

Chapter 7

Sub-Saharan Africa

This chapter looks at recent migration flows and diasporas from the Sub-Saharan African countries to the OECD area. It shows that in 2010 about 330 000 new migrants from the region settled in OECD countries, accounting for about 6% of total immigration flows. In 2005/06 there were 4 million emigrants, 15 years old or older, from the region in OECD countries, of which 49% were women and 36% held a tertiary diploma. Total emigration rate for those over 15 years of age was only 1% for the region as a whole but the emigration rate for the highly educated was the highest recorded at 13.3%. Future challenges relate notably to the persistence of significant highly skilled outmigration and the need to find new and more effective forms of international co-operation to minimise the cost and maximise the development impact of migration.

This chapter also contains 34 country notes for Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

1. Historical migration patterns

In 2010 the Sub-Saharan Africa region, consisting of 40 countries, registered an average GDP per capita (in purchasing power parities) of USD 1 300. The very low standard of living of Sub-Saharan Africa countries, coupled with a high average poverty rate of 70.1% (poverty headcount ratio at USD 2 a day, purchasing power parity), is one of the major push factors for migration, not only from the region but also within the region due to great disparities among countries. Moreover, the rapid population growth (+2.5% in 2010), a nearly two-thirds population share that is under the age of 24, and improved access to education jointly lead to increased demographic and labour market pressure to emigrate, and so shape migration patterns in the region.

The features mentioned above, as well as unstable politics, escalating ethnic conflicts, persistent economic decline, poverty and environmental deterioration, have established Sub-Saharan Africa as a region of high population mobility. Whereas migration in Sub-Saharan Africa has received increasing attention from the research and policy communities over recent decades, little is known about migration flows and stocks to, from, and within the region. This is mainly due to deficient population registration systems and the lack of suitable data, but also to nomadic traditions, cross-border ethnic groups and porous borders that somehow make the notion of migration dubious in its common acceptance and difficult to measure.

Although there is no consensus over the number of people born in a Sub-Saharan African country and living abroad, the United Nations¹ estimated that the overall number of Sub-Saharan migrants in the world amounted to about 16 million in 2005. This stock has steadily increased since 1960, but showed numerous fluctuations resulting from geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts. It increased significantly after the independence movements, reached a peak over the 1975-80 period (+5%), and then slowed down during the 1980s and early 1990s; a decrease followed between 1995 and 2000 (-1% per year); and finally the 2000-05 period saw stabilisation at 1% per year. Three main features emerge from analysis of Sub-Saharan migration:

- Sub-Saharan migrants account for a marginal and decreasing share of the world migrant population, from 10% in 1990 to 8% in 2005.
- Population growth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa being much greater than growth in the number of international migrants from the region, overall emigration rates in the region have steadily decreased since 1990 and remain relatively low, amounting to 2.2% on average in 2005.
- It is now acknowledged that the bulk of migration takes place within the region.

In 2005 the United Nations estimated that migration within the region involved between 7 million and 10 million people, accounting for more than 60% of the total Sub-Saharan migrant population and therefore putting forward a picture of Africa as a vast region of migration. These intra-regional population flows predated the colonial era, due to ancestral traditions such as nomadism but also agricultural seasonality that implied short-term and circular migrations. However, they were reinforced and encouraged during the

colonial period to meet labour needs in booming employment areas, so that those patterns kept shaping persistent cross-border migrations after independences. One major feature is that intra-regional migration flows remain extremely focused: from landlocked Sahelian countries to coastal countries in West Africa, to large plantations in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in East Africa, to mining and oil-producing countries such as Gabon and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in Central Africa. Intra-regional migration is fostered by rapid urbanisation and rural depopulation; the establishment of regional economic and monetary areas such as ECOWAS (1975) and ECCAS (1994); and the emergence of Northern African countries and new African “Eldorados” such as Nigeria, Gabon, South Africa and Botswana. However, the configuration of intra-regional migration is constantly changing due to the extreme instability and precariousness of the continent.

Migrations outside the continent are predominantly directed to OECD countries, which in 2005 hosted between 30% and 40% of the total international Sub-Saharan migrant population. Migrations were encouraged after the Second World War through guest worker agreements – mainly in Europe – but flows really intensified after independence over the 1975-80 period, following the economic boom and labour shortages, especially in low-skilled occupations. Subsequently their growth slowed; they were mainly driven by family and humanitarian factors until the late 1990s and again labour factors since 2000, although constrained by more and more restrictive immigration laws. Migration patterns remain strongly determined by former historical and colonial links and linguistic proximity. However, the implementation of selective migration policies in traditional host countries and the economic boom in Southern and Eastern Europe contributed to strengthening migrations to North America and reshaping flows over the past decade towards new European destination countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece. The 2008 economic crisis put an end to these recent evolutions. Overall, Sub-Saharan migrants in OECD countries remain highly concentrated, with ten countries (*e.g.* the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Portugal) hosting the vast majority (more than 90%) of their total population.

Apart from those voluntary (family and labour) migrations, one additional feature that cannot be neglected in the Sub-Saharan context is the importance of “forced” migration. Indeed, political instability, conflicts and civil wars were a major cause of migration within the continent over the past three decades. In 2005, according to UNHCR data Sub-Saharan Africa was the region in the world with the highest number of refugees (2.7 million), accounting for more than 15% of the total Sub-Saharan migrant population. Moreover, climate change and desertification keep increasing the number of “environmental refugees”, estimated at about 7 million people in the late 1990s.

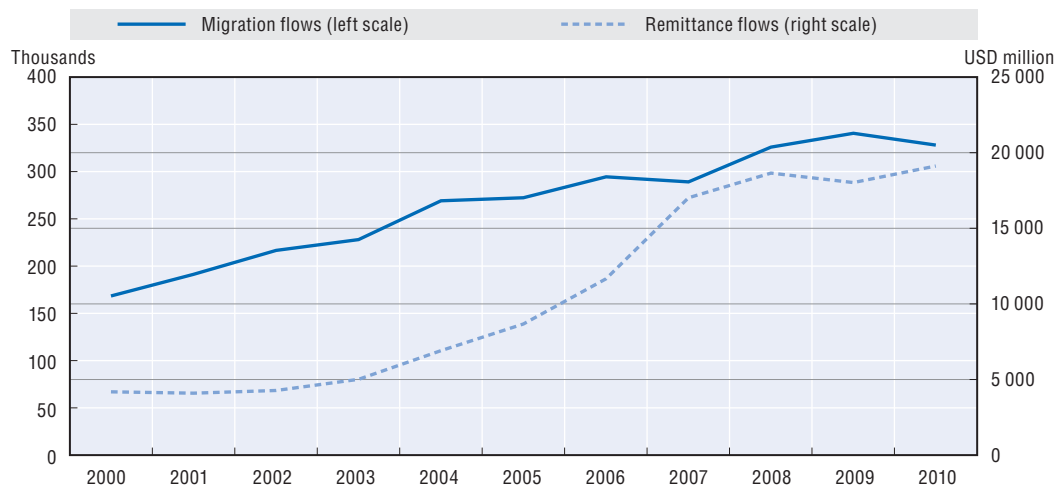
2. Current profile of emigrant populations

Flows and stocks


In 2010, about 328 000 legal migrants originating from Sub-Saharan Africa moved to an OECD country (Figure 7.1). Migration flows from Sub-Saharan Africa slightly decreased (by 4%) between 2009 and 2010: the 2008 financial crisis strongly impacted low-skilled labour-intensive sectors in which Sub-Saharan Africa migrants are overrepresented (construction, wholesale, etc.). However, this is only a slight drop compared with the over 100% increase in migration flows from Sub-Saharan Africa to the OECD area over the past decade.

Remittance flows to Sub-Saharan Africa rose sharply and steadily over the 2000-09 period, from less than USD 4 billion in 2000 to USD 19 billion in 2010. This increase can be explained by the increasing number of Sub-Saharan migrants, but also reflects the

Figure 7.1. **Migrant flows from Sub-Saharan Africa to OECD countries and remittance flows, 2000-10**



Source: OECD International Migration Database; World Bank.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932672194>

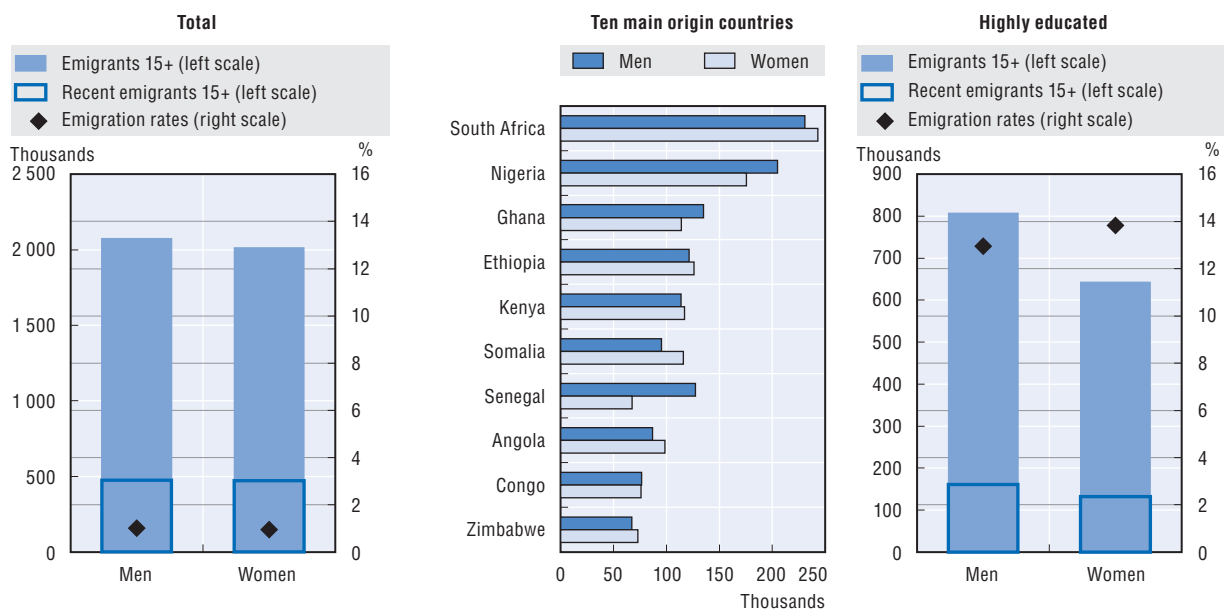
decreasing share of transfers sent via informal channels and previously not recorded. Several countries received at least USD 1 billion in remittances in 2010 (Nigeria 10; Kenya 1.8; Senegal 1.4; Sudan 1.4; South Africa 1.1). Remittances represented about 3.7% of GDP on average in the region – 23.0% in Lesotho, 10.7% in Togo, 10.4% in Senegal, 10.2% in Gambia and a substantial share in small island countries (*e.g.* Cape Verde).

Regarding migrant stocks, the population of people (over age 15) born in Sub-Saharan Africa and living in OECD countries amounted to about 4.1 million in 2005/06, of which 948 000 persons were recent migrants (*i.e.* persons having a residency of five years or less in the destination country) (Figure 7.2). While the number of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa increased by 1.1 million over the 2000-05/06 period, their share in the total stock of migrants in the OECD area remains rather low (4.8%).

Not surprisingly, among the main sending countries of the African continent, most of the biggest in terms of population size (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa) are at the top of the list, in both flows and stocks. There are exceptions, however: big countries such as Tanzania do not send many migrants to the OECD area while the reverse holds true for very small ones, such as Cape Verde and Mauritius. Cape Verde is a unique country when it comes to migration. According to some sources, the Cape Verdean diaspora would actually outnumber the current population residing in the country, estimated by the population census at 492 000 in 2010. Of these emigrants, a significant share resides in Portugal and the United States. Within Africa, the biggest Cape Verdean communities can be found in other Portuguese-speaking countries such as Angola and Sao Tome and Principe, but also Senegal.

Returning to the top of the list, South Africa ranks first, with about 474 000 migrants in the OECD area; it is followed by Nigeria (380 000), Ghana (249 000), Ethiopia (248 000) and Kenya (231 000) (Figure 7.2). The main destination countries for South African migrants are the United Kingdom (160 000), Australia (90 000), the United States (80 000) and, to a lesser extent, Canada and New Zealand. For Nigerians and Ghanaians, the two main destination countries are the United States and the United Kingdom, with respective shares of about 48% and 33% for Nigerians and 39% and 31% for Ghanaians.

Figure 7.2. **Total and highly educated emigrant population aged 15 and over from Sub-Saharan Africa in the OECD area, 2005/06**

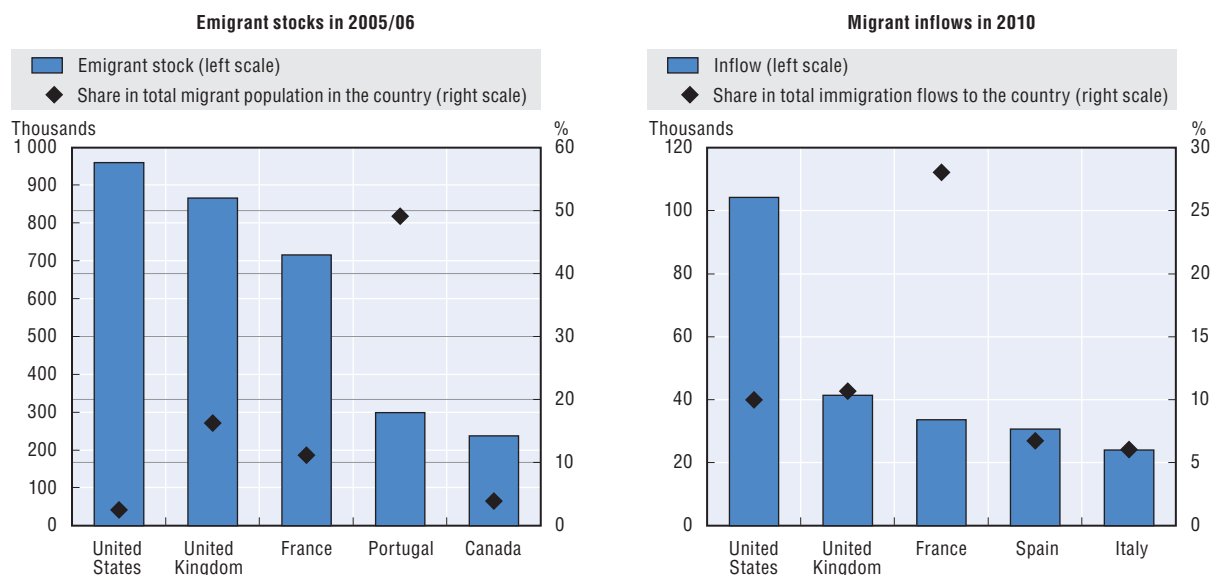


Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC 2005/06).

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Overall, even though the number of destinations has expanded over the recent years for most African migrants, historical links between populations – a common colonial past in particular – and a common language still strongly determine the direction of migration (Figure 7.3). For example, Portugal still attracts most of the Angolans (75%) and the Mozambicans (85%) residing in the OECD area; France draws migrants from Madagascar

Figure 7.3. **Emigrant populations and migrant flows from Sub-Saharan Africa to the five main destinations within the OECD area, population aged 15 and over**



Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC 2005/06); OECD International Migration Database.

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(91%), Côte d'Ivoire (66%) and Senegal (50%); and the United Kingdom attracts migrants from Kenya (51%) and Uganda (56%). All together, these three countries host about three-quarters (1.8 million) of the Sub-Saharan migrants residing in the European Union.

As suggested by recent migration flows, Italy and Spain have been attracting a growing number of Sub-Saharan migrants in the past 20 years (Figure 7.3). As a result, Italy now stands as the second main destination country for Senegalese and the third one for Ivoirians, Ghanaians and Nigerians. Turning to Spain, the rise in the number of Sub-Saharan migrants is also quite pronounced, with significant inflows from Western Africa (Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and the Gambia in particular) in the past ten years. The 2008 economic crisis and the massive layoffs that followed, especially in the Spanish construction sector, have however led to a sharp decrease in migration to this country.

Characteristics of emigrant populations in OECD countries

With regard to gender and age, in 2005/06 the number of Sub-Saharan migrant women in the OECD area was very close to the number of Sub-Saharan migrant men (Table 7.1). Such parity is recent, as migration flows both within the African continent and from Sub-Saharan Africa to the OECD have historically been male-dominated. The improved access of women to education and the expansion of the services sector have enhanced women's employability locally and across national borders, while the increase in female migration networks has lowered the cost of migrating and improved access to information about opportunities abroad. As a result, a significant proportion of women are now moving independently to fulfil their own economic needs; they are no longer simply joining a husband or other family members. Within the Sub-Saharan continent, however, Western African countries stand apart, with only 89 women for every 100 men. The share of women is particularly low for countries such as Mauritania (41 women for every 100 men), Guinea-Bissau (47), Senegal (53) and, to a lesser extent, Mali (61), even if the gap between men and women has been narrowing over the past 20 years. At the other extreme are countries such as Botswana and Namibia in Southern Africa; Madagascar, Zambia, Djibouti and the Seychelles in Eastern Africa; and Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in Central Africa, for which the share of women in migrant stocks varies between 55% and 65%.

Table 7.1. Characteristics of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in the OECD area, by gender, 2005/06

	Percentage			Percentage		
	Regional averages (unweighted)			Regional total (weighted)		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
15-24	17.0	17.4	17.0	14.8	15.8	15.3
25-64	78.8	77.5	78.3	80.3	78.3	79.3
65+	4.2	5.1	4.7	4.9	6.0	5.4
Low-educated	30.1	38.9	34.7	28.7	34.8	31.7
Highly educated	37.2	29.7	33.4	39.7	33.0	36.4
Total emigration rates	3.1	3.1	3.1	1.0	1.0	1.0
Emigration rates of the highly educated	15.7	21.5	17.3	13.0	13.8	13.3

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC 2005/06).

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Analysis of the age structure of the emigrant population from Sub-Saharan Africa countries reveals that Sub-Saharan migrants are on average younger than those from other parts of the world (Table 7.1). Seventeen per cent of Sub-Saharan Africa migrants are aged between 15 and 24, against 10% of migrants born in an OECD country, 12% of migrants born in South, East or Central Asia and 10% for migrants born in the MENA region. However, there are huge variations in the age distribution of migrants depending on which region of Sub-Saharan Africa they come from. The share of young emigrants is the highest for migrants born in Southern African countries (19%) and the lowest for migrants born in Eastern African countries (13%). The higher share of young migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa as compared with other regions may be partly explained by the age distribution of the African population as a whole. Youth currently represents more than 20% of the African population, compared to 18% for other developing regions (Asia and Latin America) and 13% in Europe. In addition, while the share of young people in the total population has started to decrease since the mid-1980s, noticeably in major developing regions and in the world as a whole, this has not been the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the share of the youth has remained very stable. The high share of young emigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa may also be explained by the large number of international students from the region studying in OECD countries. Nigeria and Cameroon are the main Sub-Saharan Africa countries of origin of international students in the OECD area, followed by Senegal and Kenya.

On average, the share of highly educated individuals among the emigrant population from Sub-Saharan Africa countries is rather high, and increased between 2000 and 2005/06. It reached 37% in 2005/06, against 32% in 2000. Migrant women have on average lower educational attainment levels than migrant men, but the share of highly educated Sub-Saharan African migrant women in the OECD area also increased over the period, from 28% to 32%. There are, however, strong disparities in education levels among Sub-Saharan migrants depending on which OECD country they reside in. The share of highly educated migrants in the total stock of migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries exceeds 40% in English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, plus Japan) and is close to 50% in former socialist countries,² compared with 16% in Southern and Northern European countries, with a share of 26%; continental Europe stands in between. While migration to Europe has long been dominated by low-educated individuals, it now concerns an increasing number of medium or highly educated individuals, so that the share of highly educated migrants observed today is much higher than the one observed twenty or even ten years ago. This marked evolution is due to both the adoption of more selective migration policies biased towards the highly educated, and to the increasing proportion of educated individuals in sending countries.

In terms of labour market outcomes, however, overqualification of Sub-Saharan migrants is an issue, with about a third of employed immigrants with a tertiary degree working in low-skilled jobs (Table 7.2). This phenomenon has substantially increased since 2000, except for migrants coming from a few countries (Congo, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Mauritania) for whom it has either stagnated or slightly declined.

Table 7.2. **Labour market characteristics of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in the OECD area, by gender, 2005/06**

	Regional averages (unweighted)			Regional total (weighted)		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Employment rate (%)	70.7	57.2	64.4	72.4	57.9	65.3
Unemployment rate (%)	12.2	18.2	14.7	10.4	14.0	12.0
Participation rate (%)	80.2	69.1	75.1	80.7	67.3	74.1
Total employed (thousands)	1 408	1 086	2 494			
Employment rate of the highly educated (%)	78.7	69.7	75.0	81.6	73.8	78.1
Unemployment rate of the highly educated (%)	9.9	12.8	11.0	7.2	8.0	7.5
Participation rate of the highly educated (%)	87.2	79.5	83.9	87.9	80.2	84.5
Highly educated employed (thousands)	635	462	1 097			
Persons with tertiary degrees in low- or medium-skilled jobs (%)	35.8	38.6	37.3	34.0	33.5	33.8

Source: Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC 2005/06).

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932675196>

Emigration rates and “brain drain”

Since emigration flows are rather low on average, the expatriation rates from Sub-Saharan Africa to OECD countries are very low. (These rates are calculated by dividing the expatriate population aged 15 and over from a given country by the native-born population aged 15 and over of the same country.) Taking Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, the expatriation rate to the OECD was around 0.8% in 2000 and around 1% in 2005/06. The highest expatriation rates are observed for small island developing states such as Cape Verde, where 28% of the total population aged 15 and over lives abroad; Sao Tome and Principe (20%); the Seychelles (13%); and Mauritius (10%).

Turning to the emigration rates of the highly educated, several interesting features emerge. First, Sub-Saharan Africa's highly educated individuals are much more likely to emigrate than less educated ones: in 2005/06, the emigration rates for tertiary-educated people (13.3%) far exceeded total emigration rates (1%).³ Second, available data on the size of the “brain drain” in Sub-Saharan African countries exhibit strong disparities. The departure of highly educated individuals in West Africa particularly affects Sierra Leone (with one-third of the highly educated living in an OECD country), Ghana (30%) and Gambia (26%). In East Africa, Mauritius, Malawi and Zimbabwe are strongly affected by the “brain drain” (with expatriation rates higher than a third in all cases), followed by Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania. In contrast, the “brain drain” is relatively low in French-speaking Western African countries such as Burkina Faso (4.1%), Guinea (5.4%), Niger (5.9%), Benin (7.8%) and Gabon (8.1%).

Between 2000 and 2005/06, emigration rates of the highly educated increased the most in Congo (+25 percentage points), Zimbabwe (+20 percentage points), Malawi (+19 percentage points), Zambia (+9 percentage points) and, to a lesser extent, Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire (+7 percentage points). Over the same period, they significantly decreased in some countries, among which are Mozambique (–8 percentage points), Sierra Leone and Liberia (–4 percentage points), all of which are in post-war regimes.

In 28 of the 33 Sub-Saharan Africa countries for which data on “brain drain” are available, highly educated women are more likely to emigrate to the OECD area than highly educated men. The differences are largest for persons born in Malawi (with a gender gap of 22 percentage points), Zimbabwe (20 percentage points), Zambia (14 percentage points) and Chad (12 percentage points).

3. Future trends and challenges

In recent years, most OECD countries' migration management policies have been influenced by increasing needs for highly educated workers due to labour shortages and population ageing. This partly explains observed trends in migration flows from Sub-Saharan Africa to the OECD area, which have been composed of increasing numbers of individuals with medium or high levels of education.

Such a trend is likely to persist and even increase in the future, not only because of demand-driven factors but also because of push effects. Given the age structure of their population, most Sub-Saharan Africa countries will be subject to heavy pressure on their labour markets for several years, especially as the expansion of their working-age population is being coupled with rising labour force participation rate among young workers. This is likely to be so for Western African countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Liberia, and for Eastern African countries such as Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. Their populations are indeed expected to grow at an annual rate of at least 2% until 2040, with the share of young people (0-14 years) remaining higher than 40%. This suggests that the number of potential migrants from these countries is expected to be on the rise in the next two or three decades, especially among those with medium or high levels of education, who suffer from higher unemployment levels than the lower-skilled (DIAL, 2007).

However, the recent world crisis – combined with OECD countries' tightening immigration policies, especially in Europe – may deter prospective migrants. This may well result in a substantial increase in migration flows within the African continent, or at least in their persistence at sustained levels, as well as in the establishment of new destinations. Migration patterns to some parts of the continent are also expected to change, with some fast-growing countries such as Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Gabon attracting an ever larger influx of immigrants. Skilled professionals in particular, pressured by uncertain economic conditions in their home countries, could well consider these booming economies as realistic alternatives to Europe, the United States and the Gulf States. Migration from the rest of Africa to some *Southern African Development Community (SADC)* countries has already increased dramatically since the early 1990s: South Africa has received a growing influx of migrants from various parts of the Sub-Saharan region, including Congo, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Kenya and Uganda; Botswana has been hosting increasing numbers of undocumented Zimbabweans, etc. In some cases these unprecedented volumes of new immigrants have given rise to high levels of xenophobia among the population, as illustrated for example by the events of May 2008 in South Africa.⁴ One of the upcoming challenges for these newly attractive African countries is thus to better comprehend and manage those increasing flows, in order to make them an additional driving force for their sustained growth.

The likely heightened pressure to emigrate from Sub-Saharan Africa also calls for new and more effective forms of international co-operation to minimise the costs and maximise the development impact of migration, and in the longer term to reduce the pressure to emigrate. Part of the solution is at the level of African sending countries themselves. Strong support for development of the agricultural sector (which still stands out as the main absorption sector), together with sound macroeconomic policies and good governance to attract foreign direct investments and promote job creation in urban labour markets, is critical. So far, most African countries have demonstrated limited capacity to

achieve these goals or, more generally, to deal with issues relating to migration. As an illustration, while the volume of migrant remittances and the potential for African diasporas to contribute to development are generally acknowledged, efforts to move migration returns towards development remain far too lacking. However, some progress has been made in recent years. In Senegal for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad was restructured in 1993 to enhance the welfare of nationals abroad and to encourage emigrants to be involved in the socioeconomic development of their home communities. Overall, more than ten African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda and Sierra Leone among them) have now set up diaspora-related institutions and ministries in order to co-ordinate diaspora-led development issues (Adepoju, 2010). These structures are still new and weak, but with adequate training and additional resources, officials in these institutions could design feasible strategic interventions.

On the whole, the Sub-Saharan African diaspora undoubtedly constitutes an international social capital and a social organisation, made of “networks, norms and trust that could facilitate co-ordination and co-operation of mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1993) and help achieve ends such as economic development and socio-political stabilisation. Yet, whether the diaspora would be willing to participate in the home country’s development remains an open question. That jointly depends on the context in the home country and the circumstances that sometimes lead members to curtail links with their origin community in the long run.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise specified, all figures in this section come from the UN’s *International Migration Report 2009: A Global Assessment* (United Nations, ST/ESA//SER.A/316), United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division (2011).
2. These countries are also those in which the number of Sub-Saharan migrants is very low.
3. These figures refer to weighted averages. The unweighted total emigration rate of Sub-Saharan Africa is 3% and the unweighted average of the emigration rates of the highly educated 17%.
4. On 12 May 2008, a series of riots broke out in the township of Alexandra (in the north-eastern part of Johannesburg) when locals attacked migrants from Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe, killing two people and injuring 40 others.

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