

# 10

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## Policing Irregular Migration in the West African Sub-region: Implications for Regional Integration

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### **Introduction**

The need for regional integration is borne out of a number of factors ranging from economic advancement to guaranteeing human rights and security. In the age of globalization, most countries embarked upon regional integration schemes in the belief that larger economic units would be better able to compete and participate in the world economy. However, some of the emergent policies on regional integration are faced with challenges in the new world order. Prominent among them is the effective management of migration of people across the sub-region as well as monitoring the activities of organized criminal networks operating along the borders. In the West African sub-region, the need for effective policing and regional cooperation is necessitated by the emergent economic and political challenges faced by countries in the sub-region. The aftermath of the Arab Springs presented some security challenges to the West African sub-region. This manifested in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons with attendant rise in the rate of armed robbery, insurgencies and terrorism. Armed resistance in Mali resulting from the activities of the radical Islamist Tuareg groups, is almost plunging the country into a civil war. In Nigeria, not long after the insurrection caused by the Niger Delta militants had been doused by the Amnesty Programme of the government, there are crises with Islamic terrorists from the northern parts. This group known as Boko Haram, is reputed to have links with terrorist groups outside the country like the Al Qaeda and Shabab. Reports have it that most of the trainings of the terrorists groups were held outside the country. Criminal activities involving pirates, kidnapping, human trafficking of especially women and children, drug peddling, illegal importation of goods, armed robbery, advanced fee fraud (also known as "419") and other trans-national criminal

networks are emerging from different parts of the sub-region. The borders across the sub-region tend to get more porous as most of these crimes are usually perpetrated despite several efforts to curb them. All these imply that there is the need to step up inter-country cooperation in form of information and intelligence sharing as far as migration management is concerned. This chapter therefore examines the implications of policing these challenges, which no doubt are fuelled by the changing migration configurations in the sub-region on the much needed regional integration. Other specific objectives of this chapter are to:

1. Analyse the challenges posed by irregular migration to the regional integration of the West African sub-region;
2. Discuss the various types of trans-border crimes in the sub-region with a view to understanding the role of irregular migration;
3. Examine the need for effective policing of aftermaths of changing migration configurations in the West African sub-region;
4. Assess the implications of the ECOWAS borderless pact for regional integration in the sub-region;
5. Discuss the implications of political instability and rising insurgences on the regional integration of the sub-region; and
6. Suggest appropriate strategies for harnessing the gains of regional integration through proactively addressing the challenges.

### **Irregular Migration: Conceptual Clarifications**

A number of definitions and modifications have been made over the years to what is to be described as irregular migration, with arguments and counter arguments as to why certain words could not be adequate to describe the phenomenon. Over the years, the phenomenon of irregular migration has been described by various scholars using different labels (Portes 1978; de Genova 2002; Espenshade 1995; Guild 2004; Baldwin-Edwards 2008; Triandafyllidou 2010; Cvajner and Sciortino 2010; Donato and Armenta 2011; Kubal 2012). Some of these labels include 'illegal migration', 'undocumented migration', 'unauthorized migration', and 'clandestine migration' among others. The various conceptual debates arose following different political and ideological viewpoints in conceiving these concepts. For instance, Koser (2005) criticized the use of 'illegal' to qualify migrants for the following reasons. First, the term 'illegal' connotes criminality and most irregular migrants are not criminals. This was corroborated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Non-Citizens, which recommended that countries of destination should not treat immigrants (even those without valid documents) as criminals. Second, since irregular migrants are humans with Fundamental Human Rights, irrespective of their status, defining them as illegal will therefore amount to denying their humanity (Guild 2010).

Methodologically, however, considering the fact that irregular migrants constitute a hard-to-reach population given their invisible nature, the subjects of most studies on irregular migration have been those who left the country without valid documents, mainly through human smuggling and trafficking, as well as undocumented migrants

trapped in the criminal justice systems of receiving countries. Incidentally, there seem not to be an end to the 'definition dilemma' as what constitutes irregular migration has continued to be the subject of controversy among legal and migration scholars. In the context of this chapter, irregular migration means the entering of a country's border without the possession of valid documents or the act of entering a country in violation of the migration norms of such country (De Haas 2007; Adepoju 2006). Notably, migrants with irregular status may include those who are in the destination countries in search of asylum or who have been displaced from their places of origin. Hence, for the purpose of this chapter, asylum seekers and refugees, who are denied entry and those who have either entered the countries of destination in violation of the norms of migration or those who entered legally but have overstayed their visas, are all categorized as irregular migrants. Amnesty International (2010) reported that in some countries, asylum seekers and other irregular migrants are treated the same way. Since this chapter addresses the issue of migration within the sub-region, the definition of irregular migrants will be those who contravene the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement. The law only allows citizens of ECOWAS member states to travel to any of the member states without a visa for an upward of 90 days. However, various studies have emerged to suggest that the free movement pact is responsible for the proliferation of human trafficking across the sub-region (Ehinderero and Idemudia 2006).

### **Responses to Irregular Migration**

The growing number of people who are involved in migration worldwide has made migration management a complex issue for managers, and, has become a real challenge to maintaining a satisfactory migration policy that could respond to all interests (Ikuteyijo 2013). On the global level, migration management continues to pose many challenges to different countries as people continue to move at the fastest rate recorded in human history. According to the United Nations, over 180 million people live outside their places of origin worldwide and this has its consequences. One such consequence is the increasing need for migration managers to be more scientific in their approach; unlike what obtained in the past, where the issue of human rights was relegated to the background. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that there were over 500,000 irregular migrants in the European Union (Stan 2006); and by the end of the 20th century, all developed nations had become countries of immigration (Massey 2003).

The increasing trend of irregular migration has presented many challenges in diverse ways to many countries, especially countries of destination. Arising from this increasing trend as well as the need to minimize the adverse consequences of irregular migration, countries of origin, transit and destination have engaged in constructive dialogues at international, regional, sub-regional and national levels to ensure that the benefits of migration are realized while the dangers are minimized. Adepoju and Van der Wiel (2010) have, however, noted that this awakening has

resulted in new initiatives and the adoption of common strategic frameworks and migration policies at all levels -- national, sub-regional and regional.

About half a century ago, many countries in West Africa unilaterally used mass expulsion as the major policy of managing migration. These policies of mass deportation and expulsion were actually aimed at specific nationals, who were 'labelled' as irregular migrants. At this period, migrants were used as scapegoats in the event of economic downturn and they were blamed for increasing rates of crime. Thus their expulsions were carried out under such excuses (Adepoju 2006). Adepoju (2005) captured some specific cases as follows:

1. In 1958, Ivory Coast expelled over 1,000 Benin and Togo nationals, while in the same year Chad expelled thousands of Benin nationals who were described as 'illegal migrants'.
2. In 1964, Ivory Coast expelled about 16,000 Beninese, while in 1968 Ghanaian fishermen were expelled from Sierra-Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast.
3. On December 1969, Ghana expelled all 'illegal aliens' without a valid residence permit and this exercise involved about half a million people mostly from Nigeria, Upper Volta and Niger.
4. In 1983 and 1985, there were mass expulsions of undocumented or irregular migrants from Nigeria. These migrants were accused of engaging in illegal activities such as begging and prostitution, besides not having legal migration documents. (Ikuteyijo 2013)

Unfortunately, the issue is not too different although there is growing awareness among various nations of the world on the need to manage migration, not unilaterally but in conjunction with identified countries of transit and destination (Ghosh 2000). For instance, in Nigeria, the attempt to manage the problem of irregular migration, especially that of human trafficking and child labour, was carried out in conjunction with countries like Italy and Spain (identified countries of destination) and the policies made were more bilateral or multilateral in nature as the case may be. Libya also enjoyed the support of some EU countries like Spain and Italy as a result of the realization of the fact that Libya had become a major transit country for migrants. In fact, a former Libyan leader (Ghaddafi) was once reported to have demanded a certain amount of money from the EU to help fight the problem of irregular migration. However, at the sub-regional level, response to irregular migration is mainly defined by the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, which unfortunately has not been adhered to by countries of destination in times of political crises and economic hardship. There is still an urgent need for migration managers in the sub-region to respect the human rights of migrants who pass through their borders. The idea of 'sacrificing' irregular migrants in times of economic hardship should cease and this can only be achieved when there is a formal forum to discuss migration management in the sub-region. Hence, Adepoju (2005) advocated a West African Dialogue on Migration Management for all stakeholders, where the media general

public would be enlightened in order to avoid the misrepresentations, ignorance and xenophobia that currently characterize response to irregular migration.

### **Trans-border Crimes as a Challenge to Regional Integration**

The regulation of activities across the borders of West African states is an essential factor in ensuring peace and stability as well as promoting the necessary political and socio-economic activities needed for regional integration in the sub-region. Inevitably, migration forms an essential part of these trans-border activities as people and goods often move from one country to another. The founding fathers of ECOWAS had, in their wisdom and in response to the need to facilitate free movement of goods and personnel across the sub-region, formulated the Protocol on Free Movement of persons, which was to pave way for economic integration in the ECOWAS community. However, the management of most borders in West Africa can best be described as shoddy and inadequate. This stems from both structural and human factors. Structurally, West African border control lacks the technical infrastructure and human resources needed to protect the borders. Likewise, the dilapidation of border control points is compounded by the dispiritedness of the security services personnel. They are generally poorly paid and feel isolated or unmotivated, without proper working tools or proper protection, for example, against attacks by criminals and cross-border traffickers (Fall 2005). This is evident in the inability of the Nigerian Immigration Service to stem/arrest the influx of Niger and other non-Nigerians involved in the Boko Haram insurgency which has embroiled the country for a while (Ikuteyijo 2013).

Addo (2006) attempted a categorization of trans-border crimes in the sub-region as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Classification of Trans-Border Crimes in West Africa

<b>Predominant Border Crimes</b>	<b>Country/Zones of activity</b>	<b>Groups/Actors involved</b>	<b>Transit states</b>	<b>Recipient states</b>
Narcotics/drug trafficking	Cape Verde, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo	Narcotics/drug dealers	Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria	Spain, Portugal, U.S.A., South Africa
Internet Crime (Advance fee fraud/money Laundering)	Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, Sierra Leone	Advance fee fraud gangs or syndicates/wealthy business men or government officials	Syndicates commute from Western parts of West Africa (Senegal) across to the Eastern parts (Benin/Nigeria)	Nigeria and other countries where 419 fraudsters are resident
Human trafficking	All across West Africa but mainly around Benin/Nigeria and Cote D'Ivoire/Burkina Faso	Traffickers who serve sometimes as middlemen, trade and business partners	Mainly Ghana and Sierra Leone	Other West African countries, North America and Middle East
Firearms Trafficking	Ghana/Togo/Benin/Nigeria/Sierra Leone/Liberia/Guinea/Cote D'Ivoire,	Rebels/local manufacturers of firearms and middlemen	Togo/Benin/Guinea Bissau and Gambia	Nigeria/Liberia/Guinea/Sierra Leone/ Cote D'Ivoire,

Trans-border crimes in the sub-region could be discussed as follows:

### **Human Trafficking and Child Labour in the West African Sub-region**

Human trafficking is the second highest world crime after illegal arms transactions. It has also been described as the modern form of human slavery which, like the old form, involves the trading of humans as commodities with no regard for their fundamental human rights. The United Nations estimates that 2.5 million people are in forced labour (including sexual exploitation) at any time as a result of trafficking (International Labour Organization [ILO] 2007; Goldin *et al* 2011). There are two main types of trafficking: internal and international trafficking. While internal trafficking takes place within the borders of a country, international trafficking involves movement of victims across national borders.

The human and economic costs of human trafficking are enormous on individuals and communities. According to conservative estimates, the cost of trafficking in terms of underpayment of wages and recruitment fees is over \$20 billion (ILO 2009:2; World Bank 2010:1). Besides the economic costs, it also involves criminality and human rights implications. The most publicised aspects of human trafficking are sex trafficking and child labour. Children are also being incorporated into the sex tourism industry. The United Nations' Children Emergency Funds estimated that about 1.2 million children are trafficked each year (UNICEF 2003). The victims of trafficking (mostly women and children) are often either kidnapped or lured from their home by traffickers under various guises like securing employment or pursuing educational advancement (UNODC 2009; Goldin *et al* 2011).

The involvement of African countries in the global human trafficking network is raising serious concerns as most African countries constitute one or more of source, transit and destination countries for trafficked victims. In the Horn of Africa, human trafficking is exacerbated by the natural and human induced catastrophes that have threatened peace and stability in the region (Manian 2010:13). Victims of human trafficking in the region often undergo dual victimization arising from the conflict in the environment as well as the exploitation of their bodies and human rights.

Lastly, in southern Africa, human trafficking is rampant in three main countries, namely: South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Human trafficking is thriving in South Africa as a result of: poverty, child and female oppression, limited border security and sexual myths. In southern Africa, human trafficking takes various forms including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery and domestic servitude (World Bank 2010). The National Prosecution Authority of South Africa (2010:iv) identified four major streams of human trafficking flows in South Africa which are: trafficking to South Africa from outside Africa; trafficking to South Africa from within Africa; trafficking within the national borders of South Africa; and trafficking that uses South Africa as a transit point to other countries. In West Africa, Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal have been identified as source, transit, and destination countries for trafficked women and children (Adepoju 2005:92). There is an established network of traffickers who run the business around the West African hub. The major source/

origin countries for child labour are Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Togo, while the major countries of origin for prostitution are Nigeria and Togo (Anarfi 1998; Adepoju 2005:78). Apart from the hubs within the sub-region, traffickers also 'export' children and young women to some countries in Europe and the Gulf States (Taylor 2002; ILO 2003; Human Rights Watch 2003; De Haas 2008:32). In fact, De Haas (2008) noted that out of the 27,000 migrants apprehended by Moroccan police in 2004, over half were of West African origin, with most migrants coming from the Gambia, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal, respectively. Human trafficking in East Africa is dominated by Uganda and Kenya as source and transit countries for women working as prostitutes in the Gulf States (Adepoju 2005:78). There are established syndicates run by foreign businessmen, who specialise in trafficking young girls to Europe. Edo and Delta States in Nigeria are particularly notorious for the trafficking of young females for the purpose of sexual slavery in Europe and even in some other parts of the continent. Available evidence shows that there are established syndicates that are usually organized across countries, especially in the West African sub-region (Adepoju 2005; Ikuteyijo 2013).

### **Proliferation of Small Arms**

Another trans-border crime in the West African sub-region is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Darkwa (2011:13) identified three main sources of SALW within the West African sub-region namely: 'extant stocks that are recycled; new imports, which may include brand-new weapons and ammunition as well as used weapons recycled from outside the sub-region; and local craft production in countries of the sub-region'. Over the years in different countries in the sub-region, where there have been insurrections against the government, the use of SALW have been prominent and this likewise helped in sustaining the proliferation. Incidentally, attempts by both ECOWAS and the United Nations to restore peace to some of the troubled zones inadvertently led to the further proliferation of SALW. Some scholars have submitted that soldiers on peacekeeping missions became active agents in the circulation of SALW. While some soldiers were rounded up and disarmed by insurgent groups like RUF, others deliberately sold their weapons in exchange for survival in the battle field (Leighton 2000; Berman 2001; Darkwa 2011).

The circulation of SALW is exacerbated by the porous nature and inadequate management of most of the borders in the sub-region. Addo (2006) noted that the porous borders engender cross-border crime and instability in the sub-region due to the lack of an appropriate mechanism for monitoring movement and illegal activities across borders. For instance, Nigeria, one of the most prominent countries in the sub-region, has 770 kilometres of shared land border with the Republic of Benin; about 1,500 kilometres with the Republic of the Niger; 1,700 kilometres with Cameroon; and 90 kilometres with Chad. This is different from the 850 kilometres of maritime border which the country has with the Atlantic Ocean (Yacubu 2005). Naturally, it is a big challenge to adequately man all these borders, as the country's immigration service does not have the staff strength needed to do that. Besides size

of borders, some countries in the sub-region find it difficult to finance border security; hence their borders have become hotspots for organized criminal gangs. For instance, the security officials of Mali and Senegal worked for months without payment because of the states' inability to fund the joint patrol of their borders (Ndime 2005). Scholars have identified some factors that encourage the proliferation of arms and ammunition. These include, *inter alia*, the rise of ethnic militarism, religious crises, inter-tribal conflicts, insurrection and terrorism, and political violence (Yacubu 2005). Moreover, small arms are ubiquitous in that they are cheap, easy to transport and conceal, simple to maintain and easy to handle.

In an attempt to curb the circulation of illicit weapons in the sub-region, ECOWAS has made a number of efforts. For example, in 1998, ECOWAS member states adopted a Declaration of the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation, and Manufacture of Light Weapons in Abuja (Addo 2006). Likewise in 2006, the ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP) was established to build the capacities of member states in combating the proliferation and illegal circulation of small arms in West Africa (ECOSAP Webpage, cited in Darkwa 2011). However, some of the challenges facing the actualization of the laudable goals of these policies are numerous. One of these is the lack of institutional capacity to train security sector personnel and law enforcement agencies on the mechanisms for addressing small arms proliferation (ECOSAP Annual Report 2010; Darkwa 2011). Another challenge is that ECOWAS member states lack the technological equipment needed to combat such proliferation in the sub-region. For example, metal detectors are either absent or in short supply at points of entry into several countries in West Africa. Furthermore, several airports as well as seaports in the sub-region lack scanners, which are essential for the detection of contraband goods, including weapons concealed in luggage. This shortage of equipment is compounded by the lack of spare parts and; supporting infrastructure, and the dependence on external sources of supply. Lastly, the porous nature of most borders in the sub-region coupled with official corruption among customs and immigration officials make it easy for smugglers to circulate SALW in the sub-region.

### **Political Instability and Terrorism as Threats to Regional Integration**

It is common knowledge that many countries in West Africa are vulnerable to terrorist operations. Poor governance is linked to terrorism because in the absence of good governance, corruption, organized crime and poverty proliferate (Trosper 2009). The West African sub-region is constituted by countries which have had their fair share in terms of political instability. Out of the sixteen countries that make up ECOWAS, only Cape Verde has not had a military putsch. From 1962 to 2003, the other fifteen states in the sub-region have had military coup d'états. Successive governments have always accused their predecessors of gross financial misappropriation and administrative indiscipline. The clamour for the control of resources has bred all forms of misgivings among various segments (usually along ethnic and religious lines) who believe they have been short-changed. One of the



indications of the threats of terrorism and political instability in the sub-region is the outbreak and consequences of civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire; the Tuareg revolts in Niger and Mali; and the insurgency in Nigeria's Niger Delta and some of the states in the north. In Nigeria, for example, the Niger Delta was engulfed in crises for some time due to what some observers described as marginalization and environmental degradation. It took the insurgencies of some militant groups to attract the attention of the government to the plight of the residents. The militias who employed the use of sophisticated weapons, which in some cases outmatched the fire power of the country's security forces, resorted to kidnapping of oil workers and sabotage of oil pipelines as well as illegal oil bunkering. Apparently, what began as an agitation for the equitable distribution of the oil wealth of the Niger Delta, snowballed into a criminal dimension (Darkwa 2011). Nigeria's economy was the worst hit at the peak of the crises as the insurgency caused the country almost 30% loss of her daily production and expected oil revenues. Not long after the Niger Delta crises had subsided and political power shifted from the north to the south, the northern part of the country also took over the baton of insurrection as some groups accused the ruling government of discrimination and launched attacks on government installations as well as non-indigenes, especially members of other religions. The inglorious Boko Haram group, which initially began with campaigns against western education, was hijacked by politicians and the nation is yet to recover from the rubble.

Apparently, insurgencies across the West African sub-region, coupled with the porous borders and limited resources to control them, provide an opportunity for terrorist groups to expand their communication and training and to export their terrorist schemes, thereby increasing regional instability. Investigations have shown that there were links between the Boko Haram and the Al Qaeda group in the Maghreb as some car bombs detonated by Boko Haram militants in the aftermaths of the UN House bombing bore signature elements of the improvised explosives used by the Qaeda offshoot in the Sahel. The forensic evidence shows that the group may have shared its tactics and techniques with the Nigerian terrorist organization. Furthermore, there were reports that the war in Mali is affecting the operations of some of these terrorist groups, prominent among which are the Boko Haram. In Mali, many of the Tuaregs currently fighting in the rebellion were reported to have received training from the late Gadhafi's Islamic Legion during his tenure in Libya. Therefore many of the combatants are experienced with a variety of warfare techniques that have posed major problems to the national governments of Mali and Niger.

The scattered evidence support the need for an effective monitoring of the borders in the sub-region. This could involve the coordinated training of border managers in order to increase the professionalization, enhance interagency communication and expand the capacity of the police and other security agencies to more effectively prevent and respond to terrorist attacks. Furthermore, countries in the sub-region should enact legislations to deal with the recent development of

terrorism and not rely on some of their criminal laws, which are apparently inadequate to address the new trend of crime.

### **ECOWAS Borderless Pact and Implications for Regional Integration**

In order to actualize the ECOWAS borderless pact whose main objective is to facilitate the free movement of citizens of member states across the sub-region, the heads of state of ECOWAS member countries at a meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in March 2000 agreed to create a borderless sub-region after the mode of the Schengen pact. It was also agreed at the meeting that rigid border formulations would be eliminated and the use of passport scanning machines would be introduced as part of border procedures. Furthermore, the numerous roadblocks and security checkpoints on highways across countries were to be dismantled to avoid delays and extortion of passengers. In the area of security, there were to be joint border patrols involving neighbouring countries like Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso. There was to be a closer working relationship between police and internal security agencies in terms of the exchange of ideas and intelligence sharing. All these were to be precluded by intensive advocacy in terms of awareness campaign among immigration and customs officials in the affected states (Adepoju 2005). The borderless policy of ECOWAS has, however, been challenged by several factors among which are socio-economic developments across member states leading to diverse reactions, hence altering the migration configurations of the sub-region.

The diversity of economic groupings with varied objectives, markets size, structure and membership also meant that different interests were being pursued by member states. At the same time, the wavering political support, political instability and inter-state border disputes among member states also affected the pact. For instance, the border disputes between Mauritania and Senegal, and Ghana and Togo, resulting in the expulsion of community citizens were in contradiction of the Protocol of Free Movement. The division of the sub-region along colonial heritage created a kind of supremacy battle among the Francophone and Anglophone countries. The persistent economic downturn facing member states affected their ability to pursue consistent macro-economic policies as well as the funding of cooperation unions. There is also the problem of arriving at common tariff regimes since there are about eight odd currencies in use in the sub-region, with the exception of CFA Franc which unites the francophone countries. There are rising rates of poverty and unemployment among member states, poor transport network with railways having different track systems and norms. Cross-border trade often assumes informal nature since it is often unrecorded due to corrupt practices among customs and immigration officials. Some member states sabotaged the free movement pact at various points in time. For instance, in 1999, Mauritania indicated to pull out of the group and withdrew her membership in June 2000. Cape Verde was on the verge of pulling out just before the coup d'état in that country, which changed the course of events. Also, in 2004, Liberia threatened to expel some foreign residents from member state's describing them as irregular migrants. Other challenges to the

free movement pact include xenophobia in some countries, e.g., the activities of touts, corrupt customs and immigration officials in Cote d'Ivoire, who make travelling across borders difficult and expensive. In response to some of these challenges, especially those relating to issues on migration management, ECOWAS came up with some policies with the following objectives:

- Information and awareness campaigns for potential migrants on the dangers of irregular migration and smuggling networks;
- Cooperation between ECOWAS Member States with regard to controlling clandestine migration and dismantling the mafia-like networks;
- Cooperation between ECOWAS Member States in collaboration with host countries with a view to combating clandestine migration;
- Cooperation with host countries to provide logistics and funding for voluntarily returning migrants in transit countries and countries of origin;
- Affirmation of the principle of the return of clandestine migrants respecting their dignity and fundamental human rights;
- Implementation by ECOWAS Member States, of measures enabling the reinsertion of irregular migrants upon their return;
- Development of technical and financial cooperation with ECOWAS Member States in the area of managing emergency situations with regard to irregular migration;
- Compliance with international commitments made by Member States regarding migration (ECOWAS 2007).

However, to what extent these laudable objectives are attained has been the subject of much controversy. The current state of events still makes the ECOWAS Free movement pact, which is a core aspect of the regional integration, a far cry from what obtains in the European Union.

### **The Way Forward**

The need to urgently review developments in the sub-region is essential if the much-talked-about integration is to be possible. To this end, a number of initiatives and resources will have to be put together by policy makers in the sub-region.

#### ***Information Sharing and Policing Cooperation***

There is an absolute need for a regional approach to policing and information sharing. Attempts should be made to undertake cooperative research and information sharing between countries of origin and destination. It is also important for law enforcement agencies in destination countries to share information on socio-demographics of trafficked persons as well as smuggling routes with agencies in countries of origin. The extent of cooperation among terrorist groups in the continent coupled with the advantage of globalization requires that a regional approach be used in policing the migration of people. There is the need therefore, to reinforce joint patrols and establish a Joint Task Force to be known as ECOPOL with the main objective of

granting national law enforcement authorities access to relevant information (such as DNA and fingerprint and other migrants' databases).

### ***Checking the Excesses of Customs and Immigration Officials***

Law enforcement agents at the points of entry and exit need to be given adequate enlightenment on the benefits of the integration plan as well as the bad image which corrupt practices can give to the region. However, this will require that such agents be well motivated and equipped for the task. Law enforcement agents should also be updated with modern techniques of combating innovative criminal acts like cybercrime, money laundering and other evolving trans-national crimes.

### ***Involvement of Civil Society Groups***

To ensure a reliable response to the challenges of migration across the sub-region, there is the need for a systemic approach by which governments at the national and regional levels will collaborate with civil society groups in managing the challenges of migration-related crimes across the sub-region. A very good example is in the area of controlling the menace of human trafficking, especially of women and children. Research has shown that victims of trafficking cooperate better with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) than law enforcement agents in terms of rehabilitation and repatriation (Ikuteyijo 2013).

### ***Promoting Good Governance***

ECOWAS should also ensure that good governance is their hallmark in all member states. The peer review mechanism by which member states will set minimum benchmarks for heads of state in terms of delivering the dividends of governance to the citizens should be encouraged. This will checkmate possible abuse of power by incumbents and allow for a fair distribution of resources among the diverse conglomeration of ethnic and religious interests represented in the sub-region.

### ***Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies***

Since the creation of ECOWAS, there have been many laudable goals of the founding fathers which are yet to be implemented. Others were initiated but abandoned by successive administrations. There is therefore the need to have ways of monitoring and evaluating these policies so as to justify the human and financial resources expended in putting them together. This can be achieved by establishing research and documentation institutes in reputable universities in each member state.

### ***Support of Cross-country Research***

There should be more cutting-edge research efforts between researchers in origin and destination countries that focus on, for example, ethnographic studies of trafficked victims in order to have a more systemic perspective of the phenomenon. Above all, channels of communication between countries of destination and origin must be

established and reinforced, and information sharing in form of research findings will form a major component of cooperation.

### ***Infrastructural Development at Border Areas***

Efforts should be made by relevant government agencies to strengthen the policy of provision of social amenities and infrastructure in border areas. This will be in the form of infrastructure like schools, hospitals, electricity and portable water, in order to gain the trust of the communities and secure their support for government policies.

### ***Personal Identification and Migration Database***

Lastly, there is the need to revamp the moribund national identification schemes of most member states to ensure that there is a database for the monitoring of citizens in the sub-region. Subsequently, the identification exercise will be extended to the regional level.

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