



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

REGIONAL FACT SHEET

Sub-Saharan Africa

In 2005, there were nearly 16 million international migrants living in sub-Saharan Africa countries, constituting 2.1 per cent of the total population, and a Diaspora of migrants from the region living overseas who have contributed to the sub-continent through remittance of earnings and economic interactions with their home countries.

The slow growth in migrant stock in the sub-continent (in 2004–2005, increasing by only 265,000) is in large part accounted for by the ongoing reduction in the number of refugees, which declined from 5.4 million in 1990 to 2.75 million in 2005. The drop-off reflects the return of refugees to their home countries, in the wake of successful resolution of conflicts during the 1990s.

The most significant receiver of migrants within the sub-continent is South Africa, which uses bilateral agreements to manage the temporary admission of migrant workers from neighbouring countries for employment in the mining sector. According to one study, poverty would increase by about 15 per cent in Lesotho if migrant workers in South African mines were to stop sending remittances home.

Outgoing migration from the region has attracted international attention recently because of desperate efforts by Western African migrants to enter Europe clandestinely via sea lanes, and resulting deaths, which have led to new efforts at regional cooperation (*see below*).

Table 1: Ten top Sub-Saharan African countries according to remittances received in 2004

Ranking	Country	Remittances (millions USD)	Percent of GDP
1	Nigeria	\$ 2,751	3.6
2	Sudan	1,403	7.0
3	South Africa	521	0.2
4	Senegal	511	6.7
5	Kenya	494	3.3
6	Lesotho	355	25.9
7	Uganda	291	3.7
8	Mauritius	215	3.4
9	Mali	154	3.1
10	Togo	149	7.2

Source: Population Division, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The diaspora of sub-Saharan Africans living overseas has returned a considerable amount of their earnings to families in home countries. *See table 1.*

In a report to a UN symposium (Turin, Italy, June 2006), the UN Economic Commission for Africa stated: “Although the debate on the impact of international migration on development in Africa has largely been shaped by the loss of skilled Africans to the developed world, growing evidence shows that international migration has positive effects on social and economic development in Africa.”

Remittances from the wages of migrants abroad, and the income multipliers they create, are critical resources for the sustenance strategies of receiving households, according to the ECA. The extra resources at the disposal of these households in turn make them agents of local and national development. An increasing number of overseas migrants in conjunction with hometown associations, investment groups and religious groups are involved in transnational activities that help to integrate African countries with the global economy; hundreds of small and medium scale factories, commercial businesses and agricultural enterprises have been established by returnees, initiating knowledge spillovers from migrants, employment opportunities, profits and additions to the local and national tax base.

The ECA cites studies showing that Kenyan families receiving remittances amassed greater productive capital than families not receiving them; in Burkina Faso, the population living beneath the poverty line was reduced by 7.2 per cent in rural households as a result of international remittances; Zimbabwe families that managed to diversify their household portfolios through migration tend to have higher levels of educational attainment as compared to households without migrants; and South African children living in household with a migrant worker and that received remittances were significantly less likely to drop out of primary or secondary school than those in a household without a migrant worker.

Nevertheless, not all outward migration produces a “brain gain”. The UN Conference on Trade and Development estimates that each professional leaving Africa costs the region \$184,000. The ECA notes that departures of health workers from Africa to richer countries have led to a significant deficit of essential skills in the health sector. In some countries, the proportion of doctors trained at home who have left for OECD countries is quite high. More than 12,000 doctors trained in South Africa now work in an OECD country, according to 2006 World Health Organisation statistics. In comparison, there are slightly less than 33,000 doctors working in the country. More than 900 physicians trained in Ghana are working in an OECD country, compared with 3,240 practising within Ghana, according to WHO figures.

Intensifying humanitarian crises caused by a growing stream of sub-Saharan migrants towards Europe led to the convening in July 2006 of an African Union-European Union conference in Rabat, Morocco. This first ministerial-level meeting between Europe and Africa to discuss migration, it approached the issue in the context of the promotion of development and by considering how migration can be a positive factor. Along with promoting assistance for the victims of trafficking victims and coordination on security measures to stem the flow of unauthorized migration across borders, measures were discussed to also stem the brain drain from Africa through partnerships between technical and scientific institutions and strengthened cooperation on professional training. □

Produced by the UN Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs