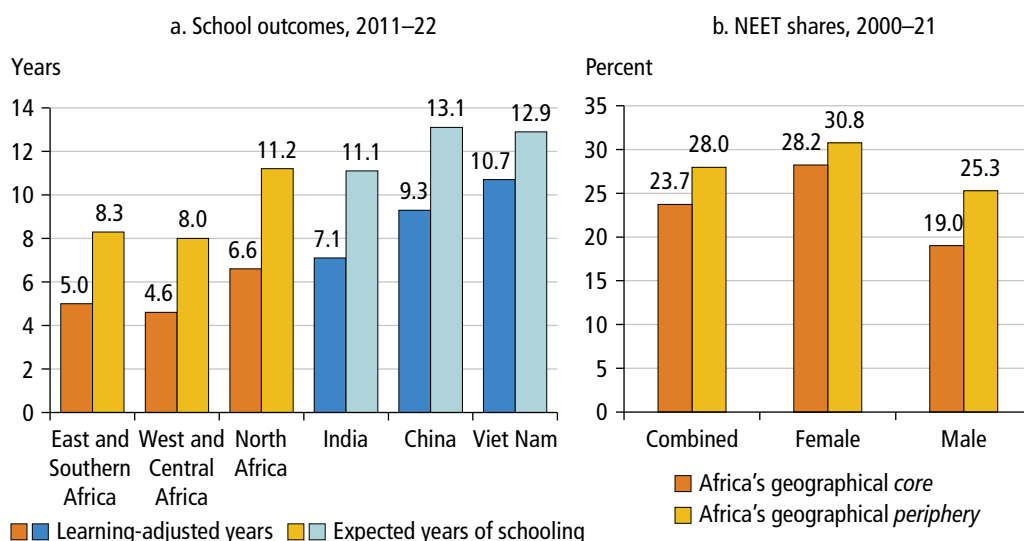
Source: Team calculations based on data from the World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform (version 20240326_2017_01_02_PROD) [data set], pip.worldbank.org.

Note: The extreme poverty line is US\$2.15 per person per day (2017 purchasing power parity). The set of geographical *core* countries excludes Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, and Somalia.

The continent is grappling with a low skill base and a high proportion of youth not in employment, education, or training (figure 2.6, panel b). Low human capital is a significant barrier to harnessing the demographic dividend. Despite progress in increasing school attendance, educational attainment indicators, especially in the countries in the continent's *core*, remain low in global comparisons. Expected years of schooling in most countries, except for those in North Africa, are less than 10, indicating persistently high dropout rates, particularly in secondary education. Learning poverty, the inability of children to read and understand a simple text by the end of primary education, is 89 percent in Sub-Saharan African countries (World Bank 2022), while children in the countries in the *core* had an average of only 4.7 learning-adjusted years of schooling in 2020. Although this indicator was marginally better in the countries in the *periphery*, both learning and school attendance are low across the continent (figure 2.6, panel a).

Africa's demographic transition is increasing the urban population, but with limited economic growth in urban areas. Although most of the population in Africa's geographical *core* remains rural, the continent is experiencing both urban growth (more urban residents) and urbanization (a higher proportion of the population in cities) (figure 2.7). However, urbanization has not led to better jobs or economic growth, especially in the resource-rich cities in the *core* where economic activity is driven more by consumption than by production. These cities primarily generate nontradable services and are disconnected from global markets (Lall, Henderson, and Venables 2017).⁸ Urban areas are ill-equipped for the rural exodus, with poor spatial planning and development, inadequate economic development policies, and underdeveloped or deteriorating public infrastructure limiting access to basic services like transportation, housing, water, and sanitation (Roberts and Anyumba 2022).

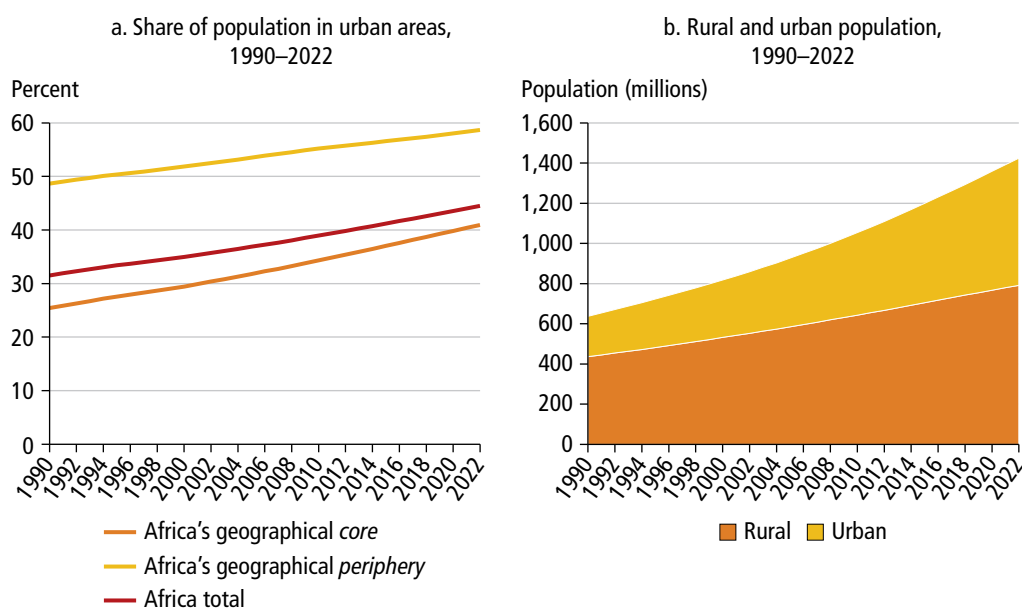
Figure 2.6 School Outcomes in Africa Lag behind Most of the World, and Africa's Share of Youth Who Are Not in Employment, Education, or Training Is High



Sources: Team calculations based on the methodology of Filmer et al. 2020; ILO 2024.

Note: School outcomes and NEET are based on data for the latest year available, ranging from 2011 to 2022 for school outcomes and from 2000 to 2021 for NEET. NEET = not in employment, education, or training.

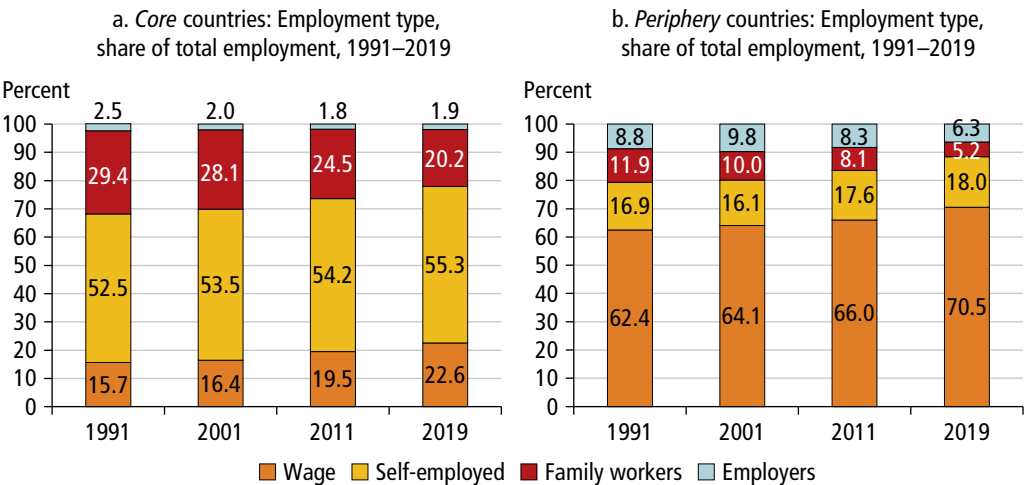
Figure 2.7 The Share and the Number of Urban Dwellers Are Rising in Africa



Source: Team calculations based on World Bank World Development Indicators 2024 (<https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>).

The current rate of productivity growth will not provide sufficient domestic opportunities to the growing population. The continent has had limited productivity gains since the 1960s, particularly in the agriculture sector, where a majority of the population is engaged.⁹ Although employment rates are high (at 64.4 and 55.6 percent in the geographical *core* and *periphery*, respectively), the share of wage employment, which on average generates higher earnings, is low in the countries in the *core* (figure 2.8, panel a).¹⁰ Only 23 percent of the employed are wage earners in the countries in the *core*, and 55 percent are self-employed. Although the share of wage employment is higher in the countries in the *periphery*, at 70.5 percent (figure 2.8, panel b), more than half of the employed are in low-paid, nontradable services. Overall, productive jobs are not expanding faster than population growth—between 1991 and 2019, the ratio of wage jobs to the working-age population hovered around 0.3 in the *periphery* and around 0.1 in the *core*. Indeed, in the countries in the *core* and in Southern Africa, the rate of job creation is also low relative to economic growth: for each 1 percentage point increase in economic growth, the proportion of wage workers increases by 0.04 percent on average.¹¹ As a consequence, economically active individuals resort to low-productivity and informal self-employment activities (World Bank 2023b).

Figure 2.8 In the Countries in Africa’s Geographical *Core*, Where Nearly 50 Percent of Workers Are in the Agriculture Sector, a Lack of Salaried Positions Compels Many to Work in Subsistence Self-Employment



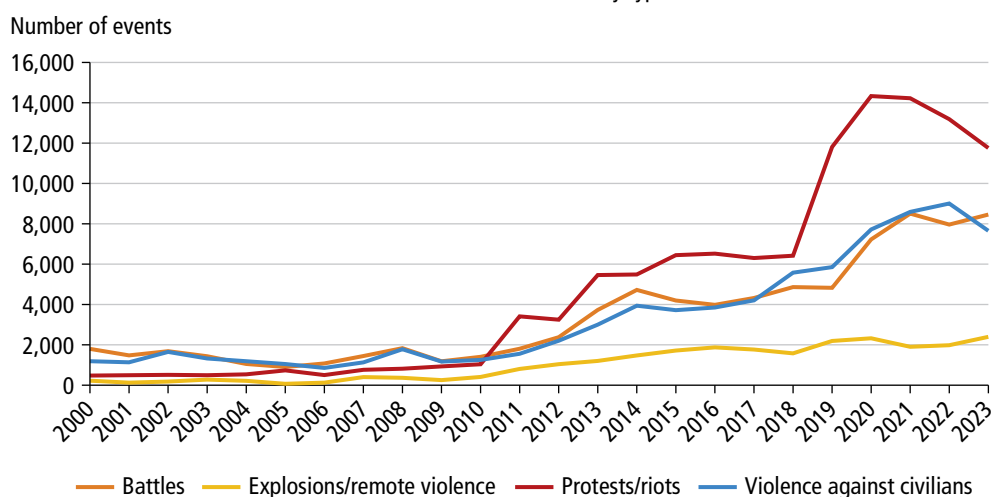
Source: Team calculations based on data from the World Bank Global Macro Indicators database.

Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Pose a Risk for the Future of the Growing Youth Population

Chronic fragility in many African countries hinders growth and economic opportunities. Most countries in the geographical *core* of Africa face fragility or conflict, marked by economic and political instability and weak governance, which impede social cohesion and economic growth (Akanbi et al. 2021; Collier 2021). In 2023, 20 of the 37 countries worldwide affected by fragility, conflict, and violence were in Africa, nearly all in the continent's *core* region.¹² Youth bulges without corresponding job opportunities are a significant risk factor for instability and violence (Cincotta and Leahy 2006; Flückiger and Ludwig 2018; Urdal 2006). About 760 million people, nearly half of Africa's population, live in countries with persistent fragility, and this number is expected to reach 1.34 billion by 2050. Conflict and violence have risen sharply since 2010, stabilizing around 2015, then increasing again since 2019, especially in East and West Africa (figure 2.9). New and resurgent conflicts, disputed elections, and competition over resources have increased instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan. From 2020 to 2023, Africa experienced nine military coups and five failed attempts. The countries affected are home to 159 million people, or 11 percent of the continent's population.¹³

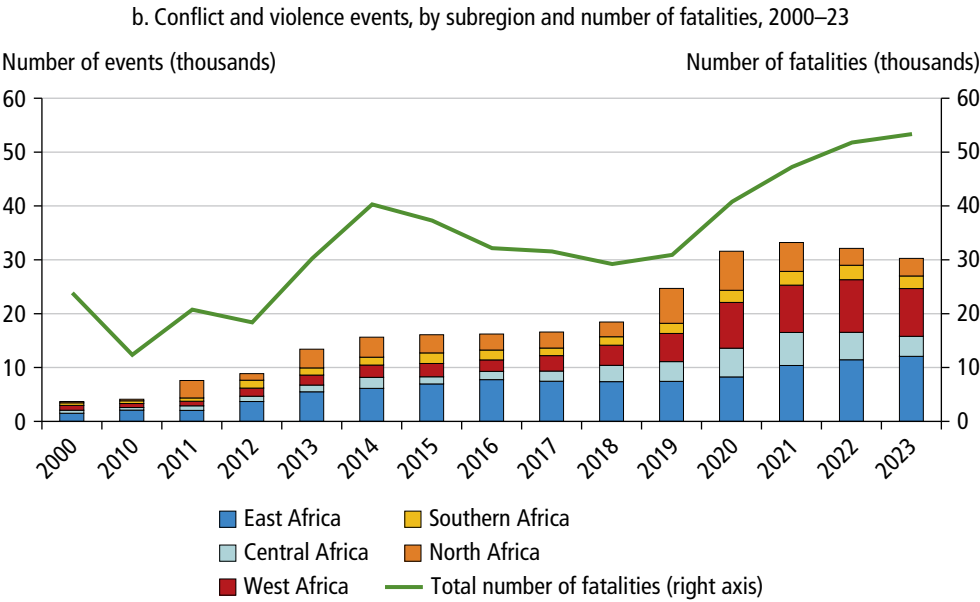
Figure 2.9 Conflict and Violence Events in Africa Have Grown over the Past Decade

a. Conflict and violence events, by type, 2000–23



(continued next page)

Figure 2.9 Conflict and Violence Events in Africa Have Grown over the Past Decade *(continued)*



Source: Team calculations based on data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project database (<https://acleddata.com/>).

Note: The figure excludes Cabo Verde, the Comoros, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and the Seychelles since no data are available before 2020 for these countries.

Reflecting the increased incidence of violence and conflict, the number of forcibly displaced people has risen rapidly over the past decade. The continent now hosts more than 41 million displaced individuals, and a handful of conflicts have generated displacement (refer to chapter 1).¹⁴ Similarly, almost 80 percent of the current internally displaced persons are in just five countries (box 1.2, in chapter 1).¹⁵ Fragility and violence have also affected migration flows beyond the continent, with political and economic ramifications for European destination countries (box 2.1).

BOX 2.1**What Happens When a Conflict Lands at the Doorstep of Europe?**

Since the 1970s, Libya has been a key destination in the context of international South-South migration, which saw peaks in the 1970s and 2000s (Migration Policy Centre 2013). Migration flows to Libya continued until 2007, when the country ended its “open door” migration policies for Sub-Saharan African countries—which were implemented following the 1992 United Nations embargo—and began enforcing visa requirements to curb irregular migration (IOM 2017).

Following the fall of Gaddafi’s regime, Libya has experienced a prolonged period of instability and conflict, impacting migration flows, with political and economic consequences for European destination countries and neighboring countries in North Africa (Cummings et al. 2015; EU Commission 2017). In 2011, the year of the Libyan uprising, migrants accounted for more than 50 percent of Libya’s labor force (Elgazzar et al. 2015). That year, 768,372 migrants fled the country (Migration Policy Centre 2013). Armed conflict erupted in 2014, and insecurity persisted into 2020, characterized by intense conflict-related violence, with peaks in 2014, 2016, and 2018–19 (Council on Foreign Relations 2019; Rahman and Di Maio 2020). Despite remaining a primary migration destination, with 12 percent of its population being foreign-born in 2018, Libya’s unstable security situation and deteriorating conditions for immigrants have also made it a transit country for migrants attempting to reach Europe (Di Maio, Sciabolazza, and Molini 2023; foreign-born numbers from UN DESA [2018]). In 2017, 43 percent of the asylum seekers reaching Italy by boat were migrants who had previously settled in Libya, driven onward by violence (Abdel Jelil et al. 2018). Departures have drastically decreased since 2018, but Libya remained the most important departure point for irregular sea crossings until 2023, although a varying number of migrants transit through its territory to reach other countries in the Maghreb (Di Maio, Sciabolazza, and Molini 2023). Only a fraction of the migrants entering North Africa decide to cross (IOM 2017).

Between May and June 2023, the International Organization for Migration’s Displacement Tracking Matrix program recorded a total of 704,369 migrants. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees registered more than 65,000 refugees and asylum seekers in June 2024.

The forcibly displaced often reside in underdeveloped rural areas with limited livelihood opportunities, market access, and services, which further exacerbates their plight. Trauma, separation from families, loss of assets, disruptions in human capital acquisition, and legal restrictions associated with displacement constrain their ability to rebuild their lives.¹⁶ The refugee population has a high proportion of children (53 percent) and a low proportion of working-age men (20 percent).¹⁷ Over 80 percent of registered refugees live in rural areas, and this proportion has remained relatively constant for over a decade.¹⁸ Additionally, 54 percent of the refugees still live in camps.¹⁹ The presence of refugees increases demand for goods and services and generates an increase in the labor supply in host communities. This shock affects the wages, employment, consumption, and health of the host communities, benefiting some while adversely affecting others (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024). Although the presence of refugees can generate new economic opportunities, the confinement of refugees to areas with limited economic prospects, restricted market access, inadequate infrastructure, and poor access to services can displace some workers, thus worsening welfare in areas that are already lagging behind (Maystadt and Verwimp 2014; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2015, 2016).

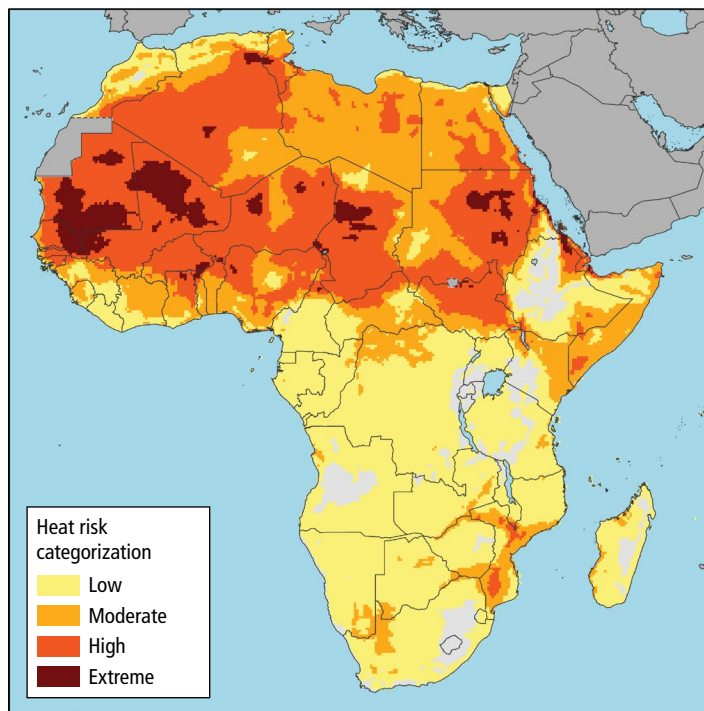
Rapid Population Growth in Africa's Geographical Core Is Overlapping with Climate Change

Africa is warming faster than other continents, with potentially significant implications for mobility.²⁰ By 2050, two of every five people on the continent could be exposed to increasingly severe heat risk (Clement and Rigaud 2024) (map 2.2). With global warming expected to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius in the twenty-first century, concurrent climate hazards, including heavy precipitation and flooding, are projected to intensify across the continent, increasing incentives to migrate (Trisos et al. 2022). Currently, more than 540 million people in Africa are estimated to be exposed to severe weather events, including floods, droughts, cyclones, or heat waves.²¹ Extreme weather events are estimated to have already internally displaced more than 35 million people on the continent over the past 15 years (calculations based on IDMC [2024]). In 2022, an estimated 7.3 million people were internally displaced in the countries in the geographical *core* due to disasters, the highest figure ever reported for the region (calculations based on IDMC [2024]).

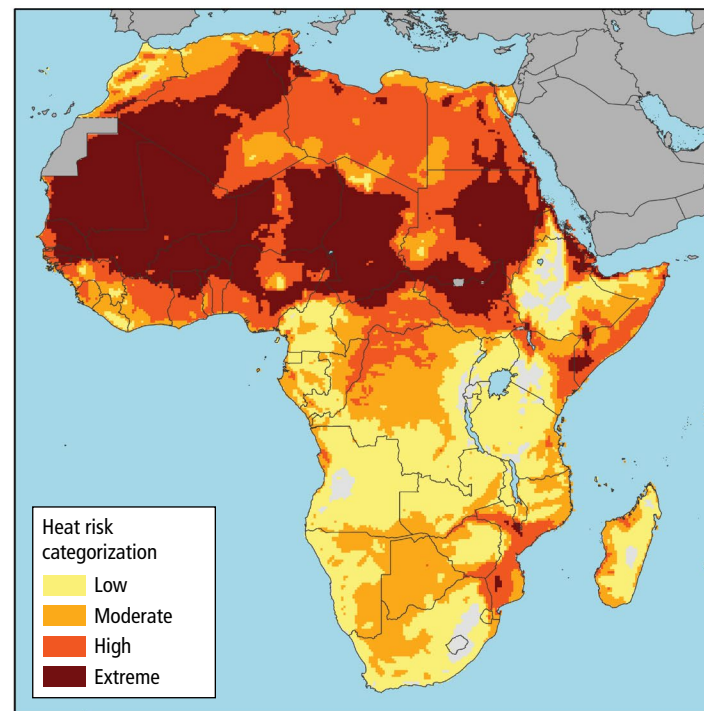
In rural areas, the adverse impacts of climate change on productivity and incomes will be exacerbated by population growth. Climate change threatens rural agricultural productivity and incomes due to reduced water availability, changes in temperature, extreme weather events, and soil degradation (Clement and Rigaud 2024). As the number of rural inhabitants increases, the available agricultural land per worker decreases, leading to smaller farm plots and land fragmentation (Masters et al. 2013).²² The rural nonfarm sector's limited capacity to absorb the growing workforce further heightens dependence on land, thus aggravating land competition and fragmentation (Masters et al. 2013). Globally, projected population growth by 2100 is expected to have a larger impact on GDP per capita than climate change (Henderson et al. 2024). The countries in the *core* of the continent are disproportionately affected by the combined impacts of climate change and population growth, elevating the use of migration as a coping mechanism for the impacted population (Clement et al. 2021).

Map 2.2 Africa Is Expected to Become Warmer in the Coming Decades

a. Historical conditions, 1995–2014



b. Projections, 2040–59



Source: World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal (<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/>).

Note: The map depicts the areas exposed to low, moderate, high, and extreme heat risks in the historical reference period (1995–2014, panel a) and by mid-century (2040–59, panel b) using the Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSP) scenarios. The 50th percentile of the multimodel ensemble for a middle-of-the-road scenario (SSP2-4.5) is depicted for the mid-century time frame, where carbon dioxide emissions remain at around current levels before starting to fall by mid-century but not reaching net-zero by 2100, and global temperatures rise by an estimated 2.7 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. Heat risk categories are defined as the averaged risk level across three indicators of heat where each component reflects their respective highest threshold reached: daily maximum temperature: 30°C, 35°C, 40°C, and 45°C; nighttime minimum temperature: 20°C, 23°C, 26°C, and 29°C; and heat index: 35°C, 37°C, 39°C, and 41°C. If at minimum one day of the year experiences the highest threshold for a given indicator, then the highest risk category is used for that indicator. The combined risk categorization is then the average across the individual categories and expressed as low, moderate, high, or extreme. °C = degrees Celsius.

Increasing numbers of people in coastal areas will face multiple climate risks. More than 100 million people are set to be exposed to sea level rise in Africa's low-lying coastal zones by 2030, increasing to more than 200 million people by mid-century (Cissé et al. 2023). Cyclones and tropical storms primarily affect the southeastern coast, including Madagascar, Mozambique, and the Indian Ocean islands, with increased incidence of coastal flooding (Clement and Rigaud 2024).

Lack of sustainable rural incomes creates incentives to relocate to urban areas, but without adequate urban planning, climate hazards will increasingly limit their viability to host an expanding population. Worsening agricultural productivity due to warmer and drier weather increases incentives to move away from rural areas, although liquidity constraints in poor economies constrain migration.²³ However, urban areas on the continent face poor planning and governance, with a proliferation of informal settlements lacking adequate service provision (Roberts and Anyumba 2022). Indeed, migrants and the urban poor often settle in high-risk flood zones. Between 1985 and 2015, urban expansion occurred predominantly in high-risk flood zones and areas predicted to be impacted by extreme heat conditions. (For a detailed discussion, refer to Clement and Rigaud [2024]; Mukim and Roberts [2023].) The concentration of heat in urban areas amid the increasing population will intensify the effects of heat waves, leading to health risks for workers and affecting productivity through reduced working hours (ILO 2019). An estimated 2.3 percent of total working hours could be lost to heat stress in 2030—the equivalent of 14 million full-time jobs—with West Africa being affected the worst (ILO 2019). Growing urban populations and their assets will be increasingly exposed to climate impacts, including extreme weather, water scarcity, and infrastructure stress. (For a detailed discussion, refer to Clement and Rigaud [2024] and Mukim and Roberts [2023].)

Notes

1. Analysis of the drivers of movement of people dates to at least Ravenstein (1885) and Stewart (1947). Climate has been linked to migration since at least 1991 (IPCC 1991).
2. The medium fertility scenario from United Nations (2022) suggests that the ratio of working-age population to dependents in the geographical *core* will peak in 2086 at around 1.7 working-age people for every child and elderly person.
3. Beegle and Christiaensen (2019); Canning, Jobanputra, and Yazbeck (2015); Hasan, Loevinsohn, et al. (2019); Hasan, Moucheraud, et al. (2019); World Bank (2015a, 2015b, 2023a, 2023b).
4. The global trend toward convergence is stronger when Sub-Saharan Africa is excluded (Kremer, Willis, and You 2022).
5. The population weighted average poverty rate for countries in the geographical *core* excludes Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, and Somalia due to data limitations. Calculations are based on data from the World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform.
6. Rising debt is also affecting countries in the geographical *periphery*, including oil-importing countries in North Africa (Gatti et al. 2024).
7. Based on Yonzan, Mahler, and Lakner (2023), updated using data from the World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform (v 20240326_2017_01_02_PROD). Projections rely on historical average annual per capita growth from the decade before the pandemic (2010–19), applied to individuals' incomes

- or consumption assuming the United Nations medium variant population projections and distribution neutrality.
8. On the rise of consumption cities, refer to Castells-Quintana and Wenban-Smith (2020); Fay and Opal (2000); Gollin, Jedwab, and Vollrath (2016).
 9. In the countries in the geographical *core*, 48 percent of the workforce is engaged in agriculture, yet the sector's valued-added contribution to GDP is less than 25 percent and has remained at that level since the early 1990s. In the countries in the geographical *periphery*, the employment share of agriculture is lower, at 20 percent, but still higher than its contribution to value added of 9.5 percent. The contribution of manufacturing to real value added has changed little and remains less than 10 percent in the countries in the *core* and less than 20 percent in the countries in the *periphery*.
 10. Formal wage employment tends to offer higher earnings and more protections compared to self-employment and informal wage employment (Fields et al. 2023). Additionally, the service sector tends to have lower earnings due to smaller firm size (World Bank, forthcoming a).
 11. This is half of the growth elasticity of wage employment in East Asian countries, which produce roughly 0.08 jobs for a percentage point increase in growth (World Bank 2023b).
 12. In the countries in the geographical *core* and Southern Africa, poverty is higher in those affected by fragility or conflict. On average, between 2010 and 2019, extreme poverty in countries that were in or had experienced conflict was 40.1 percent compared to 31.8 percent in countries that had never been in conflict. Poverty reduction has also been less responsive to growth in countries affected by fragility or conflict (World Bank, forthcoming a).
 13. Overthrows of the government occurred in Burkina Faso (twice), Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Mali (twice), Niger, and Sudan; attempts to do so failed in Guinea-Bissau, Niger, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Sudan (twice).
 14. The countries are the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024).
 15. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan.
 16. Blackmore et al. (2020); Bogic, Njoku, and Priebe (2015); Fazel, Wheeler, and Danesh (2005); Gargiulo et al. (2021); Ginn et al. (2022); Hanewald et al. (2020); Lindert et al. (2009); Pape, Petrini, and Iqbal (2018); Peconga and Thøgersen (2020); Porter and Haslam (2005); Steel et al. (2009); World Bank (forthcoming b).
 17. Calculations based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data, which cover almost all registered refugees in Africa and the Middle East, but the data are incomplete in other regions (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024).
 18. Calculations based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data.
 19. Calculations based on United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees data.
 20. The continent recorded an average rate of change of +0.3 degree Celsius per decade between 1991 and 2022, faster than the global average warming trend of around +0.2 degree Celsius per decade (WMO 2023).
 21. Calculations based on data from Doan et al. (2023), which exclude Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Somalia, for which estimates are not available. Doan et al. (2023) also find that poor households are particularly vulnerable to climate and other shocks due to reliance on agricultural work, which dampens prospects for household income growth and poverty reduction on the continent. Of those exposed in Africa, 34 percent are extremely poor, living below the US\$2.15 per person per day poverty line.
 22. The range of farm sizes examined in Africa is too limited to draw robust conclusions on the relationship between farm size and productivity (Jayne et al. 2019; Jayne et al. 2022). Although some evidence suggests a U-shaped relationship (Foster and Rosenzweig 2022; Muyanga and Jayne 2019),

weather and pest shocks and heterogeneity in the quality of land also explain a large share of the difference in farm productivity (Gollin and Udry 2021).

23. Cattaneo and Peri (2016); Henderson, Storeygard, and Deichmann (2017); Marchiori, Maystadt, and Schumacher (2012); Zaveri et al. (2021).

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The Untapped Potential of Migration

Introduction

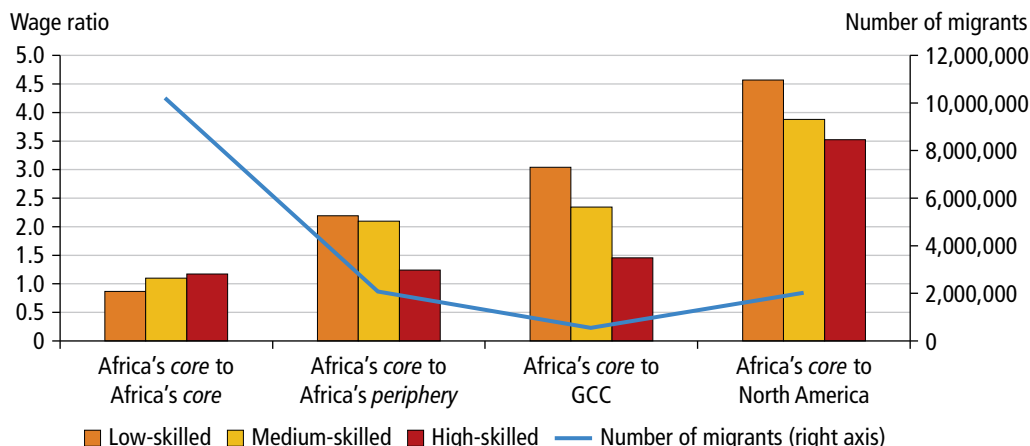
The ongoing global megatrends and African migration patterns put a high premium on getting current and future migration and forced displacement policies right. The Great Demographic Divergence and economic imbalances between Africa and the rest of the world present untapped migration benefits for migrants and their families.¹ Meanwhile, chronic fragility and climate vulnerability make migration a critical adaptation mechanism. As labor shortages grow in high-income and upper-middle-income countries, demand for immigration from Africa and elsewhere will rise, necessitating deliberate policies to harness these opportunities and mitigate downsides. The fragility, conflict, and violence in Africa underscore the need and urgency to strengthen hosting systems for both refugees and internally displaced persons. Africa has an opportunity to tap into the development benefits of migration while protecting and leveraging the economic potential of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Migration Has the Potential to Yield Higher Returns in Africa

Migration out of Africa is relatively low (as shown in chapter 1 in this report), with migrants moving to destinations with the smallest wage gains. Figure 3.1 shows the wage ratios of migrants (ages 15–35) from countries in Africa’s geographical *core* to different destination regions relative to nonmigrants of comparable skill levels in the origin countries. For example, compared to their origin country wages, a low-skilled migrant from the *core* earns twice as much in Africa’s geographical *periphery*, three times as much in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and four and a half times as much in the United States.² Gains in wages are similar for medium-skilled migrants and slightly lower for high-skilled migrants, especially in the countries in Africa’s *periphery* and GCC countries. Figure 3.1 also shows the number of migrants in 2020 from Africa’s *core* in the four destination regions. Around 10 million international migrants from Africa’s *core* are concentrated in other countries in the *core*, whereas around 2 million are in Africa’s *periphery*, slightly over 2 million in North America, and fewer than 1 million in GCC countries.³

One of the symptoms of low-return mobility is the low level of remittances received by African countries, and especially by those in the continent’s *core*. Of the global remittance flow of

Figure 3.1 Wage Ratio for Migrants (Ages 15–35) from Africa's Geographical Core Compared to Nonmigrants, by Region of Destination

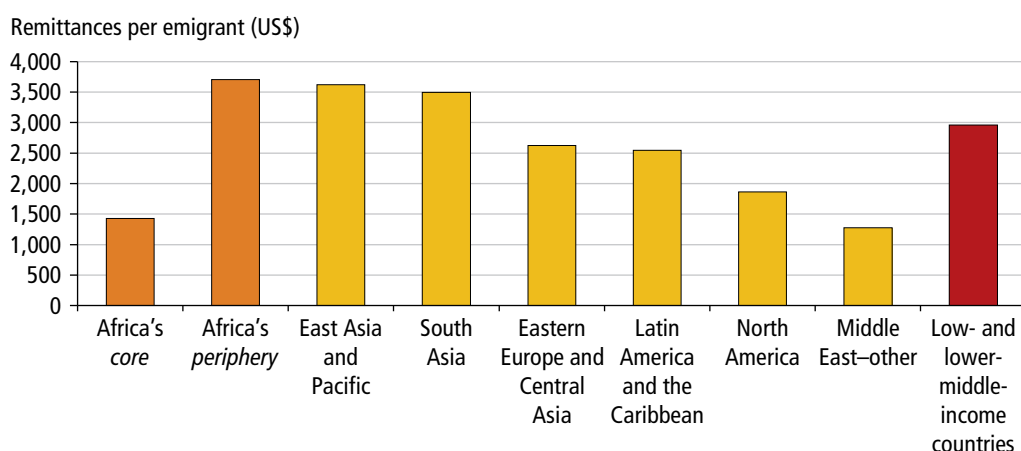


Sources: American Community Survey (2016–20); 2011 South Africa Census; 2018/19 Harmonized Surveys on Living Standards (Senegal); 2015 KNOMAD ILO Cost Surveys (Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development [KNOMAD] and International Labour Organization [ILO]).

Note: Africa's geographical *core* to Africa's *core* represents wages of migrants from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Senegal. Africa's *core* to Africa's geographical *periphery* represents wages of ECOWAS migrants in South Africa. Africa's *core* to GCC countries represents wages earned by Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia. Africa's *core* to North America represents wages of ECOWAS migrants in the United States. *Low-skilled* refers to those with primary education; *medium-skilled*, those with secondary education; and *high-skilled*, those with tertiary education. GCC = Gulf Cooperation Council.

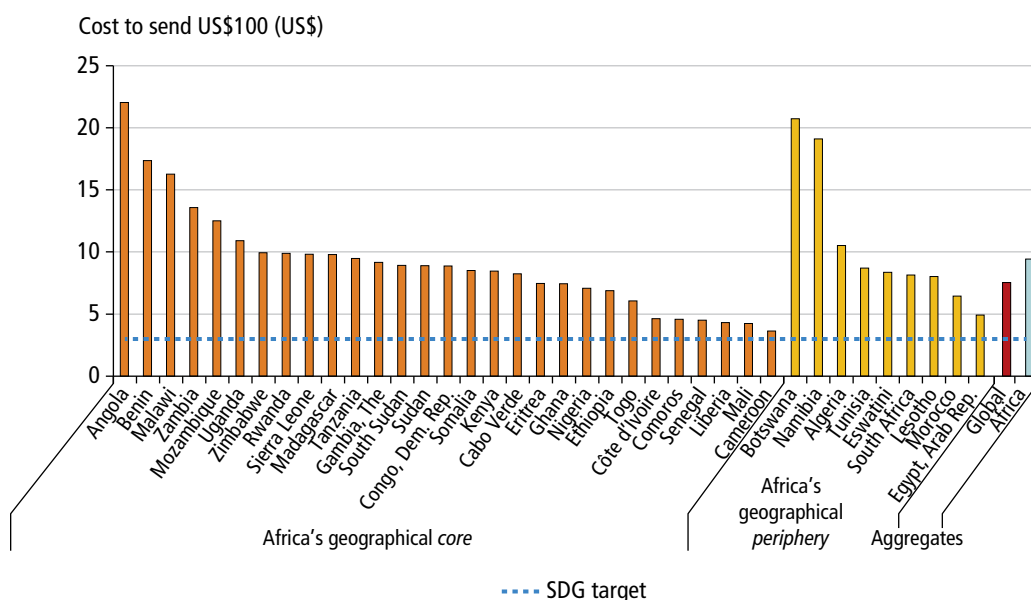
US\$781 billion in 2021, the 41 countries in Africa's *core* received an average of US\$1.2 billion per country, compared to US\$3.7 billion per country in Africa's *periphery*, US\$2.9 billion in Latin America and the Caribbean, and US\$19.6 billion in South Asia.⁴ Figure 3.2 shows that the low volume of remittances received by countries in Africa's *core* is not necessarily due to the low number of emigrants originating from the region. It shows that, on average, Africa's *core* received US\$1,429 per migrant in 2020, compared to US\$2,543 in Latin America and the Caribbean, US\$3,497 in South Asia, and US\$3,707 in Africa's *periphery*. Combined, figures 3.1 and 3.2 show that most of the migrants from Africa's *core* are concentrated in destination regions where the gains in their wages are limited and from where their remittances to communities back home are lower than those of migrants from other regions.

Additionally, the cost of sending remittances to Africa remains the highest in the world, which dampens the benefits from migration that accrue to Africa. Remittances are one of the most tangible ways for countries of origin to realize the development benefits of migration. Despite the technological advancements in recent decades, the cost of sending remittances remained at 6.2 percent globally in the second quarter of 2023, more than twice the Sustainable Development Goal target of 3 percent. This is largely due to the fees and foreign exchange margins that migrants and their families must pay in origin and destination countries. Sub-Saharan Africa was the region with the highest cost of remittances in 2023, at 7.9 percent, whereas South Asia had the lowest cost, at 4.3 percent. Figure 3.3 shows that in 18 of Africa's 29 *core* countries and seven of Africa's nine *periphery* countries for which data are available, the cost of sending remittances is higher than the global average.

Figure 3.2 Countries in Africa's Geographical Core Receive the Lowest Remittances per Emigrant

Sources: World Bank Bilateral Remittance Matrix 2021, December 2022; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Migration Stock 2020.

Note: Refugee numbers are subtracted from the reported international migration stock.

Figure 3.3 The Average Transaction Cost of Sending Remittances to an African Country Is High

Source: World Bank 2023a.

Note: SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.

Deliberate Policies Are Needed to Unleash Africa's Untapped Potential

Today and even more so in the decades to come, migrants have incentives to seek better opportunities outside the borders of their countries. Recognizing the large potential benefits

for migrants and their origin and destination countries, but also being cognizant of the associated costs, there is scope for policies and policy coordination between origin and destination countries to maximize the benefits and address the costs of realizing Africa's untapped potential.

Migration Can Bring Large Gains for Migrants and Their Origin Countries

Numerous recent studies show that the impacts of migration and remittances go beyond the migrants and their immediate households and extend to their origin communities and regions. The remittances sent by migrants provide capital for entrepreneurial activities in their origin countries and increase demand for goods and services produced locally. This provides income-generating opportunities that can raise the living standards of everyone in the origin regions and communities. Indeed, regions with higher emigration have been shown to have lower poverty and greater resilience to cope with shocks.⁵

Recent evidence from Africa confirms such effects and finds that higher emigration can spur the transformation of rural economies out of agriculture. It has been shown that even a short-lived episode of migration from Malawi to South Africa—for low-skilled workers in the mining sector between 1967 and 1974—led to transition out of agriculture in the origin districts. Districts with higher temporary emigration had larger capital inflows in the form of remittances, which increased the number of nonfarm enterprises in those districts and spurred the transformation of these labor markets out of agriculture and into services (Dinkelman, Kumchulesi, and Mariotti 2024). In Burkina Faso, the transition away from farming reduced the need for family farm labor (child labor) and lowered overall fertility rates in villages that were historically exposed to higher degrees of low-skilled circular migration to Côte d'Ivoire (Dupas et al. 2023). Similarly, Moroccan municipalities experiencing higher emigration rates to France have been found to urbanize faster (Salem and Seck 2022).

Beyond remittances, countries in Africa stand to benefit from emigration through positive impacts on human capital formation. First, remittances coming from migration are often used to improve the schooling and health of the children who are left behind in the short and long runs.⁶ Such impacts on human capital can extend beyond the immediate households of the migrants to the broader community. For example, in Malawian communities with easier access to work in South African mines between 1967 and 1974, children received significantly higher levels of schooling in the short as well as long runs (20 years later) (Dinkelman and Mariotti 2016). These gains can be even larger with persistent migration opportunities, as was the case in the Philippines (Khanna et al. 2022).

Migration—or rather the prospect of future migration—can also provide a powerful incentive for potential migrants to acquire skills that are valued abroad. Recent studies have found evidence that such incentives can increase human capital in origin countries, even among those who never migrate. A higher prospect of future migration increases secondary school completion among youngsters in Cabo Verde (Batista, Lacuesta, and Vicente 2012). Similarly, the prospect of being selected into the British Army raises overall educational attainment by

over 1.1 years even among Nepali men who never end up migrating (S. A. Shrestha 2017). The rise of the Indian information technology sector is partly attributed to Indians' increased investment in information technology education due to the prospect of migrating to the United States (Khanna and Morales 2021). Similarly, a recent study finds that the increased prospect of migrating to the United States increased nursing enrollment and licensing in the Philippines to the extent that for every nurse who emigrated, seven were licensed and remained in the Philippines (Abarcar and Theoharides 2024).

Policies are crucial for ensuring that the incentive effects of emigration on skill acquisition prevail. As the prospect of emigration enhances the returns on acquiring the relevant skills, there must be a commensurate expansion in the supply of quality training and educational institutions. For instance, the positive effects of emigration on human capital in Senegal were found to be concentrated in areas with better access to schools (Bocquier et al. 2023). If training or educational institutions cannot meet the increased demand due to emigration, the positive effects on the origin countries, which lose human capital, may be dampened or reversed. This is particularly salient in sectors such as health care (box 3.1).

BOX 3.1

Migration of Health Care Workers from Africa

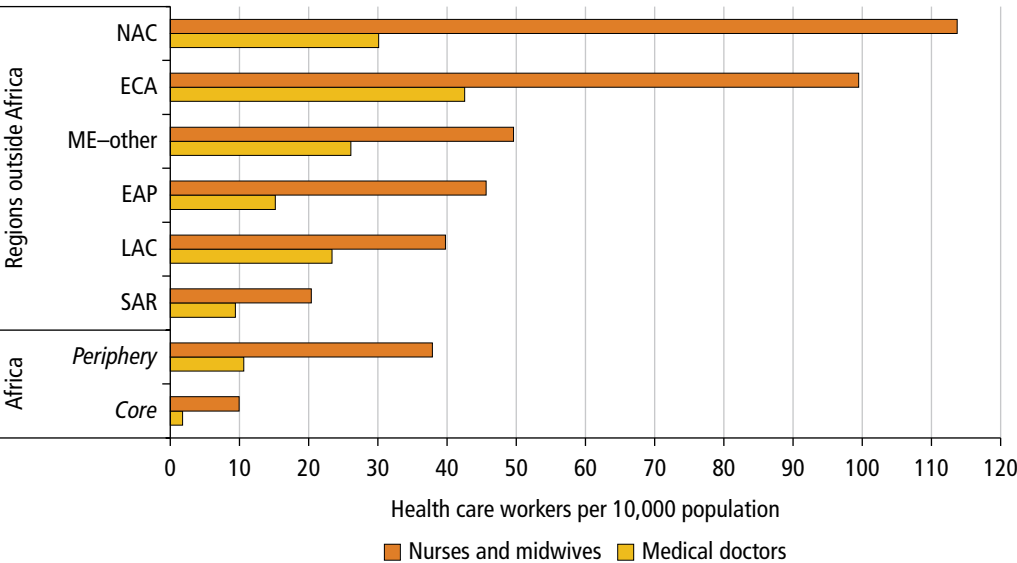
Africa's Health Sector in Numbers

In 2018, Africa had an average of 29 health care workers per 10,000 population, far below the 44.5 target of the Sustainable Development Goals (WHO 2021).^a Among the 55 countries mentioned in the World Health Organization's health workforce support and safeguards list of countries with critical health workforce shortages to meet universal health care coverage in 2023, 37 are in Africa (WHO 2023a). Figure B3.1.1 shows that the countries in Africa's geographical *core* have an average of 10 nurses and midwives and 2 medical doctors per 10,000 population. The distribution of health workers is also skewed in favor of a handful of cities, which has led to a scarcity of health care workers in rural and remote areas (WHO 2023b). The differences in public and private sector wages, with a high premium for the public sector, and the associated career incentives have further exacerbated the uneven geographical distribution of health care workers. International migration of health care workers has made the issues of both domestic and global supply of and equity in access to health care workers more salient.^b Data on the share of health care workers who migrate are hard to find, but available estimates suggest that about 10 to 20 percent of physicians and about 10 percent of nurses migrate abroad.^c

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Box 3.1 Migration of Health Care Workers from Africa *(continued)*

Figure B3.1.1 Doctors, Nurses, and Midwives per 10,000 Population, 2018–21



Source: Estimates based on data from the National Health Workforce Accounts database, World Health Organization, Geneva (<https://apps.who.int/nhwportal>, <https://www.who.int/activities/improving-health-workforce-data-and-evidence>).

Note: Data from a sample of 148 countries for which information on medical doctors and nurses and midwives were available between 2018 and 2021. Other health care workers are not included in the figure. The figure plots simple averages of densities across countries for each of the indicated regions. EAP = East Asia and Pacific; ECA = Europe and Central Asia; LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; ME = Middle East; NAC = North America; SAR = South Asia.

The Global Market for Health Care Workers

On the destination country side, the health care delivery systems in high-income countries have become increasingly reliant on immigrants. In 2021, 1 in 5 doctors and almost 1 in 10 nurses in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries were foreign trained (OECD 2023). Although countries like India and the Philippines have traditionally been the largest suppliers, African countries have increasingly become a sizable source of health care workers. For instance, Ghana, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe have been among the top five sources of health care migrants to the United Kingdom in recent years (statistics from the UK government, as cited in Dempster and Crawford [2024]). The demands for foreign health care workers are expected to increase with the aging of the population and health care workforce in high-income countries. It is expected that by 2030, OECD countries will need an additional 400,000 doctors and 2.5 million nurses beyond the domestic supply (Scheffler and Arnold 2019). The higher relative wages in high-income countries and the high and increasing demand for foreign health care workers provide strong incentives for health workers in

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Box 3.1 Migration of Health Care Workers from Africa *(continued)*

Africa to migrate abroad. These incentives are amplified by the poor working conditions in origin countries, which include the lack of complementary resources, such as equipment and administrative capacity, and limited absorptive capacity of the public sector, but also, more generally, situations of conflict and insecurity (Chikezie et al. 2023; Eastwood et al. 2005).

On the flip side, such high-powered migration incentives in the form of high economic returns can also attract individuals to invest in becoming health care workers, as documented in the case of the Philippines (Abarcar and Theoharides 2024). Likewise, preliminary evidence from Nigeria suggests that nursing enrollment is increasing rapidly as the prospects of nurses emigrating have improved in recent years (Dempster and Crawford 2024). As global demand for health care workers keeps expanding, supply will need to expand accordingly. Since the increases in global supply and demand are likely to come from different countries—with Africa as a potential provider—deliberate policy action is needed to ensure that the skills produced match the demand, spillovers are mitigated, and benefits are equitably shared (Dia 2022, 62–63).

The Policy Problem and Its Resolution

The current status of “unmanaged” emigration of health care workers, while responding to market forces, can be improved. Destination countries are facing the high burden of screening health care workers and the unpredictability of finding a workforce that matches their needs in the face of acute and increasing shortages. Migrants risk not having their credentials recognized by the destination country and having to work in occupations below their ability.^d Origin countries further view such emigration as adding to their already strained health systems.

To date, the policy response from origin countries has been to try to curb the emigration of health care workers through quotas or taxes on migrants. These include schemes that require a minimum number of years of mandatory domestic service before health care workers are allowed to emigrate (also known as “bonding schemes”). Evidence on the efficacy of these schemes is mixed and depends on the public health care sector’s capacity to absorb new graduates, the origin country’s capacity to enforce bonding requirements, and the willingness of overseas recruiters to buy out skilled graduates’ financial or bonding obligations (Hongoro and McPake 2004). Furthermore, because these schemes reduce the returns to choosing a health care profession, they can depress the overall supply of health care workers. A policy that is complementary to these ex-post restrictions is ex-ante incentives, such as scholarships that offset the disincentive effect from the future constraints on mobility, as in the case of Thailand (Wibulpolprasert and Pengpaibon 2003). Some countries in Europe, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, have designed income contingent loans (ICLs) for medical students, whereby students start repaying their loan once they are earning an income above a certain threshold amount. Clear loan

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Box 3.1 Migration of Health Care Workers from Africa *(continued)*

repayment provisions have been set up for students working abroad after their studies. In the context of high-emigration African countries, ICL schemes could be set up whereby medical school graduates who migrate to another country after completing their education have their ICL repayments collected from their monthly wages by the government of the host country, which are then transferred back to the origin country government. The revenues from the ICL scheme would be used to finance the costly tertiary education of future medical students (Ivins et al. 2022).

In lieu of unilateral policies taken by origin countries, managed migration partnerships between origin and destination countries could be mutually beneficial for both, as well as for the migrants. These bilateral mechanisms allow a predictable flow of well-qualified health care workers to match their demand. For the migrating workers, such partnerships offer access to destination countries' health care markets without any loss of credentials or skills. For origin countries in Africa, the partnerships provide a framework to manage the emigration of health workers, for example, from appropriate upstream investments in training to downstream enforcement of bonding provisions, if any.

At the heart of these partnerships is also the question of how the costs and benefits of the migration of health care workers are shared between origin and destination countries. Managed migration partnerships would thus include a provision for benefit-sharing between origin and destination countries, which could take the form of capacity-building, technical, and financial assistance. While such assistance does not, conceptually at least, need to be systematically tied to the health sector, recently released World Health Organization guidelines recommend that any such agreements address the specific needs of health systems in both the origin and destination countries (WHO 2024). For instance, the need for specialist physicians may be higher in the destination countries, whereas the origin countries may need more general physicians, nurses, or even primary health care workers. Partnership agreements can then provide more details on how the destination country can support the needs of the origin country's health system in return for providing a well-qualified health care workforce. In the specific case in which both the origin and destination countries demand the same skills, global skills partnerships (GSPs) can be an appropriate instrument that focuses on those specific skills (Clemens 2015). GSPs determine how the costs of training would be shared between the origin and destination countries and other parties to the partnership, such as the private sector. For instance, the Philippines and Germany recently set up a GSP for nursing, which involves a two-track model of training: a "home" track catered to the needs of the Filipino market and an "away" track with specialist courses catered to the German market (Center for Global Development 2021).

These managed migration partnerships and policies on regulating the emigration of health care workers will not solve the broader underlying issues leading to health worker shortages in Africa. The policies will admittedly need to be complemented by other

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Box 3.1 Migration of Health Care Workers from Africa (*continued*)

initiatives designed to address issues such as health worker mismanagement and mis-distribution across locations in many African countries.

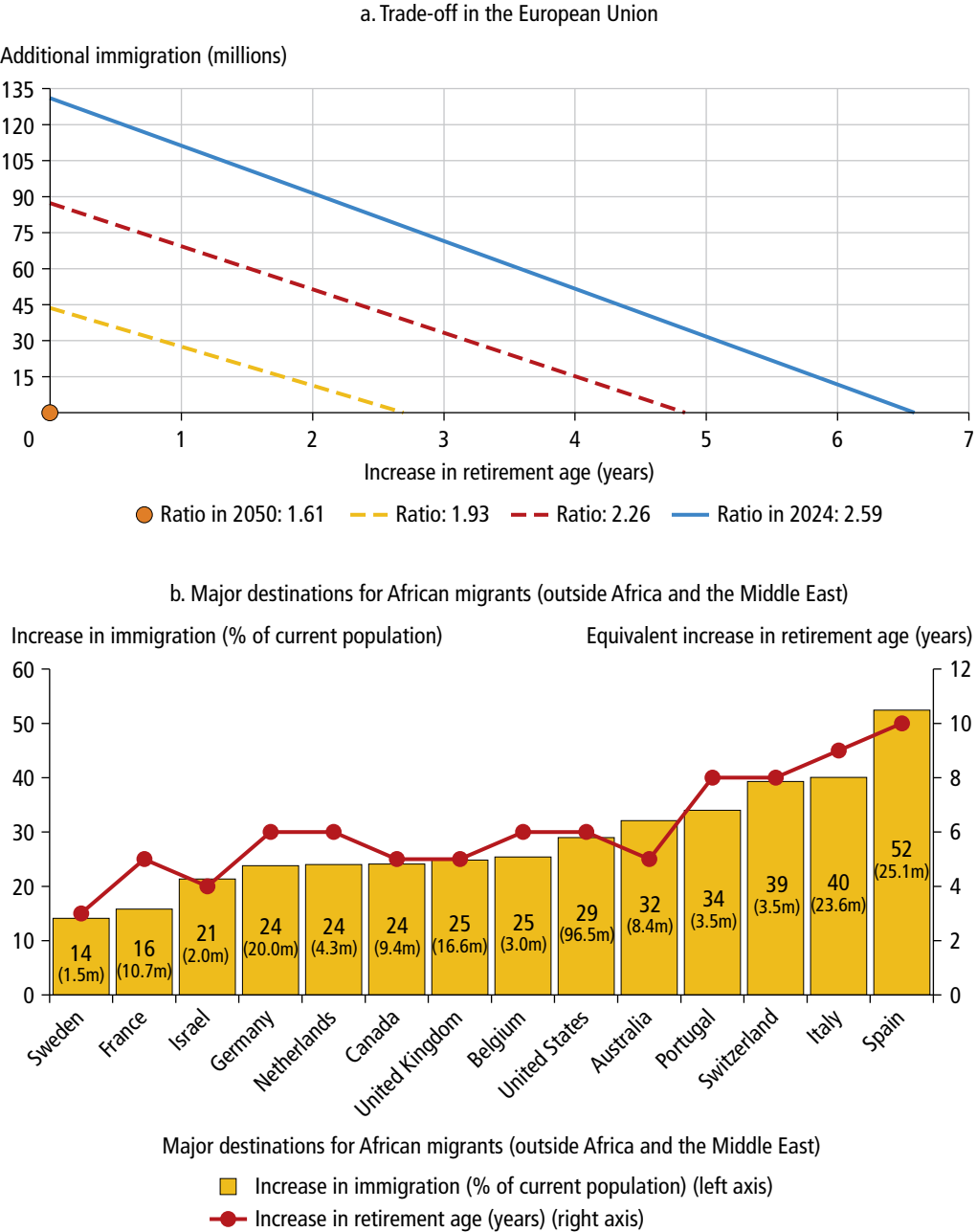
- a. This figure is based on all health workers (13 categories: physician generalists, physician specialists, professional nurses and associates, professional midwives and associates, dentists and technicians, pharmacists and technicians, laboratory workers, technicians on medical imaging and equipment, environment and public health workers, health services managers, community health workers, traditional and complementary medicine, and other health workers).
 - b. African countries do not produce enough health workers for their own markets. For example, South Africa trains fewer nurses than Mexico or Türkiye (Ivins et al. 2022).
 - c. Bhargava and Docquier (2008) estimate that around 10 percent of physicians in Sub-Saharan African countries migrate abroad. Clemens and Pettersson (2008), using a different methodology to define emigrants, find that 19 percent of physicians and 8 percent of nurses born in Africa were abroad in 2000.
 - d. Underutilization of trained health care workers is a common phenomenon observed in high-income countries. For instance, Batalova, Fix, and Pierce (2020) estimate that more than 263,000 skilled immigrants in the United States with health care qualifications are underutilized.
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The Great Demographic Divergence Provides an Opportunity for Africa

Demographic patterns and projections show that Africa will be home to an increasingly larger share of the youth population over the next three decades. As mentioned in chapter 2 of this report, one in three youth (ages 15–34) globally will be from Africa by 2050. This will be due to a combination of the youth population bulge in Africa and rapid aging in the rest of the world, particularly in high-income countries. By 2050, the combined working-age population in high-income and upper-middle-income countries outside Africa will shrink by 207 million people. For each elderly person in the population, there will be only 2.4 working-age individuals in high-income and upper-middle-income countries outside Africa by 2050, compared to 11 in Africa.

Demographic patterns have large implications for the demand for migrant labor in high-income countries. First, the working-age population in high-income countries is shrinking. This simply means that high-income countries need more workers to maintain the current levels of output and living standards. The drop in the size of the workforce, if unmitigated, is expected to lower the European Union's gross domestic product by 12 percent by 2050—an annual amount of US\$1.7 trillion—after accounting for anticipated gains in labor productivity between now and then.² Just to maintain the current working-age-to-elderly ratio of 2.59 in 2050, modeling done for this report shows that the 27 countries in the European Union would need to increase immigration from outside the European Union by 131 million people (figure 3.4, panel a). For key destination countries, the reduction in workforce relative to the elderly population would imply increases in immigration by an additional 14 to 52 percent of their current population (figure 3.4, panel b). This would mean an increase of 11 million in France, 97 million in the United States, and 17 million immigrants in the United Kingdom.

Figure 3.4 The Trade-Off between Increasing Immigration and Increasing the Retirement Age Is Stark in Key Destination Countries for African Migrants



Source: Calculations based on population estimates and (median-varient) projections from UN DESA 2022.

Note: In panel a, points along each line show possible combinations of increases in immigration and the retirement age to maintain the ratio of working-age to elderly population. Panel b plots the increase in immigration that will be necessary by 2050 to maintain the current ratio of working-age to elderly population, expressed as a percent of the current population on the left axis (in yellow). The numbers in parentheses indicate the equivalent number of immigrants (millions) needed. The right axis (in red) plots the equivalent increase in retirement age needed to maintain the ratio in the absence of additional immigration.

In addition to a decline in the size of the workforce, the composition of the working-age population in high-income countries is also expected to skew toward older workers. The share of younger workers (ages 15–39) among the working-age population (ages 15–64) is expected to fall by 7.4 percentage points in Europe and North America.⁸ This creates further demand for younger workers in the economy whose comparative advantage relies on skills related to their youth, among other factors. The ability to do manual and physical labor as well as other physically strenuous tasks will become relatively scarce in the workforce. Policy options for high-income countries, such as increasing the retirement age or boosting female labor force participation, are limited. Instead of increasing immigration, the European Union could maintain the same ratio by increasing the retirement age by close to 7 years (figure 3.4, panel a). The equivalent offsetting increase in the retirement age ranges from 3 years (Sweden) to 10 years (Spain) for key destination countries for African migrants (figure 3.4, panel b). For the high-income countries in Europe and North America, female labor force participation is already close to par and may not serve as a feasible policy alternative to boost the size of the workforce.

High-income countries can lessen some of these trade-offs through increased automation, but there are limits to how much automation can help. Aging economies are already investing disproportionately in automation technologies to offset the need for labor.⁹ The recent advancements in automation technologies, such as robotics and artificial intelligence, have transformed the common understanding of what types of tasks can be automated. Although that can help to reduce the need for (immigrant) labor, even the current advancements in technology are deemed unlikely to deliver large productivity gains as they fall short of fully substituting for humans in complex physical and interpersonal tasks, particularly in the care and service sectors (Acemoglu 2024). In these sectors, demand is expected to increase as the share of the elderly in the population increases. For instance, projections by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics show that *home health and personal care aides* are one of the top two occupations in terms of expected employment growth between 2022 and 2032 in the United States (US BLS 2024).

The skill levels of African migrants increase with distance of migration, with higher-skilled migrants traveling farther. In South Africa, less than 40 percent of the migrants from neighboring Southern African Development Community countries have completed secondary school education, while over 50 percent of migrants from more distant African countries have done so, with 25 percent holding post-secondary qualifications (Crush and Dodson 2017). Similarly, over 35 percent of migrants from Africa’s geographical *core* to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries hold a tertiary degree, with the figure rising to 55 percent for migrants from Southern African countries. However, many highly educated migrants end up working in low- or middle-skilled sectors or occupations. About 48 percent of the high-skilled migrants from non-EU countries are employed in low- or middle-skilled occupations in the European Union (EPRS 2021). Likewise, 41 percent of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa work in low-skilled sectors (Changom 2024).

Thus, there is a need for policies that recognize migrant skills and qualifications in destination countries and market institutions that better match the skills supplied with those demanded.

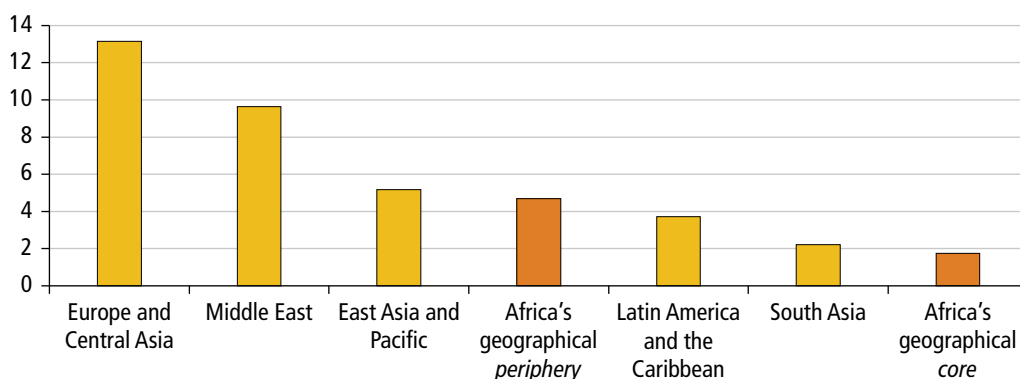
To benefit fully from the Great Demographic Divergence as well as ensure the availability of qualified workers for the domestic economies, Africa must improve its skills. The average learning-adjusted years of schooling in Africa's *core* is 4.8, compared to 10.7 in key European destinations (Filmer et al. 2020). This gap stems from poor educational quality and quantity, hindering Africa's ability to meet the global demand for high-skilled workers in areas such as information technology and health care. Ramping up skills, to boost the general level of skills as well as those targeted to high global demand sectors, will be necessary for Africa to reap the benefits from migration and also ensure that the domestic economy continues to benefit from the skilled workers in Africa. Additionally, to capitalize fully on such opportunities, particularly in high-demand occupations such as personal care or services, skills acquisition needs to be broadened beyond education to include language, communications, service orientation, social perceptiveness, critical thinking, reliability, and other interpersonal skills.¹⁰

While migration policy discussions often center on labor migration, migration for education or training—although largely underutilized—can address some of the challenges associated with labor migration, including social integration. Receiving training and education in the country of destination resolves issues related to skill and certification recognition in the labor market. Mutual recognition of qualifications would also facilitate the productive return of migrants to their countries of origin, considering that two in three international students leave OECD countries after their permits expire (OECD 2022). Additionally, students and trainees are exposed to linguistic, cultural, and political aspects of the destination society for a longer period and at an earlier age. This extended exposure facilitates integration into not only labor markets, but also society at large (World Bank 2023b, chapter 6).

The number of African students pursuing post-secondary education outside their countries of origin has nearly tripled over the past two decades, rising from fewer than 280,000 to more than 624,000 (Carnegie Endowment 2023). However, figure 3.5 shows that the propensity of youth (ages 15–24) to migrate abroad for education remains the lowest in countries of Africa's geographical *core*, where only 1.8 of every 1,000 youth pursue tertiary education abroad. This compares to 4.7 of every 1,000 in Africa's geographical *periphery* countries and 13.1 of every 1,000 in Europe and Central Asia.¹¹ African countries, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, have some of the lowest tertiary education enrollment levels globally. As demand for tertiary education in Africa grows, international student mobility can help to meet the unmet domestic demand while increasing the returns to education. Similar to overall migration trends, African student migrants are increasingly choosing diverse destinations outside North America and Western Europe, with China, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and the United Arab Emirates emerging as top destinations for international students from Africa in 2020 (Carnegie Endowment 2023).

Figure 3.5 Propensity to Migrate Abroad for Tertiary Education, 2020

International students per 1,000 youth population (ages 15–24) at origin



Sources: Calculated based on data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics and United Nations World Population Prospects.

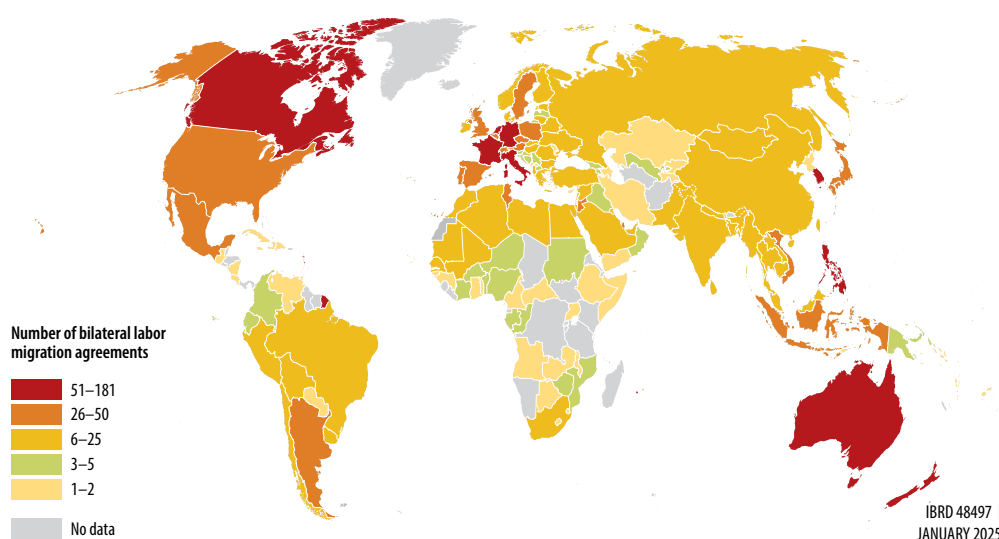
Strategic Management of Migration Is Instrumental for Unleashing Its Benefits

As the 2023 *World Development Report* points out, strategic management of migration for both origin and destination countries allows maximizing its benefits and minimizing its costs (World Bank 2023b, chapter 9). With strategic management, origin and destination countries can plan and prepare for the type of migration that is most beneficial for them, as well as maximize the gains accruing to them from existing migration. For origin countries in Africa, this would include identifying potential destination countries for the migrants; assessing and developing the skills—technical, cognitive, and noncognitive—that correspond to the demand or complement the workforce in destination countries; ensuring that people migrate with the necessary skills and documentation; improving migrant welfare while abroad; facilitating the flow of remittances, knowledge, and investments from the diaspora; and facilitating conditions for migrants who choose to return.

One of the ways in which countries have managed labor migration is through signing bilateral treaties, labor agreements, and memoranda of understanding (MOUs). These bilateral labor migration agreements (BLMAs) allow both origin and destination countries to manage the flow of labor for their mutual benefit. Since many of the policies alluded to above need time to bear fruit, visibility of the future demand for or supply of workers is necessary for both countries to undertake long-term investments. Additionally, the enforcement of some provisions—for example, the right to minimum labor standards or the obligation to abide by short-term residence permits—requires cooperation between origin and destination countries, which can be spelled out using instruments such as BLMAs.

These instruments can also help migrants while abroad, especially those, including women, in vulnerable sectors and situations. BLMAs can be important instruments for providing adequate legal protection measures for migrant workers while they are abroad. Especially when coupled with measures to regulate intermediaries, BLMAs may be essential for workers in sectors and situations that make them inherently vulnerable, such as domestic workers (Fernando and Singh, forthcoming). Female migrants, who disproportionately tend to work in those sectors, can be further vulnerable to gender-based violence and exploitation. African women migrating for work are especially vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and harassment (Atong, Maya, and Odigie 2018; Blaydes 2023). Providing access to appropriate grievance redressal mechanisms and other support and recourse mechanisms is crucial. Managing these risks through policy levers can be a better alternative to drastic policy measures that restrict migration, which can have the unintended consequence of harming the potential migrants and their families.¹² While some African countries have made strides in removing barriers to women's mobility, restrictions remain. These often involve the absence of transportation policies that address women's specific needs or gender-specific passport requirements, such as providing a husband's name or marriage certificate. In Libya, husbands can include their wives and children under 18 on their passports, preventing them from obtaining their own.¹³ Additionally, women traveling alone must justify their reasons and detail their previous trips. In the Arab Republic of Egypt, women still face restrictions on leaving the marital home without their husband's permission.^{14,15}

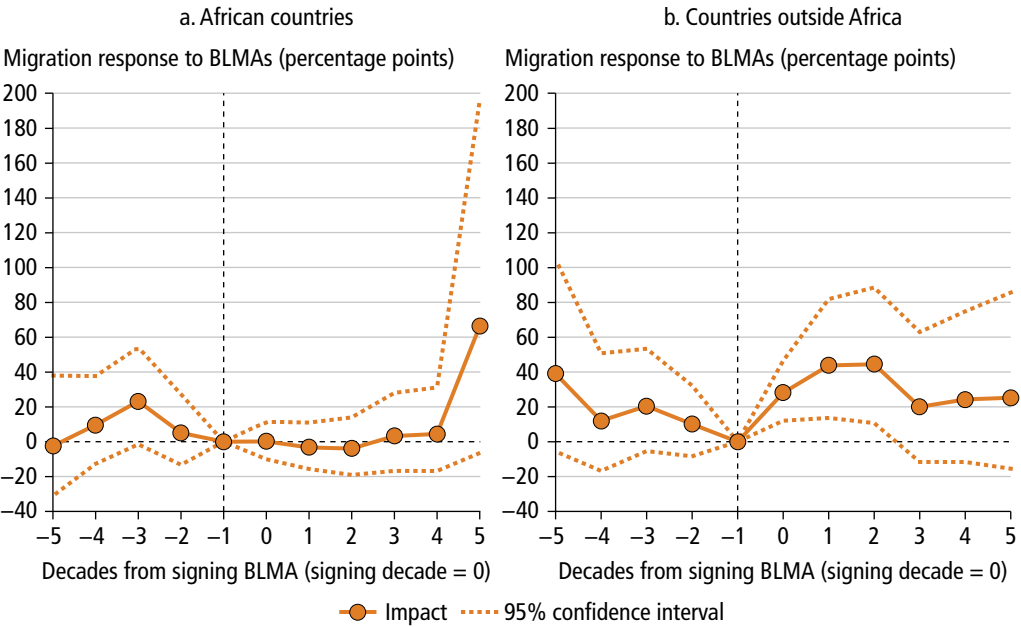
Countries in Africa, especially the countries in its geographical *core*, have not utilized BLMAs—or other strategic migration management tools—as much as the rest of the world. A comprehensive database of BLMAs since 1927 clearly shows that countries in Africa, and, in particular, countries in Africa's *core*, have lagged their peers in the number of BLMAs signed (Chilton and Woda 2022) (map 3.1). This has particularly been the case since 1990. Between 1990 and 2020, the number of BLMAs signed by countries in East Asia and Pacific and South Asia grew 7 to 10 times, whereas BLMAs signed by countries in Africa grew only twofold. While signing BLMAs is one proxy for strategic management of migration, there are several other areas in which Africa lags other regions. A recent report by the International Organization for Migration uses data from the Migration Governance Indicators to show that areas such as development of a national migration strategy and its links to the broader development strategy, establishment of an interministerial coordination mechanism on migration issues, and participation in bilateral migration discourse are missing or nascent and emerging in Africa, particularly in Africa's *core* countries.^{16,17}

Map 3.1 Number of Bilateral Labor Migration Agreements Signed, 1927–2020

Sources: Chilton and Woda 2022; Bilateral Labor Migration Agreements Dataset, Version 2 (2022), <https://www.law.uchicago.edu/bilateral-labor-agreements-dataset>.

Evidence to date points toward the important role of BLMAs in facilitating migration between signatory countries. While BLMAs are expected to facilitate migration *flows* between countries, empirical evidence also supports the view that BLMAs are effective at increasing the *stock* of migrants in destination countries as well, including in the GCC countries (Adhikari et al. 2024) (box 3.2). BLMAs increase the stock of migrants in destination countries by over 77 percent, with the effects of a single BLMA lasting up to three decades. However, as figure 3.6 shows, the positive impact of BLMAs on increasing migration is virtually absent for African countries. The lack of sustained migration effects in the case of African countries is mostly observed among countries with weaker institutions (as measured by government effectiveness), which emphasizes the need for capacity building to implement such agreements. The income gain for migrants from a Sub-Saharan African country, implied by the migration impacts of a single BLMA, would be around US\$2.4 million per year.¹⁸ However, with increased investments in migration systems and capacity to implement such BLMAs, the impacts can be much higher. If Sub-Saharan African countries achieve the same migration impact of a BLMA as in other low-income and lower-middle-income countries, the implied income gains could be an additional US\$48.6 million per year.

Figure 3.6 Effect of Signing BLMAs on Labor Migration Flows



Source: Adhikari et al. 2024.
Note: BLMAs = bilateral labor migration agreements.

The policies set in motion *today* will thus define whether Africa can benefit from the potential of economic migration *tomorrow*. High-income countries need to take policy actions *now* to ensure that they can sustain their current levels of prosperity over the coming decades. While policies like increasing the retirement age and advancing automation may help to make up for the shrinking workforce in high-income countries, increased immigration will likely be necessary to complement those policies, to meet the increasing demands for younger workers and care workers. Likewise, to take advantage of this opportunity for their benefit, African countries will need to make investments *now* to build the skills that will be in high demand in aging high-income countries. In addition to improving the education system, this could mean prioritizing the sociobehavioral skills that are likely to be important in high-income destination countries. Many African countries can leverage the opportunities abroad to improve skills in and for origin country labor markets as well.

BOX 3.2**Temporary Migration to GCC Countries**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have emerged as a prominent destination for migrant workers. In 2020, the six GCC countries collectively hosted 11 percent of the world's migrants, totaling around 30 million people.^a While South Asian nations such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have traditionally supplied the largest numbers of migrant workers, African countries, like the Arab Republic of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan, are becoming increasingly significant sources. Migrants constitute a substantial portion of the population in GCC countries, ranging from 37 percent in Saudi Arabia to 85 percent in the United Arab Emirates. Consequently, the GCC countries are a major source of remittances, with migrants sending more than US\$120 billion back home in 2022, accounting for 28 percent of global remittance flows that year (Ratha et al. 2024). These remittances play a crucial role in driving development and reducing poverty in many of the migrants' home countries.^b

Key aspects of large-scale migration to the GCC are its primary focus on employment and its temporary nature. Most of the migrant workers, especially those in low-skilled jobs, exchange labor for wages (often with room and board provided) for a set period but do not have access to long-term residency, citizenship, or public safety nets.^c Typically, a low-skilled worker's contract is fixed-term, usually lasting two or three years, with the possibility of renewal. Family members are generally not permitted to accompany the migrant unless the worker earns above a specific income threshold. Immigration laws enforcing the temporary nature of migration are complemented by an employer-based sponsorship system—the *kafala* system—which links a migrant to their employer for matters of entry, exit, stay, and employment.^d

However, the *kafala* system grants significant power to sponsoring employers over migrant workers, affecting their pay, work and living conditions, and ability to change jobs. This has raised concerns about the limited mobility and poor welfare of migrant workers, who have limited recourse to and opportunities for grievance redressal.^e Women, who made up more than 40 percent of the 5.5 million domestic workers in GCC countries in 2021, have been particularly vulnerable to this power imbalance.^f Reports of abuse and exploitation within their employers' homes have occasionally led origin countries, like Ghana, Kenya, and the Philippines, to impose temporary bans on the recruitment of their domestic workers.^g

In the past few years, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and more recently Saudi Arabia have made legislative strides to improve working and living conditions, including reforms to the *kafala* system. For domestic workers, these entail banning passport confiscation by employers, limiting daily working hours, and specifying entitlement to weekly and annual paid leave.^h A report by the International Organization for Migration documents promising developments in migration regulation, with more opportunities to be realized, particularly in the implementation of these regulations (IOM 2023). Meanwhile, origin countries can leverage the (re)negotiation of bilateral labor migration agreements to secure better terms for their citizens. Strengthening consular protection—and possibly joint protection involving several origin countries—would provide workers with support in case of labor contract breaches.

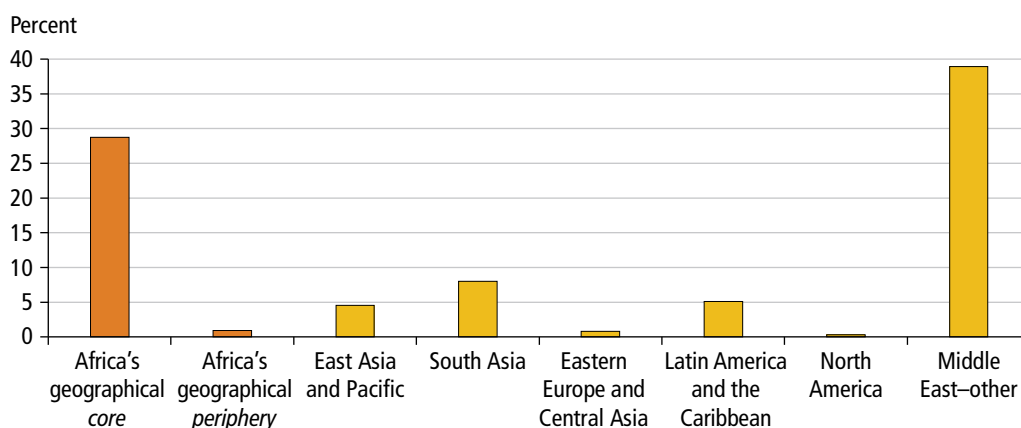
(continued next page)

Box 3.2 Temporary Migration to GCC Countries (*continued*)

- a. Based on bilateral migration data compiled by UN DESA (2020).
 - b. For instance, M. Shrestha (2017) estimates that the increase in GCC migration accounted for a third of poverty reduction in Nepal between 2001 and 2011.
 - c. Citizenship is possible but under highly restrictive conditions that exclude most migrants. Kuwait, for example, requires residing for 20 successive years (15 if of Arab origin), knowing the Arabic language, being Muslim, and being self-sufficient or providing services needed by the country—Article 4 of the Amiri Decree No. 5/1959 Regarding the Law of Kuwaiti Nationality (Migration and the Law Database, KNOMAD 2022).
 - d. The GCC countries have penalties for irregular migration, which include a combination of deportation, fines, and imprisonment (Zahra 2014).
 - e. Reforms allowing greater labor mobility in the United Arab Emirates led to improved earnings for incumbent migrant workers but fewer hires of new entrants and lower initial salaries (Naidu, Nyarko, and Wang 2016). The absence of a labor court in Saudi Arabia and affordable legal aid services for temporary low-income migrant workers also contribute to a permissive environment for employers to abuse the sponsorship system (Almutairi 2018).
 - f. These estimates exclude Oman. Women represent 32 percent of all domestic workers in Saudi Arabia and more than 70 percent in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (ILO 2021).
 - g. Ghana has banned the issuance of visas for its domestic workers to the GCC since June 2017 in response to abuses (IOM 2019). From 2014 to 2017, Kenya had a ban in place on sending workers to the Middle East, and another temporary ban for domestic workers was proposed in 2022 by the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs but was rejected by the Ministry of Labour (<https://kippra.or.ke/measures-to-ensure-the-safety-of-kenyan-domestic-workers-in-the-middle-east/#:~:text=The%20Ministry%20of%20Foreign%20and,not%20accommodate%20all%20new%20workers>). The Philippines instituted temporary bans on domestic workers to Kuwait (in January to May 2018 and again in 2023, which was lifted in June 2024) and to Saudi Arabia (in 2021–22).
 - h. Refer to Qatar's Law No.15 of 2017 on Domestic Workers and the United Arab Emirate's Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022 concerning Domestic Workers and its amendments. Saudi Arabia has also introduced new laws governing domestic workers (Ministerial Decision No. 40676).
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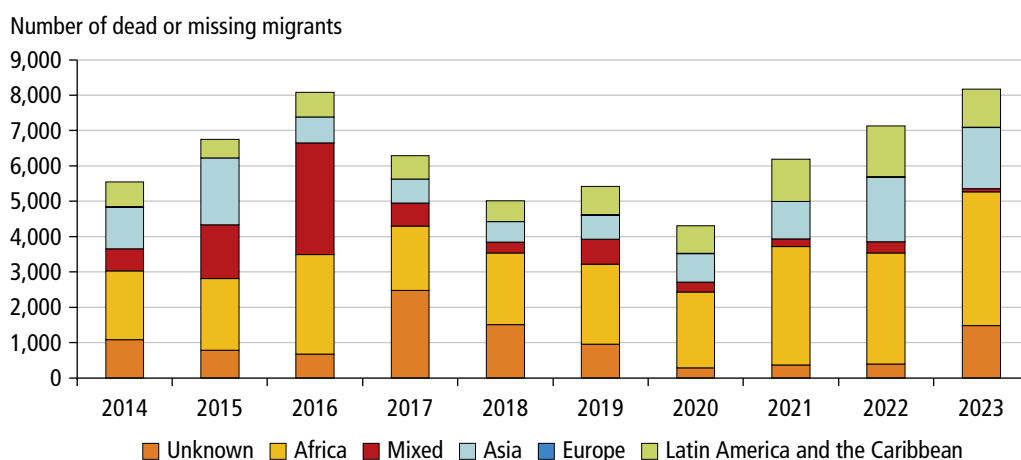
Africa Must Leverage the Economic Potential of Forcibly Displaced and Distressed Migrants while Safeguarding Their Dignity

A large share of the current cross-border migration from Africa's geographical *core* is forced displacement or distressed migration to neighboring countries. Figure 3.7 shows the share of cross-border migrants who were refugees and asylum seekers in 2020. Almost 30 percent of international migrant flows from the countries in Africa's *core* consist of refugees or asylum seekers, compared to 8 percent from South Asia, 5 percent from East Asia and Pacific, 5 percent from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 1 percent from the countries in Africa's geographical *periphery*. The Middle East (excluding North Africa) is the only region in the world where the share of refugees and asylum seekers among cross-border migrants was higher than in Africa's *core* in 2020, primarily because of large cross-border displacement from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Over 85 percent of all refugees originating from Africa remain within the continent (IOM 2024).

Figure 3.7 Share of Refugees and Asylum Seekers among Cross-Border Emigrants, 2020

Sources: Refugee Data Finder, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2020); UN DESA 2020.

Furthermore, the lack of meaningful alternatives to distressed migration has induced tremendous suffering in Africa. More than 25,000 Africans have died (or are missing) due to distressed migration in the past decade. Although distressed migration represents a small portion of the regular migration flows from Africa, the growing pain and suffering resulting from migrant deaths, abuse, and discrimination represent a failure of migration policy. Figure 3.8 shows that 2023 was the deadliest year on record for migrants taking irregular routes to reach destination countries. After recording more than 8,000 migrant deaths in 2016, the number of dead and missing migrants gradually subsided during the years of COVID-19, before rising again in 2021. The worst year on record for irregular migrants from Africa was 2023.¹⁹ More than 3,784 African migrants perished during the process of irregular migration. Most of these migrants' deaths happened in the Mediterranean between North Africa and Europe. However, migrants also die at many points on the land journey in the continent before reaching North Africa.²⁰

Figure 3.8 Number of Dead or Missing Migrants, by Region of Origin, 2014–23

Source: IOM Missing Migrants Project, <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/data>.

Guaranteeing Migrant Safety Is Paramount

Some parts of Africa, especially South Africa, are increasingly receiving economic migrants from other parts of the continent, but there are rising concerns about migrant rights and safety. Although most migrants from the countries in Africa's geographical *core* remain within the *core*, their share in the countries in Africa's geographical *periphery* is rising. Between 1990 and 2020, the share of Africa's *core* migrants in Southern Africa grew 2.7 times compared to an increase of 1.4 times in other countries in the *core*.²¹ As Southern African countries advance in their demographic transition, they will increasingly need migrant labor to address shortages in key sectors. However, migrants in South Africa often face xenophobia and discrimination (Crush 2022; United Nations 2022). Guaranteeing migrants' rights and legal protection is essential to ensuring their full participation and contribution to their host societies. It will be equally important to improve social cohesion by addressing the chronic problem of unemployment among South African youth, as evidence shows that migrants fare better than native youth in terms of employment outcomes (OECD 2018).

North Africa has been in the limelight as it has transit countries for irregular migrants from Africa's *core* to Europe, with Algeria, for instance, having the second-largest land border in Africa (6,343 kilometers, or 3,941 miles). Stricter border controls in Europe and policies targeting migrants in North Africa continue to threaten migrant rights and safety, directly and indirectly. Irregular flows of migrants from the Maghreb across the Mediterranean started in the mid-1990s when Italy and Spain introduced visa requirements. Migrants from Africa's *core* joined North Africans in the 2000s, especially after the Libyan civil war. The subsequent intensification of border controls, including via their externalization, has put irregular migrants at increased risk of trafficking, exploitation, and abuse at the hands of militias and criminal organizations, and it has made them targets of xenophobia (United Nations 2021, 2023).

Protecting and Utilizing the Economic Potential of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Is a Key Pathway to Sustainability

Countries in Africa's geographical *core* are host societies for people who have been forcibly displaced due to conflict and climate change, and for those in need of legal protection as well as opportunities to thrive. Africa is home to one-fourth of the global refugee population, with refugees concentrated in a few conflict and climate hotspots (IOM 2024). Approximately 91 percent of all refugees and asylum seekers in Africa reside in countries in the *core* region, exhibiting distinct characteristics compared to other regions in the world. A notable characteristic is the rural settlement pattern, with less than 15 percent of all refugees in Africa living in urban areas. This contrasts with over 15 percent in South Asia, 27 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 44 percent in the Middle East.²² As most refugees inhabit less developed rural areas with limited access to services, they are particularly vulnerable to additional shocks.

Effectively managing the refugee situation in Africa requires increased economic integration into host communities, which benefits both refugees and hosts. This integration entails granting refugees the right to work, which has consistently been shown to improve

their outcomes and generate positive spillovers for the host communities (Sarzin and Nsababera 2024; World Bank and UNHCR 2023). For instance, refugee camps in Kakuma, Kenya, have boosted the local economy by creating more income-generating activities, while refugee-owned businesses in Uganda have provided employment for locals (Alix-Garcia et al. 2018; d’Errico et al. 2022; Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru 2016; World Bank 2019). Economic integration empowers refugees to become more self-reliant, thereby reducing the costs of hosting them.²³ Additionally, allowing refugees freedom of movement within the host country enables them to access areas with better economic opportunities, utilizing their skills and enhancing self-reliance (World Bank and UNHCR, forthcoming). Extending freedom of movement within existing regional economic communities through appropriate legal instruments ensures continued legal protection. Enhancing refugees’ rights to work and move provides a sustainable solution amid humanitarian funding shortages, particularly in Africa.²⁴

Yet, there is heterogeneity in rights to work, and there are gaps between policies and implementation in terms of labor market integration that would provide opportunities to support vulnerable populations sustainably (Ibáñez et al. 2024). In 2021, a global survey of refugees’ work rights revealed heterogeneity in both *de jure* and *de facto* regulation. For example, Rwanda and Uganda have removed restrictions on refugees’ ability to work, albeit with remaining obstacles in camps. By contrast, Tanzania is viewed as the most restrictive, with the practice of crackdowns (Ginn et al. 2022). Thus, ensuring refugees’ *de jure* and *de facto* rights to work and move will be crucial for tapping the economic potential of refugees and reducing the burden on host communities or international agencies.

Notes

1. Impact evaluations have shown that earnings increase two to four times upon migration (Clemens 2019; Clemens and Tiongson 2017; Gaikwad, Hanson, and Tóth 2022; McKenzie, Stillman, and Gibson 2010; Mobarak, Sharif, and Shrestha 2023). Moreover, the gains are comparable to the wage ratios of migrants and nonmigrants who are observationally identical (Clemens, Montenegro, and Pritchett 2019).
2. Data and breakdown from the European Union are not available by skill levels and origin countries.
3. These patterns are admittedly not generic for all the countries in Africa’s geographical *core*. For instance, cross-border migrants from Kenya predominantly go to high-income countries. Data from UN DESA (2020) suggest that as of 2020, more than 70 percent of Kenya’s approximately 540,000 emigrants were in Europe and North America, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States. The pattern of migration outside the continent is similar for Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, although to a lesser extent in terms of shares compared to the case of Kenya.
4. World Bank Bilateral Remittance Matrix 2021 (2022).
5. Refer to M. Shrestha (2017) for poverty reduction and Yang (2008) for coping with economic shocks.
6. However, studies also document negative impacts on children left behind (for instance, Ivlevs, Nikolova, and Graham [2019]), especially when the separation is prolonged. This is often the case when migration is undocumented or distressed and does not allow migrants to travel to their countries of origin on a regular basis.

7. Do et al. (2024) provide a quantitative analysis underpinning the estimated impact of aging on gross domestic product.
8. Based on population estimates and projection data from UN DESA (2022).
9. Acemoglu and Restrepo (2022) provide theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence.
10. For example, for the required worker skills, knowledge, and abilities for personal care aides in the United States, refer to <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/31-1122.00>.
11. As a percentage of tertiary enrolled students, Africans migrate at similar levels (around 4 per 100) compared to other low-income countries (<https://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=3810>).
12. Ghana has banned the issuance of work visas for its domestic workers to the GCC since June 2017 in response to prior abuses that inadvertently led to some Ghanaians moving irregularly through neighboring countries or using unlicensed recruitment agencies (IOM 2019). A similar travel ban by Uganda to some Gulf countries also contributed to irregular movements (Bisong 2021). A study of a ban on the migration of female Filipino entertainers to Japan found that the ban lowered potential migrants' incomes and increased child labor (Theoharides 2020).
13. Executive Regulations of Law No. 4 of 1985.
14. Article 1 of Personal Status Law No. 25/1929, as amended by Article 2 of Law No. 100/1985, states that: "A wife does not lose her right to maintenance if she leaves the marital home without her husband's permission, as long as she leaves for necessity, in permissible situations that conform with Shari'a or norms, or she leaves for work, provided she is not abusing her right to work, her work does not conflict with the interests of the family, and her husband has not asked her to abstain from working."
15. For more information on legal obstacles to mobility, consult the Women, Business and the Law database, https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/data/exploretopics/wbl_gp.
16. For example, data from the Migration Governance Indicators show that 54 percent of the countries in West Africa are engaged in bilateral negotiations on migration issues, compared to 83 percent globally and 100 percent in Africa's geographical *periphery*.
17. IOM (2024). Some countries, such as Kenya, have recently signed BLMAs for health worker migration and are in the process of updating or renewing existing BLMAs with Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
18. Based on calculations in Adhikari et al. (2024). The calculation assumes an increase in income of 227 percent, based on the impacts of migration on earnings from the literature.
19. According to data from the International Organization for Migration's Missing Migrants Project, in 2023, 60 percent of all global migrant deaths occurred in Africa or on the Mediterranean Sea.
20. For instance, the International Organization for Migration reports the deaths of 27 migrants in the Chadian desert: <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-deeply-saddened-deaths-27-migrants-including-children-chadian-desert>.
21. Calculations based on data from UN DESA (2020).
22. Estimates based on data from UNHCR Population Statistics: <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.
23. In Chad, the initial cost on arrival is estimated at US\$691 per year. With greater inclusion of refugees, this drops to between US\$155 and US\$245 per year, depending on whether refugees can earn a living like those in the host communities or the average Chadian (Coulibaly, Hoogeveen, and Savadogo, forthcoming; World Bank and UNHCR, forthcoming).
24. In 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is pivotal in assisting and protecting forcibly displaced persons, reported that only 52 percent of the estimated global cost of US\$10.9 billion was funded (UNHCR 2023). Among the top 13 underfunded operations globally where cuts in assistance are projected to have devastating consequences, 8 are in Africa.

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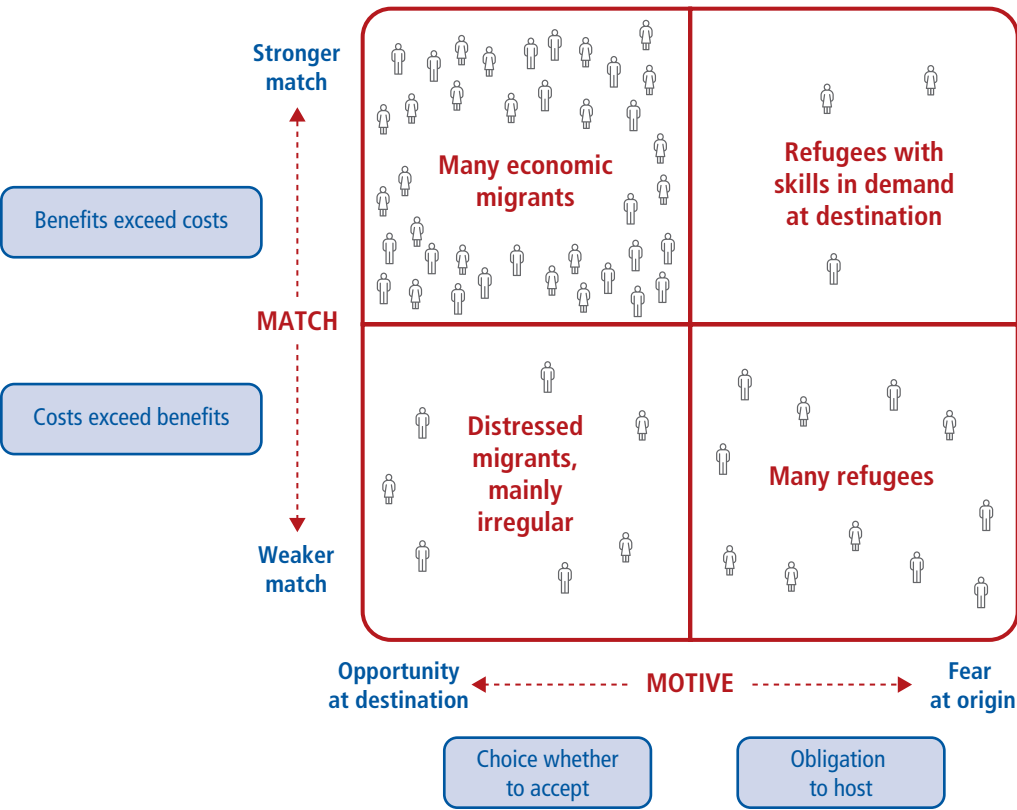
Harnessing the Productive Potential of African Mobility

Introduction

The 2023 *World Development Report's match-and-motive matrix* laid out an analytical framework that offers two complementary perspectives for assessing complex cross-border movements (World Bank 2023c, chapter 1). The *economic* perspective views migration as a phenomenon that brings costs and benefits to the destination country and, as such, migrants are a stronger match when their skills are in higher demand in the destination country's labor market and the costs associated with their socioeconomic integration are lower (the vertical axis in figure 4.1). The *legal* perspective is rooted in the 1951 Geneva Convention and views hosting refugees—those who fear for their lives in their country of origin—as a legal obligation for destination countries, irrespective of the costs and benefits involved. In other cases, such as when a person crosses a border to seek opportunities rather than international protection, destination countries have discretion over whether or not to host them (the horizontal axis in figure 4.1).

The *match-and-motive matrix* identifies three types of cross-border movements that call for three distinct policy objectives (World Bank 2023c, chapter 9). For refugees, the objective is to ensure the sustainability of host countries' international protection regime and share the costs regionally or internationally. For migrants who constitute a strong match with their country of destination, policies should foster *better* migration, that is, migration that maximizes the benefits for migrants and both origin and destination countries. Finally, distressed migrants are a weaker match and do not qualify as refugees; thus, they should be absorbed into their transit or destination countries or returned humanely to their countries of origin. Meanwhile, policy makers in origin, transit, and destination countries face the challenge of reducing the need for such movements.

Figure 4.1 Match-and-Motive Matrix of the 2023 *World Development Report*



Source: World Bank 2023c.

The policies proposed in this chapter aim to harness the economic potential of all the Africans who are seeking better opportunities in a destination society or who are being forcibly displaced. Considering the prevailing megatrends (discussed in chapter 2 of this report) and the current state of African migration (chapter 1), there is room for policies not only to promote *better* migration—beneficial for migrants and origin and destination countries—but also to leverage the economic potential of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Such policies promote and preserve their dignity while fostering the sustainability of legal protection systems (chapter 3). The policy discussion in this chapter is not meant to establish an exhaustive list of all the possible issues that should be addressed (for these, refer to World Bank [2023c, chapter 9]). Rather, it focuses on concrete actions that are deemed to be relevant in the African context.

Use Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements to Foster Better Cross-Border Migration

Bilateral labor migration agreements (BLMAs) and other legal frameworks enable origin and destination countries to coordinate on migration issues. These frameworks define the

scope and scale of migration, working, and pay conditions for immigrant workers, and guide investments in and recognition of the skills that align with destination labor markets. They also cover the enforcement of provisions, such as return policies after visas expire. Given the relative lack of BLMAs in Africa, regional or international organizations can play a critical role in supporting national governments to draft, negotiate, implement, monitor, and revise the terms of BLMAs. The 2019 joint International Labour Organization–International Organization for Migration tool for the assessment of BLMAs has been piloted to assess labor migration in the Arab Republic of Egypt–Italy and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) corridors.¹ This tool identifies several roles and responsibilities for national governments in the BLMA cycle: (1) identifying destination countries that are interested in negotiating BLMAs or MOUs; (2) identifying skills demanded and job opportunities abroad; (3) regulating pre-migration procedures related to training, travel procedures, and intermediation; (4) reviewing conditions for labor and human rights, including gender-sensitive nondiscrimination clauses; (5) identifying suitable social protection measures; (6) setting up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; (7) defining terms of savings and remittance transfers; and (8) outlining the suitable time frame and procedures for returns in cooperation with destination countries (ILO and IOM 2019).

In addition to policy coordination, BLMAs are instruments for origin and destination countries to share the economic surplus from migration equitably. While migration benefits migrants, host communities, and origin communities, it also entails costs. Bilateral agreements create a framework for both origin and destination countries to agree on benefit- and cost-sharing arrangements, ensuring that migration remains mutually beneficial while mitigating costs and adverse impacts. At stake are improved pay and working conditions for migrant workers; cofinancing of training and education in relevant sectors, through initiatives like Global Skills Partnerships; and broader participation of destination countries in the development objectives of origin countries through financial transfers, capacity building, and technical assistance (box 3.1, in chapter 3 of this report, discusses health care worker migration).

By negotiating labor agreements as a unified bloc rather than as individual countries, African nations can secure a stronger bargaining position. Mechanisms that promote coordination over competition between African countries will collectively enhance their bargaining power. Following the First Labor Migration Conference in October 2023, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, the African Union, regional economic communities, and 15 African countries of origin adopted a communiqué emphasizing the need for collective action “to spearhead the development of common positions and minimum standards for the content of BLMAs and avoid a ‘race to the bottom.’” At a minimum, collective action can ensure that BLMAs adhere to conventions guaranteeing equal treatment for migrant workers and nationals in terms of remuneration, safety, and other working conditions (for further discussion, refer to Leighton [2024]). Ultimately, these arrangements will enable origin countries to capture a larger share of the overall economic surplus from migration, which is estimated to be as much as US\$1.7 trillion annually for the 27 countries in the European Union (Do et al. 2024).

Africa has adopted such coordination mechanisms in the area of public health with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and for trade with the African Continental Free Trade Area.² With support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), regional consultative processes on labor migration are also emerging and could be built upon, such as the Regional Ministerial Forum on Migration for East and Horn of Africa, covering countries in the East African Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.³ However, the difficulty of addressing collective action problems calls for countries to adopt binding coordination mechanisms that can have a regional or sectoral focus. Negotiating as a bloc may come at the cost of a lower demand for migrant labor from destination countries. Individual countries thus have an incentive to arbitrage such demand deficits and agree to bilateral negotiations instead, thus undermining the purpose of bloc negotiations. Cooperation between origin countries is therefore easier to obtain in sectors that, other things being equal, are characterized by a more inelastic demand for migrant labor or subject to global supply shortages, like health care. Binding coordination mechanisms that identify and deter deviations from collective action may otherwise be necessary. In development assistance, for example, multilateral development banks can be viewed as mechanisms whereby countries delegate some aspects of their aid policy to a regional or international organization to address a collective action problem (Svensson 2000).

Build and Strengthen Migration Systems

Before entering bilateral or multilateral arrangements, governments must develop the capacity to determine the scope of their migration policy. Effective migration governance requires building capacity and providing technical assistance to relevant agencies to ensure that they have the appropriate statistical tools, human and financial resources, and administrative authority. While countries like Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda have national policies governing labor migration, albeit they are sometimes obsolete or incomplete, such policies are not universal across Africa. As regulating migratory flows becomes more critical, capacity-building and technical assistance efforts must be stepped up accordingly. Projects like the European Union-funded Southern Africa Migration Management project and the Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa program aim to strengthen migration systems in the SADC and North African countries.⁴ Additionally, regional statistical initiatives, such as the Harmonizing and Improving Statistics in West and Central Africa project and the SADC Regional Statistics Project, aim at improving data quality and facilitating regional coordination, peer learning, and knowledge sharing (World Bank 2023a, 2023b).

African countries need to develop and strengthen migration management systems to implement bilateral and multilateral agreements effectively in accordance with national and international policies. These systems support migrants through all stages of migration—pre-decision, pre-departure, while abroad, and return—ensuring access to information, documentation, permits, rights, and recourse. Many East and South Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, have dedicated agencies that protect migrant workers,

regulate recruitment, and generate valuable data for policy development.⁵ In contrast, fewer than 4 in 10 African countries included in the IOM's Migration Governance Indicators have such coordination mechanisms (IOM 2024). For example, Nigeria, Africa's largest migrant-sending country, does not have a dedicated agency to manage its migrant workforce. To enhance their migration management systems, African countries can benefit from experience and knowledge exchange with countries in East and South Asia.

In Origin Countries: Maximize Benefits from Pre-departure to Post-return

Invest in Skills in Demand in Destination Countries and Improve Recruitment Practices

Following the insight from the match-and-motive matrix framework, countries of origin maximize the returns to migration when migrants have skills that match the demand in destination countries. Increasing the general education level of the population is a first-order development objective for African countries, for their own sake, as well as for improved prospects for their workforce abroad. Complementary to raising the skill level of the overall population, countries in Africa can make sector-specific investments in the skills that are globally in demand, unilaterally or in partnerships with destination countries.

For instance, France's ministries of interior and labor, in consultation with social partners, established region-specific lists of occupations facing labor shortages, which are hence subject to a legal migration pathway for qualified workers. These include occupations such as building engineers, nurses, and geometers, but also roofers, truck drivers, masons, and butchers.⁶ Likewise, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics regularly releases 10-year forecasts of occupations with the largest expected employment growth in the United States (of which *home health and personal care aides* and *software developers* are two of the largest) (US BLS 2024). A recent survey of small and medium-size enterprises in the European Union found that *technicians* and *customer care experts* are the most in demand (European Union 2023). African countries can strategically and unilaterally undertake skill-specific investments to expand their workforce in those sectors. They can also proactively engage in talent partnerships with destination countries on the production, financing, and placement of the newly skilled workforce.

Increasing opportunities in the care and related service sectors abroad provide employment avenues for Africans. Globally, these sectors have been key for female employment. For instance, in 2021, 79 percent of the health and social care workers in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries were women (OECD 2023). The high and growing demand for workers in these sectors, especially in high-income destination countries, creates an opportunity to provide productive and remunerative employment for Africa's underemployed labor force, especially women. This can also empower more African women to pursue opportunities outside unpaid work, both abroad and domestically.⁷ To capitalize fully on such opportunities, however, skills acquisition needs to be broadened to include language, communications, service orientation, social perceptiveness, critical thinking, reliability, and other interpersonal skills.⁸

Access to migration opportunities and skill development interventions can be further targeted to areas and communities that are expected to produce large impacts. Geographically, such areas could be those with existing migrant outflows, such as the Brong-Ahafo region, the origin of a majority of the migrants from Ghana, to leverage migrant networks and reduce migration costs (IOM 2016, 2019). The areas could also be those where investments may be made in skills that are complementary to existing skills, to leverage comparative advantage, and areas with high unemployment or high poverty rates. Together with additional initiatives to reduce migration costs, such opportunities can also be targeted toward disadvantaged groups for whom the impacts of migration and skill development opportunities are likely to be larger. Enhancing Labor Mobility from Papua New Guinea is an example of a project that targets migration and related skills development opportunities to areas with limited economic opportunities and among disadvantaged groups (World Bank 2022b).

Recruitment agencies play a valuable role by connecting employers with workers across continents, overcoming physical, linguistic, and cultural barriers. However, recruitment malpractices and the dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information about work, pay, and working conditions are widespread (Fabbri et al. 2023; UNODC 2015). While this problem has been difficult to address, several policy interventions show promise. For example, government audits and ratings of recruitment agencies in Sri Lanka led to migrants to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries being placed with more remunerative and less abusive employers (Fernando and Singh, forthcoming). Providing information to prospective migrants about the quality of intermediaries in Indonesia improved pre-departure outcomes and migration experiences (Bazzi et al. 2021). Likewise, providing information to prospective migrants on actual wages and mortality risks abroad changes their migration decision (Shrestha 2020). Alternatively, governments have been involved in labor market intermediation beyond their regulatory function. In the Bangladesh-Malaysia government-to-government program piloted in 2013–14, government involvement in intermediation reduced migration costs to one-sixth of the private intermediation costs, reduced indebtedness, improved net returns from migration, and improved pre-departure outcomes among migrants (Mobarak, Sharif, and Shrestha 2023).

Mobilize the Diaspora's Financial Resources

The benefits from migration further accrue to countries of origin with lower remittance costs. African countries face some of the highest costs for sending remittances. Mobile operators provide a cheaper alternative to informal channels or bank transfers (World Bank 2023c, chapter 5). The Financial Stability Board, in its *G20 Roadmap for Enhancing Cross-border Payments*, lists priority themes for reaching the Group of 20 target of reducing remittance costs to less than 5 percent for all corridors (FSB 2023). Key among those priorities is the greater integration of payment systems through increased interoperability and harmonization of cross-border messages. Another priority area consists of leveling the playing field between bank and nonbank money transfer agencies, while adhering to Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism requirements. These measures would enhance competition among

operators, ultimately benefiting consumers through lower prices, better access to and quality of services, and greater transparency.

Alternative options to remittances, such as diaspora bonds, offer avenues for investment and savings targeting diaspora communities. For instance, in 2017, Nigeria successfully raised US\$300 million through diaspora bonds, which were oversubscribed by 130 percent (Ratha et al. 2023).⁹ However, the success of these programs relies on trust between the diaspora and the administering entity.¹⁰ Variants include matching grants, like Bosnia and Herzegovina's program backed by a US\$2 million grant from the US Agency for International Development, which attracted US\$22 million in diaspora capital (World Bank 2024). Involving development agencies can enhance trust and participation. Local communities could also explore *diaspora communal bonds* or equity participations, directly benefiting migrants' families and communities. For example, more than 10,000 nonresident Indians from 30 countries invested in India's first international airport that was built through a public-private partnership.¹¹ Some countries may need technical assistance to strengthen diaspora investment. For example, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, and the IOM are providing grant financing to assist eight countries to identify the best methods for effectively mobilizing the human and financial capital of the diaspora to aid recovery from political or humanitarian crises and for climate resilience.¹²

Facilitate Returns

Creating conditions for successful returns to origin countries makes migration gains sustainable and increases incentives to return. A key policy reform is the wider portability of social security, allowing migrant workers to transfer contributions made in destination countries back home. This provides financial resources for returnees to borrow, invest, and spend, thus also encouraging returns. These arrangements, typically a bilateral social security agreement (BSSA), exist between countries like Belgium and Morocco, allowing Moroccan workers in Belgium to access benefits upon return (Holzmann 2016).¹³ However, not all EU countries have such portability clauses; for example, Sweden's BSSA with Morocco lacks this feature (European Migration Network 2014). Additionally, recognizing the skills and qualifications earned abroad aids returnees in finding suitable employment. Programs that assist returnees with information, administrative support, and financial aid, like Bangladesh's Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment Project, also promote reintegration.¹⁴ While the primary objective of these measures is to promote the (re)integration of returnees—as was the case for Bangladesh when the GCC countries went into lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic—they also incentivize returns.

In Destination Countries: Promote Integration

Regional integration in Africa is gaining momentum, with more Africans seeking opportunities beyond their national borders. To promote *better* migration, destination countries must integrate migrants into labor markets and promote their social integration to enhance social cohesion and realize migrants' economic potential (World Bank 2023c, chapter 6). Africa's eight

regional economic communities are primarily committed to fostering intraregional migration, with most having protocols for the free movement of nationals. The African Union's own protocol on the free movement of persons, rights of residence, and rights of establishment was adopted in 2018, but it has been ratified by a limited number of member states to date.¹⁵ Ratification should be a priority, with freedom of movement being one of the key tenets of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement.

As more African countries become significant destinations for migrants, they can learn from nations with extensive experience in hosting large migrant populations, such as Colombia, Egypt, GCC countries, and EU nations. Notable examples of supportive migrant integration policies include Colombia's issuance of Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans fleeing their country's economic crisis. This status allows them to reside and work legally in Colombia for up to 10 years and provides access to health care, education, and other social services (Rossiasco and de Narváez 2023; World Bank 2018c). Egypt offers migrants and refugees of most nationalities access to education and health care on an equal footing with its citizens (United Nations 2022).¹⁶ Algeria is one of a few countries where access to public health care and to basic education is free of charge for immigrants and refugees, although they do not have access to residency and work permits.¹⁷ For decades, the GCC countries have hosted large numbers of economic migrants, far in excess of their national populations (box 3.2, in chapter 3 of this report, discusses this). Portugal's High Commissioner for Migration initiatives cover free, certified language programs for newcomers and one-stop-shop offices for migrant services, which facilitate cooperation among government agencies and enhance policy coherence, with the added convenience of providing access to multiple services in a single location.¹⁸

To promote integration, dispersal policies have been considered and implemented by a handful of countries, highlighting the trade-off between the negative spillovers of ethnic concentration and segregation and the positive effects of social networks. For instance, Germany and Sweden have implemented (random) dispersal policies to prevent the concentration of refugees into ethnic enclaves. However, these policies have often overlooked the economic potential of individuals and the positive spillovers of strong coethnic networks, resulting in disappointing economic outcomes (refer to BAMF [2022] for Germany and Andersson [2020] for Sweden). Improvements could be achieved with a dispersal approach that better aligns the skills of refugees with local labor market demands (Bansak et al. 2018). Although these policies were initially designed to respond to sudden and concentrated arrivals of refugees, similar trade-offs can be managed for migrants by varying the depth of the social policies in a way that also supports destination countries' territorial development and planning.

Alternatively, with the number of new international student permits issued in OECD countries increasing from 1.2 million in 2012 to 1.9 million in 2022, destination countries can address future labor market shortages and manage several aspects of migrants' economic and social integration. Training and education in the country of destination solve the issue of skill and certification recognition in the labor market. Mutual recognition of qualifications would also facilitate the productive return of migrants to their countries of origin, considering that two in three international students leave OECD countries after

their permits expire (OECD 2022). For example, Italy has opened a new legal pathway for vocation and civic-linguistic training courses to fill labor shortages in key sectors, which is available to third-country nationals as well as refugees present in countries of first asylum or transit (Government of Italy, Ministry of Labor and Social Policies 2023). Destination countries can then offer new graduates pathways to longer-term stays. For example, the United States has an Optional Practical Training provision, allowing tertiary students graduating from US universities to receive one year of work experience. After this period, students must switch their status to a work visa or return to their country of origin. Despite being a promising alternative to labor migration, only two African countries (Morocco and Nigeria) featured in the top 20 countries of origin for whom international student permits were issued in 2022 (OECD 2022).

As destination countries of migrants, Egypt and Morocco also host significant numbers of international students, with 69,800 and 23,600 foreign enrollees in 2022, respectively.¹⁹ In West Africa, the Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE) for Development Impact was launched in 2014, comprising 22 Centers of Excellence across 11 countries. This initiative promotes regional specialization among participating universities, addressing specific common regional development challenges.²⁰ It aims to strengthen these universities' capacity to deliver high-quality training and research, meet the demand for skills, and attract talent from across the continent. A second phase (ACE II) was initiated in East and Southern Africa, establishing 24 additional centers across eight countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Finally, the Statistical Schools in West Africa (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal) also attract students from across the region, thanks to the high quality of the teaching delivered. However, the international student enrollment rates remain low compared to global averages.²¹

Safeguard the Dignity of Everyone, Everywhere

Safeguarding the dignity of migrants and refugees, irrespective of the strength of their match with host societies or the motive behind their move, should guide policy decisions. Destination countries have the opportunity to implement policies and foster a political discourse that protect migrants and refugees from racism, xenophobia, and discrimination in the workplace, host communities, and housing and social services (World Bank 2023c, spotlight 6). Public perceptions of and attitudes toward migrants and refugees are influenced by whether public discourse highlights similarities or emphasizes differences between groups (Bloemraad et al. 2023). Additionally, asylum seekers' right to due process is a cornerstone of the international legal protection system, and externalizing asylum obligations, as effected in the UK-Rwanda Asylum Partnership, "poses serious risks for the safety of refugees" (UNHCR 2024).

On distressed migration, the 2023 *World Development Report* proposes a range of policies to discourage irregular migration, including expanding legal pathways (World Bank 2023c). New legal options that "compete" with smuggling networks would reduce the appeal of irregular routes. These new pathways include strengthening education and vocational training, targeted

at low- and middle-skilled migrants. Surveys conducted in Greece and Italy during the peak migration episode of 2015–16 suggest that asylum seekers in reception centers had qualification levels that were similar to those of earlier waves of migrants to the European Union (World Bank 2018a). Humanitarian pathways could mirror actions taken by the US government following the expiration of the temporary Title 42 order.²² Such actions consisted of increasing the number of refugees or individuals eligible for complementary forms of international protection, simplifying and expediting administrative procedures to apply for asylum from the country of origin, and imposing stiffer penalties for illegal border crossings, such as temporary or permanent bans on future visa applications.²³

Along with preserving the rights and dignity of migrants, reducing the incentive for distressed migration entails improving socioeconomic outcomes and resilience in countries of origin, especially in Africa's geographical *core*. As Africa continues to urbanize, cities will play a pivotal role in hosting internal migrants who move to adapt to economic or climate stresses and shocks. Therefore, urban development planning that integrates climate-resilient housing, infrastructure investments, and connectivity networks in cities will be able to offer domestic alternatives to distressed international migration (Clement et al. 2021). Djibouti, for instance, receives refugees, asylum seekers, transit migrants, and long-term economic migrants. Climate shocks are impacting both the flow of migrants and refugees (RCCC 2023) and the country's ability to integrate them as Djibouti City suffers from water shortages, extreme temperatures, floods, cyclones, and storms (GCA 2024).

Although general economic development, urban planning, and climate adaptation measures will ultimately affect migration incentives and alter migration patterns, their short-term impacts may be limited unless they are specifically targeted at population groups and localities with high unemployment rates, poverty levels, and migration outflows (World Bank 2023c, spotlight 8). For instance, a 2016 survey of asylum seekers in Italy's reception centers found that 84 percent of the Nigerians interviewed were from the South-South region of Nigeria (World Bank 2018a). Thus, focusing development projects on agriculture or urban labor markets in areas like Benin City could have a greater impact on migration from that region. Alternatively, mobility provisions within regional economic communities can be leveraged. An experiment with 3,641 young men in The Gambia found that intentions to migrate irregularly to Europe decreased among those who received information and assistance to migrate to Dakar, Senegal, instead (Bah et al. 2023).

For distressed migrants already in a country of transit or destination, the choice for the authorities is between returning the migrants humanely and integrating them into the host society. Morocco held two major regularization campaigns in 2014 and 2017, to the benefit of some 51,000 irregular migrants, 80 percent of whom were from the countries in Africa's *core*, giving them access to formal employment opportunities. Likewise, South Africa's 2010 Dispensation of Zimbabweans Project led to the regularization of 242,000 Zimbabwean migrants, yielding positive labor market effects for both migrants and natives (Cha'ngom 2024). Short of mass regularization campaigns, some countries experiencing labor shortages offer legalization pathways to irregular migrants who are employed. Until recently, Portugal allowed

immigrants holding a job for more than a year and contributing to social security to obtain legal status.²⁴ In Germany, asylum seekers who are denied international protection are obligated to leave the country; however, they can be granted a *tolerated stay permit* (Duldung) if they meet certain conditions, including being enrolled in vocational training or having a job, and the latter opens a pathway to a residence permit.²⁵

Conversely, in the Maghreb, thousands of irregular migrants of Sub-Saharan African descent have reportedly been deported to arid desert regions or subjected to inhumane detention conditions, including physical and sexual violence, extortion, and torture. These practices have led to further humanitarian crises and severe violations of rights (Soto-Mayor 2024; United Nations 2021; US Embassy in Algeria 2023; *Washington Post* 2024).

Foster the Sustainability of Refugee and IDP Legal Protection Systems

Decreasing humanitarian budgets highlight the relevance of tapping into the economic potential of refugees and IDPs to ensure the sustainability of legal protection systems. Initiatives like the Ethiopia Jobs Compact aim to generate employment and are anchored in policy commitments that support a sustainable refugee response. These commitments include granting freedom of movement, providing work permits to refugees, and reserving job quotas for them—or, equivalently, subsidizing employers who would hire them (World Bank 2018b). Although the compact has not yet met its development objectives, it has brought significant legislative changes that are prerequisites for refugee inclusion and self-reliance. Furthermore, emerging lessons highlight the private sector's pivotal role in utilizing refugee and IDP human capital productively. Initiatives such as the Kakuma Kalobeyi Challenge Fund are designed to attract private businesses and social enterprises to refugee-hosting areas. By supporting business growth, these initiatives help to create a favorable business environment, thus contributing to the economic integration and empowerment of refugees and IDPs (IFC 2024).

When expanding mobility options, both within and beyond national borders, aligns with security concerns, it enables refugees and IDPs to move to areas with better employment opportunities, harnessing individuals' comparative advantages. Uganda's refugee hosting model, which allows refugees to work, move freely, and access land, results in higher incomes and reduces the cost of assistance that would otherwise be needed by an estimated US\$225 million annually (Atamanov, Hoogeveen, and Reese 2024; Betts et al. 2019).²⁶ Geographic dispersion of refugees helps them to access job opportunities, alleviates displacement of native workers, and spreads the demand for housing, infrastructure, and services in underserved regions (refer to Clemens, Huang, and Graham [2018] and the discussion in Sarzin and Nsababera [2024]). In Denmark, refugees were distributed across municipalities in proportion to the local population to ensure shared integration efforts. Refugees who were assigned to larger cities were more likely to find employment and experience faster wage growth (Eckert, Hejlesen, and Walsh 2022). Where displacement from the labor market still occurs, job training and safety net programs, such as cash transfers combined with job search assistance, offer an opportunity for native workers facing increased competition from refugees to upgrade their skills rather than face unemployment (Baird, McKenzie, and Özler 2018; Clemens, Huang, and Graham 2018; Maitra and Mani 2017).

Africa's uniqueness lies in its multiple regional freedom of movement protocols, which present an opportunity to enhance regional mobility for the forcibly displaced, share the responsibility of refugee protection, and offer durable solutions. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), SADC, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa established free movement protocols to facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people among member states, thereby boosting economic integration. These protocols grant rights such as freedom to enter, reside, seek employment, and establish businesses, which could also be extended to refugees from member countries as a way to regularize their status. A notable example is Nigeria's application of the ECOWAS free movement protocols, where the government issued renewal residence and work permits to Liberians and Sierra Leoneans, withdrawing their refugee status once they have obtained a passport from their home countries (World Bank 2017). Such regional initiatives could provide durable solutions for populations trapped in protracted statelessness.²² The measures can be pursued alongside efforts in countries of origin to address the causes of displacement and establish conditions conducive for return and reintegration.

A reduction in humanitarian budgets necessitates accelerating the shift from emergency response to medium-term development. This transition involves integrating refugee governance into national and subnational structures, ensuring that international assistance is provided through financial support to central and local budgets. The financing of protection systems can then rely on instruments like the Window for Host Communities and Refugees (WHR), which supports longer-term development opportunities for both refugees and hosts (World Bank 2021b). For instance, in Chad, WHR support is enhancing productivity and food security for refugees and returnees from the Central African Republic (World Bank 2022a). In South Sudan, WHR funds have been used to provide basic health care services, clean water, and education for refugees and host communities (World Bank 2022a). In Kenya, the WHR played a key role in the creation of the government's "Shirika Plan," which aims to transform the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps into integrated settlements that promote the socioeconomic inclusion of both refugees and host communities (Ginn and Dempster 2024).

Notes

1. The term BLMA is used to refer to different types of labor migration agreements, including BLMAs (legally binding), MOUs (may not be legally binding), or other types of framework agreements on labor migration (ILO and IOM 2019).
2. <https://africacdc.org/> and <https://au-afcfta.org/>.
3. <https://www.iom.int/regional-ministerial-forum-migration-east-and-horn-africa-rmfm>.
4. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/botswana/southern-africa-migration-management-project-samm-%E2%80%93-2021-2024_el; https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/our-programmes/towards-holistic-approach-labour-migration-governance-and-labour-mobility-north-africa_en.
5. Bangladesh has a Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, which is the counterpart of the Department of Foreign Employment in Nepal, the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment in Pakistan, the Department of Migrant Workers in the Philippines, or the Bureau of Foreign Employment in Sri Lanka.

6. <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000043317444/2024-06-11/>. The reform was effective in reducing shortages, increasing the hiring of migrants, while not affecting employment of natives (Signorelli 2024).
7. For example, de Brauw, Kramer, and Murphy (2021) study the impact of female migration on other female members of the community in Bangladesh and find that when another woman leaves, female respondents are 20 percentage points more likely to be empowered relative to their peers.
8. For example, for the required worker skills, knowledge, and abilities for personal care aides in the United States, refer to <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/31-1122.00>.
9. In April 2024, Nigeria's government announced that it is aiming to issue a US\$10 billion diaspora bond fund.
10. Ethiopia's attempt at issuing diaspora bonds in 2009 and then again in 2011 to finance a hydropower dam did not yield the expected subscription, arguably because of perceived risks with the project and discontent of the diaspora vis-à-vis the government. The ability to tap into diaspora savings successfully depends in part on prior consultations with the diaspora for a better understanding of their expectations and to establish trust, the use of multilateral guarantees, and an offshore special purpose entity to ensure that the funds are channeled toward the intended purpose (Ratha et al. 2023; World Bank 2013).
11. The Cochin International Airport is in Kerala, India, and is held as a public limited company. Details are from the website of the Association of Private Airport Operators in India, which published an interview with V. J. Kurien, a former government official credited with the idea of having the Indian diaspora invest in the project.
12. These countries are The Gambia, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Togo, and Zimbabwe (AfDB 2023).
13. France has a similar BSSA arrangement with Tunisia (ILO 2021).
14. The Economic Community of West African States adopted a convention on mutual recognition of academic qualifications in member states in 2003, but it faced implementation difficulties due to language barriers, differing reference frameworks, and absence of national migration policies (Ibourk 2020). World Bank (2021a) provides information on Bangladesh's Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment Project.
15. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, only 4 member countries have ratified the protocol, below the 15 required for it to come into effect.
16. Migrants and refugees from the Republic of Yemen, South Sudan, Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic have equal access as Egyptian citizens to public school, while registered Syrian refugees in addition have free access to its public universities. Refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Somalia only have access to Egypt's private school system.
17. UNHCR in Algeria: <https://help.unhcr.org/algeria/unhcr-in-algeria/> and <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/algeria#toc-populations>.
18. <https://www.acm.gov.pt/ru/-/como-posso-frequentar-um-curso-de-lingua-portuguesa-para-estrangeiros> and <https://www.acm.gov.pt/-/projeto-one-stop-shop>.
19. Data were extracted from data.uis.unesco.org on June 20, 2024.
20. Further information on the ACE Project can be found at <https://ace.aau.org/about-ace-impact/>.
21. The share of incoming international students as a percentage of total enrollments (average for 2016, 2017, and 2018) was 1.9 percent in Morocco, 1.8 percent in Egypt, and 0.5 percent in Algeria, against a global average of 2.4 percent (World Bank 2020).

22. Title 42 was a public health order invoked during the COVID-19 pandemic that allowed US authorities to expel migrants at the border, citing public health concerns. The order was in effect from March 2020 until its expiration in May 2023. For more details: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title42/html/USCODE-2011-title42-chap6A-subchapII-partG-sec265.htm>.
23. For more details: <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/04/27/fact-sheet-us-government-announces-sweeping-new-actions-manage-regional-migration>; <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title42/html/USCODE-2011-title42-chap6A-subchapII-partG-sec265.htm>.
24. Articles 81, 88, and 89 of Portugal's Immigration Law 59/2017 were revoked by decree on June 3, 2024.
25. Germany's §60d Residence Act: https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/aufenthg_2004/_60d.html.
26. Small plot sizes, limited access to credit, agricultural inputs, and markets still limit refugees reaching their full productive capacity (Atamanov, Hoogeveen, and Reese 2024).
27. More than 1 million on the continent (UNHCR 2022).

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Migration in Africa is primarily driven by the search for economic opportunity, safety, and security, including from environmental hardships. However, migration's potential to uplift African livelihoods remains largely untapped. While nearly 15 percent of the world's migrant population is from Sub-Saharan Africa, two-thirds of Sub-Saharan migrants stay within Africa, and the majority move within regional economic communities. Africa is also home to a quarter of the world's refugees, primarily hosted in neighboring countries.

Africa is now at a pivotal crossroads. With a rapidly growing young population facing economic stagnation, conflict, and climate change, the continent's workforce is expected to increase by 600 million people by 2050, making up a third of the world's youth. In contrast, labor forces in high-income and upper-middle-income countries are set to decline by 200 million. This demographic divergence opens a window of opportunity for Africa to enhance its migration management systems.

Realizing the potential of migration requires deliberate policies to address challenges and maximize the benefits of migration for both origin and destination countries, as well as for the migrants. Investing in migration systems can better support migrants across the migration cycle, from developing skills in demand domestically, regionally, and globally to ensuring dignity and safety in transit or at their destination.

Increasing the number of legal migration pathways is crucial to disincentivize irregular movements and foster safe, orderly migration. Effective migration management also includes promoting integration in host societies and facilitating voluntary returns. This can be achieved through instruments such as bilateral labor migration agreements with destination countries. Entering these agreements as a unified bloc would strengthen individual countries' bargaining power, improve conditions for migrants, and maximize the economic benefits of migration. Additionally, the empowerment and self-reliance of refugees and internally displaced persons call for increased collaboration among African nations.

"Contrary to preconceived ideas, and in accordance with its vocation as a bank for reconstruction and development, the World Bank adopts an optimistic posture and advocates for the asset that is migration to be jointly and strategically managed by origin and host countries. The day is no longer far away when Africa will offer contingents of qualified migrant workers, actors in the development of countries of origin and important contributors to the world's economic growth and stability."

—Tiébilé Dramé, former Minister of Malians Abroad

"An insightful review of the untapped potential and policy challenges surrounding African migration."

—Christian Dustmann, Professor of Economics, University College London, and Director,
ROCKWOOL Foundation Berlin (RFBerlin)



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