

## **Internal Migration and The Challenges of Food Security in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Food is an indispensable component of human existence. However, the concern for food security has continued to pose a great challenge to the entire globe, with worsening effect on developing countries including Nigeria. This paper, therefore, examines internal migration and the challenges of food security in Nigeria. The paper argues that population growth has become one of the greatest demographic challenges in Nigeria which has contributed to internal migration, with attendant conflicts of interests, which have resulted in physical crises on daily basis, especially, the issue of Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers. The paper also looks at internal migration of the youth from the rural to the urban areas as a consequence of population growth. The rural-urban migration of youth in search of greener pastures has led to competition for food and other valuable resources at the destination region; it has also brought about shortage of labour force at the source region. The paper, therefore, recommends that government should bring together stakeholders to formulate policies and laws which will state the scope and limits of migrants and punish infringers of such laws; curb migration from rural areas through investment in rural development in areas of electrification, industries, health, water resources, education; and provide entrepreneurship education at all levels to encourage self-sufficiency among the youth in the country.

**Key words:** Conflict, Food Access, Food Availability, Food Security, Internal Migration, Population growth.

### **Introduction**

Food is very essential to man and the concern over food security has continued to rise throughout history, especially with increasing population growth. As acknowledged by National Research Council (1993), the rate of increase in human population across the globe has been persistent since 1800. This perhaps, engendered debate on population problems which focused on what could be the optimum size and its impact on economic growth and development. In the view of the neo-classical economist, Thomas Malthus

(1803), ‘the power of population is indefinitely greater than the resources on earth to provide the needed subsistence for mankind’. While it could not be concluded on the universal applicability of the Malthusian theory in industrial countries due to technological advances, which led to increase in agricultural production that ensured food security for the citizens, the conditions in many developing countries validate his claim (Olofin, 1999).

According to the National Population Commission (2004), Nigeria has one of the fastest growing populations in the world with annual growth rate of 2.9 percent. In 1963, the population was 56 million people which rose to 88.5 million in 1991 and further to 140 million in 2006. The World Bank (2012) estimates the population of Nigerian to be above 160 million people, the largest in Africa, almost accounting for 47% of West Africa’s total population. Today that the population of Nigeria has risen to about 190 million, the country’s demand for food has increased, while the ability to produce food continue to diminish. According to FAO, IFAD and WFP (2013), Nigeria has an energy intake of 1730Kcal and an average protein supply of 64g capita per day far below the 2500 – 3400Kcal minimum recommended daily intake per day. This shows that Nigeria is facing the challenge of unbalanced diet leading to various deficiency symptoms. Also among the 109 countries assessed by Global Food Security Index (GFSI) (2015), Nigeria is 91<sup>st</sup> with 37.1 score based on indices of affordability, availability, quality and safety. With the increasing shortage of food and other valuable resources, people have resorted to migration as a means of improving their living standards.

Migration is either international or internal. However, the focus of this discourse is on internal migration. According to Hopkins (2006), internal migration is the geographic movement of people across a specified boundary for the purpose of establishing a new permanent or semi-permanent residence. Internal migration in Nigeria is either between one state, local government or region and the other. As noted by Braunvan (2004), internal migration takes different forms, rural-urban, urban-rural, rural-rural and urban-urban which redistributes population. As a result of urban pool (availability of electricity, job

opportunities, education, availability of goods and services) youths migrate to urban more than other areas within the migration zones. Youth rural-urban migration has both positive and negative effects. However, the negative effects, which include brain drain, shortage of manpower and subsequent low agricultural productivity, seem to be the dominant factors.

Food security challenge has been a critical issue of human concern, with the increasing internal migration as a consequence of population growth and scarcity of resources. As Bakare (2017) emphasizes, mass migration of young school leavers from the rural communities to the cities, has left behind old and tired hands to engage in farming. The implication of the above is the food shortage that is the contemporary problem in Nigeria. Although people migrate with the main intention of meeting basic life needs, latent consequences, including labour force shortage in the area of agriculture at the source region, and competition for food, shelter and other basic resources at the destination region is prevalent. These competitions sometimes metamorphose into physical conflicts, which have become common challenges of internal migration in Nigeria in recent times, with obvious consequence of food insecurity. Supporting the above view, Okpiliya, Ekong and Imoke (2013) assert that conflict is a common daily occurrence among individuals, groups and communities in Nigeria. The causes of these conflicts are commonly associated with agitation for land, food and other economic resources. An instance of this is the Fulani migrants whose violent activities tend to be more noticeable recently in some North Central and South-Eastern states like Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Imo, among others. This has, no doubt, affected the output of crops, which are especially coming from the North; the region relied mainly upon for the provision of foodstuffs and fruits in the country. It is quite challenging that during the planting season in 2017, farmers in the affected areas were afraid of going to their farms to cultivate their farmlands for fear of being attacked by herdsmen. This paper, therefore, explores forms of internal migration: rural-urban, urban-rural, rural-rural and urban-urban, which have contributed to food insecurity, especially

due to manpower shortage in the area of agriculture and conflict creations that have hindered agricultural activities.

### **The concept of internal migration**

Hughes and Kroehler (2009) have defined migration as the movement of people from one geographical location to another involving permanent or temporary settlement. It is the geographic movement of people across a specified boundary for the purpose of establishing a new permanent or semi-permanent residence (Hopkins, 2006). The region where people are leaving is referred to as the source region, whereas the region to which people are entering is known as destination region. They further maintain that both push factors—that encourage people to leave a habitat they already occupy; and pull factors—that attract people to a new habitat are factors that prompt migration. Before people actually migrate, they usually compare the relative opportunities offered by the current and the anticipated habitats. If the balance is on the side of the anticipated habitat, they typically migrate unless prevented from doing so by government action, immigration quotas, lack of financial resources, or some other compelling barriers. Both push and pull factors are contributing to the entry into Nigeria of large numbers of illegal immigrants from around the world. However, FAO, IFAD and WFP (2013) noted that both the causes and consequences of migration are multifaceted and complicated. While many people leave their homes as a result of conflict or poverty, others move under conditions of peace, political stability and development. People may also leave to study, reunite with family members, or with plan to find work and financially support their families back home. Few studies seem to support the often-heard hypothesis that migrants are attracted to cities in search of better entertainment or "bright lights" (Easterlin, 1980).

According to International Organization for Migration (2014), Migration, whether internal or international, has a profound effect on economic development, which could be negative or positive. For instance:

- a. Brain drain occurs when significant number of highly skilled individuals leave their places of origin or countries of origin to seek employment or establish businesses abroad. It has a negative effect on the economies of developing countries, because the skills of the remaining nationals are not sufficient to grow industries, academia and other sectors of the economy.
- b. Brain waste occurs when skilled migrants engage in menial occupations abroad, resulting in deskilling.
- c. Brain gain can be achieved through the return of individuals who gained skills abroad through temporary migration.

Internal migration refers to human migration within one geopolitical entity, usually a nation. In this case, internal migration means the movement of people from other geographical locations to Benue State. An instance of this is the movement of an Hausa person from Katsina State to a new settlement in Benue State. Not only has this form of migration altered the spatial distribution of population, it sits alongside births, deaths, and international migration in shaping population change. But as the first demographic transition runs its course and as spatial differentials in vital rates diminish, internal migration plays an increasingly important role. Analysis of the drivers and dynamics of internal migration is critical to understanding the progressive shifts in the pattern of human settlement across the globe (Rees, Bell, Kupiszewski, Kupiszewska, Ueffing, Bernard, Edwards and Stillwell, 2017).

Migrants obviously move for many reasons. The notion that migrants often move to gain access to a higher income stream has a very long history in the economic literature. Sjaastad (1962) formalized this idea by hypothesizing that whether an individual's decision to move is influenced by the present value of the difference in income streams between alternative locations, minus any initial or subsequent, financial or psychic costs of moving. To the extent that costs are incurred at an early stage, migration is then a form of investment. One common corollary, drawn from this human capital model of migration is

an explanation for the higher rate of migration amongst the young. Todaro (1969) offers a simple but powerful hypothesis. The essential idea is that urban jobs are more attractive than rural employment; entry to the better urban activities is somehow constrained; and search for urban job openings can be more effectively conducted in close geographical proximity. As a result, urban migration is induced as an investment in job search for the attractive, urban opportunities.

### **The Concept of food security**

There is no consensus definition of the concept of food security and the concept is multifaceted implying that food security varies over time and space. In whatever way you define it is not the main concern here, the concern should be how access to food can be achieved and sustained either at household level, community level or nationally. Kolawale, 1989, cited in Muktar (2011) defined food security as the entitlement of individual's of a country to food at a relative ease of access and at affordable prices. Food and Agricultural Organization, (1999) defines food security as existing, when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe nutritious food to maintain a healthy active life. The concept of food security is defined as including both physical and economic access to food that meets people's needs as well as their food preferences. According to World Health Organization cited in indianonlinepages.com (2013), food security is built on three pillars:

- i. **Food access:** Having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
- ii. **Food availability:** Sufficient quantities of food available on a consistent basis;
- iii. **Food use:** appropriate use based on the knowledge of basic nutrition and care as well as adequate water and sanitation.

From the following, we can deduce that a qualitative and quantitative presence of food without accessibility and affordability for use is not food security. The problem facing the world at large is how to meet a sustainable food balance so as to keep pace with unprecedented increase in demand and at the same time meet sustainable development.

Some of the factors that contribute to food problems globally are population growth and rise in income of developing countries (FAO, 2000). The problem however is not that food production is outstripped by population, the problem is where the food is produced, who produced it and who command it. In most cases, people suffer from starvation and malnutrition, not just because there is no food, but lacks the money with which to own their share. A household is considered food secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. According to FAO (2000), there are two popular definitions of food security used by the UN's (United Nations) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active healthy life. The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies) (USDA, 2008). However, food security challenges are those factors that inhibit the attainment of adequate and sustainable food needed to provide the people with the energy and nutrients for fully productive lives.

### **Internal migration and food security in Nigeria**

Migration is an inevitable part of human existence, with a long history. Migration effort is stemmed from the desire to search for a greener pasture. To Braun (2004) people tend to be pulled to areas of prosperity and pushed from areas of decline. Migrants are usually concerned with the benefits they hope to gain by moving and usually give less thought to the problems that they will incur as a result of the migration process. The relationship between migration and food security cannot be easily captured by the measure. For example, migration can be an important strategy for households to cope with the risk of hunger. Research suggests that households with members missing meals and anxious

about access to food, decreasing quality and quantity of food, were more likely to decide that an adult migrates in search of employment to support better lives for themselves and the family (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2013). FAO, IFAD and WFP (2013) further report that when poor rural households are concerned about food security, they are most likely to decide that an adult should seasonally migrate in search of employment to reduce the family's risk of hunger and extreme poverty. The report recognizes the benefits associated with migration when it states that remittances from migrants can help alleviate poverty and food security and promote investments in local economic opportunities.

The above does not give migration a pass mark as remedy for food security because it has been recognized from time immemorial that man's search for food and better welfare is the beginning of conflict in the society. Thus, in the analysis of the society, Marx (1968) critically reviews the Hegelian philosophy of right, which appeared in 1844 and supported that material (economic) life conditions of social, political and intellectual life process in general. In the words of Marx, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being determine their consciousness" (Marx, 1968, p181). He opines that in the course of food production, man enters into a relationship that is contradictory and conflictual. Sustaining this view, Usen (2008) avers that the existence and endurance of conflicts are best explained in terms of economics because people in conflict are perceived to be fighting over something material. These changes according to Bredal and Malone, quoted in Usen (2008) represent at the most basic level, a contest for control over economic assets, resources and system. Conflict is an existing state of disagreement or hostility between two or more people (Nicholson, 1992). By this, it means two or more parties do not have an accord and are as such on two different parallels on the same issue. It thus suggests the pursuit of incompatible goals. Put differently, conflict means collision course; it also refers to opposition to existing view, stand, or position. It is, therefore, clear from the view of Marx that people migrate with positive intention (to acquire basic resources for themselves and family), but the positive intentions are



sometimes marred by unintended consequences associated with conflicts of interests that sometimes result in physical crises.

The 2006 Population and Housing Census revealed that more than 10 percent of Nigerians are life time migrants or live in states other than their states of birth. People born in Ogun, Kwara, Osun and Imo are the most migratory, with more than 20 per cent living in other states. The Internal Migration Survey conducted by the National Population Commission in 2010 revealed that 23 per cent of the sampled population of Nigerians are migrants, having changed residence within 10 years, and 2 per cent are return migrants. This shows that large number of Nigeria's population is on the move internally. These migratory flows are mostly influenced by a desire for better economic prospects and social facilities. The survey indicated that about 60 per cent of internal migrants reside in urban areas, with obvious consequences on socio-economic infrastructures in the urban areas (International Organization for Migration, 2014).

In time past, herdsmen and farmers used to have a reasonably symbiotic relationship. While the cattle served as means of transportation for daily goods as well as manure to fertilize the fields for farmers; the herdsmen in turn obtained grains and other farm produce from the farmers. Bakare (2017) however with the expansion of farming activities, a huge demand for farmlands drastically reduce supply of grazing lands, with flocks of cattle frequently encroaching upon already cultivated fields to the chagrin of farmers. This, indeed to him, is a major source of unending friction between the two groups. It is, however, unfortunate that these frictions are not being properly checked by the government, until they escalate into crises to the point that most of the farmers flee out of their communities to neighbouring villages, abandoning their agriculture and other economic activities in their villages. This has been the major cause of food shortage and insecurity in the country.

As observed by Bakare (2017) in Jigawa State alone, more than 70 cases of conflicts have been recorded since the beginning of the 2015 farming season. These cases bordered

on encroachment into farms by cattle and farmers' misuse of cattle routes. The situation is not different in Nasarawa and Benue States, the food baskets of the nation, as Fulani herdsmen and farmers persistently engage in feuds that often result in serious casualties on both sides. While farmers accuse the herdsmen of farm land encroachment, the latter blame the farmers and members of their communities for rustling and killing of their cattle.

Conflict and insecurity occasioned by internal migration is not, however, the only cause of food insecurity in Nigeria; other forms of migration, particularly the rural urban migration, is a major cause of food insecurity in Nigeria. As Anticamara, Watson, Gelchu and Pauly (2011) assert, before the advent of colonial rule in 1900 and the discovery of oil in the 70s, Nigeria's economy relied majorly on agriculture and was doing very well based on agriculture and trading across the borders of the country. Nigeria had enough food both for the sustenance of its population and export trade. From the 70s when crude oil was first discovered till today, there has been a diminishing return in agricultural produce as major attention has been directed towards oil exploration and its revenue generation. More attention was given to crude oil, and there was a gradual abandonment of agriculture for urban life, and to share in the national cake. This has led to increased hunger and poverty. They emphasize that, recently, the problem of malnourishment exists at an increasing pace in Nigeria and many other countries of the world.

In most rural areas, the impact of rural-urban migration is rapid deterioration of the rural economy leading to chronic poverty and food insecurity. Reduction in agricultural productivity is occasioned by massive rural-urban migration by youths living only old, senile men and women (Jalloh, 2010). According to Mini (2001) the impoverishment of rural areas in Nigeria is partly explainable by migration of able-bodied youths in search of white collar jobs in the cities. Agriculture which was the mainstay of Nigeria's economy prior to the discovery of oil has been relegated to the background leading to the country's mono-economy status. The impact of rural-urban migration is indeed a rapid deterioration of the rural economy, leading to chronic poverty and food insecurity. The urban, on the

other hand, is characterized by scarcity of food and other economic resources; there is high competition for the limited resources, including food, shelter, jobs and other opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

Food security is a current global challenge, with worsening effect on developing countries. Population growth in developing countries is usually not marched with technological advancements required to aid industrial development, food production as well as provide job opportunities and other basic requirements of man. In Nigeria, internal migration is a common means by which people search for greener pastures. Nevertheless, conflicts usually ensue at the instance of food and employment search, especially among certain groups such as the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. During such conflicts, farmers flee from their communities and abandon farming activities. Apart from the above, the migration of able-bodied youths especially from the rural areas to the urban areas in search of white collar jobs has resulted in the low food productivity and food insecurity.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations have been made

1. The issues of security should be a concern for all; but the government should take it more seriously, as it is shouldered with the responsibility of protecting its people. Stakeholders should come together to formulate policies and laws that will state the scope and limits of migrants and punish infringers of such laws.
2. Government should curb migration from rural areas in Nigeria by investing in rural development- electrification, citing of cottage industries, agro-allied industries, health, water resources, education etc. They should embark on sustainable agriculture, climate change adaptation and resilient livelihoods, and encourage companies and individuals to invest in rural areas.

3. Governments at all levels should provide lands, seedlings, mechanized infrastructure and easy access to loan so as to encourage young and unemployed school leavers to embrace farming. It is important that all stakeholders rise up to the occasion by ensuring that more resources are committed into the agriculture sector, rather than paying lip services to the issue of agriculture.
4. Government should take the issue of technological development seriously to enhance rapid industrial and infrastructural development. This will not only help reduce overdependence on government for jobs. It also will enhance the comfort of the people, irrespective of whether they live in rural or urban environment.
5. Entrepreneurship education at all levels should be appropriately implemented to increase the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills by school leavers and graduates, especially those residing in the urban areas to remedy the rate of unemployment and anti-social behaviours among the youths in the country.

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