



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OUT OF NIGERIA: THE IMPACT ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS*

Abstract

This paper examines the repercussions consequent on the international migration of women in Nigeria. The recent spate of migration has taken an unprecedented turn as many of these migrant women and even men have limited or no information about their destination. A number of factors such as, poverty and insecurity have been identified as some of the major reasons for the unprecedented scourge of migration of Nigerian women. Many of these women end up as victims of trafficking en route their destination and also at the destination of migration, which impacts negatively on their reproductive health and rights. This paper typically adopts the doctrinal methodology and examines the subject of discourse, the causes, effects and the ways to alleviate the scourge. This research finds that lack of local prospects and unemployment are the leading causes of the surge in migration out of Nigeria and thus recommends inter alia that if government provide basic amenities and a conducive economy thereby fulfilling their obligations in prioritizing the welfare and security of its citizens as contained in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the International instruments which they are parties to, it will play a significant role in reducing the uncontrolled exit of women out of Nigeria.

Keywords: Migration, Immigration, Women's Rights, Reproductive Rights, Human Trafficking

1. Introduction

According to the International Organization of Migration (IOM), migration is the movement of persons, leaving or fleeing their usual residence for diverse reasons. According to IOM, migration may also take place inside the territory of a country; however international migration is usually more complicated. It therefore means the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State. The various forms of migration are; climate migration, displacement, internal migration, international migration, irregular migration, labour migration, migrant, safe, orderly and regular migration.¹

Migration is an ancient concept which is multifaceted, and increasingly growing in popularity. The ancient bible days shows incidences of migration severally.² Migration due to persecution has been formally addressed in international conventions consequent upon the Second World War while migration for employment was regulated earlier on as part of international labour law and economic practices. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2021, it is estimated globally that, international migrant workers constitute nearly 5 per cent of the universal labour force and they constitute a core aspect of the world economy. This data clearly shows that as a fact, no State can address international migration by itself, since it is a universal concept.³

Multilateral treaties dedicated to migration are limited in number and cover specific situations of migration that have aroused international concerns over the years such as; rights of migrant workers and their families, Refugees status, human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants. Therefore in a bid to address this phenomenal development, the United Nations dedicated special attention to the rights of irregular migrant workers and their families. This gave rise to the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members

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¹ IOM, 'UN Migration' <<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#:~:text=Migrant%20%E2%80%93%20An%20umbrella%20term%2C%20not,for%20a%20variety%20of%20reasons>>. Accessed 20 March 2024.

² Genesis 37, Exodus 2, Ruth 2 gives account of migration to strange lands by Joseph, Moses and Ruth.

³ 'The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law' <<https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/migrant-migration/>> Accessed 20 March 2024.



of their family. Unfortunately, this convention was only ratified by a few States parties, about 58 states, accounting for only countries of origin of migration, without any significant participation by the major countries of destination.⁴ Due to the failure of the attempt at a rights-based approach, to address migration and its peculiarities, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proceeded to adopt the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 which led to the intergovernmental collaboration which is now apparent in the non-binding Global Compact for Safe, orderly and regular migration 2018.⁵

Migrants do not possess any international right to migration *per se*. Migration, undoubtedly gives rise to several legal implications. The major legal framework of migration includes international agreements which provide for the free movement and fair treatment of migrant workers at international level or within a regional economic area.⁶ Apart from the limited protection of migrants provided in the international migration framework, just like other humans, migrants can enjoy certain fundamental human rights applicable to them as defined at both international and regional level. Thus, rights such as freedom of movement and the right to flee, the principle of non-refoulement⁷ and expulsion, detention and human treatment as well as respect for family ties can all be enjoyed by the migrant.⁸

Significantly, the International Refugee Convention prohibits States from punishing migrants for illegal entry into their territory, if they are asylum seekers who fled from individual persecution. Notwithstanding, illegal entry into a country is an offence, except where the migrant qualify as refugees or asylum seekers.⁹ This means that migration is at the intersection between the economic interest of the state and the life constraints of individuals. It is not seen as a human right but as an integral component of the global economy and the global agenda for sustainable development.¹⁰ Therefore, the ability of migrants to settle effectively in another country is determined by the country's policies on the numbers and profile of migrant workers it allows into its borders and this is influenced by the labour force needed or other concerns that are of importance to the State.

With increased migration, the gap between the number of migrants and the restrictions on employment practiced by States, one begins to wonder at the effectiveness or usefulness of the existing international framework for migrants who are fleeing their counties because of danger, seeing that there is little or no consideration for their plight. This undoubtedly gives rise to dangerous migration incidences such as human trafficking and migrant smuggling, which undoubtedly leaves migrants desperate and vulnerable.

In spite of these significant gaps, International Human Rights Conventions however, afford some limited protection which migrants can fall back on, where they find themselves in unsavoury migratory situations in the territory of a State of which they are not nationals. One of the most significant provisions is the prohibition of refoulement to a country where the life or security of the individual is threatened.¹¹ It is completed by the prohibition of collective expulsion, and fundamental guarantees concerning detention, humane treatment and respect for family unity. States are obliged

⁴ibid.

⁵ibid.

⁶ibid.

⁷ This is the practice of not forcefully sending refugees of asylum seekers back to their countries where they are likely to face persecution.

⁸ 'The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law' <<https://guide-humanitarian-law.org/content/article/3/migrant-migration/>> Accessed 20 March 2024.

⁹ibid.

¹⁰ibid.

¹¹ibid.



to respect these rules with regard to all persons, including those who are in an irregular migratory situation on their territory and under their control.¹²

Statistics suggest that a third of all Nigerian migrants choose Europe as their destination while another third migrated to other African countries and the last third moved to North America.¹³ This paper will discuss this topic in five parts, part I is the introductory essay, part II enunciates the distinction between several terms relative to migration, part III will discuss the causes of migration, part IV, the effects of migration and part V contains recommendations to address the problems identified as well as the concluding paragraph.

2. The Distinction Between, Migrants, Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seeker and Refugees

2.1. Migrant—This is a term though not defined in international law, reflects the common understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students.¹⁴ It is worthy to note that at the international level, there is no universally accepted definition for “migrant”. The present definition was developed by IOM for its own purposes and it is not meant to imply or create any new legal category.¹⁵

2.2. Internally Displaced Persons – Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are "Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border".¹⁶ Internally displaced people include, but are not limited to:¹⁷

- i. Families caught in war and crisis situation and have to flee their places of abode.
- ii. Residents of poor neighborhoods who have become homeless due to weather hazards and change in climate.
- iii. Locals who are forced to vacate their lands to give way for development and other infrastructure projects.¹⁸

Significantly, IDPs are entitled to enjoyment of the same rights and freedoms provided by international and national laws that are enjoyed by the other inhabitants of the host country. IDPs are subject to peculiar needs and face typical risks such as family separation, loss of documentation,

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ OA Adedokun and IV Karzanova, 'Impact Of Migration On The Economy Of Nigeria: Recent Trends' <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334312429>> Accessed 28 March 2024.

¹⁴ IOM, "UN Migration" <<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#:~:text=Migrant%20%E2%80%93%20An%20umbrella%20term%2C%20not,for%20a%20variety%20of%20reasons>> Accessed 20 March 2024.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Internal Displacement Monitoring Center <<https://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement/>> Accessed 20 March 2024.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*



freedom of movement in and out of camps, loss of property, and further exposure to the risk of secondary or onward displacement.¹⁹

2.3. Asylum Seeker-This is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it.²⁰ Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every recognized refugee is initially an asylum seeker.²¹

2.4. Refugee- According to the Refugee Convention 1951, a refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.²² A refugee qualifies for the protection of the United Nations provided by the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in accordance with UNHCR's Statute and, notably, subsequent General Assembly's resolutions clarifying the scope of UNHCR's competency, regardless of whether or not he or she is in a country that is a party to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol – or a relevant regional refugee instrument – or whether or not he or she has been recognized by his or her host country as a refugee under either of these instruments.²³

3. Causes of Migration of Women in Nigeria

3.1. Poverty

Studies reveal that an estimated 70 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line with women as the majority of that percentage. Substandard management of reproductive health as well as poor strategies for enforcement of women's rights are contributory factors to these developmental difficulties.²⁴ In many societies, particularly in the rural areas, a significant number of the women are illiterate with no ascertained means of livelihood; this increases the tendency for these women to be fully dependent on their spouses who in turn use this as an opportunity to constantly mete out inhumane treatment, as well as subject them to oppression and even humiliation.²⁵ Poverty is the leading cause why women who are victims of domestic violence still remain in those conditions due to the inherent fear of their inability to cater for themselves and their children, should they decide to leave the abusive marriage. Poverty and illiteracy undoubtedly enable customary practices which engender subjugation and oppression of women. These practices are further fuelled by patriarchy which is deeply entrenched in many African societies and aggravate violence and discrimination

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ IOM, 'UN Migration' <<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#:~:text=Migrant%20%E2%80%93%20An%20umbrella%20term%2C%20not,for%20a%20variety%20of%20reasons>> .> Accessed 20 March 2024.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

²³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status (2011) HCR/1P/4/enG/Rev. 3, 7, paragraph 16. <<https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/4d93528a9.pdf>>

²⁴ Jane Muthumbi, Joar Svanemyr, Elisa Scolaro E., et al, 'Female Genital Mutilation: A Literature Review of the Current Status of Legislation and Policies in 27 African Countries and Yemen' *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, September 2015: 19(3): 34.

²⁵ G Izevbuwa, Lilian Akhirome-Omonfuegbe, 'Examining the Impediments to Enforcement of Women's Reproductive Rights in Nigeria' *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies Int. j. adv. multidisc. res. stud.* 2023; 3(4):2023, 605-612 .



against women.²⁶ Suffice it to say that these prejudicial customary practices in Nigeria not only violate women's rights but are also a breach of other constitutionally protected rights.²⁷

Many of these women and even men have no information on their reproductive rights and health. Access to information is a key to the elimination of fear of abuse, and equipping women with the requisite arsenal needed to combat constant and unbridled abuse in society.²⁸ Hence this paper among other things advocates for women empowerment through education and job creation. The prevalence of illiteracy among females and generally the relegated social and economic status bestowed on women in the Nigerian society also play a part in the increase of other reproductive problems- Thus extreme poverty and lack of education have been identified as some of the major reasons for the unprecedented scourge of women trafficking in Nigeria, which unarguably has adverse and severe impacts on the reproductive health of these women concerned.²⁹ Lack of local prospects, unemployment and having large number of children makes parents susceptible to the bogus promises of money, education or a better life for their children given by the traffickers. The young boys and girls leave their villages to escape the miserable living conditions.³⁰ Studies further reveal that economic factors and greed have no doubt contributed to the incessant rise of cases of human trafficking.

3.2. Lack of Quality Health care

It is impossible to discuss women's rights without the concept of Reproductive health care; it is therefore imperative to give paramount attention to providing quality healthcare for women in Nigeria. This will in turn decrease as well as prevent avoidable pregnancy related deaths, disability and diseases. Provision of quality healthcare will further address the needless complications arising out of improperly done abortions and death of mother and or the child. This paper advocates for women to have unfettered access to quality reproductive health services such as medical care, planned family, safe pregnancy, delivery care and treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV & AIDS. Significantly, matters relating to reproductive health are slowly gaining recognition in Africa at large and Nigeria in particular and proper addressing of the situation may significantly reduce the spate of migration in search of quality healthcare.

Lack of well-equipped and standard healthcare facilities remains one of the core inhibitions to the enjoyment of reproductive rights in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas where there is significant unavailability of equipped health care facilities and qualified personnel to render quality healthcare services. Statistics reveal the lack of access to quality healthcare as the leading cause of the deplorable state of women's reproductive health in Nigeria.³¹ Research in Nigeria further indicates that, about one Nigerian woman dies every 10 minutes from pregnancy related conditions, these are avoidable deaths which could be prevented by ensuring women and girls have access to education and reproductive health services, including family planning.³²

²⁶Ogugua Ikpeze, 'Customary Perspective on Reproductive Health Rights' *Journal of Health Law and Reproductive Rights (JHLRR)* 2013- 2014 Issue 4-5, ,59.

²⁷ Ogugua Ikpeze, "Customary Perspective on Reproductive Health Rights" *Journal of Health Law and Reproductive Rights (JHLRR)* Issue 4-5, 2013- 2014, 60.

²⁸ibid.

²⁹ibid.

³⁰O G Izevbuwa , Lilian Akhirome-Omonfuegbe, "Examining the Impediments to Enforcement of Women's Reproductive Rights in Nigeria" *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies Int. j. adv. multidisc. res. stud.* 2023; 3(4): 605-612.

³¹Nkolika I Aniekwu, *Reproductive Health Law; A Jurisprudential Analysis of Gender Specific Human Rights for the African Region* 1st edn (Ambik Press Nigeria, 2011), 84.

³²CEDAW General Recommendation on Women and Health, para 14.



Furthermore, in humanitarian crisis (which is rampant in Northern Nigeria) which displace populations and undermine community welfare and support mechanisms, there is a higher risk of death and injury during insurgency, which further constrains the already limited health facilities and qualified personnel available to cater for women and girls.³³ The right to quality healthcare is fundamental to the realization of women's reproductive rights, thus in pursuance of this rights, women may have to migrate to countries where they are assured of unfettered access to proper and more organized healthcare. One of the most controversial aspects of women's healthcare which constantly arouses debates and sometimes even persecution of women is the right to abortion. It is no news that some countries, Nigeria inclusive have legal restrictions on abortion. There can be no discourse on reproductive rights without a mention of abortion. This controversial topic has birthed several debates universally and is still generating controversies. One of the major tenets of reproductive health and rights is a woman's right to safe abortion. In almost every part of the world, abortions have been the subject of religious, social, political and legal discourses.³⁴ Under Nigerian law, medical intervention in pregnancy no matter how early in the course of the pregnancy is a crime, except for preservation of the mother's life. The foetus is regarded as a human life from the moment the ovum is fertilized and one in which the society has an interest that must be protected by law. It is only when the mother's life is at risk that it is conceded that there is an overriding interest that allows abortion to be tolerated.³⁵ This is clearly at variance with the provisions of The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR Protocol on Women's rights in Africa) which provides that State parties shall protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the fetus.³⁶

This paper opines that the search for countries with more liberal laws on women's health, especially body autonomy is another motivation for migration. It therefore advocates for a reform of the Nigerian Legal framework in order to align with the provisions of the protocol as well as the ultimate goal of protecting reproductive rights.

3.3. Wars and Armed Conflicts

It is no news that during wars and armed conflicts, women account for the larger percentage of injured and abused victims. During wars, women and girls are abused, sexually and physically and many end up dead. Generally, women and girls are usually displaced during such conflict and end up as internally displaced persons (IDP). It is apparent that IDPs instantaneously become reliant on others for basic needs such as shelter, food and water. Their vulnerability is heightened at this time by their deprivation of healthcare, education, employment, economic activities and benefits in the areas of displacement. Therefore it becomes imperative to change location in order to escape these mishaps.

In times of crisis, the ability to access good medical care is a determinant of whether the woman involved lives or dies.³⁷ It is also common to see people flee their habitual places of residence to take up respite in temporary destinations. Others decide to leave the country completely in order

³³<<https://nigeria.unfpa.org/en/news/crisis-access-reproductive-health-care-often-determines-if-women-and-girls-live-or-die-says>> Accessed 12 February 2022.

³⁴O G Izevbuwa, Lilian Akhirome-Omonfuegbe, "Examining the Impediments to Enforcement of Women's Reproductive Rights in Nigeria" *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies* Int. j. adv. multidisc. res. stud. 2023; 3(4):605-612 .

³⁵E G Ikeatu, 'Violations Of Womens' Reproductive Rights In Nigeria' *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence (ajol.info)* NAUJILJ 2020 (11) (2) 197 Accessed 26 March 2021.

³⁶Art 14 (2) ACHPR.

³⁷Lilian Akhirome-Omonfuegbe, CO Joseph-Asoh, "Internal Displacement in Nigeria: Its Impact on Women's Reproductive Health" *Journal of Law and Criminial Justice* December 2021, (9) (2) 87-97.



to escape the violations of their human rights. The impact of this displacement is mostly felt by women and children. Consequently, some of these women will flee the country completely, in search of safety and stability for themselves and their children. The rate of internal displacement and the inevitable problems arising there from, versus the proportion of response from government still leaves more to be desired in contemporary times.³⁸ For women and girls especially pregnant women, who may face life-threatening childbirth complications, as well as lactating women, caring for newborns throughout the chaos, whether they live or die in a crisis often depends on their access to basic sexual and reproductive health services.³⁹ In the three Nigerian states worst hit by the insurgency crisis; Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, approximately 53 per cent of internally displaced persons are women and girls, of whom about 1.73 million are of childbearing age, with 276, 000 pregnancies expected in 2017.⁴⁰

The need to escape insurgency crisis and the complications arising is a priority for many families, women and adolescent girls and often times this is a major motivation for migration.

3.4. Unfavourable Climate Change

Gradual climate change which overtime results in unfavourable living conditions can give rise to migration. Factors such as extremely high temperatures are a threat to agricultural livelihoods, rise in sea-level inevitably lead to severe flooding, and desertification engenders conflict over water access- these have been identified as clear causes of migration.⁴¹ On the other hand, rapid changes such as disasters typically lead to short-term displacement where people may move temporarily or permanently due to reoccurrence of the disasters or enormous and irreversible damage has been done to their habitations. Migration is one major response to the impacts of climate change; this is because climate change makes livelihoods harder and disasters more severe. There is also the increased risk of displacement of persons which may become more unpredictable and unmanageable.⁴² As noted earlier in this paper, women and children account for the largest percentage of vulnerable persons during displacement. Climate risks are interconnected and can have a reverberating effect. For example a rise in temperature can reduce availability and quality of water which inevitably results in drought leading to crop failures that will reduce incomes and food supplies. There is also the increased risk of disease spread during water shortage. All this can potentially lead to social disruption and political instability.⁴³ Thus, we see migration as a response to these hazards, with many people opting to leave the country anyway they can. For instance, in the Northern part of Nigeria where there are repeated incidents of drought, it is not uncommon to see women and children move by road across the border to neighbouring countries. Suffice it to say that many of these women have heart wrenching stories to tell about their plight in their host countries.⁴⁴

³⁸ibid.

³⁹Babatunde Osotimehin, the Executive Director of UNFPA, during his mission to Northern Nigeria to advocate for the reproductive health and rights of women and girls.

⁴⁰ibid.

⁴¹ Migration Policy Institute "Climate Migration 101:An Explainer <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/climate-migration-101-explainer#:~:text=Over%20time%2C%20a%20bigger%20issue,which%20can%20lead%20to%20migration>> Accessed 28 March 2024.

⁴² Migration Policy Institute "Climate Migration 101:An Explainer <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/climate-migration-101-explainer#:~:text=Over%20time%2C%20a%20bigger%20issue,which%20can%20lead%20to%20migration>> Accessed 28 March 2024.

⁴³Sean MacAllister <<https://www.zurich.com/en/media/magazine/2022/there-could-be-1-2-billion-climate-refugees-by-2050-here-s-what-you-need-to-know#>> Accessed 28 March 2024.

⁴⁴ See the plight of young men and women stuck in Libya while trying to gain entrance into Europe via the desert- <<https://www.vanguardngr.com> > News> Accessed 16 June 2020.



The recent surge in severe floods in Nigeria has needless to say resulted in incessant deaths and displacement of people from their homes. Heavy rains combined with poor urban planning have made several areas in Nigeria more vulnerable to flooding.⁴⁵ Ultimately in response to these disastrous incidences, there is the likelihood of increased migration, some of which will be internal while many others will be international. Recently at a seminar organised by the Nigerian Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the 26th of May 2022 at Abuja, the Programmes Advisor at Climate and Sustainable Development Network of Nigeria (CSDDevNet) pointed out that climate change still infringes human rights and engenders migration in Nigeria. He further asserted that the enjoyment of human rights, such as the rights to food, water, appropriate housing, and life, are clearly inhibited by the negative consequences of climate change which in turn exacerbates migration or alter already established migration trends.⁴⁶

4. Consequences of Uncontrolled Migration on Women's Reproductive Health

4.1. Human Trafficking

Often times, women are endangered in their quest for migration. Research reveals that many of these women who attempt to cross over borders via deserts and oceans manually, face a heightened risk of becoming victims of trafficking. As discussed earlier in this paper, several factors have been identified as causes of migration. Thus in a quest for a better life many women and girls are inclined to migrate and may inevitably fall into the hands of predators who seduce them with promises of job opportunities, school admission and a better life in a foreign land. Economic factors and greed have also been identified as major influences for migration for instance Nigeria, though being one of the largest oil producers in the world, unfortunately accounts for one of the highest number of citizens living below the poverty line.⁴⁷

Apart from ending up as victims of sex trafficking, a significant number of migrants may also end up being trafficked for labour. According to the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons in Washington D.C, those who are trafficked for labour also suffer physical and mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder due to physical assaults and beatings, and depression that elevates the risk of suicide. Victims of labour servitude have limited ability to determine the conditions in which they work, which may put them at higher risk of physical and mental health damage.⁴⁸

4.2. Health Implications

The consequences of uncontrolled migration are too numerous. Many women, who end up being victims of trafficking as earlier noted, also suffer grave health complications resulting from series of sexual and physical abuse. Furthermore, migrant women suffer a multitude of setbacks such as legal impediments, language barrier, inability to foot the medical cost, and lack of access to transportation to the medical centers. All these are significant barriers to migrant women's access to reproductive health services in their country of destination. For instance, migrant women may not be eligible for coverage under the national health insurance schemes of their host countries, which can make the

⁴⁵"Nigeria's worst floods in a decade have displaced over a million people" Oct 20, 2022
<<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/10/nigeria-flood-rain-climate/>> Accessed 28 March 2024.

⁴⁶Jiata Ekele, 'Climate Still Infringes on Human Rights and engenders Migration in Nigeria'
<<https://csdevnet.org/climate-change-still-infringes-human-rights-and-engenders-migration-in-nigeria/>> Accessed 28 March 2024.

⁴⁷<<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/rankorder/2173rank.html>> Accessed 26 August 2022.

⁴⁸Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
Washington, DC August 8, 2007 <<https://2001-2009.state.gov/g/tip/rls/fs/07/91418.htm>> Accessed 19 July 2019.



cost of reproductive health services enormous and beyond their reach.⁴⁹In many cases the migrant women are also victims of discrimination such as mandatory pregnancy tests or mandatory HIV testing, which may lead to loss of job opportunities or even deportation where the outcome of the tests are positive. Pregnant migrant women may also become victims of coerced abortion, as well as being faced with lack of access to safe and affordable maternal health care. There is also the additional problem of inadequate or complete deprivation of maternity leave and benefits.⁵⁰

4.3. Sexual Abuse and Harassment

Migrant women may also face an increased risk of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and physical violence. Undocumented migrants due to the constant fear of deportation and separation from their families if their status is discovered by authorities, tend to avoid the formal healthcare systems. This no doubt increases their risk of inadequate or poor quality reproductive health care.⁵¹ They may also avoid making formal reports of the abuse; due to fear of their undocumented migrant status being discovered by the authorities, therefore they suffer in silence. Many women endure domestic violence, rape, unfair tenancy arrangements for fear of being deported if found to be without the requisite documentation as migrants. Unfortunately, even women with proper visas or residence permits, still endure abuse and harassment because they would rather remain in a foreign country than return to their home country where they have escaped unsavoury living conditions. Therefore incidences of racial abuse and harassment go unreported by these migrant women.

4.4. Economic Implications

One of the major repercussions of international migration is the movement of skilled Nigerians. Highly skilled Nigerians who have been trained in the country move abroad. In the United States and Europe, highly skilled Nigerians represent a large proportion of the total immigrant population. A significant number of Nigerians are currently employed in the health-care sector, followed by the real estate and retail sectors.⁵² Nigerian doctors abroad mainly work in two countries – the United States and the United Kingdom. These two countries also attract most of the emigrant Nigerian nurses.⁵³ Nigerians in Diaspora are mostly highly qualified specialists with skills in professions ranging from engineering, medicine, education, law and information technology. Most of them are gainfully employed as doctors, nurses, lecturers, and IT experts in the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and many other countries. There are also several others employed in menial jobs like cleaning, cab driving, construction laborers, hair dressers, automobile repairer and retailers.⁵⁴ Many studies have revealed that, whether internal or external migration, a number of skilled nationals migrate outside their communities of origin for greener pastures. Migration has grave implications for the economy of Nigeria because the skilled labor remaining within the country is becoming increasingly insufficient to cater for the growing industries and other sectors of the economy.⁵⁵ There is already a significant gender gap due to the insignificant

⁴⁹‘Reproductive Rights: A Tool for Monitoring State Obligations’ UNFPA Centre For Reproductive Rights <https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civactions.net/files/documents/crr_Monitoring_Tool_State_Obligations.pdf> Accessed 26 August 2022.

⁵⁰ibid.

⁵¹ ibid.

⁵² OA Adedokun, IV Karzanova “Impact Of Migration On The Economy Of Nigeria: Recent Trends “: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334312429>> Accessed 28 March 2024.

⁵³ibid.

⁵⁴ibid.

⁵⁵Deborah Ugochi and EA Agba ‘Nigeria’s Human Capital Migration and the Socio-economic Implications’ *The International Journal Of Humanities & Social Studies* ISSN 2321 - 9203 <<https://www.theijhss.com>.> Accessed 28 March 2024.



representation of women in the labour force, the increased migration of women out of Nigeria, further increases this gap as it significantly reduces the total number of women represented in the labour force. Unfortunately, this is detrimental to the already high gender difference in income distribution in Nigeria. Women as it were, are already faced with restrictions in economic participation which inevitably downplays their talent pool in the labour market and consequently their total factor productivity and output growth are generally lower than their male counterparts.⁵⁶

4.5. Political Implications

Migration further holds detrimental repercussions on Nigerian politics. Nigeria has long been known for recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions. Though concerted efforts have been made by government and non-governmental organizations to increase the level of participation of women in politics, in line, with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocates 30% affirmative action, there is still significant room for improvement. Consequently, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) in Nigeria advocates for a more inclusive representation of women in both elective political and appointive public service positions.⁵⁷ The under representation of women in political participation is no doubt fueled by the patriarchal culture inherent in the Nigerian society. However, the re-introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women's political participation in Nigeria.⁵⁸ Existing studies on Nigerian politics has consistently highlighted the marginalization of women as a core obstacle to their political participation. Previous studies focused on how the intersection of socio-economic and cultural norms leaves women on the margins of politics.⁵⁹ The under representation of women in politics and factors that constrain their participation are key reasons why many women would rather pursue a political ambition in diaspora. There are significant examples of Nigerian women excelling in politics in other countries outside Nigeria, but the same cannot be said for their Nigerian based counterparts. One of such women is Funmi Badejo who was originally born in Kogi State, Nigeria. Her parents later immigrated to the United States of America, where she was raised in the state of Florida. She currently serves as a Special Assistant to the United States' President, Joseph Biden. She is also an Associate Counsel in the White House Counsel's Office.⁶⁰ Olukemi Badenoch is another Nigerian woman significantly standing out in public service on the international scene. She currently serves as Minister of State for Levelling Up Communities, and Minister of State for Equalities in the United Kingdom. Badenoch grew up in Wimbledon, London, where she was born, and Lagos where she had her High School education and returned to the United Kingdom at the age of 16 to study Computer Systems Engineering at the University of Sussex.⁶¹

This paper undoubtedly recognizes and acknowledges the significant rise of women participation in Nigerian politics in recent times with women like Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the late

⁵⁶ Women's Economic Empowerment In Nigeria Factsheet PAWED <https://drpcngr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/FACTSHEET-ON-WOMEN_S-ECONOMIC-PARTICIPATION-IN-NIGERIA1.pdf> Accessed 29 March 2024.

⁵⁷ Mrs. Oloyede Oluyemi 'Monitoring Participation Of Women In Politics In Nigeria' Paper presented at the National Bureau of Statistics <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Finland_Oct2016/Documents/Nigeria_paper.pdf> Accessed 29 March 2024.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Etteh Mercy, Akpan- Obong Patience et al 'Negotiating Access and Privilege: Politics of Female Participation and Representation in Nigeria' *Journal of Asian and African Studies* <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00219096221084253>> Accessed 29 March 2024.

⁶⁰ The Punch Newspaper 'Nigerian Women, Global Leaders' March 13th 2022 <<https://punchng.com/nigerian-women-global-leaders/>> Accessed 29 March 2024.

⁶¹ *ibid.*



Dr. Dora Akunyuli standing out in appointment offices. However this paper opines that there is still insufficient participation of younger and upcoming women at the political level and in public service. It appears that the private sectors in Nigeria are actively and increasingly embracing and enabling women participation in their leadership sector, as can be seen in the recent appointments of female chief executive officers in several banks and limited liability companies. However the significant lack of female leaderships in prominent political sectors leaves much to be desired and this will inevitably encourage continuous international migration of young women with prospects in leadership. This, without a doubt, further deprives the Nigerian political scene from the benefits of the participation and involvement of these young women, who would rather migrate to countries where gender equality in politics is widely endorsed.

Generally, the recognition and protection of women's rights in Nigeria is still a long way from being a reality. Unfortunately, the existing legal framework in Nigeria on protection of women's rights is not only paltry, but is plagued with restrictions which makes it unfit to serve the purpose of providing assurance for the enforcement of women's reproductive rights.⁶² Until this is adequately addressed, there will continue to be massive exit of people, especially women out of Nigeria, to countries where the rights of women are prioritised and validated.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is trite that the recent trend of international migration out of Nigeria is not going to end anytime soon. Every day the airports are flooded with people thronging the premises on their way out of the country. Evidently, a significant number of these passengers are women who all have one goal in mind: the pursuit of a better life for themselves and their children. As noted in this paper, some of them are fleeing poverty, joblessness, lack of basic amenities or even endangerment of their lives either from family crisis or state crisis. Whatever the reason for the migration, it is imperative that the Nigerian government actively directs its policies and laws to protection of its citizens particularly women from subjugation, discrimination and endangerment which will in turn create an enabling environment for women to thrive albeit reducing and discouraging the incessant migration out of Nigeria.

Consequently, this paper makes the following recommendations:

1. This paper advocates for women empowerment through education and job creation; this will encourage more women to recognize prospects for them in Nigeria and be encouraged to participate in the ongoing development and awakening to the rights of women globally.
2. It is imperative that government provides the essential infrastructures and amenities such as quality healthcare, equipping educational institutions, in order to discourage the trend of movement out of Nigeria in order to have access to these amenities.
3. Finally, gender equality in the labour market and in political participation should be encouraged and supported, to motivate women's participation, seeing that harnessing the strength of women in governance is key to the achievement of sustainable development.

⁶²Ogugua Ikpeze, 'Customary Perspective on Reproductive Health Rights' *Journal of Health Law and Reproductive Rights (JHLRR)* (2014).4-5 60.