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Post-Tana Regional Multi-Stakeholder Forum

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Gorée Institute, Dakar



Migration, Peace and Security: What Role for CSOs?

Outcomes Report



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Introduction

On 9-10 October 2019, the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), and the Gorée Institute jointly organized a two-day multi-stakeholder dialogue on the theme “Migration, Peace and Security: What Role for CSOs”. The forum, held on Gorée Island, Senegal, attracted over 40 participants from civil society, government, academia, and international and regional organizations in 10 countries.

Participants recognized that the location of the Post-Tana Forum on Gorée Island was symbolic of the important historical legacy of migration in and out of Africa. The Tana Forum was commended as a symbol of African intellectual independence, and the organization of dialogue foras such as the Post-Tana Forum was appreciated as a useful space for key organizations such as ECOWAS to discuss and develop substantive knowledge and policies on migration.

Background

The Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa (Tana Forum) aims at bridging the gap between policy making and policy implementation by bringing together Heads of State and Government, experts, prominent personalities, leaders of international and regional institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector, eminent scholars, academics and socially engaged youth to discuss timely

issues in a spirit of commonality and moral duty towards finding solutions to peace and security challenges facing the continent. The informal nature of the Forum lends a different approach to discussing security issues on the continent. The Forum is not intended to deliver official declarations; instead, it is stimulated by the desire to engage in fresh, candid and in-depth discussions on pressing peace and security issues to produce innovative ideas and open new windows of opportunities for solutions.

In its 8th edition, the Tana Forum discussed “Political Dynamics in the Horn of Africa: Nurturing the Emerging Peace Trends” on 3-4 May 2019 in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. National and regional stability in the Horn of Africa (HoA) is of paramount importance to the region’s peace and security agenda, serving as vital components of sustainable development objectives across the region. Among the various topics raised and discussed, the situation regarding migration and free movement of people in Africa and beyond emerged as an issue that requires deeper discussions and engagement with civil society institutions.

This was the backdrop to the dialogue, which aimed to garner experiences and perspectives from CSOs and stakeholders active in this field.



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Objectives

The dialogue sought to explore migration and free movement of people in the nexus of regional integration, address the pros and cons of this discourse, and recommend practical operable recommendations for the AU, Member States, RECs/RMs and other stakeholders working on migration, peace and security.

The specific objectives of the forum were to:

- Assess the situation of migration and displacement in Africa and challenges posed;
- Discuss strategic approaches that protect the human rights of migrants and refugees in countries of destination, transit, and origin;
- Identify the critical role of CSOs on the topic.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

A. Current Status of Migration and Displacement in Africa

1. The panellists discussed the political economy that creates structural factors conducive to migration. Dating back to the slave trade and colonial history to the modern-day era of globalization and neoliberalism, the current imbalance in global trade relations is furthered by African elites who lack the political will to keep African resources and talents within the continent. In order to reverse this trend, bilateral and multilateral relationships should focus on African ownership over the exploitation of resources and industrialization.
2. Identifying both push factors (such as unemployment, climate change, insecurity and armed conflict) and pull factors (such as political stability, favourable economic and climatic conditions and attractive migration policies) is key to regulating and managing migration efficiently.
3. Migration is a cross-cutting issue relevant to a majority of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The main references to migration are found in Goal 8 and Goal 10, which aim to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth” and “reduce inequality within and among countries” respectively.¹ Safe and free migration and movement greatly contributes to closing the widening inequality divide by abiding to the SDG principle of “leaving no one behind.”
4. Adhering to multilateral frameworks and implementing them at the national level is necessary to target push and pull factors in a holistic way. One example is the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Child Trafficking in West Africa, adopted by 11 ECOWAS member states in 2005.² In Côte d'Ivoire, this has translated into promising initiatives resulting from collaboration with CSOs, such as advocacy campaigns informing the youth on the risks of migration, programmes to support the return of migrants, and the introduction of new laws such as compulsory education.
5. Furthermore, national efforts should be increasingly coordinated with neighbouring countries to find common approaches to migration. This requires strong political leadership and regional integration.
6. While migration is often portrayed negatively, it is a natural phenomenon that brings benefits when adequately managed and organized. Civil society actors should highlight the positive aspects of migration in order to contribute to the development of new policies that support migrants' contributions to society.
7. The role of civil society organizations is to engage in advocacy, accountability and action. They have the unique ability to equip citizens with the necessary knowledge to hold governments accountable for the use of their taxes, and to push for more inclusive exploitation of national resources. To allow CSOs to play these roles, states have the responsibility to make civic space more conducive.
8. While CSOs are often associated with confrontation, activism and advocacy against government policies, they can also benefit from increased professionalization, clearer mandates, and closer collaboration with the state.
9. Finally, in order to better engage with the government on migration issues, CSOs should use social media efficiently and constantly engage with the government's online platforms.

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

² https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Trafficking/Dakar_Saddikh_Niass_en.pdf

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B. Strategic Governance Approaches to Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

1. At the continental level, the development of legal frameworks and multilateral agreements is crucial for the regulation of migration. However, challenges remain in the implementation of these policies by national governments. Civil society actors should increase citizens' knowledge of existing legal frameworks in order to encourage implementation.
2. While European countries impose strict visa requirements to cross their borders, most African states do not reciprocate. While participants noted the differences in ease of travel and mobility between African and Western countries, they also acknowledged the potentially harmful impact of reciprocation policies on tourism.
3. The Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, contains provisions that require host states to support and protect migrants.³ However, African states are not harmonized in their efforts to push the EU to abide by them. More enforcement and coordination is needed for migrants to benefit from existing regulations.
4. The African diaspora is recognized by the AU as the sixth region in Africa. Remittances should not be the only link connecting diaspora Africans to the continent; they should enjoy the advantages of social, political and economic integration. Policies aiming to improve diaspora ties to the continent are difficult to develop, because of the private and largely intangible nature of diaspora links with home countries.
5. How can migration accelerate economic growth, especially through trade relations? The adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) is an opportunity to collectively provide and ensure peace and security on the continent on the path to integration. While the agreement provides the AU with a powerful instrument to regulate the circulation of goods and services, migration is still not adequately included in the process. In particular, the January 2018 Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons has yet to be ratified by a majority of signatories (as of July 2019, the Protocol had 32 signatories and 4 ratifications).⁴ The success of the AfCFTA will depend on the response to the current status of migration, particularly the high numbers of refugees and displaced persons.

6. The lack of measures to protect people from transnational crime and human trafficking further exposes migrants to human rights violations due to their vulnerability. Moreover, the recent cases of xenophobic violence on the continent prove how the wrong perception of migrants by a host community can lead to loss of lives and also inaccurate assumptions such as migrants taking local jobs or engaging in crime.
7. At the national level in most African countries, migration is not addressed as a priority issue, but rather as a transversal problem addressed by uncoordinated state bodies. This prevents the development of long-term and proactive policies. One exception is Morocco, which has a comprehensive migration policy with a specific allocated budget.
8. Regional initiatives based on best practice sharing (such as the RECOSA project involving Morocco, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal)⁵ are promising, but they are not fully implemented at the state level. This prevents the development of harmonized migration strategies at the regional level.
9. Data is key in managing migration, as the lack of reliable data (particularly statistics disaggregated by age and gender) can negatively influence policy making by failing to reflect the realities of vulnerable populations. There is a need to collect reliable data at the national level in order to base migration policies on credible evidence. Currently, most data collection is conducted through global surveys that lack accuracy, even though African countries have the resources and skills to collect their own migration data. AfroBarometer, a research network that measures public attitudes in Africa, provides rigorous and invaluable insight into Africans' motivations to leave their countries. For example, the most preferred destination of potential African emigrants is within their region (29%) or elsewhere in Africa (7%). Europe is the second most preferred destination at 27%, followed by North America (22%).⁶

C. Migration and Free Movement of People in the Nexus of Peace and Security: What Role for CSOs?

1. The dominant media narrative that Africans are "flooding" to Europe is false and misleading. In fact, statistics show that 80% of African migration occurs within the continent.⁷ In addition, regions seeing the most movement are not necessarily the most unstable, and factors other than migration account for insecurity in those regions. CSOs have the comparative advantage to change the narrative of African migration; and they must strive to do so.

³ http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/namibia/documents/eu_namibia/cotonou-agreement_en.pdf

⁴ <https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36403-sl-PROTOCOL%20TO%20THE%20TREATY%20ESTABLISHING%20THE%20AFRICAN%20ECONOMIC%20COMMUNITY%20RELAT...pdf>

⁵ <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/42563.html>

⁶ http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r7_dispatchno288_looking_for_opportunity_africans_views_on_emigration1.pdf

⁷ <https://qz.com/africa/1550885/at-least-80-of-african-migrants-never-leave-the-continent-but-the-focus-is-on-europe/>

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2. It was noted that African countries should not copy migration policies from the West that promote strict border control. Instead, regional blocs should have a collective vision and contextualized approach to the type of migration policies they want to see in place.
3. Regional integration is critical to migration efforts. Civil society organizations have been working directly with ECOWAS on several migration initiatives such as assisting migrants with settlement and job searches in destination countries, developing early warning systems, implementing advocacy campaigns, and ensuring ample security is provided in border areas.
4. At the community level, CSOs have a key role to play: their proximity to local populations means they have access to critical information that decision makers can use, such as quantitative data on which areas need social services and gender disparities. Community dialogue facilitators have also been used to intervene in the prevention of conflict and violent extremism, and to strengthen social cohesion in communities.
5. CSOs can also bring added value to social mediation, documentation and research, and legal support in order to build migrant capacities, increase their awareness of the rule of law, and inform them of their rights in transit or destination countries.
6. While inter-African trade may appear weak based on published statistics, there is a lot of movement on the ground that is not captured in official figures. A closer examination reveals the difficulties faced by informal traders. African women who conduct trade, for instance, disproportionately face general insecurity and harassment by police and customs officials in these corridors.
7. The number of young people in Africa is significantly growing each year. 10-12 million people enter the job market every year, yet only 3.1 million jobs are available.⁸ In addition, capital cities in Africa receive the majority of development and investment, this should be balanced to prevent overcrowding and other effects of overpopulation. In response to this surge, there is a need to revise education strategies and training programmes, and provide start up capital to address the real needs of youth. If students are trained for relevant sectors, they will have fewer reasons to leave the country.
8. Preference should also be given to local companies when awarding infrastructure projects and processing raw materials in order for them to participate in the country's development through the transfer of technology and expertise. Local companies should also receive equitable tax and fiscal treatment to foster development. What's lacking is the political will.

D. Role of CSOs in the Security Agenda in Africa

1. Civil society, government and development actors tend to work in silos, with government usually going to CSOs after making decisions, not before or during the decision making process. More policy dialogue is needed to achieve harmonious development.
2. There is also a need to take into account the new dimensions of migration and security by focusing more on human safety. For instance, mechanisms should be developed to specifically protect children, who are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.
3. For women, migration is a means to increase their income, be empowered, and access an environment with less barriers to gender equality. However, female migrants are also exposed to intimidation, discrimination, sexual exploitation, xenophobia, and poor and unsafe work conditions. The gender dimension of migration and security should thus be taken into account. For instance, the ECOWAS Women's Network is undertaking initiatives to empower female traders and encourage measures such as introducing safer customs searches for women, advocating for more female customs staff, and informing women traders of their rights in the ECOWAS space.
4. There is a communication gap between different stakeholders (CSOs, diaspora, communities, government institutions) that creates mistrust in their relations with one another. Strategic partnerships are needed to ensure inclusiveness and participation at all levels.
5. More tripartite dialogue is also needed between the government, civil society and development actors. For instance, governments and development actors can coordinate to improve regional security by sending troops to sensitize border communities about their cross-border activities. Civil society can sensitize migrants on the importance of their economic, social and political inclusion in the host community for their own security.
6. Governments must create mechanisms for grassroots-level civil society to be involved in the country's development. They need to be included and consulted from the beginning, including during the policy design stage. For instance, parliamentary hearings can include CSOs during debates on cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights, the environment) where civil society has a comparative advantage.
7. Civil society produces substantial knowledge and research that supports decision making. Research and action-research should be encouraged and financially supported to ensure sustained contributions to research and policy making.

⁸ https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Images/high_5s/Job_youth_Africa_Job_youth_Africa.pdf

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Conclusion

Migration is a growing concern both on the continent and globally, and more engagements and discussions are necessary to overcome the associated security risks and threats. Governments alone do not have the answers; all actors must play a role. Academia, research institutions, civil society and the media must all be involved. In particular, governments should work in tandem with civil society by leaning on their expertise in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

As actors at the grassroots level, civil society is expected to monitor and advocate for the implementation of regional and international instruments agreed to by their governments. However, holding governments accountable is insufficient; African governments should also collectively

consolidate their positions in order to strengthen their negotiations at the global level.

After the presentation of key takeaways, the ECOWAS representative suggested translating the recommendations into a summary roadmap with detailed proposals for regional and national organizations to consider.



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List of Participants

Mr.	Abdoulaye Illiassou	Researcher	Institute for Security Studies	Senegal
Mr.	Abdourahmane Wane	National Coordinator, Migration for Development Programme	GIZ Office Dakar	Senegal
Gen.	Amadou Anta Gueye	Executive Director	Centre des Hautes Etudes de Défense et de Sécurité (CHEDS)	
Col.	Babacar Diouf	Special Advisor to the General Director	Centre des Hautes Etudes de Défense et de Sécurité (CHEDS)	Senegal
Mr.	Babacar Ndiaye		Freelance	Senegal
Mr.	Bara Amar		Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD)	Senegal
Dr.	Chukwuemeka B. Eze	Director	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)	Ghana
Mrs.	Diago Diagne Ndiaye	President	Network on Peace and Security for Women in the ECOWAS Region (NOPSWECO)	Senegal
Mr.	Doudou Dia	Executive Director	Gorée Institute	Senegal
Dr.	Ebrima Sall	Executive Director	Trust Africa	Senegal
Dr.	Edem Selormey	Field Operations Manager for West, East and North Africa	Afrobarometer	Ghana
Mrs.	Elise Ford	Director of Peacebuilding Portfolio	Humanity United	USA
Mr.	François Traoré	Senior Officer, West and North Africa, CSO Engagement	African Development Bank Group	Ivory Coast
Mrs.	Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane	Director	African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP)	Senegal
Mr.	Kawsu Sillah	Executive Secretary	African Youth Commission	Gambia
Dr.	Koffi Dela Kepomey Fofa	Executive Director	Concertation Nationale de la Société Civile (CNSC)	Togo
Mr.	Komlan Messi	Director	West Africa Civil Society Forum (FACSOFF)	
Dr.	Marie-Paule Kodjo	President	NGO Playdo-CI	Côte d'Ivoire
Mrs.	Marlene Urscheler	Human Rights Officer	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	Switzerland
Ms.	Mbathio Samb	Assistant Research Officer	African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP)	Senegal
Mrs.	Michelle Ndiaye	Director, Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP) and Head of the Tana Forum Secretariat	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Mr.	Moussa Fara Diop	Commissioner	African Youth Commission, AJP	Senegal
Prof.	Ndioro Ndiaye	President		
Mr.	Papa Alassane Mbaye	Communication Officer	African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP)	Senegal
Mrs.	Patrice Desbonnes	Migration Liaison Officer	EU Delegation Office Dakar	Senegal
Mrs.	R. Khady Sow		Trust Africa	Senegal
Mrs.	Sophie Ndiaye Sy		Groupe de Travail Femmes, Jeunes, Paix et Sécurité en Afrique de l'Ouest et au Sahel (GTFJPS-AOS)	Senegal

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Ms.	Sophie Nonnemacher	Deputy Director	International Organization for Migration (IOM) Senegal	Senegal
H.E.	Tei Konzi	Commissioner for Trade, Customs and Free Movement of Persons	Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	Nigeria
Dr.	Yonas Adaye Adeto	Director	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Ms.	Lettie Longwe	Programme Management and Institutional Development Team Leader	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Ms.	Seble Mulugeta	Administrative Manager, Support to Research and Training of the African Union	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Mr.	Endeshaw Tafa	Finance Officer Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP)	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Ms.	Michelle Muita	Content Coordinator, Africa Peace and Security Programme (APSP)	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Ms.	Chedine Tazi	Researcher Peace and Security Reports Unit (PSRU)	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Ms.	Rubiyat Mohammed	Coordinator, Policy Dialogues	Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	Ethiopia
Ms.	Sokhna Ndiaye	Coordinator program peace building and conflict prevention	Goree Institute	Senegal
Ms.	Safietou Mbodi-Teral	Manager	Goree Institute	Senegal
Ms.	Dieynaba Thiane	Chargee de la Relation Client, Département Teral	Goree Institute	Senegal
Ms.	Maguette Ndiaye	Chargee de l'organisation des seminars	Goree Institute	Senegal
Mr.	Mbathio Samb	Responsable adjointe de recherche / Assistant Research Officer	Institute for Economic Development and Planning	Senegal