

**PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS OF NIGERIAN MIGRANTS: THE CASE OF MIGRANTS' REMITTANCES ENTERPRISE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

*Human rights are all rights and privileges inherent on man by virtue of existence. A few inalienable human rights are selected, protected, safeguarded and enshrined in the constitution. The objective of the paper is to explore the human rights of Nigerian migrants and analyze the contributions of migrants' remittances to income-generation in Nigeria. Findings show that Nigerians abroad remit billions of US dollars yearly for consumption, investment and enterprise growth. In 2006, the sum of USD 5.4 billion was remitted from abroad to Nigeria. From 2007 to 2009, the sums of USD 9.2 billion, USD 9.9 billion and USD 9.6 billion respectively were remitted to Nigeria by Nigerian migrants abroad. In 2010, remittance-recipients in Nigeria received an estimated sum of USD 9.975 billion. Migrants' remittance enterprise plays a role in investment and enterprise growth, and has had significant effect on Nigeria's economy. Migrants need adequate information to afford them better opportunities both at home and in their host countries and they need proper orientation on issues relating to migration. Governments support and protection are necessary for Nigerian migrants in order to protect and respect their human rights, and to ensure that they are not exploited; and that their earnings in the host countries are safeguarded. The paper concluded that international migration, therefore, has enormous implications for growth and welfare development in both the origin and destination countries.*

**Key words:** *Human rights, Nigeria migrants, remittances, sustainable development.*

## INTRODUCTION

Remittances are the central and most tangible link between migration and development (Ratha, 2007). According to data from the World Bank (2011), after foreign direct investment (EDI), remittances are the Africa's largest source of foreign inflows. Migrate remittances contributed to international resources, help finance imports, and improve the current account of recipient countries ( Ratha, Mohapatra, Ozden, Plaza, Shaw and Shimeles, 2011). They are associated with reductions in poverty, improved health and education outcomes and increased business investments. New data on migration from household surveys conducted in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal indicate that migrants tend to be young adults between the ages of 15 and 40. Migration from these countries resulted in significant occupational changes, in particular a transition from farming to trading, semi-skilled employment and professional jobs (Ratha et at, 2011). Migrants remittances can be fully realized in during the periods of peace, good governance and civil order. This is the aim of the United Nations.

The maintenance of peace, and the prevention of armed conflict are the vital concerns of the United Nations (UN). Respect for human rights at all times and in all places is a fundamental principle of the UN. Human rights of Nigerians in armed conflict regions of the world are adversely being effected. In recent times, countries such as Egypt, Libya, Cote I'voire, Tunisia, Syria just to mention a few have joined war-torn countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait in a devastating armed conflicts affecting the lives and properties of the migrants.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Although, ideas of rights and liberty have existed for much of human history, it is unclear to what degree such concepts can be described as "human rights" in the modern sense. The concept of rights certainly existed in pre-modern cultures; old philosophers such as Aristotle wrote extensively on the rights of citizens to property and participation in public affairs (ICRC, 2004). The United Nations has an international mandate to "achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, gender, language, or religion" (UNO, 1948). One of the UN Treaty Bodies is the International Council for the Rights of all Migrant Workers (ICRMW).

The UN has set up a number of treaty-based bodies to monitor and study human rights, to be supported by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties. One of such committees is the Committee on Migrant Workers, which was established in 2004 and monitors the International Council for the Rights of all Migrant Workers (ICRC, 2004).

Remittances mainly consist of the money and goods individuals migrants transfer to their families, relatives or friends in the country of origin. Bodies consumption, recipients spend them for health related expenses, education housing, enterprise development, investments and savings. Remittances or transfer payments are a part of microfinance. Other components of microfinance are microcredit, microsavings and micro insurance.

The objective of the paper is to explore the human rights of Nigerian migrants' and analyze the contributions of migrants' remittances to income – generation in Nigeria.

#### **SIZE AND IMPORTANCE OF MIGRANT REMITTANCES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

Remittances have become one of the most significant sources of foreign exchange for African countries. According to the World Bank (2006), officially recorded remittances to developing countries rose to an estimated USD 167 billion in 2005. Due to the flows through informal channels, the true amount might be more than 50 percent higher. According to estimations by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD, (2007), formal remittance to developing countries amounted to USD 300 billion in 2006, three times as much as official development assistance in the same year (Schuttler, 2008).

In addition to these remittances sent by individual migrants, money and goods are also transferred to countries of origin on a collective basis (Goldring, 2003). Informal organized groups and registered associations of migrants pool funds on their own initiative or through a plan set up by government or by the group for a great variety of activities. Migrants collectively donate for humanitarian causes or as a investment in public infrastructure. Migrants' organizations scope, form and size are varied (Moya, 2005) and there are home town associations (HTAs) with members from the same community in the country of origin, religious associations, sport clubs, professional associations, investment groups and political groups. However, only a minority of all

migrant organizations aims at promoting development in countries of origin (deHaas, 2006). Funds sent on a collective basis thus only account for a small fraction of total remittances. Nevertheless, they represent a high quality resource because of their economic, social and political dimension, as well as the transfer of know-how that accompanies them (World Bank, 2002).

## **SOCIAL COSTS AND BENEFITS OF MIGRATION**

Migration in Africa has important effects on social issues that cannot be evaluated purely in economic terms (Ratha et al., 2011). These costs and benefits include their effects on gender roles and family cohesion,

### **Changes in Gender Role**

Migration shapes values and attitudes toward gender roles within the household (Ghosh, 2009). When women move, their role as caregiver changes, as a result, men are more likely to engage in traditionally female activities such as caring for children and the elderly (King and Vullnetari, 2006). When men emigrate, women are empowered to take a more prominent part in community decision making controlling their own income, and expanding their role in the domestic sphere (DeshingKar and Grimm, 2005).

Recent migration flows have included a larger number of women who are migrating independently rather than following fathers or husbands (ECA, 2006). Migration provides women with new economic opportunities and sometimes escapes from a failed marriage, particularly, in societies in which divorce is not an option. In traditional societies, where divorce is highly uncommon or not possible, migration has been associated with a higher probability of family breakdown. Although, protracted separation can take its toll on family cohesion, Lucas (2005) points out that men and women whose marriages were unstable to begin with are more likely to migrate. Gender differences are apparent in other ways. Manuh (2001) finds that Ghanaian men in Canada are more likely than Ghanaian women to return home. For men, the attractiveness lies in the opportunity to go back to a patriarchal society, women do not relish losing the independence they have experienced in Canada.

### **Effects on Family Cohesion**

Migration may spread attitudes and behaviours from democratic host countries to less- democratic spending countries through returning migrants, cross-border communications from Diaspora members, and information networks in migrant –spending communities (Perez- Armendariz and

Crow, 2010). Although, the decision to migrate may be made in the interest of household welfare, separation from one's immediate family often entails considerable emotional cost and can erode family structures and relationships (D'Emilio, Cordero, Bainvel, Skoog, Comini, Gough, Dias, Saab and Kilbane, 2007). A breakdown of family ties because of emigration can impose significant emotional costs on children (Mckenzie and Rapoport, 2006). To some extent e-mail, text messages, and affordable telephone calls may allow transnational families to thrive even at a distance (UNDP, 2009). Recent evidence from Mozambique suggests that migration may also strengthen social networks by enabling households that receive remittances to participate more actively in their communities (Gallego and Mendola, 2010).

Table 1: Remittance Flows to Selected African Countries, 2006-2010.  
(\$ million, except where otherwise indicated)

Region/country	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010e	2008-09	Growth	Share
							(Percent)	of GDP
							2009-10e	(percent)
Nigeria	5,435	9,221	9,980	9,585	9,975	-4.0	4.1	5.5
Sudan	1,179	1,769	3,100	2,993	3,178	-3.5	6.2	5.5
Kenya	1,128	1,588	1,692	1,686	1,758	-0.3	4.3	5.7
Senegal	925	1,192	1,288	1,191	1,164	7.5	2.3	9.3
South Africa	734	834	823	902	1,008	9.7	11.8	0.3
Uganda	411	452	724	694	773	-4.1	11.3	4.3
Lesotho	361	451	439	450	525	2.6	16.7	28.5
Mali	212	344	431	405	385	-6.1	-4.8	4.5
Ethiopia	172	385	387	353	387	-8.8	9.7	1.2
Togo	232	284	337	307	302	-9.0	-1.7	10.7
Egypt, Arab Rep	5,330	7,656	8,694	7,150	7,681	-17.8	7.4	3.8
Morocco	5,451	6,730	6,895	6,271	6,447	-9.0	2.8	6.9
Algeria	1,610	2,120	2,202	2,059	2,031	-6.5	-1.3	1.5
Tunisia	1,510	1,716	1,977	1,966	1,960	-0.05	-0.3	5.0
Djibouti	28	29	30	28	28	-6.8	-0.3	2.7
Libya	16	16	16	14	16	-10.1	9.3	0.0

Source: World Bank (2011), migration and remittances unit, based on IMF balance of payment statistics.

Note: e = estimated

Table 1 shows selected African countries remittance data from 2006 to 2010. In 2006, the sum of USD 5.435 billion was remitted from abroad to Nigeria. From 2007 to 2009, the sum of USD 9.221, USD 9.980, and USD 9.585 respectively were remitted to Nigeria by Nigerian migrants abroad. In 2010, an estimated amount of USD 9.975 was also remitted to Nigeria from abroad. Migration plays a role in microfinance development. Microfinance, the provision of financial services to the poor, has emerged as stimulating sustainable development through local enterprises: micro, small and medium sizes. Migrants remittances also play a major role in consumption expenditures of households. An asset index composed of land, quality of housing, access to electricity, and household amenities was used as a proxy for consumption expenditure (Filmer and Pritchette, 2001). The evidence on whether skilled or unskilled migrants send larger remittances is mixed. Some studies suggest that skilled migrants remit less because they are more likely to settle down in their host countries and eventually bring their families ( Niimi and Ozden, 2006; Faini, 2007). Other studies, based on micro data, find a positive relationship between education and amounts remitted (Clemens, 2009).

Table 2: Formal and Informal Remittance Channels, Nigeria, 2009  
(percent of recipients)

Country/channel	Remittances from outside Africa	Remittances from with Africa	Domestic remittances
<b>NIGERIA</b>			
Money transfer operator	57,1	35,2	6.3
Friend or relative	12.8	15.4	21.2
Direct transfer to bank account	11.8	12.1	35.0
Bank as paying agent for money transfer operator	10.5	17.6	2.6
Brought home by migrant during visit	5.4	13.2	27.7
Informal individual agent	2.5	4.4	4.1
Postal money order	0	1.1	0
Foreign exchange bureau	0	1.1	0.1
Credit union	0	0	0.2
Travel agency	0	0	0.4
Courier, bus, or other transport	0	0	0.5
Mobile phone or telecom service provider	0	0	0.4
Prepaid card or ATM card	0	0	0.2
Internet money transfer	0	0	0.1

Other	0	0	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Ratha et al., (2011) based on results of household surveys conducted in Nigeria in 2009.

Table 2 shows remittance channels in Nigeria. As a result of the high cost and limited reach of formal channels, as well as the seasonal character of migration, informal channels play a large role in remittance transfers (Ratha et al., 2011). Remittances by hand during visits to hometowns accounted for 13.2%, within Africa. Remittances from outside Africa through money transfer operator have the highest record of 57.1%. Informal channels were more prevalent for domestic money transfer, that is, remittances within Nigeria, which include travel agency: courier or other transport 0.5%; mobile phone 0.4%, internet money transfer 0.1%; prepaid card 0.2% and friend or relative 21.2%. In Nigeria, banks account for 37.6% of the volume of remittances and money transfer companies 6.3%.

Table 3: Use of Remittances by Recipient Households in Nigeria, by Source of Remittances (Percent of total remittances)

Use	NIGERIA		
	Outside Africa	Within Africa	Domestic
Food	10.1	20.1	1.0
Education	22.1	19.6	4.5
Health	5.1	12.0	10.6
clothing	-	-	-
Rent (house, land)	4.4	4.9	0.8
Cars/trucks	0.0	0.0	0.5
Marriage / funeral	0.4	1.0	0.7
Construction of new house	5.8	0.0	0.1
Rebuilding of house	4.7	3.2	7.0
Purchase of land	24.8	16.6	18.2
Improvement of farm	-	-	-
Business	217	20.1	11.1
Investment	-	-	-
Other	0.8	2.6	3.5

Source: Ratha et al (2011), calculations based on results of household surveys conducted in Burkina

Faso, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda.

Note: - Negligible or missing

Table 3 indicates that remittances are often spent on essential consumption, investment in physical and human capital, and expenditures that improve welfare and productivity, including health, education and information and communication technology. Expenditures on consumption (C) and investment (I) help to accelerate enterprise growth and development, and usually impact positively on national income accounting ( $Y=C+I$ ), and economic development of Nigeria. Taylor and Wyatt (1996) argue that the shadow value of remittances for overcoming risk and liquidity constraints is particularly important to households in the low to middle income range, which otherwise tend to be credit constrained. In 1997, Osili (2004) conducted a survey of 112 Nigerian migrant households in Chicago and a matched sample of 61 families in Nigeria. She found that a third of remittances were spent on housing investment the proceeding year and that migrants' housing investment was responsive to change in macroeconomic conditions such as inflation, the real exchange rate and political stability. In rural Pakistan, international remittances raise the propensity to invest in agricultural land (Adams, 1998). Remittance-receiving households that benefited from an exchange rate shock spent more hours in self-employment and were more likely to start relatively capital-intensive entrepreneurial enterprises in the Philippines (Yang, 2008). Some recent studies (for example, Ashraf, Aycinena, Martinez and Yang, 2010) find that giving migrants more control over the uses of remittances can increase savings rates among both migrants and remittance recipients. Abuse of human rights of the Nigerian migrants can exacerbate the inability of migrants to save and remit funds to Nigeria. Also, incessant and prolonged armed conflicts in countries with political instability can reduce the level of remittances, thereby affecting negatively the volume and growth of enterprises in Nigeria.

Remittances may increase expenditure on education by helping finance schooling and reducing the need for child labour. Evidence from household surveys in the table above shows that education was the second-highest (22.1%) use of remittances from outside Africa. The data shows that remittance-recipients in Nigeria spent more money on food, rather than committing the fund on improvement of farms.

## CONCLUSION

In the past, migration was seen as reflecting the failure of development. However, there is now a growing recognition that migration, both domestic and international, and the resulting remittances, can offer an important route out of poverty and exacerbate enterprise growth and development for many people in developing countries. In Nigeria, remittances of migrants can



represent an important source of finance for small business development. The continual inflows of remittances can sustain business and economic development of Nigeria. Sustainability is a concept of inter-generational equity- the principle of equity between people alive today and future generation and intra-generational equity implying that the production and consumption in one community should not undermine the ecological, social and economic basis of other communities to maintain or improve their own quality of life. Therefore, sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Enterprise growth and development arising from the Nigerian migrants' remittances are also improving on sustainable rates. For sustainable development to evolve, there must be a mechanism and capacity not only to mobilize fund but also to mobilize savings. Saving is a result of income less consumption. Hence, if consumption is reduced, savings will be increased. Therefore, saving mobilization and internal financing are paramount to the success of sustainable development.

Remittances are often the only relationship that many poor people have with the formal financial system, and if remittances are received through banks or other financial intermediaries (such as microfinance institutions or saving cooperatives, there is a high likelihood that some part of the remittances will be saved (Gupta, Pattillo and Wagh, 2009). Respect for human rights and for fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, gender, language and religion as enunciated in the 1948 charter of the United Nations Organization will contribute to increase in Nigerian migrants' savings and remittances. Governments support and protection are necessary for Nigeria migrants in order to protect and respect their human rights, and to ensure that they are not exploited; and that their earning in the host countries are safeguarded. International migration therefore, has enormous implications for growth and welfare development in both origin and destination countries.

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