



Cross-Border Migrants' Integration in Rural Border Communities of South-West Nigeria

POPOOLA Kehinde Olayinka

Department of Urban and Regional Planning,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Abstract:

The study examined Cross border migrants' integration in rural border communities of Ogun and Oyo States, South-West Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used for the survey. The sample size was determined by a snowball sampling technique and a total of 173 duly completed questionnaires administered to the household heads in each sampled household were used.

It was discovered in the study that many of the migrants were from neighbouring Benin Republic. Also majority of the respondents were males. Most of the cross border migrants were still in their active working age (21-50years) while many had no basic education, a good number of them were farmers. The migrants migrated because of bad economic condition in their country of origin. Many of the migrants rented their houses and land. Majority preferred marrying among themselves. None of the respondents have legal stay and majority still aspire to go back to their country of origin. All these are indications of low level of migrants' integration in the RBC of SW Nigeria. This study concluded that the identified socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the migrants are relevant factors for consideration in planning for the integration of migrants in RBC of SW Nigeria.

Keywords: Migration, Cross border migration, Integration, Rural border communities.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is described as a purposeful geographical movement of people towards areas where industry and employment are available (Haider, 2010). In recent times, migration has become a global issue and currently one of the major forces shaping the world (Phillimore et al 2008). Globally and regionally, there is the prosperous region and the lagging region but people are generally more attracted to the prosperous area. The factors; pull or push factor, responsible for the movement could be positive or negative. People migrate not only within their country of origin but also beyond their country of origin. However, the act of any movement from one country to another irrespective of its length, composition and causes is termed cross border migration (Economic Community of West African State-Sahel and West Africa Club ECOWAS-SWAC 2006).

According to Centre for Social Protection (CSP) Research Report (2011), migrants are seen as newly added members of the society and they must be integrated into the society so that they can enjoy the same rights and benefits as the local residents. However, when people migrate, they are not properly integrated into the host community. They face numerous settling challenges in the receiving countries and communities after migrating. Weeks, (1999) noted that migrants face lots of challenges in their receiving countries like: greater expenses, difficulties in: getting jobs, accessing services and learning new Language. In Nigeria, majority of these migrants (74.1%) are nationals from neighbouring Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with nationals from Benin (29%), Ghana (22%) and Mali (16%) representing the most numerous immigrants' nationalities in the country. (Development Research Centre on Migration (DRC), 2007). The reason for this might not be far-fetched from the illegal means of entrance into the country and the porosity of Nigerian borders which made it possible for the unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries and this has major negative implications for the country (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012).

Aside the negative implications and impression everybody have about cross border migrants, they also have their own positive contribution to the receiving countries. The significance and impacts of migrants in receiving countries has been recognized and established by many authors (Briggs, 1994; Willits and Luloff, 1995; Hugo, 2005; Jentsch, 2007; McCollum, 2011; OECD, 2014). Migrants in rural border communities contribute to repopulating the areas, enhancing the provision and sustainability of social services, increasing labour and food security and also revitalizing the economies of the host communities. This is because most rural areas have been known to be depopulated as a result of migration of young people to urban areas, low birth rates and an ageing population, neglect and under development (Jentsch, 2007).

United Nations (2013) emphasized the protection of migrants' rights in destination countries. The policy states that; *"there should be fairly broad series of right to all migrants and members of their families, irrespective of their migratory status"*. These rights include; entry, residence, establishment, adequate standard of living, work and social security. This was formulated to ensure migrants' fair right in the destination country. Migrants' integration in the destination country is part of the migrants' right that must be considered and planned for. In line with this, Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) (2011) institutionalized a single regional socio-economic space where all citizens can benefit from opportunities in member states. However, there are no records or study providing information on cross border migrants' integration in rural border communities of Nigeria.

Based on the foregoing, this study is therefore necessary to produce empirical evidence that could inform policy makers of the direction to which policy initiatives should be tailored in order to plan for cross-border migrants' integration and harness their positive contributions towards rural border development in Nigeria. The questions answered in this paper are; (1) who are the cross border rural immigrants? (2) why do they migrate across the border? (3) What are the settling challenges and opportunities they encountered? (4) what are the

measures of migrants' integration? And (5) what are the implications of these for planning in rural border communities of Nigeria?

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

In this paper, four basic concepts were discussed, namely; migration, cross border migration, rural border communities and integration. Migration is defined as the movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence, usually across a political boundary (National Geographic Society, 2005). National Geographic Society explained that people move for various reasons. These reasons are usually economic, social, political and environmental. These economic, social, political and environmental reasons can further be classified into pull and push factors. Push factors are factors that drive people away from their country of origin. Examples include: war, poverty, unemployment, crop failure, draught, and flood. Pull factors are those factors that attract people to an area of destination. Examples are: job opportunities, political freedom, better quality of life, access to land amongst other factors.

There are three basic types of migration. They are: Forced, Internal and International migration. Forced migration is usually externally induced by natural or artificial factors (like natural disasters, and war). This form of migration is usually against the migrants' will and in most cases it occurs when there is threat to life and property of the people. Internal migration is the movement or migration of people from one place to another within an administrative territory usually within the same region or country. Example is rural-urban migration within the country. International migration which is also referred to as Cross-border migration is what the emphasis of this study is on. It is the migration or movement of people across a national boundary. This movement is usually to a different administrative jurisdiction or a different country.

A cross-border migrant is a person who moves to a different country. Cross border migrants can be further grouped into three. They are: Refugees, Illegal migrants, and Legal migrants. Refugees are people who for fear of persecution flee their country of nationality to seek refuge in another country. Cartagena Declaration 1984 states that refugees include persons who flee their country "because their lives, security or freedom have been threatened by generalised violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order." Illegal migrants are those migrants without legal stay in their host country, while Legal migrants are those with legal stay in their host country. However, many cross border migrants are without legal permission to stay in their host country. This makes their integration in the host's community very challenging.

Moreover, before people migrate, they compare the desirability of their place based on its social, economic, political or environmental condition, to the value of living in another location. They also consider the advantages and disadvantages of staying versus moving, as well as factors such as distance, travel costs, travel time, modes of transportation, terrain, and cultural barriers (National Geographic Society, 2005). Birhan (2011) explained that in most cases, destination areas of migrants give opportunity to enjoy a better living condition. This is because provision of services such as electricity, piped water and public amenities make destination areas attractive to migrants.

However, this is not the case with Nigeria and its rural border communities. Rural border communities are villages close to the boundary between two countries or states. Nigerian rural border communities like many other rural communities lack infrastructural facilities like roads, portable water, electricity, good communication network, education and health facilities among others. Many of the border communities in Africa specifically the rural border communities of Nigeria are characterized by neglect. The quality of life, access to opportunities and economic development is also very low in

this area. People in the border communities are faced with challenges such as poverty, diseases, unemployment and violence (Will, 2010).

Constanze (2014) attributed the low level of development and neglect in the border region to border conflicts and war. He explained that these are the major reasons government or individuals are unwilling to invest in them. In spite of the condition of these border communities, people from neighbouring countries still migrate and settle in the area especially the rural border communities and this is really becoming popular. The reason for this can be linked to the fact that 'opportunities nearby are usually considered more attractive than equal or slightly better opportunities farther away, thus enabling migrants to settle in locations closer to their point of origin. Also people are more likely to settle in a nearer place about which they have more knowledge than in a farther place about which they know and understand little. This is because as distance from a given location increases, understanding of that location decreases (National Geographic Society, 2005).

In line with the above, another reason migrants move towards the rural border communities especially in West Africa is to access farming opportunities because the area is characterized by extensive farm lands. Also most of the rural border indigenes in most cases use the cross border migrants as farm labour in order to sustain farming activities and ensure food security in the country. There is therefore a need for these migrants to be well settled and integrated into the host communities.

Migrants' integration according to Jimenez (2011) is a process where immigrants and their host communities mutually adapt to one another. It is an everyday interaction between the migrants and the host communities. It is also a function of migrants and host communities characteristics which is based on the migrants' resources (e.g skills, finance) and opportunities available in the host communities (Jiménez, 2011). Also migrants are integrated into their host communities through their migration facilitators and networks. Adepoju (1998) explained that cross border migration are facilitated by cultural affinity

especially where the immigrants have the same custom and speak the same language with the host communities. Also Chan (2009) opined that migration process involves networks which include relatives, neighbours, friends, informal and informal recruitment agents with migration experience. All these factors aid integration of the migrants in the host communities.

Migrants' integration in rural border communities of Nigeria has planning potentials given the low level of development in the area. It is on this note that this paper attempts an examination of migrants' integration in rural border communities of South-Western Nigeria and its implications for planning. This is with a view to harnessing their positive impacts in the rural border development of Nigeria.

THE STUDY AREA

The study area covers two major states in South-Western Nigeria: Ogun State and Oyo State. Ogun state is situated between Latitude $2^{\circ}6'$ and $3^{\circ}6'$ east of the Greenwich meridian while Oyo state is located between latitudes $7^{\circ}22'$ and $7^{\circ}40'$ North of the Equator and longitudes $3^{\circ}53'$ and $4^{\circ}10'$ East of the Greenwich. Ogun State is bounded on the West by the republic of Benin and on the East by Ondo State. To the North is Oyo State while Lagos and the Atlantic Ocean are to the South. Oyo State is bounded in the south by Ogun State, in the north by Kwara State, in the west it is partly bounded by Ogun State and partly by the Republic of Benin, while in the East by Osun State (Figure I). Ogun State has twenty 20 local government areas out of which Ipokia and Yewa North local government areas were selected for this study while Oyo State has thirty three (33) local government areas out of which Saki-west and Atisbo local government areas were selected for this study because they share border with other countries (See Figure II).

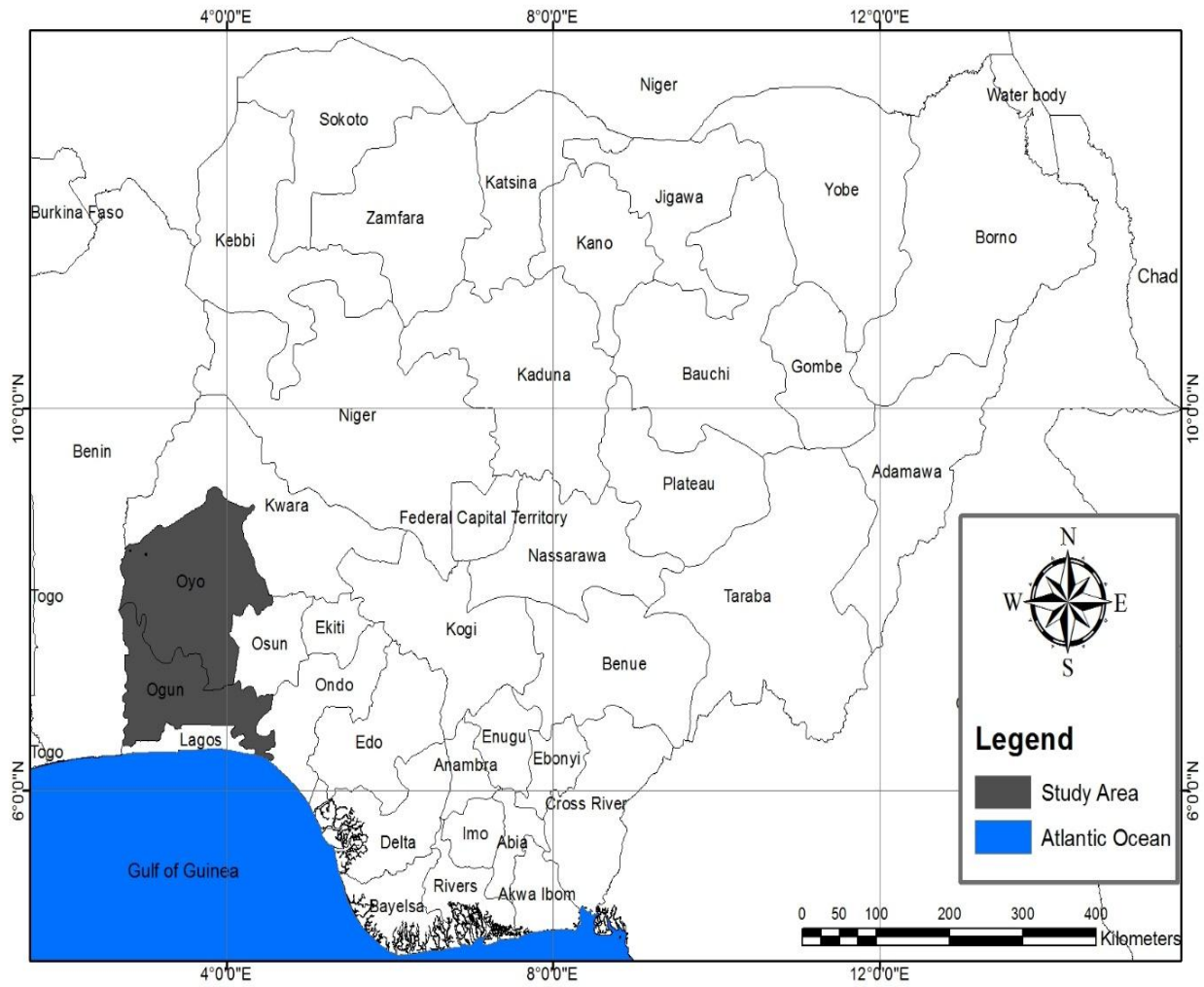


Figure I: Map of Nigeria showing Ogun and Oyo State.

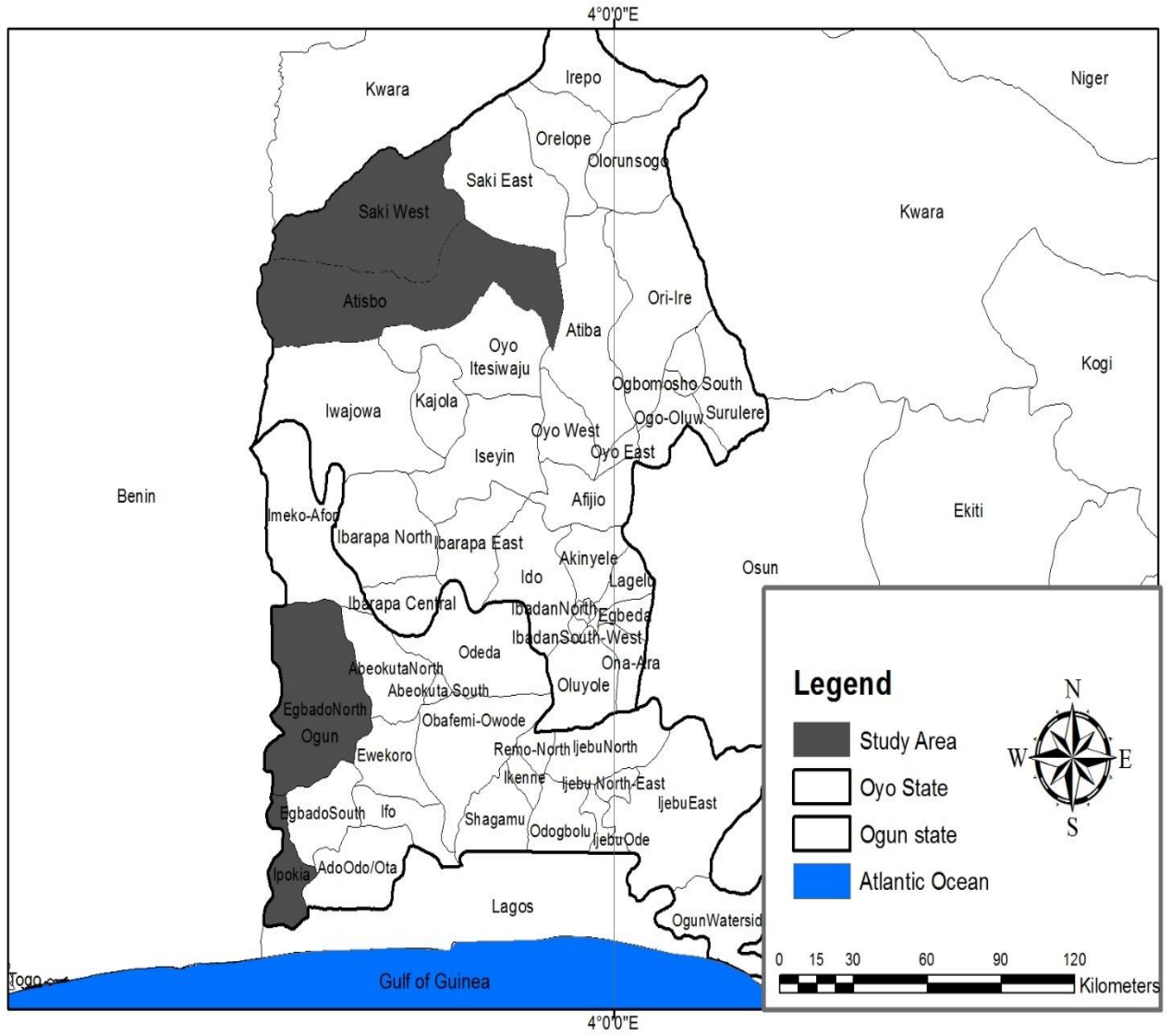


Figure II: Map of Ogun and Oyo State showing the selected Local Government Areas.

METHODOLOGY

The research made use of primary data. The primary data were obtained through interview and structured questionnaire administered in the selected rural border communities of Ogun State and Oyo State South Western Nigeria (SWN) using a multistage sampling technique. Two local government areas were selected from each of the two states on the basis of their closeness to the border (Ipokia and Yewa north in Ogun state; Saki west and Atisbo in Oyo State) as shown in figure 2. Four rural border settlements were selected from each of the selected local government areas through simple random selection process. The settlements are: Tongeji, Sekoji, Ikefin, Gbokota, Ago-ajeri, Bodease, Abule-idi, Arete, Budowule, Opaba, Abatagboro, Aiyemojuba, Okerete, Obanla, Oritagbagbe and Budo amala in Ogun and Oyo States. The sampling frame was the total number of houses in the selected settlements while the sample size was determined by a snowball sampling technique where a cross-border migrant was located and the rest were referred in the study area. A total of 173 duly completed questionnaires administered to the household head in each sampled household were used.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section draws on the analysis of cross border migrants' integration in rural border communities of south western Nigeria. Cross border migrants' integration in this study was determined by examining the characteristics of the migrants, reasons for migrating, challenges and opportunities of migration and measures of migrants' integration. Meanwhile attention is focused on the socio-economic characteristics of migrants in rural border communities of Nigeria.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Cross Border Migrants in Rural Border Communities of Nigeria

Country of Origin distribution of the cross border migrants settling in rural border communities of SW Nigeria shows that (55%) were from Benin Republic, 35% were from Togo, 7% from Ghana and 3% from Senegal. The reason most of the migrants were from Benin Republic is most likely because it is the nearest neighbouring country. 24% of these migrants were females while 76% were males. Also 89% of the respondents were in the 21-50years age bracket while 7% were in age range of 51 years and above. This shows that most of the cross border migrants were still in their active working age. 47% of the respondents had no formal education or training; 29% had vocational training, 13% had primary education, 10% had secondary education while 2% had OND/NCE or its equivalent. Most of the respondents (68%) were farmers, 16% were traders, while the remaining 16% respondents were transporters, hunters, herders or fishermen.

Reasons for Cross Border Immigration

The migrants gave reasons for leaving their home country for Nigeria. 40% indicated that they left for Nigeria because of poverty. 22% left because of poor access to land, 20% left because they felt they could get employment opportunities, while 18% left because of poor income they receive in their home countries. All the reasons given still reflect the fact that the migrants crossed the border for Nigeria because of bad economic conditions in their countries of origin.

Challenges and Opportunities of migrants in host communities

The migrants explained they all encountered one form of challenges or the other. For instance, 15% of the migrants explained they struggled with getting their choiced jobs when they just came; 14% complained of isolation and loneliness; 24% had problem with accessing land on time to build their houses and farm. Many (46%) complained of labour

exploitation. However, in spite of all these challenges, many of the migrants discovered there were many opportunities in the rural border communities of South West Nigeria they could harness. For instance majority (56%) had opportunities of having access to land to farm; some (32%) worked as farm labourers to owners of farm lands before they had theirs; some (12%) brought down goods from their country to sell and took goods from Nigeria to sell in their country.

Assessment of Cross Border Migrants Integration

Measures of cross border migrants integration was determined in terms of their social and economic advancement in their host community. This was determined by examining their socio-economic indicators of integration which include: House ownership, Land Ownership, Intermarriage, Legal stay, Sense of belonging and Future aspiration. For instance analysis of levels of migrants' integration in the study area revealed that 24.6% owned houses, while the remaining 75.4% rented their houses; 28% were able to buy and own land while the remaining 72% could only access land by renting. Also analysis of migrants' intermarriage with the indigenes of the host communities revealed that only 9% of the respondents were married to the indigenes of the host communities. Majority (91%) preferred marrying among themselves. Also analysis of migrants' legal stay revealed that none of the respondents have stamped international passports which is an indication of illegal stay in the host community. Analysis of migrants' sense of belonging further revealed that 66% of the respondents do not have a sense of belonging to the host community because they still aspire to go back to their home countries, 24% of the respondents were already settled with their family members in their host communities while the remaining 10% were indifferent.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Cross border migrants' integration in rural border communities of South-West Nigeria was examined in this study. In examining the cross border migrants' integration, the migrants' socio-economic characteristics, their reasons for migrating, challenges and opportunities of migrants in host communities and assessment of migrants' integration were examined. The migrants' socio-economic characteristics examined were; country of origin, gender, age, education and occupation. The indicators of migrants' integration examined include: House ownership, Land Ownership, Intermarriage, Legal stay, Sense of belonging and Future aspiration. It was discovered in this study that many of the migrants are from Benin Republic which is most likely because it is the nearest neighbouring country. Also majority of the respondents are male and most of the migrants were still in their active working age (21-50years). Many of the respondents had no basic education with quite a few having vocational training, primary and secondary education. Most of the respondents are farmers. It was also discovered that the migrants crossed the border for Nigeria because of bad economic condition in their countries of origin. Many of the migrants rented their houses and land. Majority preferred marrying among themselves. None of the respondents have legal stay and majority still aspire to go back to their country. All these are indications of low level of migrants' integration in the rural border communities of SW Nigeria.

There is need for integration programmes to be organized for the migrants so that the migrants could easily settle and integrate with their host communities. Similarly, there should be a comprehensive government policy to protect migrants' right in destination country.

References

- [1] Adeola, Gabriel Lanre and Fayomi, Oluyemi,(2012): "The Political and Security Implications of Cross Border Migration between Nigeria and her Francophone Neighbours, *International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow*, Vol. 1 No. 3.
- [2] Adepoju, A (1998): An Overview of International Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa at the Threshold of the 21st Century; in *International Migration and Africa; Trends and prospects for 21st Century*. Regional Meeting of Experts, Gaborone, Botswana, 2nd- 5th June 1998. UNESCO.
- [3] Birhan Asmame (2011): Causes and Consequences of Rural-Urban Migration: The case of Woldiya town, North Ethiopia. MA Thesis, University of South Africa
- [4] Briggs, V. M., Jr. (1994). *International migration and labor mobility: The receiving countries* (CAHRS Working Paper #94-19). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies.
- [5] Chan, S. (2009): Costs and Benefits of Cross-Country Labour Migration in the GMS: Cambodia Country Study, Working Paper Series No. 44. Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Cambodia Development Resource Institute.
- [6] Constanze, Semmelmann (2014): "Legal principles in EU law as an expression of European legal culture between unity and diversity," in HELLERINGER and PURNHAGEN (eds.) 303-27.
- [7] Centre for Social Protection (CSP) Research Report (2011):
- [8] Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty (DRC),(2007):Global Migrant Origin Database, Development Research Centre on Migration Globalisation and Poverty, March 2007, Version 4.
- [9] ECOWAS-SWAC (2006). West African Migration Dynamics to North Africa. <http://www.atlasouestafrrique.org/spip.php?article115>.
- [10] ECOWAS (2011): "Press Release on ECOWAS, Development Partners Review Progress in Regional Integration." June. Abuja, Nigeria: ECOWAS.
- [11] Haider, S. Kabir U. (2010): "Factors of Migration on Urban Bangladesh: An Empirical Study of Poor Migrants in Rajshahi", *Pakistan Journal of Social sciences*, Vol 30 No 2, pp. 307-323.
- [12] Hugo, G.J. (2005): Competing for Global Talent: The Australian Experience. Paper prepared for Conference on Competing for Global Talent, organised by Wee Kim Centre, Singapore Management University, Singapore.
- [13] Jentsch, Birgit (2007): "Migrant Workers in Rural Scotland: Going to the Middle of Nowhere" in *International Journal on Multicultural Societies (IJMS)*, Vol.9, No. 1, pp.35-53.

- [14] Jimenez, Tomas R. (2011): Immigrants' in the United States: How well are they integrating into Society?" Migration Policy Institute website, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/integration-Jimenez.pdf>.
- [15] McCollum, D. (2011): The Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of Return Migrants and Long-term in Migrants in Scotland: Evidence from the Scottish Longitudinal Study. Scottish Government Social Research, Scotland.
- [16] National Geographic Society (2005): Xpeditions—Human Migration Guide 6-8. www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions
- [17] OECD (2014): "Is migration good for the economy?" Migration Policy Debates, No. 2.
- [18] Phillimore J., Goodson L. and Thornhill J. (2008): Migrants from A8 Countries and Housing in the East Midlands. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- [19] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013): *Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision* (United Nation database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2013), available on www.unmigration.org.
- [20] Willits, F.K. and A.E. Luloff (1995): "Urban Residents' Views of Rurality and Contacts with Rural Places." *Rural Sociology* 60(3):454–466.
- [21] Wills, N. (2010): School-based professional support by Border Community Development Agency. Retrieved from:www.voiceofnigeria.org/Bordersecub.htm