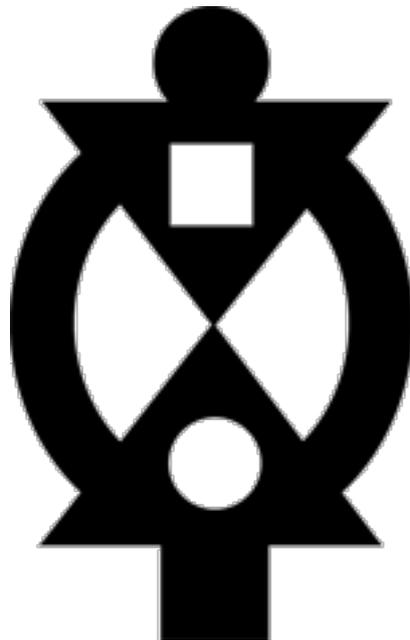


A Critical Review of the European Agenda on Migration for Third Countries and Key Considerations for Africa

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Image: Adinkra Symbol: Boa Me Na Me Mmoa Wo “Help Me Let Me Help You”

Source: ["Cloth As Metaphor"](#) by G.F. Kojo Arthur

A Critical Review of the European Agenda on Migration for Third Countries and Key Considerations for Africa

A brief synopsis for the agenda:

With increasing numbers of refugees overwhelming European borders, the EU decided to put in place a strategy to ensure that lives are saved, rates of return to countries of origin are increased and migrants and refugees stay close to home and avoid taking dangerous journeys. Key targets to be achieved in this strategy include **working with partners to improve the legislative and institutional framework for migration, assistance in capacity building on border and migration management, encouragement for voluntary return and support for reintegration and stemming of irregular flows while offering legal migration channels.**

Key to the success of this strategy and realisation of the agenda is third countries - who will receive the financial, logistical and technical support to manage the refugee flows and implement the activities to realise the targets and objectives. A total EUR 1.88bn has been dedicated through the EU Trust Fund for Africa with EUR 750m already pegged to projects aimed at creating jobs, and resilience in the horn of Africa. Turkey's Facility for Refugees has EUR 3 billion dedicated towards immediate and structural support to stem the flow of refugees for the FY 2016/2017.

The above therefore demonstrates a deliberate attempt to address the refugee crisis albeit in the interest of the EU - as rightly so. Thus, the focus and need to consider the implications for African nations is paramount especially in regard to harmonising positions, recognising the role of governments in stabilising the situation and ensuring that the efforts are long term and not band aid. Crucial to the achievement of this equilibrium is discourse on the contributing factors that have exacerbated the conflict and drivers of the migration crisis thus the need to examine these factors and framing the actions to alleviate the same.

A Historical Perspective

The narratives and the framing of the crisis have been narrowed to two issues:

1. EU is being "swarmed" by terrorists
2. EU is being overtaken by economic migrants

For over 200 years, the international relations and global economy arena has been dominated by the Global North - to which the EU may be characterised to belong - at what some observers deem the exclusion or exploitation of the Global South including but not limited to Africa and parts of the Middle East. This dynamic has defined engagement and collaborations, the tone, mode and roles in engagement on the global arena. For instance, Africa stood with and fought all World Wars of Europe while it had no reason to apart from global mandates or calls to engage in global concerns¹. The debates and schools of thought on the cost, significance or other such need for Africa's engagement are varied. However the rebuilding of the affected countries did not include Africa and the Middle East – at least not on the scale Europe was re-built. That coupled with political interference, poor trade agreements, and master-servant relationship with Africa and the Middle East has put these parts of the world behind time in terms of their

¹ See: http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/colonial_military_participation_in_europe_africa

economic and political development. However, as will be discussed subsequently, when global crises hit or emerge, no region is spared the emergency, efforts and responsibility to help solve the crisis. For instance, the recent Ebola crisis saw global partnerships and efforts emerge to successfully manage the situation, the case was the same for the bird flu epidemics and many other such events, to which various partners must address their attention, and resources. Thus, the recent refugee crisis is no exception to global response mechanisms and the EU's framework and agenda on migration is another example of multi-pronged efforts to deal with the refugee crisis - both within and outside the EU.

This paper will address the EU's proposition to the European Commission (EC), European Parliament and the European Council and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to establish a **New Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration**². The focus will be on the case of West Africa and how the region (ECOWAS³) and how its Diaspora can work effectively in proposing and informing a transformational perspective to the current proposal.

The EU employment market is at a level that it requires more technical and specialised skills, while there is a gap in the labour market, the majority immigrants seeking to come into the EU for economic reasons do not have such skill to fill the needs of the current job market⁴. Of course the historical jobs of immigrants (cleaning, low income jobs, etc.) are in abundance but the new type of migrants do not want and are sometimes over qualified for such jobs. The history on jobs and what jobs migrants are willing to do has changed as well. Thus for many policy makers, the problem is not the arrival of migrants, but rather the inability of receiving countries to integrate the migrants and thus making them economically independent.

Positive Transformation and Solidarity

Finding solutions to the current migration challenge that faces Europe requires an honest round conversation about the place of history. So far, the framework speaks a one-sided truth: the issues and solutions benefitting of the EU, the roles and resources allocated to partners - "third countries" but indicates little on the long term dividends and sustainability of these immediate actions.

The Partnership Framework the EU seeks with third countries is to stop, integrate and provide more aid at the ports of departure outside the EU than within the EU. To this end, over €2 billion has been set aside to "engage" African governments to prevent out-migration. It is assumed this "engaging" part of the policy will be on bilateral issues with specificity to 16 priority countries⁵.

² Henceforth referred to as "the framework" "Agenda"

³ Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is the regional grouping of the West African region.

⁴ What next for skills in the European labor market? See: www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9059_en.pdf

⁵ Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

For the framework to be successful, the policy proposals must be transformative - “growing the pie” where all actors are equal irrespective of who is footing the bill. Recognising that those that can not pay the bills of the policy will be critical in the success or failure of the Framework.

We suggest therefore for the EU to rewrite this policy by including out-migration countries (their governments) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs); especially the local, national and grassroots organisations. It is important for these sets of partners because they are the organisations most in contact with the potential migrants and often times with the on-ground logistical agility to deliver these solutions.

The Framework must seek to work in **solidarity with** not talking down to partners. In the past, policies have been drafted in Brussels and EC country and Regional programmes through bi and multilateral means have been forced on target countries. To work in “solidarity with” means understanding the unique contexts, frames, narratives and socio-cultural circumstances of the partner third countries; affirming and acknowledging how they impinge on the projects, programmes or policies without necessarily wanting to remove them.

It is imperative for the Framework to define its “solidarity with” policy in how it will work with the 16 priority countries.

Whereas technical support and capacity building is mentioned and resourced under the framework, a crucial consideration for partners is in integrating such effort within the wider national and regional policy frameworks. This will produce policy coherence, provide a bedrock for sustainable actions and ensure that the agreements are not only reflected within the partnership agreements framed under this agenda, but actually inform mainstream policies in target countries especially in skilling or creating conditions to disincentivise the illegal and precarious trips to Europe by migrants as has been observed.

What Incentives?

One key factor to consider is that the solutions are varied, whereas resourcing migration management policies and actions is vital, there also needs to be consideration of incentives given to people that either facilitate or report on illegal migration both in sending and receiving countries? It is clear that destroying boats of smugglers is easy but has not stopped the flow of migrants to the shores of Europe via alternate and equally precarious means. It is pertinent therefore for the framework to reflect innovative ways to identify and disincentivise people that are involved in the smuggling supply chain process both within and outside the EU. Since the process thrives on an underground, unregulated and thus vulnerability compounding operating environment, it would be prudent to put mechanisms in place to detract or encourage enabling parties to abandon the idea and “trade”. Such incentives include civil prosecution terms for individuals within the EU that help coordinate transport to migrants or outright deportation for traffickers while informants could be rewarded with cash or other such incentives.

With regard to the “return and blockade” of migrants and prospective migrants, there is the need to negotiate and consider the state of the countries where the “blockage” is happening in respect of human rights (in general), rights of women and children, general security and specific to recruitment by terror groups such as ISIS and Boko Haram. Efforts to strengthen systemic and institutional capacities cognisant of this reality will enable relevant institutions to create the environment for citizens to thrive and leave. Thus the focus expands towards considering

wider and societal issues than the currently manifesting symptomatic movements culminating into the crisis.

How are local governments especially being resourced in the so-called third countries in managing care, resettlement, health and monitoring?

Fostering Resilience and Self-Reliance

The agenda seeks to foster resilience and self-reliance and has set aside nearly €2 billion under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa of which €750 million is earmarked for “job creation”, for the ‘Sahel/Lake Chad area and the horn of Africa. However, the question remains: “what jobs is Africa creating?” Donor funds to “create jobs” have either missed the targeted beneficiaries or have been invested in programmes that will not grow to provide jobs beyond the immediate beneficiary. For instance, a large chunk of the money divested through the EIB will go to big existing companies who will be adding little or no jobs relative to the support they will get from the EU and if the funds do get to the “vulnerable”, the businesses they create is also not able to employ people. To achieve resilience and self-reliance, the EU, EC and EIB need to focus on Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with the view to growing them to employ large numbers and moving from the perspective of funding governments rather than businesses.

The annual Official Development Assistance (ODA) of Eur 4.4billion⁶ per year going to the 16 priority countries (mostly governments) raises wider questions around aid efficacy and for what use it has been. For instance, one could think that the average yearly support of two hundred seventy-five million euro going to Ghana (a member of the priority countries) could build 3 small factories per year or completely eliminate schools-under-trees in remote parts of Ghana in 5 years. This same logic could help deliver solutions to the causal mechanisms of the refugee crisis in the long-term by creating the skill and incentives that maybe deterrent to the current crises.

To further amplify the returns on the investments in SMEs, the EU needs to open more, its market to products coming from the regions it will be investing its relief and other emergency funds. This review of rules and regulations must happen before the money is disbursed to ensure that products are not produced only to wait for EU trade waivers. The EU must guarantee in its policymaking free trade, imports from third and priority countries.

On its part, the African regional blocs, including the African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Commission (SADC) among others have a responsibility to fast-track the opening of borders and its markets to each other; towards improving intra and inter regional trade.

Finally, clear laid out plans must be included in SME’s grants on how they intend to fund their social corporate responsibility (CSR) programme to help their communities.

Building Trust and Partnership

The Agenda as set forth by the EU can only be successfully delivered based on **true partnership and trust**. True partnership is about respect of differences, of capabilities and equity. Trust is inherent in partnership and the processes that build it.

⁶ Average receipts per each of the 16 priority countries.

Like Ebola⁷, the migration crisis needs trustworthy partners and for many players, working with aid money is always a double sword situation, a poisoned chalice that most partners are wary of and seek rather to engage at a distance.

The EU needs to review and revise how it works with governments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) especially those in the 16 priority countries. The Agenda must seek out local, grassroots organisations, empower them, build capacity in order to achieve sustained impact and reach.

*Ian Smillie in the book 'Patronage or Partnership' states that, "supporting the work and strengthening the capacity of local organizations can not only be instrumental in dealing with the situation at hand, but also increase resilience to future humanitarian emergencies. Sending in international emergency teams can help, but is not enough. It is important for the international response to move from a culture of patronage to a culture of partnership."*⁸

Kennedy and Nisbett in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation* (Bull World Health Organ 2015;93:2) state: "Even in the best of situations, most of the world's resource-limited communities tend to be wary of government officials and other outsiders"⁹. The value of local community and grassroots organisations cannot be overemphasised.

Regional organisations such as the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) must begin to work in galvanising West Africa's businesses and wealthy individuals to begin contributing, financially to the problems that plague the region. OSIWA must begin to find ways of making philanthropy more meaningful for the mega rich in West Africa.

OSIWA as a big donor in the region should consider implementing a CSR scorecard for big profit making organisations.

Conclusion

As the world gets more globalised and open (a fact accelerated by social media), we increasingly become each other's responsibility and are forced more to work together; share the gains and losses of our struggles as both individuals and nations. It is in this spirit of collective responsibility that the EU and its partners in the North must seek to work with its partners in the South; by beginning to acknowledge their historical ties and how that binds them rather than separates them.

The migration crises that are facing the world is NOT only a EU problem, it is a global problem. The solutions proffered must therefore be global and must seek input from as many partners as possible. In particular to third countries in West Africa and Africa in general, the policies developed must be "bottom-up" instead of "top down". The policies must take into

⁷ The Ebola crisis took longer to contain because of trust issues around government and international aid organisations and local communities. See: <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2014/10/making-tragedy-inequality-mistrust-environmental-change-drive-ebola-epidemic/> and <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/8/ebola-virus-liberiasierraleonepolitics.html>

⁸ See <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2014/10/ebola-virus-health-lessons/>

⁹ <http://dx.doi.org/10.2471/BLT.14.151068>

consideration the huge knowledge and expertise of the local grassroots organisations and their networks. It is important for the current framework (proposed or otherwise) to focus on more on CSO's instead of governments.

Truth speaking, honesty, partnership and solidarity must be the guiding principles of the EU's framework on migration with third countries. A system of "sticks and carrots" will only leave everyone broken, frustrated and antagonistic. The resultant repercussions will only further endanger current and future migrants.

Eventually, there must be ways to incentivise people - reward local communities and organisations that work to dismantle smuggling organisations or work to discourage illegal and dangerous immigration while punishing those that work to encourage the practice.

Fostering resilience and self-reliance must but built around trade and not aid. The EU must work with third countries to remove trade barriers that prevent or make productions from third countries in getting into the EU. Business development and business support services including loans and grants must target SME's and not governments. EU funds that support SMEs must have clear guidelines on how such beneficiary SMEs will use their CSR programmes to address poverty in the communities they work in.

Eventually, saving the world is not the responsibility of only the strong and powerful, but the collective effort of all and by all; everyone that can and should be contributing must be encouraged. Humanity is a crucial and shared attribute and all persons and entities are equal partners because of it.