

Emigration and development linkages in Kenya

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Abstract:

Introduction: Up to the time of undertaking this study, there has been no national-level survey on emigration and its effects on development in Kenya. Too little was known about the levels and trends of emigration in the country, its contribution to the livelihoods of migrants and their households, and how it interacts with wider changes in both rural and urban societies. This study is informed by the realization that the sheer lack of studies on the subject in the country constrains making sound policy decisions, hence the relevance of this study. The purpose of this study is to establish the prevailing emigration and development linkages in Kenya, using the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census data. Theoretically speaking, Wibur Zelinsky's 'hypothesis of mobility transition' provided a plausible guide for this study, as recognizes the causes of migration and the feedback mechanisms through which population movements are perpetuated, particularly within the framework of migration-development nexus; and more importantly, it underpins the phase of the transition gauged against 'vital transition' versus 'mobility transition' on the path of modernisation.

Methodology: This study used the 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census data to determine the volume, trend and pattern of emigration and remittances. Literature search, documented data from the Central Bank of Kenya and the World Bank were also used to complement and verify the results established from the census data. The Migration-Remittances model was used as the plausible analytical framework for explaining Emigration-Development Linkages in Kenya.

Analysis and Results: This study establishes that recent flows of emigrants are relatively gender balanced and on average emigrants are much younger than previous cohorts. However, there appears to be no clear process of skill selection or brain drain of migrants from Kenyan counties, that is, the education profile of migrants is similar to the education levels of the overall population in counties of origin. This study has shown that a sizable proportion of migrant workers decide to emigrate because of employment and seeking for education opportunities outside the country. In unravelling the impact of emigration and remittances on development, this study analyses the sources, volume and value of emigrants' remittances and, thereafter, unpacking the unknown quantum, namely the contribution of emigrants in homeland development as well as the utilisation of the remittances. It is noted that even though emigration is analysed as a social process due to the decision-making structures, either at the individual, household or community level (assuming that it is voluntary mobility), the reasons for emigration are diverse, including social, economic, political and environmental determinants. The analysis is structured by counties, age, sex, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and how migration in turn affects development (through remittances), thereby enabling readers to move away from seeing migrants as helpless victims, and describe migration as a highly dynamic process upon which when well managed using appropriate policies, is a resource that can be positively harnessed for development.

Outcome of the research: The study noted that Kenya's emigration pattern is not coherent to the Standard Age Migration Schedule which has four peaks, yet Kenya's is only one

peaked; meaning that most of the emigrants were at their places of destination, to a greater extent due to search for employment and education opportunities. The pattern of emigration was established to be: to the developed world (the U.S.A., the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada); to the east African Partner States (Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), with South Sudan being a major place of destination; to the Middle East (mainly to United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia), and; to Southern Africa (mainly to the Republic of South Africa and Botswana). The pattern of emigration could be divided into two. That is short distance and long distance movers. The counties at the boundaries of Kenya and other countries (such as Busia, Bungoma, Turkana, Taita Taveta) contributed more to short distance emigration into the neighbouring countries; whereas, counties such as Kiambu, Kisii, Samburu and Garissa contributed to long distance emigration. The study noted that the county of origin, the country of destination and the emigrant's profession had an association to the volume and per capita remittance. For instance Garissa County had greatest per capita remittance compared to other counties. However, Kiambu and Nairobi counties had the greatest volume of remittance inflow. The trend of remittances was also noted to be rising, and it was mainly used for consumption, education and health, and to a minimal extent on investment. The professionals who emigrated included teachers, doctors, nurses, lecturers, engineers, economists, statisticians and artisans, among others. The trend was noted to be on the rise. The study concludes that human capital accumulation is crucial in terms of the contribution that migrant workers make on development in their countries of origin. This is illustrated by the amounts of remittance that emigrants sent to their households of origin. Conclusion: The study established that the Kenya's Age Migration Schedule is incoherent to the Standard Age Migration Schedule. It notes that the Kenyan pattern is only one humped, instead of being a four-humped pattern so as to conform to the standard one. The distribution is peaked at ages 25-29 years, and picks between ages 15-39; showing that the emigrants moved out to their destinations, mainly for employment and educational opportunities. In the migration cycle, there are five phases, each with unique characteristics. It was established Kenya is at Phase 2; which is the early stage of the vital transition, characterized by all forms of mobility (circular, rural colonization frontiers, internal rural-urban, international) on the increase. The study has also established the plausible migration theory to explain Kenya's migration. There exists a variety of theories on migration. Analysis on migration has always been done using Kenya migration data, whether internal or international. However, all the previously analysis had been undertaken without establishing which migration theory befits Kenya's situation. It was noted that percentage number of remitters at the county levels was not as important as per capita remittance at the household level. Analysis of remittances per year for Kenya since the year 1995-2009 showed that percentage of those who remitted was not as important a variable in explaining the resultant percent of remittance for any particular year. The plausible interpretation was that per capita remittance was most significant than total number of remitters, as in the year 1995 the percent of those who remitted was lower than in 1996, but ultimately the percent remitted in 1995 Was higher than in 1996.