

CMFS BRIEF: NIGERIAN MIGRANTS (TO EUROPE)

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) – Comprehensive Migration Flow Survey (CMFS)

A Nigerian family living in a host community in Maiduguri, Nigeria.
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INTRODUCTION

For decades Nigerian migrants have arrived in Europe through different channels and for various reasons that have ranged from obtaining legal protection to seeking livelihood opportunities. The unique data collection exercise carried out by DTM in 2017 sought to explore the diversity of such flows by interviewing migrants at different stages of their migration journeys to help policymakers design human-centric and evidence-based solutions. The results of this study indicate that migrants' needs differ at different stages of their journeys highlighting the necessity for the provision of context specific support to ensure that migrants receive timely and relevant assistance, as well as further research on the evolving migration flows to Europe.

METHODOLOGY

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Comprehensive Migration Flow Survey (CMFS) provides a comprehensive evidence base on migration flows from Nigeria to Europe and return migration to Nigeria. This was achieved by collecting data on four different Nigerian migrant groups namely 1) potential migrants in the origin country (Nigeria), 2) transit migrants in Niger, Libya and Greece travelling to Europe; 3) migrants in a country of final destination, the Netherlands; and 4) returnees from Europe to Nigeria. The data collection explores six key thematic areas – (1) migrant profiles, (2) migration drivers and decision making, (3) migrant challenges and related vulnerabilities, (4) the role of intermediaries, (5) migrant perceptions towards Europe and (6) migration choices and options. The main outcomes of the DTM CMFS report and resulting recommendations are summarized in this CMFS brief.¹

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2018a). [Enabling a better understanding of migration flows \(and its root causes\) from Nigeria towards Europe – Final CMFS Report](#) – Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC MIGRANT PROFILE

Understanding migrant demographic characteristics provides an evidence-base upon which tailored interventions can be built.

Demographic profile: The DTM CMFS study indicates that throughout the different migration phases, most Nigerian respondents were mainly young, single males without children. The average age of the Nigerian migrants ranged from 23 years (Nigerians in Niger) to 34 years (Nigerian returnees).

Previous international migration: This study found that most respondents had not experienced international migration previously. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that those reported to have internationally migrated before, mainly migrated within the region.

MIGRATION DRIVERS AND DECISION-MAKING

Understanding drivers of migration is key to developing relevant programming and policies in the origin country.

Challenges before migration: In the six months prior to departure, Nigerians mostly faced economic challenges (e.g. lack of sufficient income and livelihood opportunities, unemployment, financial problems and debts) at the personal, household, and community levels. Security problems were also reported, though to a lesser extent.

Migration trigger: Specific events that triggered Nigerians to leave their origin country reflected a combination of economic triggers (e.g. lack or loss of employment, job offer in Europe) and influence from their social circles (e.g. hearing from a family or friend that life in Europe was good, friends asking to join in their migration,

family wanting them to migrate) and to lesser extent security.

Migration decision making: Most Nigerian respondents reported having made their migration decision on their own. They did, however, often consult family and friends about their migration, who vastly supported their decision to migrate. When respondents did not make the decision themselves, the migration decision was generally made by their spouse or parent.

Information and networks: Nigerian respondents reported social media and communication with family and friends in Europe as their primary source of information source to inform migration decisions. Nigerians mostly reported word of mouth and electronic sources (e.g. Internet, WhatsApp, Facebook) as their main source of information. This included verbal contact with social networks in Europe (though particularly with friends) via phone, Viber, Facebook, and/or Skype.

Information to prepare for the journey: In preparation for their migration journey, Nigerian respondents mostly collected information on the costs of migration, the job market, and transportation options.

CHALLENGES AND RELATED VULNERABILITIES

Understanding the challenges and related vulnerabilities migrants face en route to Europe could enhance targeted interventions to increase migrant protection.

Travel: Nigerians reported travelling alone, with a group, or with friends.

Problems and challenges en route to Europe: The main problems and challenges reported by Nigerian respondents en route to Europe were

hunger and thirst. Other primary challenges reported included being robbed and detention².

Expected problems vs reported problems:

Almost all Nigerian potential migrants expected to face to face problems along the route to Europe. The most common problems potential migrants expected to face were hunger and thirst, robbery, and problems at sea. Nigerians in transit expected to face problems such as detention and problems at sea during their onward journey. Notably, the expected problems corresponded with the actual problems Nigerian migrants reported.

Smartphone usage along the route: Half of the Nigerian respondents reported to have a smartphone with them while travelling to Europe, which they mainly used for communication with social networks in Europe and in their home country. They also used smartphones find information about the journey.

THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

Understanding the role migrant facilitators is key to enhancing regular, voluntary and orderly migration.

Use of migration facilitators: Across the different stages, most of the respondents planned to use or had used a migration facilitator³ during their journey to Europe. The majority of Nigerian respondents used an average of two migration facilitators during their journey to Europe.

Costs of migration: There is a great variance in actual and expected costs of migration between

the different stages among the responses of the Nigerian migrants. While expectations on the (remaining) costs to reach final destination vary between 2,773 USD (Libya) to 8,436 USD (Niger), actual costs to reach final destination are reported to be around 10,000 USD by Nigerians in the Netherlands. This amount is higher than any of the expected costs reported under the study.

To finance their journeys, respondents generally reported relying on savings, borrowing money, selling assets and working along the route to pay for their travels.

MIGRANT PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPE

Understanding perceptions of migrants towards Europe could address information and communication gaps, and better address migrant needs across different migratory stages

Intended destination countries: The main intended countries of final destination among Nigerian respondents were diverse, with Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland being most commonly reported. The reasons for Nigerians to choose their intended destination country were also mixed between security (e.g. safety of the country), economic factors (e.g. availability of opportunities), or social factors (e.g. having social networks there).

Perceptions of Europe: A main source of information on which Nigerians based their perceptions of Europe is word of mouth. The main channels were verbal (via phone, Viber,

² Detention by official authorities is legitimate part of the migration management. From the migrants' perspective, detention may be the deprivation of liberty based on their migration status and without committing any crime as such. Since this report provides data and research on migrant perception, it is presented here as a 'problem'.

³ Migration facilitator: Within this study the term 'migration facilitator' refers to anyone that is involved in the facilitation of

migration services (irregular and regular) via air, land or sea routes in exchange for money. Those services can reach from consultative services for visa application and acquiring (fraudulent) documents, to transportation arrangement, to the facilitation of border crossings. The term used does not intend to neglect the differences in services and often used terms for those persons providing the migration services.

Facebook, and/or Skype) and written contact (via smartphone apps and/or social media) with social networks in Europe. Other sources included the internet, television, and radio.

Advising other potential migrants: Nigerian respondents would generally⁴ advise others to migrate to Europe (with the exceptions of those in Niger and the Netherlands). For those that would encourage others to migrate to Europe, the reasons to do so were associated with the respect for human rights in Europe, livelihood opportunities, a lack for hope for a future in Nigeria. Of the respondents that would not advise others to migrate to Europe, the reasons include the difficulties encountered en route to Europe, as well as life in Europe not being as expected.

Priorities and expectations upon arrival: In general, the first priorities for Nigerian respondents upon arrival to Europe were varied, but mainly included legal status, employment, or, family reunification. In line with these priorities, the main forms of support expected by Nigerians in Europe included receiving a legal status to stay in the country, social support, and support with family reunification. At the same time, the most common problems that respondents expected upon arrival to their destination country were deportation, detention, rejection of their asylum claim and inability to obtain legal permission to stay.

MIGRATION CHOICES AND OPTIONS

Understanding migrant choices and legal options could enhance global, regional, and national policy development and further strengthen migrant opportunities and rights.

Regional migration: The main reasons for Nigerian migrants to choose migration to Europe over regional migration were primarily economic-lack of jobs and livelihood in the region, supposed access to jobs in Europe and higher incomes) and security respect for human rights, and safety. If given the opportunity to work or study in their region, many respondents would still consider migrating to Europe.

Awareness of EU migration options: Awareness of legal options to migrate to Europe was varied, with 86 per cent of Nigerian potential migrants, 16 per cent of Nigerians in Niger, 44 per cent of Nigerians in Greece, 17 per cent of respondents in the Netherlands, and 83 per cent of returnees reported to have such knowledge. The most known legal option to migrate to Europe was the Schengen visa, with Nigerians in the Netherlands being significantly more aware of the Schengen visa as a legal option to migrate to Europe than their counterparts.

It is, further, observed that knowledge of the asylum procedure is overall very low amongst Nigerian respondents. Knowledge is especially low among those Nigerians that have not reached the European continent, ranging from only 3 per cent among Nigerians in Libya, 5 per cent among those in Niger, and 15 per cent among potential migrants. While this may reflect a lack of knowledge on the procedure itself, there still is a general acknowledgement of the importance of this form of documentation for legally living in Europe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By drawing on the results of the DTM CMFS study highlighted in the previous sections, it is possible to suggest the following recommendations.

Information tailored to the different migration stages: This study found that the role of

⁴ Potential migrants: 75.9%, Libya: 65.1%, Greece: 55.4%, Return: 76.7%, Niger: 28.6%, the Netherlands 24.4%

information is central in shaping migrant decisions and perceptions. Hence, the variety of information channels used, and the relevance of word of mouth, television, social media and the internet should be acknowledged when designing information campaigns.

The following information is of importance during the different stages of the migration journey to further enhance safe, orderly, and regular migration:

Nigerian potential migrants: primary information should focus on i) safe and regular migration pathways (incl. asylum procedures), ii) potential challenges and vulnerabilities related to the migration journey, and iii) realistic expectation of life in Europe.

Nigerian transit migrants: primary information should focus on i) available referral mechanisms, ii) available support and services (temporary shelter, food, [emergency] health care, protection etc.), iii) safe and regular migration pathways (incl. asylum procedures), and iv) migrant rights in transit and final destination.

Nigerian migrants in final destination: upon arrival in the final destination country, primary information should focus on i) migrant rights (incl. asylum procedures), ii) available referral mechanisms, iii) available support and services (temporary shelter, food, [emergency] health care, protection etc.),

Nigerian returnees: upon return in home-country primary information should focus on i) available referral mechanism, ii) livelihood opportunities, iii) housing market and iii) access to relevant national services such as health care and education.

1. For developing targeted information for migrants during the different stages of the journey, it is important to address:

The socio-demographic characteristics of Nigerian (potential) migrants to ensure that the right beneficiaries are identified.

2. The diverse sources of information (e.g. social media, intermediaries, religious centres) used by Nigerian migrants at different stages of the journey.
3. The usage of smartphones and the importance of (social media) apps at the different stages of the journey for Nigerians.
4. The different type of information that Nigerian migrants investigate during the different stages of their migration journey
5. Nigerian migrants are often not visible can be difficult to reach (e.g. along informal transit routes).
6. The potential role transnational networks.

Additional research: Migration flows continuously evolve, and further research into the drivers of migration and decision-making processes among Nigerian migrants would allow researchers to identify patterns over time that could be utilized to better inform interventions and assistance. Challenges faced among other specific sub-populations namely, females, children and unaccompanied minors, and elderly persons during transit, at their destination, and upon return should also be considered in more depth.

While the Netherlands is the only destination country of focus within this research study, similar studies should be conducted to understand the differences and similarities between the experiences of Nigerian migrants in other European destination countries.

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