Migration and Integrity of ODA as a Resource in Sub-Saharan Africa

David Ugolor and Leo Atakpu, Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ)

1. Introduction

Increasingly, there have been debates on the integrity of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to recipient countries. While many see the need for reforms to improve the integrity of ODA, others believe that recipient countries should introduce national and regional agendas to move beyond aid dependence.

Given global economic inequalities and harsh realities of many sub-Sahara African countries, including Nigeria, there are numerous challenges affecting millions of citizens, particularly the youth population. Aside from the obvious issues of widespread poverty, insurgency, youth unemployment, the migration of millions of youth to Europe in search of greener pastures has globally assumed worrisome proportions. Sadly, it has even been an avenue for the re-introduction of slave trade, hundreds of years after it was abolished.¹

There has been some evidence which point to the fact that recipient countries are depending less on aid. In fact, aid dependency has fallen on average by a third in the poorest countries in the first decade after 2000, according to a report by Action Aid.² In Ghana aid dependency has dropped from 47% to 27%, in Mozambique from 74% to 58% and in Vietnam from 22% to 13%. Although aid levels have increased, economic growth and countries’ ability to mobilise their own resources has increased faster. The Action Aid report also states that “fourteen of the 30 most aid dependent countries in 2000 reduced their dependence by more than 20% of expenditure by 2009.”

Some of the reasons are not hard to discern. Aid dependent governments are in danger of losing the space they need to design and implement home-grown development policies. Loss of policy space can occur as a direct consequence of aid, because donors can insist, that recipient countries implement donors’ policy priorities through tied aid.

When services are funded largely through aid, it can undermine relationships whereby citizens hold their governments accountable for delivering services such as education, health or water. Governments are less accountable to people, switching their attention to relations with aid donors rather than their own citizens.

In 2008, The Economist nevertheless suggested that, despite manifold and persistent problems of poor performing governments and erratic climates, Africa has a chance of rising.³ The increasing interest in Africa by emerging economic giants such as China and India is connected with new market opportunities opening up in the continent. This is a sign that Africa is being seen as a continent of interesting promises.
The quest for self-reliance is seemingly undermined by the ever-increasing commitments for more and better aid accountability that donor countries make at every international summit. Many recipient countries are beginning to pose two questions: Does Africa need more aid? And if so, why is this, given the promising economic trends the continent is registering? Does Africa need aid to stem the slave trade in Libya and stop the hundreds of thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean and Sahara desert?

2. Aid and migration

Migration has always been an integral part of human life. Escaping natural and human threats, as well as harsh economic conditions, are the most important motivations of those leaving their home countries. The recent flow of refugees around the world evokes diametrically opposed reactions by the host countries’ citizens. Many people are willing to help refugees, whereas many others are not.

Yet, the underlying mechanisms that lead to refugee helping versus rejection are not well understood. Robert Böhm, Maik M. P. Theelen, Hannes Rusch, and Paul A. M. Van Lange (2018) reckon that costs associated with refugee helping are a key determinant of citizens’ willingness to do so. It is especially people with a higher degree of solidarity that are willing to bear the personal cost of helping. Emphasizing the neediness of refugees as well as their integration efforts increases the willingness among citizens to provide help.

The proportion of ODA spent on hosting refugees inside donor countries has reportedly risen steeply, to 10.8 percent of total ODA in 2016, up from 9.2% in 2015 and 4.7% in 2014. The latest figures on ODA spending by the Development Assistance Committee, released by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, also show that, while donors have increased aid budgets, much of this new spending is being directed toward in-donor refugee costs.

ODA spent on hosting refugees inside donor countries has jumped by 27.5% in real terms since 2015. In 2016 it reached $15.4 billion. That equates to 10.8% of total net ODA, up from 9.2% in 2015 and 4.8% in 2014. Many donor countries have seen unprecedented inflows of refugees in the last two years. The DAC is working to clarify its ODA reporting rules to ensure that refugee costs do not eat into funding for development. Humanitarian aid rose by 8% in real terms in 2016 to USD 14.4 billion.

These overall increases are largely due to increased contributions by countries such as Germany, which is the second-largest donor country, spending $23.8 billion on net official development assistance in 2017 (in 2016 prices). This corresponds to 0.66% of GNI. Germany achieved the 0.7% target for the first time in 2016, largely driven by refugee-related expenditures ($6.6 billion in 2016). A decrease in the ODA-reportable costs for hosting refugees in Germany (US$5.9 billion in 2017, an 11% decrease) explains the lower overall ODA level in 2017. When excluding these, net ODA only marginally decreased (-1% between 2016 and 2017).

The DAC set up a temporary working group to reassess the rules for what in-house costs can be counted as aid. Over the past year, they have worked to “improve the consistency, comparability, and
transparency of reporting of ODA-eligible, in-donor refugee costs.” The group was billed to meet for the last time on July 10, before new rules, likely to come into effect in 2018, are announced in October. Abby Young-Powel (2017) posits that while some countries are pushing for a broader definition of what counts as ODA, a number of aid organizations are now campaigning for tighter limits. They also want greater transparency around the reporting process — OECD data currently just has one headline for “in-donor refugee costs,” with no further details of what exactly is spent and how.

**Shifts in Spending**

Abby Young-Powel further notes that some $15.4 billion in DAC countries’ ODA was spent domestically in 2016 — an amount that has nearly quintupled since 2010, when it was just 3.25 billion. For the first time, DAC donors spent more on domestic costs — about $1 billion — than on humanitarian assistance. Ten European countries spent over 15% of their ODA on domestic refugee costs in 2016, with Austria (37.7 percent) spending the most, followed by Italy (34.3%) and Germany (25.2%). Four DAC-donors — Australia, Japan, Korea and Luxembourg — did not count any refugee costs as ODA.

According to Julie Seghers, the rules on what can be classed as ODA are currently vague and unclear, and some donor countries have used this to their advantage.⁸

Germany intends to deepen its focus on Africa. During its G20 presidency, Germany spearheaded discussions on increased public and private investments through two major initiatives: the ‘Compact with Africa’, launched in 2017, and the ‘Marshall plan with Africa’, which focuses on stimulating private investments in Africa and supporting countries which implement good governance reforms. In this context, Germany has established a migration consulting centre in Lagos, Nigeria. The global program, “Programme Migration for Development” is commissioned by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation (BMZ) and is being implemented by the Centre for Migration and Development (CIM) as a joint operation.

The overarching objective of the migration program is to strengthen the development-relevant contributions of migrants in their countries of origin and improve the conditions for legal migration in selected partner countries. It handles returning migrants as well as citizens who are interested in emigrating.⁹

However, the quality and integrity of aid as a resource for poverty reduction is increasingly being challenged by CSOs. The inclusion of first year refugee costs in the donor countries has raised many questions. There is concern that ODA is being undermined by European countries that are taking advantage of rules in the OECD-DAC guidelines for development cooperation. While support for refugees is a human rights obligation in donor countries, these resources as ODA are self-serving for the donor governments.

It is also important to examine this question of aid and refugees from the perspective of the forces that are driving migration from African countries. Migration is a long-standing phenomenon. However, as
Guma el-Gamaty has noted “the issue has accelerated sharply in the past five years, and migration from mainly sub-Saharan African countries to Europe across Libya and other North African countries can be traced back to the year 2000.” According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which monitors checkpoints, some 270,000 people passed through Agadez on their way towards Libya between February and the end of September 2016.

Libya is not the only route for migration. Morocco and Tunisia are also used, though to a much less extent. Libya is sadly caught in the middle of an international migration web and a trafficking model that starts and stretches across the whole of sub-Saharan Africa to the south and beyond to Bangladesh. Migrants come from many countries such as Nigeria, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and others. Recently migrants from Bangladesh travelling through Libya have also increased in numbers. Migrants naively believe that by reaching Europe they will land jobs, money and a quality of life that they could only have dreamt of achieving back home.

Migrants who risk their lives through thousands of miles of hazardous desert routes and dangerous sea crossings on very crowded small boats are driven by poverty, lack of jobs and persecution in their countries of origin. There are recruiters inside the sub-Saharan countries of origin who make money from recruiting potential migrants. The city of Agadez in northern Niger is a famous hub used by African traffickers. However, the dreams of the majority of these people are often shattered. Europe refers to these migrants as "illegal" migrants, but seeking asylum for political or humanitarian grounds, including economic reasons, is a legal right according to international human rights conventions and laws.

Looking forward, costs of hosting refugees in Germany are expected to decrease further, bringing the ODA/GNI share to 0.52% in 2018.

3. Emerging trends in ODA allocation and displacement

Foreign aid serves a multitude of objectives. For some donor states, the allocation and type of aid is largely shaped by concerns for the development needs of recipient countries, while other states use aid rather as an instrument of foreign and commercial policy interests. Since the early 1990s, the criteria for bilateral aid allocation decisions have shifted towards some new objectives (Hjertholm & White, 2000). Czaika M. (2009) notes that one of these new goals of development policy is mitigating the root causes of the heightened migration pressure from refugees and other migrants coming from developing countries to Western industrialized countries. The prevention of refugee movements and the cessation of long-lasting refugee situations have gained priority in international politics as primary development and foreign policy objectives, although bilateral donor governments have, as yet, been rather slow in implementing these objectives (UNHCR, 2006b).

There are several emerging trends in the distribution of ODA for development initiatives that relate very directly to donor reactions to the increasing number of migrants attempting to cross over to Europe. Germany, for example, frames its development policy under an overarching narrative of “fighting the root causes of displacement.” The 2017-2021 German government coalition treaty focuses on fair trade,
Africa, gender and education, social and health systems, poverty, and climate change, but with particular attention to the Middle East and North Africa, a source of refugees coming to Europe.

Also, new aid rules allow for the inclusion of a wider set of peace and security activities. Sarah Dalrymple (2016) posits that ensuring transparency and illustrating the development impact of funding decisions will be critical to ensuring that the needs of vulnerable people are met. At the High-Level Meeting of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) held in 2016, governments agreed to new rules that allow for a wider set of peace and security activities to be counted as official development assistance (ODA). This decision was obviously taken because most migrants are from conflict riddled nations.

Sarah Dalrymple (2016) is of the opinion that there is a risk that for some donors, depending on how the wording in the communiqué for the High-Level Meeting is interpreted, these changes to aid rules may result in resources being diverted away from activities with a greater development and poverty-reduction focus in favour of those that align to national security and political priorities. The new focus on ‘preventing violent extremism’ through ODA, which aligns closely with many donor governments’ foreign policy priorities on counter-terrorism, does validate this concern. As a result, the direct impact of ODA on people facing acute poverty and insecurity would be reduced, undermining efforts to meet the ambition set out in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to “leave no one behind”

4. Impact of programmes that address the root causes of forced migration

Europe has been searching for quick fixes to deal with its huge migration issues. Unpopular governments are trying to mitigate their migration policy failures. However, these governments are not investing the time or resources required to create a permanent solution by tackling the root causes of the migration problem.

One of the root causes of the problem is the huge gap in human development attainments between sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. According to the Washington think-tank, Centre for Global Development, the flow of Africans risking everything to achieve a better life in Europe is likely to continue. The centre argues that as poor countries develop, migration rates tend to rise until GDP per person reaches $7,000 to $8,000 per year. Most African countries are far below this level of per capita income. For example, per capita income in the Gambia is about $500 per annum. For Nigeria, which is one of the highest in the region, per capita income is $2,144. The GDP per Capita, in Ghana, when adjusted by Purchasing Power Parity is equivalent to 24 percent of the world’s average. GDP per capita PPP in Ghana averaged $2,711 from 1990 until 2017, reaching an all time high of $4,227 in 2017 and a record low of $1,919 in 1990.

The first systematic quantitative assessment of the global average effect of aid on emigration is the gravity model in Berthélemy et al. (2009). They find that aid raises net emigration from the average poor country to high-income OECD countries: When aid rises by 10% of GDP this raises the average emigrant stock as a share of population by 1.5 percentage points. They also find that aid shifts the
composition of emigration toward low-skill migrants, and that the share of bilateral aid raises emigration about twice as much as aggregate aid.

One complication in interpreting these results, a complication common to many cross-country findings, is the possibility of over-controlling—that is, holding portions of the relevant causal pathway constant. The regressions used by Berthélemy et al. (2009) control for the aid recipient’s GDP per capita, population, and trade with the migrant destination country. This is a sensible empirical choice because all of these factors can affect migration independently of aid. But it has the drawback that all of these factors can likewise form part of the causal pathway from aid to migration. Thus the coefficient estimates on aid itself show the relationship between aid and migration other than any effects that aid might have via any effects on economic growth, population growth, or trade. In principle, aid could affect these other factors in ways that reduce migration, or increase it even more.

The broad finding of Berthélemy et al. has been challenged by a small, recent literature. Lanati and Thiele (2017), also in a gravity model, find no effect of bilateral aid on migration, and a negative effect of aggregate aid on migration.

In sum, the few cross-country studies testing the overall relationship between aid and migration fail to offer clear evidence that aid has substantially deterred migration on average. The only study to date published in a peer-reviewed journal finds that aid typically raises emigration.

However, the European Union, and the International Organisation on Migration (IOM) have continued to seek ways to better channel aid and other development assistance to countries of the south to minimise the impact of migration on their countries deploying the instrumentality of overseas development assistance. The case study of Edo State, Nigeria, West Africa presents perhaps what could be one way of having a positive impact on channeling ODA to deal with migration challenge.

5. Case Study Of Edo State, Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with the greatest migration crisis issues. Over 70 per cent of migrants from Nigeria are from Edo State.

The European Union (EU) Unit is responsible for the coordination of all EU supported programs/projects, including the returning of irregular migrants. The Ministry of Budget and National Planning is responsible for the administration of EU projects, as well as the monitoring of EU programs. Migration is handled under the Ministry’s Special Projects and Programs Contribution to Non-focal Areas.

A review of the situation for returning refugees to Africa confirms that the International Organization on Migration and the Federal Government hold co-responsibility for returning Nigerian refugees who are held in Libya. This has been orchestrated by the European Union, which made €100 available for every Nigerian returnee under the IOM returning program. When a refugee arrives at either the Murtala
Muhammed or Port-Harcourt Airport, he/she is to receive N41,000 which is given to them in Lagos. From available records, Nigeria’s federal government, which signed the deal, has not been providing funds for rehabilitation of returnees. The sub-national Edo State Government has been providing some cushioning funds for returned citizens to enable them to visit their relatives.

Out of deep sympathy for the plight of returnees, the Benin Monarch, His Royal Majesty, Omo N’Oba N’Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, the Chairman of traditional rulers in Edo State, bestowed a N20,000 payment for returnees from his kingdom who registered at his palace. His foundation also promised to make payments to beneficiaries for three months to help them to begin a new life.

As the repatriation of Nigerian refugees living in Libya continued, Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki approved the release of 150 hectares of land and N100million seed capital for victims of human trafficking as well as 150 returnees. The money and land were given to those who completed skills acquisition training at the Edo Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) office in Benin City, the Edo state capital. Over 2,000 Edo citizens have returned from Libya to Edo State.

Since he came into office a year and half ago Governor Godwin Obaseki, has been working to end human trafficking of females from 13 – 35 years of age to various destination in Europe. Aside the great pain and misery to these individuals and their families, these violations have placed the state in bad light, not only nationally but also internationally. The Governor had approached the palace for support. Nigeria’s National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), had pleaded with the Oba of Benin, Oba Ewuare II, to prevail on Juju priests to stop administering oaths on victims of human trafficking.

During an advocacy visit to the Benin monarch the Director-General of NAPTIP, Ms. Okah-Donli, stated that their investigation revealed that some local witch doctors have been involved in the trafficking of persons to Europe. Their research confirmed that, once a victim’s consent to be trafficked was obtained by fraud or coercion, this person would be taken to a shrine to swear to an oath of secrecy and allegiance before a local juju man. NAPPTIP’s Director General has partnered with the traditional institution in Edo, particularly the Benin Kingdom, to try to eliminate the tide of human trafficking in the state and Nigeria in general.20

Dan Owegie stated that “it was quite interesting to note that the cursing ceremony at the palace, which had in attendance, priests, priestesses, native doctors, traditional religious worshippers, Bini chiefs, dukes, village heads, market women, shrine worshippers, directors and officials of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) as well as members of the diplomatic community in Nigeria and security agencies heralded the unprecedented step taken by the Benin monarch in combating the ugly menace of human trafficking in the state.”21

Through the odionwere (clan leaders), the Oba Ewuare II placed curses on all the pastors, churches, individuals, groups, families and parents who promote, indulge, contract, participate or encourage
perpetrators in any vices associated with human trafficking. Native doctors who had been holding the
perpetrators of the heinous crimes to oaths of seccrecies were also cursed as were cultists and violators
of the order banning community development associations and others whose businesses have been
initiating the sons and daughters of the ancient kingdom into various cult groups.

For NAPTIP, this ceremony and the partnership were most welcome, as all other strategies had been
exhausted, with no success. Although many juju priests had assured the Agency that they would stop
administering oaths on the victims this practice had continued unabated.

During this period, the Edo State Governor sent an Executive Bill to the State House of Assembly to ban
all human trafficking activities in the state. The House quickly passed the Bill and the Governor has
assented. The signing ceremony whereby the Edo State Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law 2018 was
passed into law had in attendance the Ambassador of European Union to Nigeria, Ketil Karlsen, as well
as the Chief of Mission, International Organisation for Migration, Enira Krdzalic.22

The law established the Edo State Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons, which is headed by the
Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice. It provides an effective and comprehensive legal and
institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of
human trafficking and related offences in Edo State.

Since these concerted actions, several human trafficking cartels and ‘king-pins’ have collapsed locally as
well as across Europe. Only recently, a Benin City High Court convicted a Human Trafficker to several
years in prison in accordance with the provisions of the new anti-human trafficking law. The deterrence
level for human trafficking and irregular migration is high in Edo to combat the high rate of this crime.23

Providing returnees with programs on poverty reduction and empowerment by the Sub-Saharan African
governments and development partners would go a long way in reintegrating them into the society and
using their stories to deter others who would want to embark on similar lethal trips to reconsider such
plans and look inwards. These measures are fundamental to truly addressing and ending the migration
challenge. The European Union and other OECD countries interested in the migration challenge should,
therefore target the deployment of ODA such as the Assisted Voluntary return Programme as well as
providing support for policy reforms that help to curb human trafficking, disruption of traffickers’ cartels
and prevention of migration of young people to produce more success stories as recorded in Edo.

5. How integrity of ODA as a public resource can be improved and preserved in the context of
migration

Increasing domestic pressure in many donor countries to stem migration from developing countries is
putting ODA at risk of being instrumentalized for the benefit of donor countries. With migration-related
activities becoming more and more predominant in many donors’ development policies, it is critical that
the DAC strengthen its oversight and reporting tools to monitor how this translates at the level of donor
programs and projects, and to ensure that these indeed “promote the economic development and
welfare of developing countries” and do not “pursue first and foremost providers’ interest (e.g. restricting migration).”

Of great significance is how ODA’s integrity can be improved and preserved. This chapter advocates the following:

1. The purpose of ODA should be refined to explicitly focus on poverty reduction and to leaving no one behind. DAC should continue reporting on projects aiming at ending trafficking in humans, especially women and children, under existing codes 15160 and 15180 in order to ensure alignment with the text and context of SDGs 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2. They should promote proper guidance, informed by development objectives and human rights, not migration control.

2. Policymakers in rich countries are right to view foreign aid as an appropriate instrument to curb the flow of migrants, but it will be important for them to act collectively, because of the heterogeneous impacts of different types of foreign aid. For instance, ODA can help safeguard the integrity of boarders and optimize administrative processes in countries of the south.

3. In-donor refugee costs (IDRCs) should not be counted as ODA, rather they should be considered as donor countries’ domestic costs. OECD member countries should live up to their 1970 commitments of dedicating 0.7% of their GNI to ODA.

4. Rethinking EU policy on smuggling is key to ending migration crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa. The EU should deploy ODA to target economic alternatives in smuggling communities. Realistically, it’s hard to end people smuggling because the demand for it is so high, as are their passengers’ extraordinary tolerance for danger. The EU has discussed targeting Libyan smuggling vessels, and arrests smugglers when they arrive in Italy. But for logistical and legal reasons the former would be very hard to do in practice, and the latter targets only low-level pawns rather than key players. The EU has pushed to make smuggling illegal in the parts of Africa where it is rampant – such as in Niger, the door to Libya from West Africa. But smuggling continues unabated because low-paid police take substantial kick-backs from the trade, and because there are no other major sources of income for locals.

What this context suggests is that the use of ODA to improve greater economic activities in smuggling communities, which would provide local people with an alternative to the smuggling trade, might be the best long-term policy and would ultimately reduce the migration crisis.

5. Continuation of the use of ODA to support reintegration plans particularly in Voluntary Return Programmes is crucial to addressing migration crisis. Reintegration is critical in optimizing migrants’ chances of a successful and sustainable return to their home country. In 2016, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided almost 100,000 migrants with support in the form of subsistence allowances, accommodation, medical support or economic livelihood support through its Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme. Donor
governments also provide various types of reintegration support, for example, the Swedish government offers approximately €3,200 per adult (up to a maximum of €8,100 per family) in reintegration assistance. Reintegration support is critical to address the considerable challenges faced by migrants upon return to rebuild their livelihoods. Reintegration also must be seen from the perspective of the receiving communities and their absorption capacity. This is to prevent returning migrants to worse case scenarios such as contributing to social vices as was seen in the cases of some returned migrants who upon return take to armed robbery and prostitution.

1 On 25 March 1807, the abolition of Slave Trade Act entered the statute books of Britain. The Act made it illegal to engage in the slave trade throughout the British colonies.
3 The Economist, *There is Hope*, October 8, 2008.
8 Julie Seghers is OECD Policy and advocacy advisor at OXFAM.
15 https://guardian.ng/news/why-nigerias-per-capita-income-will-remain-at-2144
16 https://tradingeconomics.com/ghana/gdp-per-capita-ppp
18 In the regressions of Lanati and Thiele (2017) the coefficient on bilateral aid is similar in absolute value but opposite in sign to the coefficient on aggregate aid. Because an increase in bilateral aid also raises aggregate aid, this implies that the estimated effect of bilateral aid is indistinguishable from zero.


23. ANEEJ Report on Crime rate in Benin City, 2017

