

Kabran Aristide Djane

During the colonial era, migration patterns were drastically altered by the imposition of forced labour systems and the rise of urban and industrial centres

Interview conducted by **Adebusuyi Isaac Adeniran** *

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Dr. Kabran Aristide Djane is a renowned Sociologist specializing in regional migration, environmental sociology and sustainable development. He is an Associate Professor at Université Peleforo Gon Coulibaly (UPGC) in Korhogo (Cote d'Ivoire) and also the co-editor of the Revue Africaine de Migration et Environnement. Beyond academia, Dr. Djane has held leadership roles, including Head of Inter-University Cooperation and External Relations at UPGC, and has been a pivotal figure in professional networks such as the UNESCO Chair on Anticipation, Prospective, and Sustainable Territories and the Climate Mobility Research Network in Africa.

Adebusuyi Isaac Adeniran (AIA): What is the history of migration of Africans within Africa?

Kabran Aristide Djane (KAD): Migration within Africa has deep historical roots shaped by economic, social, and environmental factors. In pre-colonial times, migration was integral to trade, agriculture, and survival. The trans-Saharan trade routes facilitated the exchange of goods, cultures, and ideas, while pastoralist communities migrated seasonally in search of grazing land and water. The Bantu migrations, among the most significant in African history, saw the movement of Bantu-speaking peoples from West-Central Africa to East and Southern Africa in search of fertile land and better living conditions.

During the colonial era, migration patterns were drastically altered by the imposition of forced labour systems and the rise of urban and industrial centres.

Policies driven by colonial exploitation compelled people to migrate to mines, plantations, and emerging cities like Johannesburg and Lagos. This era also introduced artificial borders, disrupting traditional migration routes and creating new challenges for communities divided by colonial boundaries. Today, migration within Africa continues to reflect historical patterns, shaped by urbanization, economic opportunities, and regional integration efforts. Understanding this history highlights the resilience and adaptability of African communities in navigating changing socio-economic and environmental realities.

AIA: What about the Ivory Coast experiences with West Africans?

KAD: Côte d'Ivoire has been a significant destination for labour migration in West Africa, particularly during the cocoa and coffee booms of the mid-20th century.

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The country's agricultural prosperity attracted workers from neighbouring nations such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea, who sought employment opportunities in its farms and urban centres. This migration was further facilitated by President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's policy of "open borders," which promoted regional integration and made Côte d'Ivoire a key hub for West African migrants seeking economic opportunities.

AIA: What are the reasons for growing trend of intra African migration?

KAD: The growing trend of intra-African migration is driven by several factors. Economic opportunities in regions like West and Southern Africa attract migrants seeking better livelihoods. For example, South Africa's mining and industrial sectors have drawn workers from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, while Ghana's gold mines and burgeoning oil industry attract migrants from Burkina Faso and other neighbouring countries. Regional integration initiatives, such as ECOWAS's free movement protocol, have facilitated cross-border migration, enabling traders and workers from Nigeria to freely access markets in countries like Benin and Togo.

Environmental factors, including climate change and desertification, have displaced communities, particularly in the Sahel region. For instance, farmers from Chad and Niger, facing declining agricultural yields, often migrate to cities like Kano in Nigeria or fertile areas in Côte d'Ivoire for better opportunities. Urbanization across the continent has also created job prospects. Expanding cities such as Lagos, Nairobi, and Johannesburg are magnets for migrants, offering employment in industries like construction, technology, and services.

Conflict and political instability in regions like the Horn of Africa and parts of the Sahel have pushed many to migrate in search of safety. For instance, ongoing violence in South Sudan has led refugees to seek asylum in Uganda and Kenya, while the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has displaced thousands, with many seeking refuge in Cameroon and Chad. These examples illustrate the diverse and interconnected reasons behind the rising trend of intra-African migration.

AIA: What are the benefits of African internal migration to African development and progress?

KAD: African internal migration offers numerous benefits to the continent's development and progress. Economically, migrants contribute labour, skills, and entrepreneurship that stimulate local economies. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, migrants from Burkina Faso play a crucial role in the cocoa and coffee industries, which are vital to the country's economy. Migrants also facilitate knowledge exchange by sharing skills, technologies, and cultural practices, enhancing innovation. A notable example is the spread of agricultural techniques and trade practices among East African nations through regional labour mobility. Cultural integration is another significant benefit, as migration fosters cross-cultural understanding and regional solidarity. For instance, the movement of people within ECOWAS member states has promoted cultural exchange and cooperation between countries like Ghana and Nigeria. Migration also helps reduce inequalities as migrants send remittances back to their home countries, supporting families and boosting local economies. For example, remittances from Kenyan migrants working

in neighbouring Uganda significantly support rural development projects in their communities of origin. In host communities, migrants often fill labour shortages, support agricultural sectors, and drive urbanization. In South Africa, Zimbabwean migrants contribute to the agricultural sector by providing labour in commercial farming. Similarly, the influx of migrants to cities like Nairobi has spurred urbanization and economic activities, contributing to the overall development of these areas. These examples highlight the transformative potential of African internal migration for the continent's economic, social, and cultural progress.

AIA: What do you think the world, especially Europe, stands to gain from increasing African migration in Africa?

KAD: Increasing African migration within Africa provides significant benefits to the world, especially Europe. By fostering economic opportunities and stability within Africa, it reduces the pressure for irregular migration to Europe, easing social tensions and security concerns. For example, the growth of industries in Nigeria and South Africa keeps more skilled workers within the continent, limiting the push factors for migration to Europe. A thriving, mobile African workforce also strengthens intra-African trade and creates more robust economies, which serve as valuable trading partners for Europe. For instance, the success of regional economic blocs like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) boosts markets that European businesses can engage with.

Migrants also contribute to addressing environmental challenges by adopting sustainable practices, such as clima-

te-resilient farming in countries like Kenya, which has positive global ecological impacts. Finally, migration fosters global cultural exchange, enriching diversity and mutual understanding. For example, African cuisine, music, and art influence European culture through migration networks, showcasing the interconnected benefits of Africa's internal mobility to the wider world.

AIA: Thank you. Any other contributions?

KAD: Governments and regional bodies must enhance frameworks for safe and legal migration to ensure orderly and beneficial movement within Africa. For example, ECOWAS has implemented protocols to ease cross-border migration and protect migrants' rights in West Africa.

Investment in education and training programs for migrants equips them with the skills needed to contribute effectively to development. Initiatives like Kenya's youth empowerment programs, which focus on technical skills, illustrate the potential of such investments. Diasporas also play a crucial role by providing resources and advocating for migrants' rights. For instance, the Nigerian diaspora has significantly contributed to development through remittances and lobbying for better migration policies. Encouraging sustainable urbanization is vital for accommodating migration-driven growth in cities while protecting the environment. Projects like Rwanda's eco-friendly urban planning in Kigali demonstrate how cities can adapt to growing populations sustainably. These strategies collectively enhance the positive impact of migration on African development.