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CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2010/61

Highly-Skilled Migration Series
Demographic and Economic Module



CARIM
Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration

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This publication is part of a series of papers on Highly-Skilled Migration written in the framework of the CARIM project and presented at a meeting organised in Florence: 'Highly-Skilled Migration into, through and from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa' (30 November – 1 December 2009).

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>.

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CARIM

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.

CARIM carries out the following activities:

- Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan migration database;
- Research and publications;
- Meetings of academics and between experts and policy makers;
- Migration Summer School;
- Outreach.

The activities of CARIM cover three aspects of international migration in the Region: economic and demographic, legal, and socio-political.

Results of the above activities are made available for public consultation through the website of the project: www.carim.org

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Abstract

This paper discusses the problem of the recent emigration of highly-skilled Sudanese citizens and sheds light on the mechanism that prompts such emigration. High levels of graduate unemployment coupled with the economic hardship that holds back the economy makes emigration the only alternative for the majority of graduates. As individual investment in education does not pay off in Sudan, and as higher education is still in demand, people get involved in higher education to equip themselves with skills that have viable market potential elsewhere in the world. Despite a consistent proportion of Sudanese emigrants being well educated (i.e. at least secondary education) most leave the country to be employed in low-skilled jobs. “Higher education for emigration” seems to represent the logo of those still demanding higher education and ready to pay for it and this likely represents one of the main challenges to be faced by the Sudanese higher-education system in the near future.

Résumé

Cette note analyse le problème récent de l'émigration des citoyens soudanais hautement qualifiés et met en lumière les mécanismes à l'origine de ce phénomène. L'émigration est en effet la seule alternative pour la majorité des diplômés devant faire face aux niveaux élevés de chômage et aux difficultés économiques. Comme l'investissement individuel dans l'éducation n'est pas rentable alors que l'enseignement supérieur est lui toujours en demande, les soudanais s'engagent donc dans l'enseignement supérieur en vue d'obtenir des compétences ayant un réel potentiel pour les marchés du travail étrangers. En dépit d'une proportion importante d'émigrants soudanais disposant au moins d'un diplôme secondaire, une majorité quitte le pays pour des emplois peu qualifiés dans les pays de destination. « L'enseignement supérieur en fonction de l'émigration » telle est désormais la devise des soudanais ayant les moyens de s'engager dans l'éducation supérieure. Par conséquent, ce phénomène représente probablement l'un des principaux défis du système d'enseignement supérieur soudanais.

Introduction

Sudan has a long and unusual experience of migration. The tendency to change residence for whatever reason has created a strong migration culture that reached its height in the 1980s and the 1990s, only to gain momentum again in the early 2000s. This long history of migration has created change in the structure and culture of Sudanese families in relation to migration. As to their profile, Sudanese migrants, especially emigrants are largely young and able-bodied males, educated to a level where they can make a living elsewhere on the world-labor market.

Push and pull factors for migration include the conventional factors of unemployment at home, strong employment opportunities abroad, political pressures at home and a strong desire to catch up with peers who have already made lives abroad. These reasons have long been known by the state but nothing concrete has been done to staunch the flow of emigrants, especially the flow of well-educated individuals.

The direction of emigration flows is also worth noting. Almost every country in the world has a Sudanese emigrant. Even Israel, a country with no diplomatic relations with Sudan, has received a number of Sudanese emigrants in recent years. And emigration shows no sign of slowing, at least not in the foreseeable future. It is true that some countries happened to receive more emigrants than others, but the receiving capacity of these countries seems to have reached its limit, especially in the Gulf.

Immigration, on the other hand, has its own story. Millions of Muslims live in West African countries. These Muslims have long made their pilgrimage to Mecca *via* Sudan. Some of them managed to proceed to Mecca but other have remained in Sudan becoming part of its population. Then there are too the socio-economic and political upheavals in the neighboring countries which have prompted neighboring populations to flood into Sudan to seek refuge. Climate change has also drawn migrants into Sudan from neighboring countries. Nor is there any sign of a halt to immigration.

As elsewhere in the developing world, scientific and reliable data on migration is scarce. Data scarcity and unreliability can be attributed to inadequate funding, lack of trained staff, deficiency in statistical coverage and a lack of periodicity in data collection processes. There is also an unfortunate overlap of responsibilities in the government units responsible for official data on migration. As a result of this overlap, a conflict over the official statistics on migration disseminated by the concerned Government units remains a fact of life. Nor is estimating the emigration stock of highly-skilled Sudanese abroad a trivial issue. The “number debate” has never ended either at an academic or at an official institutional level. Likewise, there is disagreement on whether the brain drain is beneficial to Sudan or not. Some scholars argue that brain drain as a labor phenomenon adds to the experience and skills of the emigrants, and that when they return home the country benefits from their experience and skills. Others argue that, on the contrary, the flux of emigrants has deprived many sectors in the economy of trained personnel causing damage especially to the health and education sectors. An increase in emigration over a short period of time in a country with a small modern labor market such as Sudan is bound to have a considerable impact (Birks et al. 1980). Here there is no easy remedy.

The present paper has a twofold objective: 1) to examine the size and pattern of Sudanese emigration focusing on highly-skilled emigrants; 2) to analyze the relationship between the Sudanese labor market and highly skilled migration.

Emigration from Sudan

Data on Sudanese emigration is usually obtained from the Bureau of the Sudanese Working Abroad (BSWA) and the Ministry of Labor and Administrative Reform (MLAR). These are government bodies entitled to collect data on emigrants.

According to the Ministry of Labor and Administrative Reform, the number of Sudanese emigrants residing abroad equaled 788,211 emigrants in 2009. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics allow to reconstruct the most important destinations for Sudanese workers in the period 2005-2007 (table 1).

Table 1- Stock of Sudanese labor emigrants by receiving country, 2005 - 2007

Receiving country	2005	2006	2007
Saudi Arabia	456,074	481,397	495,597
Iraq	51,843	52,105	52,220
Libya	52,445	55,007	55,640
United Arab Emirates	45,901	49,746	51,577
Yemen	19,352	19,442	19,491
Qatar	16,105	17,592	18,506
Bahrain	1,283	1,388	1,364
Jordan	1,296	1,388	1,440
Kuwait	8,525	8,919	9,116
Oman	6,437	6,802	6,960
Egypt	783	953	1,055
Lebanon	470	729	801
Syria	416	530	598
Morocco	40	47	47
Tunisia	30	32	33
Algeria	26	26	26
Palestine	1	2	2
Others Arab countries	-	2	4
Total Arab Countries	661,027	696,055	714,477
African countries	655	955	747
Asian countries	601	585	659
European countries	1,724	2,016	2,124
North America, Australia, and Latin America	822	898	1,140
Total	664,829	700,509	719,147

Source: The Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Year Book, 2007

In 2007, Saudi Arabia came top of the countries receiving Sudanese emigrants (68.9%) because of the ease of entering the country for Hajj and Umra. Libya also received many Sudanese emigrants (7.7%), since it has long and porous borders. Emigration to Libya started long before the discovery of oil in that country, with trade between Sudan and Libya down the Arba'een Road linking Sudan to Egypt, Libya and the Mediterranean. When oil was discovered in Libya, access to that country grew even more important. As a whole, emigration to the Gulf countries was a constant from the 1970s until the receiving countries changed policy by replacing Sudanese and Egyptians' workers with cheaper

labor from Asia. Recruitment of emigrants in the Gulf countries also became highly selective with only the highly-educated and highly-skilled being chosen. Emigration to the Gulf countries can be described as the first Grand Wave of Emigration, though these countries still represent the preferred destinations for Sudanese emigrants.

Furthermore, emigration to Europe, Americas and Australia was the Second Grand Wave of Emigration. Here, emigration was prompted by the need to gain higher education or permanent emigration via the American Lottery Program, in addition to political asylum.

However, recent data on Sudanese outflows in the period 2005-2008 confirm that, still today, a large majority continued to migrate towards Gulf countries (table 2).

Table 2- Annual Sudanese outward labor migration flows by receiving country, 2005 – 2008

Receiving country	2005	2006	2007	2008
Saudi Arabia	7,221	6,825	11,841	18,836
United Arab Emirates	805	777	1,050	2,060
Qatar	205	478	641	1,059
Oman	61	56	126	86
Kuwait	143	146	176	388
Bahrain	5	1	6	9
Yemen	1	3	7	2
Jordan	2	1	1	2
Japan	1	-	-	-
Lebanon	-	2	1	1
Libya	-	3	4	1
Ethiopia	-	8	-	-
Nigeria	-	2	-	-
Britain	-	-	1	-
other	3	-	-	-
Total	8,447	8,302	13,854	22,444

Source: The 2007 Yearbook (years 2005 – 2007) and the 2008 Strategic Report (year 2008), Sudanese Central Bureau of Statistics

Moreover, it is worth noting that in only 4 years, annual outward flows increased from 8,447 to 22,444 individuals (i.e. at an average annual growth rate of 55.2%). The reasons behind this increase can be found in the recent growth in unemployment levels, due to the inability of the productive sectors of the economy to absorb active labor, leading workers either to emigration or to be employed in the informal sector.

Highly-skilled emigrants

As to the educational characteristics of emigrants, according to the Bureau of the Sudanese Working Abroad, in 2009, 52.1% of Sudanese emigrants hold a secondary school certificate (32.8%) or above (19.3%).

Table 3 - Stock of Sudanese labor emigrants (*), 2009

Level of education	Number	%
Illiterate	23,703	11.3
Primary education	76,689	36.6
Secondary education and diplomas	68,856	32.8
University and above	40,501	19.3
Total	209,749	100.0

Notes: (*) figures exclude missing data and not applicable cases

Source: Bureau of the Sudanese Working Abroad (BSWA)

The quantitative importance of highly-skilled individuals (those with at least secondary education) among Sudanese emigrants can be attributed to increasing unemployment among youth, especially among well educated persons. A partial explanation of this phenomenon might be found in the expansion of educational services in the last two decades, which met no commensurate expansion in the productive sectors of the economy. Official figures from the Ministry of Labor and Administrative Reform show that the unemployment level has continuously risen in the last decade reaching 19.4% in 2007. As to the employment of highly-educated individuals, the picture is even more disappointing. For example, in 2006 the number of job-seeking graduates was 14,155, of whom only 4,280 found employment (30.2%), while in 2007, the number of graduates who sought employment reached 17,141 of whom only 3,882 found a job (22.6%). In 2008, 15,854 graduates were registered for employment and only 5,311 managed to find employment (33.5%).

As to their occupational profile (table 4), recent emigrants have left the country to be mainly employed in low skilled jobs, especially in the agriculture, animal husbandry and hunting sectors (60,2%) or employed as plant and machine operators and hand-craft workers (20,8%). Instead, only a few filled highly-skilled occupations, as professionals and scientists (7.2%) and managers, administrators or technicians (7.6%).

Table 4- Annual Sudanese outward labor migration flows by occupation, 2005 – 2008

Occupation	2005	2006	2007	2008
Managers and administrators	10	23	73	95
Professionals and scientists	293	520	691	1,617
Technicians	193	239	304	765
Clerks and accountants	111	133	199	399
Sale and service workers	462	167	1,227	499
Agriculture, animal husbandry and hunting	5,550	4,629	6,160	13,518
Hand-crafts workers	328	181	678	1,635
Plant and machine operators	758	458	3,497	3,039
Transportation work	-	1,047	-	-
Elementary work	742	905	1,025	877
Total	8,447	8,302	13,854	22,444

Source: The 2007 Yearbook (years 2005 – 2007) and the 2008 Strategic Report (year 2008), Sudanese Central Bureau of Statistics

So, while the Sudanese abroad include a high number of well-educated individuals, recent data on flows show that they tend, instead, to be employed in low skilled jobs and so as there is a substantial mismatch between acquired skills and occupation. “Higher education for emigration” seems to be the logo of those still demanding higher education and ready to pay for it and this likely represents one of the main challenges facing by the Sudanese higher education’s system in the near future.

Unemployment, education and highly-skilled emigration

As already mentioned, education plays a key role in unemployment issues. This is quite evident as, in most developing countries, the educational systems are only weakly connected to general planning institutions, especially the manpower planning institutions. Consequently it hardly becomes possible for educational planning bodies to formulate plans and policies that enable individuals to hold productive jobs and play productive roles after having completed a certain level of education. However, an economy, whatever philosophical persuasion it is founded on, has to base its production activities and technical, occupational and industrial jobs on its educational system and integrate education and employment if it is to produce the skills needed by the labor market and avoid shortage or surpluses in the labor force that results in unemployment or brain drain.

Presently the educational system output is largely unproductive, and there are many graduates holding specializations that are spurned by the local labor market. The educational system is today much concerned with the annual growth rate of graduates and the increasing social demand for higher education in a recessive economic environment.

The higher-educational system in Sudan has undergone dramatic changes since the 1990s. Before then education – at all levels – had been a free public service. With globalization knocking at the doors of the world economies including Sudan and Sudan privatizing, changes were made to this system.

The higher-educational system began in Sudan in the year 1906 with the opening of the Medical School, followed by the opening of the School of Science and Engineering, the Arts and Law School, and the Agriculture and Veterinary School. All these schools later merged into Khartoum University College. Parallel to these there was also provision for religious education. Since then higher-education institutions have grown, with five universities in 1989 not to mention a number of specialized colleges. In 1990 the State adopted the policy of increasing the absorptive capacity of these higher educational institutions by opening new government sponsored universities in almost all the states of Sudan, a policy that increased the number of government-run universities to 28 or to 32 including non-governmental universities and colleges. The absorptive capacity of all these universities and colleges was raised to 138,581 registered students in 2004 to jump further to 152,788 students in 2005.

As a consequence of the policy of expansion in higher education, the output of the higher-educational system has increased: the number of university degree holders rocketing to 506,048 graduates in 2000 or 2.1% of the total resident population and 6.2% of the labor force.

Impressively, in that year, the unemployment rate among university-degree holders was estimated at 32.0%. 8 years later, according to the 2008 Labor Force Survey, this rose to 48.7%. In the same year, the total unemployment rate equaled 15.4% reaching 28.4% for people aged 15-24. Indeed, it has been an economic and social problem related to expansion in the higher-education programs, the result of a lack of match between higher-education programs and employers’ needs.

Conclusion

It has been shown how data is conflicting, and the overlapping of responsibilities adds more imprecision to the already scarce statistics available. The reasons behind migration, i.e., the push and pull factors, are nothing but the conventional factors of unemployment at home, strong employment opportunities abroad, political pressures at home, and a strong desire to catch up with peers who have already made new lives abroad. It is amazing that these reasons have been well known in the state for many decades, but that nothing concrete has been done to stem the flow of emigrants, especially the brain drain component of that process.

Here, the profile of Sudanese emigrants and highly-skilled emigration patterns have been presented. It has been shown that highly-skilled individuals form a consistent part of Sudanese emigrants mainly because of the negative performance of the Sudanese labor market, where the well-educated have particular problems getting a job. However, the majority of Sudanese emigrants tend to leave the country to be employed in low-skilled jobs. Here, the issue between the conventional national spirit of “Higher education for development” and the individual aspiration of “Higher education for emigration” emerged strikingly and this is one of the main challenges for Sudan’s higher education’s system.

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