HUMAN SMUGGLING OF AFRICANS ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SENDING COUNTRIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF VICTIMS

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Abstract

This paper examines the implications of human smuggling of people of African descent across the Mediterranean from their countries of origin and human rights of the smuggled. Distinguishing human smuggling from human trafficking, the paper traces the evolutionary trend and motivating factors of human smuggling to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonial epoch and post-colonial socio-economic, political and security factors. The paper went further to discuss the transit routes and means of human smuggling to Europe, particularly through the North African countries, as well as the harrowing risks and hazards faced by the smuggled migrants while on transit, which include drowning, tragic death, interception, accidents, and other casualties. The paper critically discussed the human right implications of the smuggled migrants in host countries as well as the social and economic implications of this to both the receiving and sending states. The paper concludes that efforts should be geared up by African governments to curb the growing unemployment, socio-political crises situations that aggravate human smuggling through effective and functional self-reliant poverty reduction strategies and good governance.

Keywords: Human Smuggling, Human Trafficking, Human Right and Migration

Introduction

Migration is a common feature in human society. Throughout history, people have moved, or have been force to move across borders and the trend continues today. According to United Nations (UN) statistics, 175 million people; 3 percent of the world’s population, live outside their native land (Jama and Cruz, 2005:1). In recent decades there has been increased global mobility of people, facilitated by improvements in transportation and communication technologies. The widening gap between the world’s haves and have “nots” is accelerating the flight of people escaping from comparatively poor working conditions to the industrialized nations of Western Europe and North America. And whereas in the underdeveloped or third world nations, migration has been seen as total abandonment of one’s citizenship to attain better living in the developed European or American countries. While in recent times, liberalization has been the hallmark of globalization in the areas of trade and finance; migration policies have not seen similar progressive policy.
In response to an ever-increasing influx of migrants from the developing world, most industrialized nations have imposed restrictive immigration laws over the past two decades. But restrictions on visas and tighter border controls have not halted the flow of migrants. They have simply driven the movement underground. Despite the fact that developed nations have beefed up their border defenses, there continues to be a steady demand for cheap foreign labour in most industrialized countries, especially in the areas of manufacturing, agriculture, construction and domestic work. Human smuggling is now a thriving multi-billion dollar industry, worth $10-15 billion annually going by the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, second only to drugs smuggling in size and sophistication (Obiukwu and Abaneme, 2015).

Over recent years, there has been growing concern in European countries with irregular migration and other supposedly related-transnational challenges from across the Mediterranean, which has come to be seen both as security risk as well as a humanitarian challenge. In response, European countries have been stepping up their efforts to police their Mediterranean borders. Thus, smuggling and the various means by which people are smuggled, the conditions that necessitate it as well as the condition of the smuggled African migrants at the transit route, and at the countries of destination has also come to be seen as a serious humanitarian challenge. The effects are manifest in their health conditions and the ever-rising death toll of would-be immigrants seeking to reach Europe by land and sea. Therefore, this paper examines the human smuggling issues structured into six thematic sections. Section one after this introduction deals with the conceptual clarification of human smuggling. Section two examines the evolutionary trends of causes of human smuggling. Section three attempts a consummated discourse on transit routes and means of human smuggling of African citizens to Europe. Section four examines the risks and hazards on victims on transit. Section five deals with human rights/socio-economic conditions of the smuggled in host and receiving countries. Finally, section six concludes by providing the critical implications for the sending African countries and the way forward. The paper adopted, descriptive and analytic method of data analysis as its methodology, likewise secondary sources of data collections like official documents of various research institutions, textbooks, journal articles, documentaries, media reports etc as source of data.

**Conceptual Clarification**

For a proper understanding of the term smuggling the distinction between smuggling and trafficking need to be made. Many times both have been used interchangeably without a clear distinction. While it is acknowledged that the distinction between the two concepts differs in theory, particularly in their human rights implications, a distinction is important to maintain. According to Kuti-Olaniyi (2004:65), smuggling of migrants usually relates to the facilitated illegal entry into a state in a voluntary capacity through the paid services of a smuggler. On the other hand, trafficking generally denotes the coercion or forced movement of persons for the purpose of exploitation, with or without their consent, in order words, in the case of trafficking, the trafficked person is a victim, whereas the smuggled is regarded as a client in the case of smuggling. In addition, whereas, smuggling is considered to be a crime against states, trafficking is seen as a crime against a person and the state. In smuggling the person(s) involved sought and contracted the help of the smuggler to help him/her gain entrance into the desired country. It is done with the person’s conscious and deliberate approval.

The importance of the above distinction is embedded in the implications for the human rights of victims or clients of the perpetrators of these activities. For instance, it is argued that trafficking is an issue of migration with human rights implications as it involves protection of individuals, whereas smuggling is an issue of crime and border control as it encompasses protection of states. Hence, unlike trafficking, smuggling generally has not been considered as a human rights issue. While such recognition of smugglers of the rights of victims of trafficking is welcome among human rights activist, however it must be noted that smugglers often deceive individuals who have paid for their services. They often create a situation whereby those they have smuggled may be further victimized, either directly or through their relatives in the country of origin. This, therefore according to Kuti-Olaniyi (2000) calls for equal concerns for victims of smugglers.

Thus, while victims of trafficking are more likely to benefit from treatments with emphasis on the protection of their human rights, victims of smuggling on the other hand, may not be endowed with such treatments. Rather, treatments such as immediate arrest, detention, prosecution and deportation can be expected for smuggled persons. Be it as it may, both are illegal act of migration which contravene international and national laws but fuelled either by socio-economic and security situations of the victims countries or presumed gains in the untended countries of migration. In smuggling there is a perpetrator and victim(s) only that victim submitted themselves due to perceived or told advantage of crossing into another
country. In some situation they also pay for such activities which they are victims to. Victims of trafficking have little or no knowledge of their destination, fate and therefore contribute nothing more or less in the process.

Evolutionary Trends/Causes of Human Smuggling

The biggest number of mass African migration to the United States (US), Latin America, and elsewhere in Europe is slavery. According to Paul Zeleza, a professor of History and African Studies at the University of Illinois, after its (slave trade) abolition there had been relatively very small number of Africans migrating and settling in America. Even in terms of economic immigration, a term which many westerners associate with Africans in their countries, Africa has its own share too. Thus, going by Zeleza’s comprehensive research, between 1965 and 1990, there were more migrants going into Africa from all parts of the world, including those from Europe, than any other region in the world. Africa, thus, increased its share of international migrants from 10.6% to 13.1% in this period. According to Zeleza, by 1995, African countries were only second to European countries in the numbers of economically active migrants they hosted, but that was excluding refugees and asylum seekers. His research reveals that between 1820 and 1993 (a period of 173 years) the United States took in only 418,000 African immigrants (Zeleza quoted in Jere-Malanda, 2004:10). Zeleza’s analysis is insightful; he says:

African migration to the North (Western economies) is part of a much older story of African global migration, going back to tragic days of slave trade … a painful moment and a poignant metaphor that established the subsequent tapestry of African-European-American relations,…a cruel reminder that the victims and combatants of Western barbarity, globalization –the dispersal of individuals, ideas, ideologies and institution –did not start yesterday with the internet. Contemporary patterns of African overseas migration are woven in intricate and complex way (quoted in Jere-Malanda, 2004:11).

In view of the above, Bafalikike (2002:43) recounted the European migration to Africa. According to him, what is interesting is that the Europeans have forgotten that when life in Europe was harsh and the continent was poor not very long ago, they left in droves for Africa and other foreign parts, without passports and visas. In today’s parlance, that would be illegal immigration,” but it doesn’t matter now-after all it was Europeans who were emigrating, not the other way round

On the factors responsible for human smuggling across continents from Africa, some scholars, political leaders and administrators in international organizations have either blamed it on colonialism, neo-colonialism and global economy generally, while others blame it on internal factors within the sending countries. Zeleza explains how international migration flows are determined by conditions in both the sending and receiving countries. These conditions include the state of the economy, political stability and freedoms, immigration laws, all of which are affected by even the broader forces of the current global political economy. Zeleza further contends that the current human smuggling is attributable to the deteriorating economic and political conditions exacerbated by perilous structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank. For instance the huge spike in the number of people trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea in recent times has been attributed to worsening security situation in Africa, particularly Libya, Mali and Nigeria etc. (www.aljazeera.com/news/eu-ships-rescue - 4200 migrants- Mediterranean- sea- 150530024822879.html; Accessed 20/05/15).

According to Jere-Malanda (2004:11), many political analysts agree that migration is closely tied to the world’s economic order and the dynamics of unfair trade and economic trends exacerbated by the globalization fad of recent years. There is consensus that in the current economic order, national wealth of individual countries “is a product of world interaction, which involves growing global mobility of business and people. This entails that migrant labour is indispensable” Worldwide, people have at one time or another fled to other countries for various reasons - hunger, wars, greener pastures, climate change and so forth. In fact the law of nature dictates that you do not stay in one place and die of hunger and poverty, you move to find food and greener pastures elsewhere. It is based on this same principle that when Europe was poor in their countries before the 20th century, they moved all over the world to find greener pastures. In today’s
Transit Routes and Means of Human Smuggling of African Citizens to Europe

Spain’s long coast and proximity to North Africa makes it attractive to human smugglers. Thus, Morocco is a transit route to Spain because average income is 12 times higher in Spain than Morocco. A record of 31,000 illegal (smuggled) immigrants from West Africa reached Spain’s Canary Islands in 2006 through this route (King, 2008:16). The above figure does not take into account attempts at other Spanish entry points such as Barbate, Algeciras, Gibraltar and Malaga, with smugglers demanding $1,000 to be smuggled through the short dangerous crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar (King, 2008). In 2017 about 21,500 persons entered into Spain through the sea alone, 119,000 arrived in Italy, 28,000 arrived in Greece (Alvaro and Laurence, 2017).

Another entry point to Europe is Lampedusa, a tiny Italian Island north of Tunisia and Libya and south of Sicily. Lampedusa is situated some 125 miles south east of Sicily just about some miles north of Tunisia. Most illegal immigrants arrive in rickety boats after dangerous long journey across the open ocean, although fewer and fewer of them are succeeding. This is due in part to the increased surveillance of the coastline by West African and European law enforcement agencies. Ahmed Ould Eley, Mauritania’s top police commissioner; believes every measure possible is being taken to try to stop illegal migration. But he says each time law enforcement agencies gain experience, people traffickers equally change their methods (Ely quoted in King 2008:16). Mauritania has become another key transit point. As routes through northern Africa have become increasingly patrolled, illegal immigrants have begun leaving from further south, from Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau (King, 2008:16).

Irregular migrants manoeuvre their way in precarious conditions through bush paths, deserts and creeks to avoid authorities and check points. Some dig tunnels under border fence, or cut holes in them, sometimes with the assistance of corrupt or sympathetic guides. Many migrants carry false passports, and are assisted by agent – a network of smugglers and of migrant communities who have settled along these routes (Adepoju, 2007). A 2013 report for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), by Altai Consulting, estimates that the cost of getting to Libya varies from about $200 to $1,000 from West Africa, and from about $1,000 to $6,000 from the Horn of Africa. Subsequent transit by sea runs from a few hundred dollars to a couple of thousand (www.economist.com/blogs/economistexplains/2015/05/economist-explains-6, Accessed 20/05/15).

However, the increased measures/efforts by the Italian and Spanish authorities to render its borders more impermeable for African immigrants into these countries have had certain unwanted and undesirable side effect, two of which seem particularly worth noting: the increasing professionalization of irregular immigration, especially in the sense of a growing involvement of human smugglers, and the diversion of the migratory flows towards other typically more dangerous routes. It is now commonly agreed among analysts that irregular migration across both Italy and Spain’s southern border has become increasingly controlled by human smugglers’ organizations. One indication of this can be seen in the growing number of people smugglers arrested in these countries. In Italy, for example, the number of human smugglers arrested rose more than threefold between 1997 and 2000, from 297 to more than 1,000 (minister dell’ interior, 2001:29).
In Spain, the number of persons arrested for human smuggling increased from 151 in 1999 to 225 in 2000 (minister dell’ interior, 2000; ICMPD, 2004:5). Thus, efforts to reinforce the country’s southern borders, especially, in the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, seen to have gone hand in hand with a growth in human smuggling across the Mediterranean. A similar diversion effect towards longer and more dangerous routes can be observed along Spain’s southern borders, where the Mediterranean route across the Straits of Gibraltar has been increasingly replaced by the Atlantic route via the Canary Islands. With the upgrading of controls along the Straits of Gibraltar, a growing number of would be immigrants has been seeking to reach Spain via the Canary Islands, departing from Morocco’s Atlantic coast. Thus, while between 2001 and 2003, the number of undocumented migrants intercepted trying to cross the straits of Gibraltar dropped from 14,045 to 10,400, the number of those landing on the Canary Islands increased from 4,112 to 9,800 over this period. This implies greater clandestine means of human smuggling across the Mediterranean (Lutterbeck, 2006:17).

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), has estimated that some 100,000 to 120,000 irregular migrants push across the Mediterranean each year, with about 35,000 coming from sub-Saharan Africa (ICMPD, 2004:8). Also, Jama (2005) observed that every summer, when ideal weather conditions for sea travel resume so do the boatloads of African migrants arrive Italy. According to him, over the five years, a record number of immigrants have arrived Italian Island popular with tourists 133 kms off the Libyan coast. In some weeks, more than 1, 000 people arrive in low wooden boats, tired, sick and hungry after being at sea for days. According to the reports, they have paid between €1,000 ($1,201) and €1, 500 ($1, 802) per person for a voyage they expect to take them to mainland Italy.

Normally, people arrive in small groups of 2 and, 35 at a time. But there are times when about 1,000 people arrive within 48 hours. Because of the clandestine nature of the crossing, there is no record of how many boats leave the Atlantic coast of Africa every year to reach the Canaries. Sometimes, the harrowing journey by boat could take more than a month reported Raymond Ofordu, from Nigeria’s Rivers State, which is among the lucky ones that made it to Spanish soil alive and unhurt. This client recounted how he paid N80, 000 (around $600) for the trip (Jama, 2005b: 12),

Risks and Hazards on Victims on Transit

Migrants usually make the crossing in small, overcrowded and often ill-equipped boats. Sometimes they undergo terrible conditions on board the ramshackle vessels even as they are robbed while on the boat before depositing them on the shores (Jama 2005b: 11-12). Some of the migrants die en-route and an unknown number of boats capsize during the long and dangerous passage. The Report of the Economist (2015) for example, expressed that a boat that sank on April 19th 2015 was about 20 meters long carrying more than 900 people many of them locked below decks (www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/05/economist, accessed 20/05/15). Alvaro and Laurence (2017) availed that in 2016 4,967 migrants died or disappeared while trying to cross the Mediterranean into Europe, while in 2017, it was about 3,116 people. Chief Ojo Maduekwe, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a national workshop on campaign against irregular migration gave a statistics of no less than 59,000 Nigerians that are currently in Northern African countries without valid travel documents in transit waiting for opportunity to migrate to the West. According to him, figures available to the ministry show that 8,000 of the illegal immigrants are in Morocco, 16,000 in Algeria, 20,000 in Libya and about 15,000 in Mauritania. He also said that reports had it that over 10,000 migrants died between 1999 and 2002, while trying to cross over from North Africa to Europe.

The circumstances of their departure such as using unofficial routes and without proper documentation, made them vulnerable to criminal gangs who recruited them into all manner of illicit business, (with long Jail sentence as consequence when they are caught (Josiah, 2008:7). On this note, the Netherlands-based NGO, United has documented the death of 6,336 people who tried to cross North Africa into Europe between 1993 and 2005. This translates into deaths every two days over a twelve- year period. These are just documented deaths. The exact death toll is unknown (Sabune et al, 2005:56).

Most of the irregular or smuggled migrants are intercepted at sea. The total numbers of interceptions at sea for example, increased more than tenfold between 1999 and 2003, from 1,573 to more than 18,000 (Lutterbeck, 2006:4). A consequence of reinforced border controls along Italy’s coast which has greatly increased the risks for the undocumented immigrants is that the people smugglers, in order to avoid being intercepted by the police, have started to force the immigrants out of the boats before actually reaching Italy’s shores (CENSIS, 1999). Moreover in Spain, it has been shown by APDHA (2004:9) which has documented the circumstance under which seaborne migrants attempting to enter from Morocco have died, thus
in 2004, the second largest number of deaths, (71 out of a total of 289) occurred at the moment of interception at sea by Spanish authorities. This suggests that such operations constitute a considerable risk for the migrants.

In countries on both side of the Mediterranean, there has been growing concern with the rising number of deaths of would be immigrants seeking to reach Europe via sea. As pointed out by Michael Pugh, in countries such as Italy or Spain hardly a week goes by without reports of shipwrecks and dead bodies of migrants found in their waters and on their beaches (Pugh, 2001). Accidents are frequent not only because would – be migrants often travel in insecure vessels but also because the human smugglers show little if any, concern for their safety. According to ADPHA (2003), more than 4,000 migrants drowned seeking to enter Spain from Morocco since the beginning of the 1990s. The ICMPD (2000:8) has estimated that, over the last decade, a total of at least 10,000 persons have died trying to cross the Mediterranean and reach Europe’s southern shores.

Due to interceptions of irregular immigrants in the Straits of Gibraltar and the Canary islands, immigrants have been facing greater risks to their safety. Thus for the year 2003, APDHA reported 137 deaths off the Canary Islands, whereas 25 would be immigrants died trying to reach Spain through the straits of Gibraltar (APDHA, 2008). More so, according to Adepoju (2007:21), about 2,000 Africans are believed to drown in the Mediterranean each year while attempting illegal crossings to Europe. The death of six irregular migrants attempting to scale the fence in Ceuta to enter Spain in September 2005 prompted the Spanish government to double the height of the metal wire fence barricade. Besides, would be migrants face a series of dangers along the route, including dehydration during the long trek across the Sahara desert, and shipwreck. What is worse is that there is no end in sight for the deaths and tragedies taking place at the gates of Europe. In October 2005, 14 people died, either shot by Spanish border police or trampled when they stormed the razor edged walls enclosing Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish colonial enclaves in Morocco (Sabune, Sawyer and Tesfahuney, 2005:56-57).

Greece has a worse record of inflicting harm on the smuggled migrants. Its coast-guards are alleged to deliberately drown the migrants once they spot them approaching in the rubber boats. According to the Istanbul based Non – Governmental Organization (NGO), Aegean Survivors, a boat carrying the migrants from Somalia, Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia was sunk in June 2002 as it set sail at 1:00pm from the Turkish resort city of Bodrum to the Greek Island of Kos. Out of 18 black Africans, only six survived after Turkish coastguards mounted rescue operation (Bafalifkike, 2002:43). In a related development, in May 2005, about 1,000 people arrived on Lampedusa, which is more than 200 km from Sicily. Dangerously crammed into boats, many of them were suffering from nausea, vomiting, sunburn, dehydration, hypoglycemia and diarrhea (Jama, 2005:16). Currently, on May, 5th 2015, over 4,200 migrants were saved within 24 hours. The migrants were rescued by the Italian coast guard from wooden fishing boats and motorized rubber dinghies in operations involving ships from nations including Italy, Ireland, Germany, Belgium and Britain. Seventeen bodies were found off Libya on three inflatable dinghies, from which more than 300 other migrants were rescued alive. The total number of people rescued in this operation turns out to be one of the highest in recent times. So far, the busiest days in this year 2015, have the rescue of 3,791 migrants on April 12, and 3,690 on May 2 (www.aljazeera.com/news/eu-ships-rescue-4200-migrants-mediterranean-sea-150530024828279.html; Accessed 20/05/15).

It could be recalled that so far this year (2015) about 1,770 migrants have perished on hazardous journey to Europe as contained in the figures released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) report, which does not include the latest rescues, a 30 – fold increase on the same period in 2014 (www.aljazeera.com/news/eu-ships-rescue-4,200-migrants-mediterranean-sea-150530024828279.html; Accessed 20/05/15). On the whole, there are lots of risks and hazards faced by irregular migrants ranging from illnesses and diseases, to drawing and death, among others.

**Human Rights and Socio-economic Conditions in Host Countries**

The picture created by the Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodrigue Zapatero at the Summit of European Union (EU) and African leaders in Lisbon (2008), is a good example of the human right problems faced by the illegal migrants. According to him “illegal immigration is the dramatic result of our (Europe’s) collective failure”. It produces citizens that are vulnerable to abuses and without any rights in the countries of destination (cited in King, 2008:17). Sabune et al have documented some human rights abuses. For instance in October 2005, 14 people died either shot by Spanish border police or trampled when would be immigrants stormed the razor-edged walls enclosing Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish colonial enclaves in Morocco. Africans who are caught in this melee are being treated like packed animals and whisked off and “dumped” on Morocco’s border with Algeria without food and water and this is being done with the connivance of the E.U
and some African authorities (Sabune, et al 2005:57.) However, the plans unveiled by the European Commission to make the rest of the 28 nations of EU share the burden of frontline states such as Italy, Greece and Malta when it comes to taking in migrants has been opposed by some countries such as Britain (www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/eu-ships-recue-4,200-migrants-miditarranean-sea-150530024828279.html; Accessed 20/05/15).

Elsewhere, the Austrian police have built “deportation camps” where inmates (illegal immigrants) suffer untold inhuman treatment. Marcus Omofuma, a Nigerian: for example, died recently after being subjected to savage brutality in one of the camps. Another Nigerian, Tranzan Osamugie, was also partially blinded in 1994 after a hard object was thrown at his left eye at the Graz police station in Austria (Bafalikike, 2002:43). Immigrants are also sent back immediately they arrived at their destination. This has led to criticisms by the United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and humanitarian organizations, which have accused Italy of violating the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. According to this Convention, individuals fleeing persecution are entitled to international protection. They should not be denied entry or sent back to countries where they are likely to face persecution or their lives might be in danger. Shipping people back without first granting them a fair hearing which should establish the validity of their claims breaches international human rights law. UNHCR’s chief concern is that individuals in need of international protection are being put in harm’s way by being returned to Libya. Thus:

In any given boat, you have people fleeing different situations: people escaping poverty or wanting to have a better life and people fleeing wars or human rights abuses. You can’t just ship them right back without conducting proper identification first. The Italian authorities have been uncooperative in providing access to the holding centre and giving adequate information about conditions of the people there. We have no idea about what happened to the people sent back to Libya and we have expressed our concerns to the Italian government. Libya does not have an asylum system. Nor has it yet ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. This means that there are no guarantees for the protection of the human rights of migrants sent back from Italy, who are generally non-Libyan nationals. Libyan authorities have also been uncooperative in giving access to, and providing information about people sent back from Italy. UNHCR has accused Italy and Libya of preventing the organization from exercising its mandate to protect refugees (Laura Bodirini, a spokeswoman for the Italy Bureau of the UN High commission for Refugees, quoted in Jama, 2005a:15-18).

Besides, the immigrants face other hardship in their country of destination such as poor working conditions, racism and discrimination. They work long hours for poor wages, in unstable employment and are subject to appalling health and safety conditions. Majority of the undocumented migrants are recruited informally to work in agricultural sector where local labour is in short supply (King, 2008:17). Most migrants face serious problems in the labour market in destination countries. Undocumented migrants are especially vulnerable as they tend to face hazardous work conditions or blatant discrimination. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that, as illegal aliens, they have no legal protection or recourse. At times, of economic downturn, migrants become easy targets as scapegoats and take the blame for anything from ‘stealing’ job to increasing crime rates. Meanwhile, international conventions aimed at promotion and protection of migrant rights do not gain wide acceptance. The 1990 Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers, for example, has not yet come into force, due to insufficient number of ratification.

The Implications for the Sending African Countries

On the positive side, the remittances made by the undocumented immigrants could have an impact in the economy, especially for consumption purposes, which contribute in poverty alleviation. For instance, even when used for consumption, it could also stimulate demand and support local enterprises. Thus, according to King (2008:16) young Senegalese say the dangers of illegal migration do not daunt them, especially, when young unemployed see their friends who are in Europe send back money to help their families, return to build Houses and get married, those left behind want to emulate such people and are prepared to go to Europe by any means. Also, the smuggled migrants are in themselves contributing in solving the problems of unemployment, redundancy, idleness as well as overcrowding of the urban cities with its associated problems of street hawking, juvenile delinquencies, drug addiction, criminality and other forms of social vices since they get busy in their transit routes and countries of their destinations irrespective of how odd the jobs were.
On the other hand, the death of so many of them on the high sea or at the borders or transit refugee camps amount to waste of huge human resources that could have been put into productive use had the African governments built their capacity. Also, history has shown that the labour of African slaves in the New World contributed to the economic prosperity of the Western countries, and by these illegal immigrant labours in farm settlements in Europe, a repeat episode of such history is in the offing to the chagrin of African economies. The net loser in this drama is the African countries who do not make good use of their abundant human resources.

Thirdly, when these irregular migrants are deported due to the rash and harsh way they are being abandoned in the desert regions (such as Oujda near the Algerian border), they either return home and form criminal gangs or remain in the transit routes to do illicit businesses such as human trafficking and drug trafficking etc. This could culminate in money laundering activities which further devastate the economies of African States concerned. Fourthly, human smuggling and associated crimes tarnishes national images of African countries, regional and sub-regional unions at international scenes. African countries are always given a bad name by western countries as a result of their experiences in the hands of such illegal turned legal migrants in Europe and America who engage in all sorts of criminal activities. Whereas there are outnumbering number of Africans who are good both within and outside the continent. These good Africans integrity and personality are a times not considered while brandishing Africa with all manner of bad names. Human smuggling and its associated activities have actually done more injury to Africans name and integrity.

The African Union (AU) should make its voice heard by condemning and protesting against the police brutality and maltreatment of Africans in the Spanish enclaves. The AU should mobilize and protect the lives of Africans both inside and outside Europe (Sabune et al, 2005:57). Sub-regional economic organizations need to be revamped to facilitate intra and inter-regional labour mobility, in tune with the visions both of NEPAD and the African Economic Community. Functional economic integration can offer long term prospects for stimulating intra-regional labour mobility, thus providing much needed viable local and regional alternatives to the attractions of Europe. Development programmes should not only be elitist but should be pro-poor in order to provide livelihoods for the youths. The youths should be supported to be self-employed in self-sustaining ventures rather than allowing them to perish in the sea in a desperate search for the non-existent “Golden Fleece”. Finally, African governments should provide the appropriate platform for mainstreaming migration into development activities at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. This would reduce the clandestine nature and accompanying deaths and other social hazards being suffered by the smuggled migrants.

Conclusion

This paper has looked into the pull and push factors necessitating human smuggling, the origin of migration in Africa, the hazards the smuggled entities undergo on transit at sea and the borders of their destination countries, and in the host countries; and therefore, concludes that the current clandestine emigration of Africans across the Mediterranean is not a new phenomenon but a repeat of movement of peoples, especially the Europeans to Africa from 1830 until the mid-1960. In this wave of movement, Britain for example, operated The British Child Emigration Scheme which sought to populate its colonies using a young generation of Brits to other colonies including Africa with help from child-care organizations, among them the “oddly named children” from the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society” (Jere-Malanda, 2004: 9).

In this century Africans have been the ones seriously engaging in migration problems. This has led to a lot of death, human right breach, national image tarnishing, loss of manpower, etc. The paper therefore calls for concerted efforts by African governments at poverty reduction through self-reliant strategy to curb the growing unemployment situation that triggers human smuggling across borders as well as cooperative efforts at the continental and sub-regional levels to guard against undemocratic power transitions, sit-tight presidents/leaders syndrome, human rights abuses and wide scale leadership corruption which join forces to breed internal and external terrorism and attendant insecurity contributing to human smuggling at any cost. It also demands that African Union should make a serious and radical concerted efforts through United Nations, European Union and other Humanitarian organizations to see how rights of African citizens who engage in migration en-route Mediterranean as a result of harsh socio-economic conditions in Africa are protected and treated as humans.
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