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Highly-Skilled Migration Series
Socio-Political Module



CARIM
Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration

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Munzoul Assal*

Associate Professor of Social Anthropology and Director,
Graduates Affairs Administration, University of Khartoum

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These papers will be discussed in two other meetings between Policy Makers and Experts on the same topic in early spring 2010. The results of these discussions will also be published.

The entire set of papers on Highly-Skilled Migration are available at <http://www.carim.org/HighlySkilledMigration>.

* Email address: massal@uofk.edu

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European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

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The Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) was created at the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), in February 2004 and co-financed by the European Commission, DG AidCo, currently under the Thematic programme for the cooperation with third countries in the areas of migration and asylum.

Within this framework, CARIM aims, in an academic perspective, to observe, analyse, and forecast migration in Southern & Eastern Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Countries (hereafter Region).

CARIM is composed of a coordinating unit established at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) of the European University Institute (EUI, Florence), and a network of scientific correspondents based in the 17 countries observed by CARIM: Algeria, Chad, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Palestine, Senegal, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.

All are studied as origin, transit and immigration countries. External experts from the European Union and countries of the Region also contribute to CARIM activities.

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For more information:

Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI)

Convento

Via delle Fontanelle 19

50014 San Domenico di Fiesole

Italy

Tel: +39 055 46 85 878

Fax: + 39 055 46 85 755

Email: carim@eui.eu

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/>

Abstract

This article is on highly-skilled migration in Sudan. Given the fact that there have not been systematic efforts to study and document highly-skilled migration in this country, and also due to the fact that reliable data on the numbers, categories and distribution of skilled migrants hardly exist for Sudan, the article represents a preliminary effort that attempts to provide a reliable picture for highly-skilled Sudanese migrants. The article starts with a general historical overview of skilled migration, particularly to the oil-producing Gulf countries, and examines the link between higher-education policies and the increase in the number of Sudanese migrants, categories of skilled migrants and their destination. The link between higher-educational policies and migration is tackled. The migration of medical professionals is used to illustrate the extent of skilled-labour migration in Sudan. The article also discusses the policies of the Sudanese government with a view to determining its impact on highly-skilled migration. The main finding of the article is that, apart from the migration of medical specialists, highly-skilled Sudanese migrants do not constitute brain drain. Higher-educational institutions provide more highly-skilled workers than the local labour market can absorb.

Résumé

La migration des travailleurs qualifiés du Soudan est étroitement liée au développement des pays du Golfe. Cette forme de migration économique qui date du dernier quart du 20ème siècle est liée à des facteurs régionaux et domestiques tels la flambée du pétrole dans les pays du Golfe et la détérioration des conditions économiques au Soudan. D'autres formes de migration qui ne sont pas motivées par des raisons économiques sont apparues au tournant du siècle mais ces formes ne seront pas abordées par cette note analytique qui se focalisera sur la migration des travailleurs qualifiés au Soudan tout en évaluant si cette forme de migration représente un gain ou une perte/hémorragie.

Eu égard aux difficultés causées par l'absence de documentation et de statistiques précises sur l'effectif, les catégories et la distribution des migrants qualifiés, l'article pourvoit une analyse préliminaire visant à mettre en lumière le phénomène de la migration de la main d'œuvre qualifiée du Soudan.

La note esquisse dans un premier temps un aperçu historique de l'émigration de la main d'œuvre qualifiée, notamment vers les pays du Golfe, puis examine le lien entre les politiques relatives à l'enseignement supérieur et l'effectif ainsi que les catégories des migrants soudanais qualifiés dans les pays de destination. La note se penche également sur les politiques gouvernementales mises en place en vue de montrer leur impact sur le phénomène.

Les sources sur lesquelles cette note se base sont diverses. Citons le Bureau Central des Statistiques, le Conseil de la Population au Soudan, le Ministère de l'Intérieur, le Ministère du Travail et du Développement des Ressources Humaines ainsi que le Secrétariat des Soudanais à l'Etranger. En guise de conclusion, l'étude déduit que l'émigration des travailleurs qualifiés ne peut être considérée comme une fuite de cerveaux car les établissements d'enseignement supérieur mettent chaque année sur le marché du travail plus de travailleurs qualifiés que le marché ne peut absorber.

Introduction

The literature on migration contains many definitions that deal with different categories of migrants. For the purposes of this article, highly-skilled migrants include all tertiary educated migrants, whether or not their migration was voluntary and whether or not they migrate for economic or political reasons. Sudan actually represents a case where the distinction between voluntary and forced migration is extremely difficult to make (Hamid 1996; Lucas 2001).

The Sudanese situation presents many conceptual and analytical challenges with regard to highly-skilled migration and other categories, too. Sudan is both a sending and receiving country; in terms of economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. By 2007 there were 722,794 refugees in Sudan including Eritreans (60 percent), Chadians (20 percent) and Ethiopians (13 percent). There were also Ugandan, Congolese and Somali migrants.¹ Another interesting development beyond the scope of this paper is the recent arrival of domestic workers from Asian countries (including the Philippines, Indonesia and Bangladesh), in addition to Eritreans and Ethiopians. In recent years, Sudan received additionally hundreds of thousands of Egyptians.² The reception of foreign nationals, whether these are highly-skilled migrants or refugees, is, however, again beyond the scope of this paper.

The importance and relevance of highly-skilled migration can be viewed or studied from different perspectives. One can look at or study it from the perspective of remittances and contribution to household economies. Alternatively, highly-skilled migration could also be conceptualized through its contribution to development. Generally, however, and particularly in recent years, there has been a growing interest in highly-skilled migration. Attention has focused on whether or not highly-skilled migration represents a brain drain.

The debate about whether the migration of highly-skilled persons represents a drain or gain is not new, and the answer to this question does not rest with either the receiving or sending countries alone. As this article shows, within the same country, highly-skilled migration can be a gain and a drain at the same time. This article examines highly-skilled migration from Sudan. Since there have not been systematic efforts to study and document highly-skilled migration, and since there is a lack of reliable data, the article is an attempt to provide a reliable overview for Sudan. This article provides a general background on migration, especially to the Gulf countries. It particularly examines the link between higher-education policies and the increase in the number of highly-skilled Sudanese migrants. The migration of medical professionals is used to illustrate the extent of highly-skilled migration. The policy environment with regard to migration is also discussed in the article, with a view to determining its impact on highly-skilled migration. For the purpose of this article and also for purposes of simplicity and clarity, I will limit my analysis to migrants who travel for economic purposes and on the basis of qualifications that they had acquired when migration took place. Data for the article is drawn from a variety of sources notably the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Sudan Population Council, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development, and the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad.

Sudanese out-migration: the Gulf

Migration that traverses international boundaries for economic reasons has long been a feature of livelihood strategies in Sudan. International migration generally follows a certain pattern: Gulf

¹ Sudan Population Council, 2009, p. 59.

² In 2007, the number of foreign nationals granted residence permits in Sudan was 35449. For more details on the total numbers of foreign nationals granted residence permits during 1989-2007 see the Sudan Population Council's report: *al-hijra walehirak al-sukkani fil al-sudan* (Migration and Population Mobility in Sudan), 2009, p. 57.

countries (male dominated) and Libya for semi-skilled labourers (Black et al 2008). However, it is difficult to gauge the numbers of migrants involved, their destinations, the nature of their work, the volume of their remittances and behavioural attributes related to their movements. The discovery of oil in the Gulf countries and Libya³ and the subsequent boom during the 1970s and 1980s intensified labour migration and emphasized the role of external migration in Sudan's economy. As far back as 1988, Galal el-Din (1988: 293) estimated the number of Sudanese migrants in Arab oil countries at 207,000. Abusharaf (2002: 73) provided a figure of 1,000,000. The purpose of external migration during the 1970s and 1980s was primarily economic. It is hard to document the economic contribution of Sudanese expatriates in the Gulf to Gross National Product (GNP), but judging from the numbers of expatriates, their contribution to supporting families is significant. The economic vibrancy of the Gulf migrants during the 1970s and 1980s was glorified, for example in wedding songs that encouraged young men to migrate (Abusharaf 2002: 174).

The glamour of Gulf expatriates waned during the 1990s, due to several factors in Sudan and the Gulf countries. In Sudan, the 1989 military coup inaugurated a long period of suffering the effects of which are still felt.⁴ The purge adopted by the military government, along with economic policies that jeopardized whole segments of the population, siphoned off the savings of expatriates and increased their social and economic burdens (Assal 2006: 5). The purge included the sacking of qualified civil servants whose loyalty to the new regime was in doubt. Between 1989 and 2003, the total number of those sacked was 122,000 employees from the public sector, representing 20 percent of its labour force (SHRW 2004: 14).⁵ Economic policies, notably privatization, also resulted in the loss of jobs.⁶

The Sudanese in the Gulf faced yet another challenge during the same period: the Gulf war of 1990 during which the Sudanese government sided with Iraq. Sudanese expatriates were hit hard by the conflict (Assal 2004: 43-46). As a consequence of this, some expatriates (in Kuwait) were expelled and in the process lost their savings and entitlements.

Due to repressive conditions in Sudan, for many Sudanese expatriates coming home was not an option. Hard circumstances in Sudan and in the Gulf countries forced Sudanese migrants to move to other destinations, namely the US, Europe, Canada and Australia, either on lottery or asylum and refugee tickets. This indicates the complexity of migration in the sense that a migrant, who migrated initially for purely economic reasons, could become a refugee or an asylum seeker. It also underlines the difficulty of clearly delineating types of migrants. The following section provides basic information and statistics on international migration up to 2008.

Basic data on international migration

During the period 2002-2007, the level of emigration and immigration significantly increased. The total number of annual overseas arrivals and departures of nationals and foreign nationals increased from 532,064 in 2002 to 1,242,617 in 2007. This indicates a 134 percent increase in 6 years. Likewise,

³ Migration to Libya has historically been an important dimension in the economy of Darfur region; which borders Libya. People from Darfur migrate to Libya on foot and by camel, and the journey takes around 30 days. The caravans, each led by a desert expert (locally known as *khabeer*), travel by night and rest during the day. The introduction of trucks and four-wheel-drive vehicles accelerated the process of migration and trade. For more on migration from Darfur to Libya and remittances, see Young, H. et al (2005). *Darfur: Livelihoods under Siege*. Feinstein International Famine Centre. University of Tuft, p. 83.

⁴ Due to the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and the privatization policies adopted by the government in 1990, subsidies were removed from education and health services in Sudan.

⁵ This figure does not include those who lost their jobs due to privatization public institutions and corporations.

⁶ The latest public institution to be privatized was Sudan Postal Services. The number of employees is 11000. Due to privatization, 50 percent of the employees will lose their jobs (http://www.rayaam.info/News_view.aspx?pid=444&id=23909).

the number of Sudanese migrants departing or coming from other countries also rose significantly during 2002-2007. Departures increased from 185,985 to 417,359 (124 percent increase) and arrivals increased from 228,265 to 388,930 (70 percent increase). Since 2004, departures exceeded arrivals, which means that the net migration in Sudan is negative (Population Council 2009: 43).

According to the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA), the number of Sudanese working abroad in 2008 was 799,020 distributed in 108 countries. Saudi Arabia has the largest share of Sudanese expatriates. Figures show that there are 513,411 Sudanese migrants in Saudi Arabia in 2008. This represents 64.2 percent of the total number of Sudanese migrants working abroad. The table below shows the number and distribution of Sudanese expatriates in major Arab countries.

Table 1. Number of Sudanese expatriates in some Arab countries

Country	Number of Sudanese expatriates
Saudi Arabia	513,411
Libya	56,617
United Arab Emirates	54,314
Iraq	52,301
Qatar	19,774
Yemen	19,528
Kuwait	9416
Oman	7138
Total	732499

Source: Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad 2009.

Table 1 above provides estimates for the number of Sudanese migrants in Arab countries, the major destinations for Sudanese migrants. As can be seen, Egypt is not mentioned as a country of destination for Sudanese migrants. Historically, Egypt has been a popular destination for Sudanese nationals though it is not a country where these nationals seek work, whether skilled or not. There is no accurate estimate for the number of Sudanese migrants in Egypt, but the number ranges between 2 and 3 million. It should also be noted that, starting from 1990, increasing numbers of Sudanese nationals have migrated to Europe, Canada, the US and Australia. While some people in this category migrate on the basis of immigration quota policies in receiving countries, some do so on refugee and asylum tickets. Unlike migration to the Gulf countries, migration to the First World involves naturalization opportunities. During the period 2005-2008, more than 14,000 Sudanese got the nationality of the countries to which they emigrated. The UK, the United States and Canada were the countries where most Sudanese emigrants were naturalized.

Highly-skilled labour migration

Databases on skilled Sudanese migrants working abroad are inadequate. Prior to 2007, no detailed databases existed. Also, age and gender distribution of highly-skilled migrants are not available. The 2008 data shows that the greater majority of Sudanese expatriates work in skilled and semi-skilled professions. The total number for this category (skilled and semi-skilled) is 451,443. The data also show that there are significant numbers of expatriates who hold high professional positions such as engineers, medical professions, university professors and legal professions, accounting for 12,373, 10,253, 2,406, and 1,160, respectively. One problem with the existing data is that there is no breakdown by educational attainment. The following table gives the distribution of international migrants along with professional skills and occupations.

Table 2. Professional distribution of highly-skilled Sudanese migrants⁷

Profession category	Number of migrants in each category
University Professors	2,406
Medical professions	10,253
Engineers	12,373
Administrative professions	86,471
Legal professions	1,160
Labourers ⁸	451,443
Investors	46
Soldiers	915
Teachers	4,360
Unspecified contracts ⁹	175,179
Total	744,606

Source: Secretariat for Sudanese Working Abroad, 2009.

Table 3. Number of authenticated contracts during 1998-2007 by country of destination

Year/ Country	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Saudi Arabia	15680	39170	33361	28802	28834	17392	14904	9885	6825	11732	206585
U.A.E	86	1143	1386	1358	994	1001	1010	792	813	1015	9598
Qatar	254	485	742	530	494	312	272	252	478	636	4455
Kuwait	--	--	11	20	38	147	227	120	146	173	882
Oman	13	17	19	42	235	42	85	121	56	121	751
Bahrain	--	--	26	0	20	8	7	2	1	6	70
Yemen	3	4	--	--	25	9	4	1	3	7	56
Jordan	14	21	3	0	1	1	4	1	1	1	47
Libya	0	6	3	0	5	3	0	0	4	4	25
Lebanon	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	4
UK	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	3
others	1	1	0	9	2	6	0	10	10	0	39
Total	16050	40846	35551	30752	30648	18918	16514	11154	8329	13697	222515

Source: Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development, 2009.

⁷ The total in this table does not represent the total number of skilled and semi-skilled migrants. It is about the total of the categories provided *per* the available data.

⁸ The category "labourer" is categorized as semi-skilled by the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad. According to officials at the SSWA, the overwhelming majority of this category are university graduates. This puts them under highly-skilled migrants who are defined as "persons with tertiary level of education, whether they achieved that level before or after migration."

⁹ These are new migrants whose contracts have not been classified yet.

Table 3 illustrates the number of registered contracts authenticated by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development. The total number of these contracts is far less than the total number of emigrants shown in table (2). Not all contracts go through the Ministry of Labour. Additionally, migration to Libya in particular is not sufficiently documented and the numbers provided for Libya in table (3) grossly underestimate the volume of migration to Libya. As mentioned in footnote 4 earlier (cf. Young et al 2005), migration to Libya uses trucks or camel caravans. This is the case with people who migrate from Darfur, which neighbours Libya, but also for Sudanese migrants from other parts of the country who travel to Libya through Darfur. While it is necessary to obtain an exit visa to leave Sudan, the overwhelming majority of Sudanese nationals who travel to Libya do so without obtaining exit visas, and therefore they do not appear in the records of immigration authorities of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development.

Higher education and migration

The increase in the number of highly-skilled Sudanese migrants is related to higher education policies implemented during the 1990s. The student intake to universities jumped from 6,080 in 1989 to 13,210 in 1990-91 and 38,623 in 1999-2000. The number of female students rose by 40% in 1995. In 2008, 132,047 students were admitted to higher-educational institutions, at the bachelor and high diploma levels.¹⁰ The number of public universities increased from 5 universities and 1 polytechnic in 1989 to 26 universities in 1996 (the one polytechnic, Khartoum Technical Institute, became a university). This number remains the same in 2009. The number of private higher education institutions increased from 1 in 1989 to 16 in 1996 and to more than 22 in 2008. This huge increase in the number of universities in Sudan, both private and public, has resulted in many more students completing their university education.

Over the last 3-4 years, an average of 100,000 candidates in different specializations graduated from higher-education institutions. The increase in both higher-educational institutions and student intake was not well planned. It was rather an imposed political decision. One motivation for the increase in the number of students was financial. While the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) can decide on a ceiling for admission to universities, universities, in their quest to generate income, instead, admit more students. Additionally, higher-education institutions were also allowed to offer intermediate diploma programmes (El-Tom 2006: 55). In effect, a mismatch was created between education and employment and therefore one could talk about “brain waste” instead of “brain drain.” Given the fact that higher-educational institutions in Sudan are poorly equipped, in terms of staff and other facilities, it could be said that the education exported abroad through skilled migrants does not constitute a loss for Sudan. However, there are exceptions to this as we shall see below. The point is that the excess supply of graduates in the country reflects a governmental education policy that is not supported by adequate job opportunities.

A look at the number of medicine graduates provides an example of the extent of highly- skilled migration in Sudan. There are 31 faculties of medicine in Sudan from which 3000 physicians graduate every year.¹¹ During the 1980s and early 1990s, the Sudanese Ministry of Health was facing shortage in medical personnel (general practitioners and specialists), to the extent that the Ministry banned the migration of physicians. Yet, this restriction did not curb migration. Physicians who are determined to migrate simply change the profession in their passports. The situation changed in the late 1990s and currently there are thousands of medicine graduates who are unemployed in Sudan. The increase in the

¹⁰ *Al-Ayam Newspaper*, Volume 9170, 29th July 2008. This figure represents the number of students who applied for admission during the first round. The number could be higher as more students are admitted during the second round of applications. In addition to the normal admission quota, more students are also admitted through “private admission” where seats are made available for students with lower grades who can pay tuition fees at higher rates.

¹¹ Professor Mamoun Humeida, Vice-Chancellor, University of Medical Sciences and Technology, in an interview in *Akhirlahaza Newspaper*, October 1st, 2009 (<http://www.akhirlahaza.net/news/porta...ype=3&id=25840>)

number of medicine faculties and students did not take into consideration the capacities of hospitals and training facilities for physicians, and there is no coordination between the ministries of health and higher education. While there are thousands of unemployed physicians, there is an acute shortage in specialists. The Sudanese Medical Council, established in 1999, is entrusted with the training of medical specialists. But the council is poorly equipped. Between 1999 and 2009, the council trained 1350 specialists; i.e. 135 specialist *per year*, while the need in Sudan is 500 specialists *per year*.¹² It is estimated that 800 doctors migrate each year following the expansion in medical education during the 1990s. *The Observatory Eye*, a medical newsletter in Sudan reports that out of 21,000 doctors registered in Sudan, 12,000 work outside Sudan (nearly 60 percent). It is also notable that the brain drain among pharmacists is considerable, involving 25 percent of the total country stock. The major destination countries for doctors and pharmacists include the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia not to mention the UK and Ireland.¹³ The migration of nurses is not common. One reason is that highly-skilled nurses are few in numbers. Additionally, being predominantly female, nurses face socio-cultural and legal hurdles that discourage and in some cases limit the migration of unaccompanied females.¹⁴

As mentioned above, highly-skilled Sudanese migrants are economic migrants. The rate of unemployment in Sudan was estimated at 28 percent in 2008. It was reported that 57,000 graduates were unemployed.¹⁵ The public sector in Sudan is not enticing and for many graduates the private sector or the informal sector provides avenues in which they seek employment. Given the fact that the labour market does not have the capacity to absorb huge numbers of graduates, international migration represents one reasonable alternative. In this regard, the general assumption that the migration of highly-skilled persons represents a brain drain does not hold for Sudan, especially in the context of higher-education policies that focus on increasing student numbers. As stated above, one rationale for the increase in the number of students is financial. What the state provides for universities falls far below their needs. Except for chapter one of their budgets (staff salaries), other budget lines are not funded by the government. To guarantee higher thresholds, admission criteria are lowered; 12 percent less than the minimum score (El-Tom 2006: 55). The intake policies emphasize numbers, not quality. The point is that the migration of highly-skilled Sudanese nationals does not represent a loss to the country. Even in the case of medical professionals discussed above, the international migration of physicians does not represent a loss in so far as medical institutions in Sudan cannot absorb 3000 physicians annually. However, the migration of medical specialists can be justly called a loss or brain drain since there is a shortage of specialists in Sudan.¹⁶ This is also the case with other related professions, e.g. pharmacists. The skills of specialists transferred through emigration represent then a scarce resource in Sudan. It is estimated that the Sudanese spend \$500 million annually seeking medical treatment outside Sudan. Jordan is one of the main destinations for those Sudanese nationals who seek medical treatment abroad.

There is no credible data on gender and highly-skilled migration: the available information is not gender-disaggregated. Historically, international migration in Sudan is male-dominated (Abusharaf 1997, Galal el-Din 1988). Unless accompanying husbands or families, few Sudanese women migrate

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *The Observatory Eye*, Volume (2), Issue No 1, January 2009. The word “doctors” is used ambiguously in the newsletter: does it stand for “physicians” or “specialists”? This distinction is important in as much as migration by physicians or general practitioners is not considered brain drain, while that of specialists is.

¹⁴ Sudanese women now travel without the need for consent from a male guardian. But some destination countries impose restrictions. For example, to obtain residence permit in Saudi Arabia, a female must have a male guardian.

¹⁵ *Al-Ayam* Newspaper, Volume 9170, 29th July 2008. However, this figure (57,000) represents only those who registered their names with the Public Service Office. Many graduates either migrate or get employment in the private sector.

¹⁶ Nonetheless, the fact that medical institutions cannot absorb all physicians is not predicated on the capacities of these institutions alone. There is a problem in the distribution of both physicians and medical institutions in Sudan. While Khartoum and other major cities and towns are well covered, remote areas in the countryside are not.

on their own, except for those who migrate for reasons of study. Even here, i.e. migration for studies, males dominate. This was the case prior to 1989 where international migration was pursued for predominantly economic reasons. After 1989, highly-skilled migrants included other categories that are otherwise classified as refugees and asylum seekers. While traditionally Sudanese migrants went to the Gulf countries, in recent years new destinations have been added. Europe and the US are among the new destinations for highly-skilled Sudanese migrants (Assal 2004, Abusharaf 1997, 2002). Whether they are refugees or asylum seekers, they are highly skilled. Assal (2004) found that the overwhelming majority of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers in Norway had completed their college education before arriving in Norway. Indeed, many of them started postgraduate studies in Norway. While there is no empirical evidence for the conditions of Sudanese migrants in other European countries, one can assume a similar situation in these countries. The Sudanese also migrate to the US and Canada through established immigration policies (Canadian immigration policies and US diversity visa programme). By their nature, these programmes are selective and they mainly attract highly-skilled individuals, especially the Canadian system.

Institutional and policy framework

This section will assess the institutional and policy framework and its impact on highly- skilled migration trends. To start with, there is no single or coherent emigration policy in Sudan. There are many factors that lie behind this. Chief among these factors is the fact that there are many institutions that are entrusted with the regulation of external migration. The Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development, National Intelligence and Security, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs are some of the institutions that are part of the policy framework mechanisms for international migration.¹⁷ There are other institutions that are either autonomous bodies or subsidiaries and that are also part of the policy frameworks. One such institution is the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA). This section looks at how policies related to emigration are formulated.

The Ministry of Interior is the first institution that regulates international migration. The basic functions which the Ministry undertakes with regard to facilitating travel and emigration include the following: (1) issuing passports; (2) emergency travel documents; (3) exit visas¹⁸; (4) renewals of passports; and (5) the addition of children to the passports of their parents.¹⁹ The Passports, Immigration and Nationality Law came into effect in 1957 and continued until 1994 when a new law was introduced. The law specifies certain ports as entry and exit points through which departures and arrivals must pass. In other words, obtaining an exit visa alone is not always enough to leave the country.

The Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development oversees contractual matters for those who intend to work abroad. It certifies work contracts based on article (24) of the 1974 Labour Law. This law gives the right for anyone who wants to work abroad to register at the Ministry of Labour. Persons wishing to register must be 18 years or older. The documents needed for registration include a valid passport, experience credentials, birth certificate, and any other documents that are deemed necessary by the Ministry. Article (42) of Sudan's Interim Constitution of 2005 grants Sudanese citizens the right of travel inside and outside the country. The 1974 Labour Law also grants the same right. Here are some of the laws that regulate emigration:

¹⁷ Sometimes there are different departments or sections within the same ministry or institution that deal with emigration. For instance, the Ministry of Interior has many sections whose functions sometimes overlap

¹⁸ Sudan is among the very few countries that still apply exit visas. Obtaining an exit visa is a must for any Sudanese citizen who intends to travel abroad. For the Ministry of Interior, the exit visa is an important source of revenue. For instance, in 2007 the immigration authorities issued 416331 exit visas. In terms of money, this amounts to \$16.7 million per year.

¹⁹ In 2009, Sudan introduced the so-called "electronic or machine readable passports." Children can no longer be added to their parents' passports. Every child must have a separate passport.

- a. In 1979, the then President Jaafar Numeiri issued decree No. 781 on the basis of which the Central Administration for Expatriates Affairs was created. CAEA was part of the Council of Ministers and was under the supervision of the President.
- b. The Organization of Incentives of Sudanese Working Abroad Act was issued in 1986. This was followed by 1986 Compulsory National Contribution Act.
- c. The 1986 Act was nullified in 1989 and replaced with another act (with the same title as that of 1986)
- d. The 1989 Act was replaced with the 1993 Expatriates Act
- e. In 1998, the Organization of the Affairs of Sudanese Working Abroad Act was issued. This act nullified the previous ones and is currently in use.

The above laws and acts are meant to organize international migration. One apparent function of these acts is to guarantee that expatriates pay their stipulated national financial contributions, tax and *zakat*. These acts also talk about the rights of expatriates, but these rights remain vague. The word “incentive” mentioned in some of the Acts means that expatriates could obtain some privileges. However, any such privilege must be approved by the appropriate authority and the Minister of Finance.

Article (4) of the 1998 Act stipulated the establishment of the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA). The Act lists the following as functions of SSWA: (1) implementation of state policies with regard to international migration, in collaboration with other relevant institutions; (2) the organizing of the relationship between expatriates and the state; (3) responsibility for looking after the interests of expatriates inside and outside Sudan; (4) the development of the skills of expatriates; (5) the providing of recommendations with regard to policies pertaining to international migration; (6) a contribution to national gross product; and (7) any other objectives that might be appropriate. Articles (29) and (30) specified obligations and rights. Article (29a and b) stated that expatriates are obliged to pay “national contribution” and *zakat*.²⁰ Article (2) describes the rights which expatriates shall enjoy. These include custom exemptions to a certain limit, the right to general and higher education for their children, and entitlement to residential plots.²¹ Article (4) states that no expatriate will have their passport renewed or obtain an exit visa if he/she does not pay their national contribution and *zakat* as stipulated in Article (29).

These different Acts have problems. Some of the salient problems include: (1) a failure to tackle all issues related to international migration; (2) the fact that they are mainly concerned with ensuring expatriates’ financial contributions; and (3) the fact that they deal only with Sudanese expatriates registered at the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA). Generally, the different Acts were tailored to suit Sudanese expatriates in the Gulf countries, and are more about financial contributions than are about protecting the rights of expatriates.

One of the functions of SSWA is to curb undesired international migration. In general terms, however, the government in Sudan seems to encourage migration, particularly to the Gulf countries as international migration is one source of foreign currency. Yet, there are many policies that put burden on expatriates or generally any person who intends to travel abroad. Every Sudanese in the 18-49 age range is subjected to the so-called compulsory national service. While very few people actually perform their military service, everyone travelling will have to obtain a permit for clearance from the military. The permit is issued against a fee of SDG 90 for a single journey. Those who travel

²⁰ The national contribution is a lump sum levied on expatriates. Until 2005, expatriates were required to pay \$375 as an annual national contribution. In 2005, the Council of Ministers reduced this amount to \$100 *per annum*. For more information see (www.sswa.sd).

²¹ It must be noted that expatriates pay higher tuition fees for the education of their children.

frequently may obtain multiple permits. As with exit visas, these travel permits from the military represent a source of revenue for the Ministry of Defence.

Looking at the institutional policy environment, it can be said that institutional frameworks are not well structured or developed to effectively deal with highly-skilled migration. Rather there are bits and pieces of policies administered by different bodies that lack coordination and synergies. The lack of a coherent institutional framework results in poor data and poor planning with regard to highly-skilled migration.

Conclusions

Except for medical specialists and pharmacists, it is fair to say that the emigration of highly-skilled Sudanese nationals neither represents a loss to the Sudanese society nor a brain drain. Higher-educational policies adopted in the 1990s resulted in a substantial increase in universities and other higher-education institutions, as well as to a dramatic increase in the number of students in higher education institutions. The different higher educational institutions have supplied the labour market with an average of 100,000 graduates over the last 3 years. The Sudanese labour market cannot absorb these numbers and therefore international migration is one way for people to seek employment. Higher education in Sudan overproduces highly-skilled workers. The increase in the number of universities and student intake was a political decision that was not subjected to careful consideration. The prime reason for such an increase, besides being political, was financial. It is through the increase in students' intake that higher education institutions are able to run their programmes, in *lieu* of sufficient state funding. Thus, such increases are not a means to attain development or to serve the objective of producing the skilled workers needed for the local labour market.

There is a dearth of data on highly-skilled migrants in Sudan. In addition to the dearth of information, the data which exists suffers some gaps. For instance, the exact level of education is not mentioned for all highly skilled migrants. While there is categorization of highly-skilled migrants by profession (table 2), there was no mention of their education level, though it is possible to gauge this by looking at the professions of migrants. For instance, looking at university professors and legal professionals it is possible to find the level of education attained by persons comprising these categories. Moreover, information on highly-skilled migrants also lacks data on gender.

There is a gamut of institutions that deal with international migration, whether of skilled workers or other categories. Yet, there is lack of synergy between these different institutions. The Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Intelligence and Security, and the Secretariat of Sudanese Working Abroad are among the major institutions that deal with migration issues. In terms of policies, there are many laws that have been issued over the last three decades. These laws or acts mainly dealt with emigration issues or expatriate Sudanese. The 1998 Act is currently in use. The most recent policy action was the establishment in 2008 of the Higher Council for Migration. The council is chaired by the Vice President of Sudan. This is a new development in state policies toward migration. The council has yet to embark on programmes that can be looked at or evaluated.

While the article provided information on Sudan as a sending country, there is a need to look at the receiving end, particularly the Gulf countries. The data in the article reveal that Sudanese expatriates are concentrated in certain oil-producing countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Libya, United Arab Emirates and Qatar). Looking at the receiving end would be useful as the viability of emigration and particularly that of highly-skilled migration is contingent on a propitious policy environment in both sending and receiving countries.

A recent development is the emigration of highly-skilled Sudanese nationals to Europe and the United States. While migration to Europe and the US is often caused by political factors (most migrants to these destination are either refugees or asylum seekers), this does not exclude the fact that

they are highly skilled. This means that the boundaries between the different categories of migrants – on the basis of factors leading to migration – may not be useful or important, particularly if the focus is on the skills which people have; whether prior to or after migration. Given the analysis and arguments in the article, the following recommendations are offered:

1. There is need to streamline educational and development policies in Sudan. The increase in the number of both higher-educational institutions and students has meant so far brain waste. The numbers of students admitted to higher-education institutions needs to be reconsidered so as to match labour market and development needs;
2. There is need for a clear policy framework for migration. The establishment of the Higher Council for Migration is commendable.
3. To harmonize state policies, a single institution should be entrusted with issues of highly skilled or generally international migration.

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