

Expert Group Meeting on Youth and Informal Labour Migration in West Africa Urban Corridors

The expert group meeting was held virtually on February 2, 2022. Participants at the expert meeting include academics from Sociology, Linguistics, Political Science, Migrations studies, Literature, French and Integration Studies from Universities in Nigeria, Benin Republic and Ghana and Ouagadougou.

Five major questions were explored during the expert meeting:

1. Why do people move from their country of origin to another destination?

There are reasons were identified as the cause for frequent migration withing West Africa. People move from one country to another in search of jobs and to be able to sell their skill. Other reasons include family and marital, economic, medical, and finding a way around disaster

2. What categories of people mostly embark on migration along the West African urban corridors?

There are different categories of people that move. Most of them are between the ages of 14 and of 35. This depends on the type of work they do, for instance, farmers that move between Ghana and Burkina Faso are younger, some are around 15 or less, but not more than 20.

3. In the course of this movement, what moves, and what aspect of culture do people move with?

Everything moves, living style, thought pattern, food, entertainment, dressing, religion medicine and health care (mainly herbal medicine). Both material and non-material culture move in and out of West African urban cities. The movement has been intensified in the age of social media. Social media has a way of intensifying such movement like what doctors alone say in terms of being current with events, cultures, slang, ideas, etc.

Transportation is mainly though road transport. The two types of road transportation are buses and motorbikes

4. What is the gender dimension to the category of movement that has been identified?

In terms of the gender of the migrants, the male gender tends to move more than the female. Seven out of ten people that move from one country to another within West Africa are male. Most of the migrants that move are farmers and artisans, and those that engage in these activities are men. So, the gender imbalance is obvious because there are more women than men in the villages and they cannot do many things on their own. Skillful men are the population of those that move the most.

5. Is there a preferred space for migrants in the identified West African urban cities? Or do they just move into any available space?

Migrants spread throughout the country. But there are established enclaves for identified migrants from particular West African urban cities. For instance, everyone knows that Missebo in Cotonou, Benon Republic is mostly occupied by Nigerians. There is also a place call Zongo, where there is a mix of people from other West African countries.

In Ouagadougou, migrants stay together due to factors including linguistic and profession. For instance, Nigerians live together in an enclave, but Ghanainas and Ivorians can be found everywhere, and this is because they both share borders with Burkina Faso. There are also places where Nigerians and Ghanaians stay together mainly because of linguistic comprehension.