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**Unnoticed Ways in which Migration Reinforces  
Underdevelopment**

**Abumere, Frank Aragbonfoh (PhD, Dr Phil)**

Freelance Researcher on Global Governance

P.M.B. 5119, Wuse, Abuja, Nigeria

+2348079749382

[farafranki@yahoo.com](mailto:farafranki@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**

This paper analyses how migration from low income economies to high income economies can actually have negative rather than positive consequences on development and low income economies. There are noticed ways - such as brain drain, separation from family, etc – in which migration negatively affects sending-countries. But this paper argues that there are unnoticed ways in which migration negatively affects development and low income economies. For this paper, the relationship between migration and underdevelopment is a complex rather than a simple one. It is simple to see how underdevelopment causes migration. But to see that migration in turn reinforces underdevelopment, one needs to engage in some complex analysis. Alarming, the end-result of the complex analysis is that migration and remittances, while alleviating poverty, can actually make: citizens neglect their duty to hold their governments responsible for underdevelopment; and governments neglect their duty to find long term solutions to the problem of underdevelopment. In terms of methodological approach, admittedly this sort of work often requires empirical methods. Nevertheless, the aim of this paper is to do a theoretical analysis which will serve as the foundation on which future empirical works can be based.

**Key words;** Institutions, Migration, Poverty, Remittances, Underdevelopment.

### **Introduction**

Migration from low income countries to high income countries is very attractive to migrants. They are more likely to find jobs than they would have if they remained in their countries. They are likely to earn higher wages or salaries. They are likely to send remittances back home to their families. Consequently, their lives and the lives of their family members are likely to be better off economically. Because of this, it is easily tempting for many citizens of countries suffering from the consequences of poverty caused by the absence of stable and functional institutions to see migration as ‘the-go-to-solution.’

The relationship between migration and underdevelopment is a complex rather than a simple one. It is simple to see how underdevelopment causes migration. But to see that migration in turn reinforces underdevelopment, one needs to engage in some complex analysis. The simple analysis is as follows: the absence of stable and functional institutions leads to poverty (underdevelopment); poverty (underdevelopment) leads to migration; migrants send remittances back to their home countries; the remittances alleviate poverty (underdevelopment); the alleviation of poverty (underdevelopment) reduces the need and desire for migration; then the reduction in the need and desire for migration reduces migration.

But the simple analysis misses the point because the major reasons for the poverty and underdevelopment, namely the absence of stable and institutions (lack of rule of law, corruption, rent-seeking, corporate opacity, anticompetitive or antitrust behaviour, etc) are not solvable by migration but by political, economic, social and legal policies such as effective rule of law, transparency, diversification, etc. Therefore, the need to jettison the simple analysis and do a complex analysis which will, alarmingly, reveal how migration and remittances, while alleviating poverty, can actually lead to negative effects or situations which reinforce underdevelopment.

In our complex analysis, we will be relying on theoretical analysis. Admittedly, any sort of work like our subject-matter often requires empirical methods. Nevertheless, our aim in this paper is to do a theoretical analysis which will serve as the foundation on which future empirical works can be based. This paper is divided into four parts. The first part discusses the theoretical framework of the paper. The second part discusses the sources of growth, development and prosperity of a country; this will help us concretise and contextualise our discussion in the third part which is the main part of the paper. The third part analyses the unnoticed ways in which migration reinforces underdevelopment. While the fourth part, in view of the negative effects of migration and in consideration of the benefits of migration, proffers solution to the dilemma of migration.

### **The Unnoticed ‘Double-Neglect’ Negative Consequences of Migration**

Migration, being the movement of a large number of people from one place to another place, has two components; namely, emigration and immigration. Emigration is the movement from one place while immigration is the movement to another place. Our focus is on the emigration from low income economies (e.g. Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, etc) to ‘greener pastures.’ So we are not concerned with any form of immigration to low income economies. Furthermore, throughout this discussion, in our analysis of the negative effects (and in our references to positive effects) of migration, we are only concerned about the sending-countries (countries of departure) where migrants emigrate from rather than receiving countries (countries of destination) where migrants immigrate to.

There are obvious negative consequences of migration such as brain-drain, separation from family, etc. Our focus is not on obvious but rather on less obvious negative consequences of migration. While the obvious negative consequences are paid attention to because they are obvious, the less obvious negative consequences are seldom paid attention to because of the fact that they are very subtle, hence they almost always go unnoticed. Our focus on the less obvious negative consequences is an attempt to draw attention to them so that they will no longer go unnoticed.

Although brain-drain is the most popular negative consequence of migration, our focus is not on brain-drain. Brain-drain is very noticeable, so we will not focus on it. Rather our intention is to focus on two of the key unnoticed negative consequences of migration which we refer to as the double-neglect situations. The double-neglect situations are more complex and complicated than brain drain. Brain drain is simple to understand because the consequences of a country losing some of its best trained professionals are readily manifest. But because the consequences of the double-neglect situations are not readily manifest, in other words, because the consequences are subtle, they almost always go unnoticed. Therefore, in this paper, we shall analyse how migration from low income economies to high income economies can actually have negative rather than positive consequences on low income economies.

The negative situations which we refer to as the double-neglect situations have to do with both the civic duties of citizens and the governance duties of governments. The first situation is what we refer to as the citizens-neglect situation, and the second situation is what we refer to as the government-neglect situation. On the one hand, in the citizens-neglect situation, migration and remittances can make citizens neglect their duty to hold their governments responsible for underdevelopment. On the other hand, in the government-neglect situation, migration and remittances can make governments reliant on remittances which in turn can make them neglect their duty of finding long-term and viable solutions to underdevelopment.

### **Sources of Growth, Development and Prosperity of a Country**

In this part of the paper, we shall be discussing the sources of growth, development and prosperity of a country. This discussion will help us concretise and contextualise our discussion in the next part of the paper which is the main part of the paper. On the sources of growth, development and prosperity of a country, development economists have different views. Some development economists think institutions are the source of growth, development and prosperity of a country. Some development economists think the source of growth, development and prosperity of a country is geography. While other development economists think integrations are the source of growth, development and prosperity of a country (Risse, 2012, p. 128).

According to the institutional (institutions) view:

Growth and prosperity depend on the quality of institutions, such as stable property rights, the rule of law, bureaucratic capacity, the existence of appropriate regulatory structures, to curtail at least the worst forms of fraud, anticompetitive behaviour, graft, and the quality and independence of courts, but also the cohesiveness of society, the existence of trust and social cooperation, and thus the overall quality of civil society (Risse, 2012, p. 128).

Unlike the institutional (institutions) views, the geographical (geography) view says “growth and prosperity are primarily determined by factors such as location, climate, resource endowment, disease burden, and thus agricultural productivity, the quality of human resources, and transportation costs” (Risse, 2012, p. 128). Just as the geographical (geography) view differs from the institutional (institutions) view, so also the integrational (integrations) view differs from both the institutional and geographical views. Unlike the institutional and geographical views, the integrational view says that “growth and prosperity are primarily determined by world market integration” (Risse, 2012, p. 128).

Note that the institutional view does not say that geography and integration do not matter. Rather, it says that although geography and integrations matter, institutions are the principal source of the growth, development and prosperity of a country. Also, the geographical view does not say that institutions and integrations do not matter. Rather, it says although institutions and integrations matter, geography is the principal source of the growth, development and prosperity of a country. So also the integrational view does not say that institutions and geography do not matter. Rather, it says although institutions and geography matter, integrations are the principal source of the growth, development and prosperity of a country.

So, despite the aforementioned disagreement among development economists, they are agreed that stable and functional institutions are indispensable in ensuring growth, development and prosperity. No matter how favourable geographical and integrational factors in a country are, without stable and functional institutions growth, development and prosperity will elude the country. When stable and functional institutions are absent and non-functional institutions takes their place; growth, development and prosperity are as good as nonexistent. It is for this reason that stable and functional institutions, which are the means through which good governance engenders growth, development and prosperity, are vital to every country and economy whether developed, developing, underdeveloped, high-high income, medium-high income, low-high income, high-medium income, medium-medium income, low-medium income, high-low income, medium-low income, or low-low income.

#### **Migration as a Contributory Factor to Underdevelopment**

In the preceding part of this paper, we discussed the sources of growth, development and prosperity of a country. In that discussion, we saw the importance of stable and functional institutions. Now let us relate the importance of stable and functional institutions to how migration can reinforce underdevelopment. In the absence of stable and functional situations, poverty and underdevelopment flourish. Hence in order to resolve the problem of underdevelopment, the problem of the absence of stable and functional institutions must first be resolved because the 'general' problem of underdevelopment is hinged on the 'specific' problem of the absence of stable and functional institutions. But in the situations we refer to as the double neglect (citizens-neglect and government-neglect), rather than solving the problem of the absence of stable and functional institutions as the means to resolving underdevelopment, citizens and government rely on migration as the panacea for underdevelopment. On the one hand, in the citizens-neglect situation, migration and remittances can make citizens neglect their duty to hold their governments responsible for underdevelopment. On the other hand, in the government-neglect situation, migration and remittances can make governments reliant on remittances which in turn can make them neglect their duty of finding long-term and viable economic solutions to underdevelopment.

Due to the 'double-neglect', both citizens and governments fail to tackle the problem of the absence of stable and functional institutions which, in this case, is the 'disease' responsible for underdevelopment. But they look for cure for the symptoms of the disease rather than cure for the disease itself. On the one hand, on the part of the citizens, some emigrate from their diseased-country and others rely on them for remittances. Therefore, both those who emigrate and those who rely on them for remittances see migration as the go-to-solution rather than holding their government

accountable for the absence of stable and functional institutions. On the other hand, on the part of governments, they rely on the 'power' of remittances to solve the poverty problems of their citizens. Knowing that the more the number of people who emigrate, the less the number of people governments have to cater for; and knowing that the more the amount of remittances people receive, the less the poverty problems governments have to solve; governments eagerly accept migration and remittances as ready-made solutions to underdevelopment. By so doing, governments neglect their governance duties of solving the problems that cause underdevelopment.

As already mentioned, in the context of our discussion underdevelopment is caused by the absence of stable and functional institutions. But the problem of absence of stable and functional institutions is not solvable by migration and remittances. Rather, it is solvable by political, economic, social and legal policies such as the rule of law, transparency, accountability, diversification, etc. It is common knowledge that many citizens of low income economies see migration to a greener pasture as the best possible way of escaping from the troubles and hardships of poverty. The problem here is that migration is seen as the *best* possible solution rather than as a *mere* possible solution. Hence, other options are explored if and only if migration fails.

The disastrous consequence is that citizens who have been successful in migrating to greener pastures think they have the best possible solution to their poverty problem. And those who are fortunate to be receiving remittances from abroad also think they have the best possible solution to their poverty problem. Therefore, they lack the political will to pressurize the government to resolve the problem of absence of stable and functional institutions. Absent the illusion of migration, these people *may probably* be forced to assume their political and civic responsibilities of actively seeking economic, political, social and legal solutions to the problems of their countries.

So also, it is common knowledge that many governments of low income economies see remittances as a viable solution to remedy the maladies of the absence of stable and functional institutions. The problem is that remittances are seen as a *viable* solution to the maladies of the absence of stable and functional institutions rather than as a *mere* supplement to stable and functional institutions, good governance, good economic policies and long term solutions to poverty. In this case, the alarming consequence is that such governments of low income economies become over-reliant on remittances. Overreliance on remittances is a recipe for disaster! Remittances are only sent home by those who have emigrated. Other things equal, the higher the number of those who have emigrated, the higher the amount of remittances sent home. So, governments that are over-reliant on remittances have the incentive to, at least indirectly or implicitly, if not directly or explicitly, encourage emigration. The false logic of such governments is that: as long as some citizens have emigration as the

means to escape poverty; and as long as other citizens have remittances as the means to escape poverty; then governments can neglect political, economic, social and legal responsibilities. Consequently, such governments of low income economies will tend to avoid positive transformation and continue with business as usual as long as remittances keep pouring into their countries.

Note that we are not arguing that migration causes underdevelopment; rather we are arguing that the former reinforces the latter. No singular factor is responsible for underdevelopment. There are many factors that are responsible for underdevelopment, and it is a combination of these many factors that engenders underdevelopment. Migration is only one of the factors. Migration is not even one of the most important factors; nevertheless it still has a role to play in underdevelopment. Since no singular factor is responsible for underdevelopment, and since it is a combination of many factors that engenders underdevelopment, and since migration is one of these many factors, therefore migration can be said to be a contributory factor in underdevelopment. Hence, migration being a contributory factor, is just as important as many other factors. If isolated as a singular factor, migration is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for underdevelopment. Migration is not 'the cause' but is only 'part of the reinforcement' of underdevelopment. The question is; how can migration be said to have any responsibility for underdevelopment when, in the context of underdevelopment, the act and phenomenon of migration is not causality if causality is understood as a necessary and sufficient condition for an effect?

Firstly, migration is not at once a necessary and sufficient condition for underdevelopment. Secondly, migration is not a necessary condition for underdevelopment. Thirdly, migration is not a sufficient condition for underdevelopment. Fourthly, migration is at once not necessary and not sufficient for underdevelopment. Then it might be argued that migration ought to be 'exonerated' from underdevelopment. Nevertheless, migration can still be seen as having some responsibility for underdevelopment in the following ways:

Firstly, although migration, on its own, is at once not necessary and not sufficient, and neither necessary nor sufficient for underdevelopment, if we combine migration with all the other factors that contribute to engendering underdevelopment, then the conditions of necessity and sufficiency might be present or the condition of either necessity or sufficiency alone might be met.

Secondly, we can see migration as a contributory factor in underdevelopment. Migration can be seen as a contributory factor if, seen as an antecedent, it heralds a consequent – underdevelopment - and alteration to the antecedent leads to alteration in the consequent. Consequently, although migration is not at once necessary and sufficient, and is neither necessary nor sufficient, yet it can be a contributory factor in

engendering underdevelopment. Hence, migration ought not to be ‘exonerated’ from resource curse.

Moreover, in the context of underdevelopment, we can see migration as “an *insufficient* but *necessary* part of a condition which is itself *unnecessary* but *sufficient* for the result” (emphasis is original) (Mackie, 1965, p. 245) or “an *insufficient* but *non-redundant* part of an *unnecessary* but *sufficient* condition” (Mackie, 1974, p. 62) - an INUS condition. John Leslie Mackie (1988) asserts that our idea of causation implies insufficient but non-redundant parts of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the occurrence of the effect.

In his explication of the INUS condition, Mackie (1965) uses the following illustration. A house was on fire but fire fighters put out the fire before the house could be totally consumed by the fire. After their investigation of the fire incidence, the fire fighters reached the conclusion that the cause of the fire was a particular short circuit in the house. Nevertheless, this conclusion does not mean that the fire fighters are saying the particular short circuit that caused the fire was a *necessary condition* for the fire. The fire fighters know that another short circuit or other factors, *if they had happened*, could have caused the fire (p. 245).

Furthermore, the fire fighters do not mean that the particular short circuit that caused the fire was a *sufficient condition* for the fire. The fire fighters know that *if* there were no inflammable materials nearby to fuel the fire caused by the short circuit the house would not have caught fire. And even if there were inflammable materials near the short circuit *but* there were some automatic fire extinguisher or water sprinkler at the right place and it worked efficiently, the fire would not have occurred. Although the short circuit was not at once a necessary and sufficient condition, and was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the fire, the fire fighters have concluded that it caused the fire (Mackie, 1965, p. 245).

As a contributory factor to underdevelopment, migration is like Mackie’s INUS condition. It is neither necessary nor sufficient for underdevelopment; nevertheless, it still has some responsibility for underdevelopment. But unlike the short circuit’s responsibility in the fire, migration’s responsibility in underdevelopment is not ‘causal responsibility’ but that of ‘reinforcement.’

Similarly, we can see the factors responsible for underdevelopment as systemic and then see migration as being part of the system. Although we are not saying that migration causes underdevelopment, since the role of migration in underdevelopment is only contributory, George Lakoff’s (2012) explanation of systemic causation will help shed light on how migration can reinforce underdevelopment. According to Lakoff (2012):



Systemic causation, because it is less obvious, is more important to understand. A systemic cause may be one of a number of multiple causes. It may require some special conditions. It may be indirect, working through a network of more direct causes. It may be probabilistic, occurring with a significantly high probability. It may require a feedback mechanism. In general, causation in ecosystems, biological systems, economic systems, and social systems tends not to be direct, but is no less causal. And because it is not direct causation, it requires all the greater attention if it is to be understood and its negative effects controlled. Above all, it requires a name: systemic causation.

Remember we earlier mentioned that the double-neglect situations triggered by migration are less obvious and unnoticed. It is for this reason that Lakoff's notion of systemic causation is helpful in understanding the contributory role of migration in the reinforcement of underdevelopment in low income economies.

#### **The Migration and Remittances Problem: Equilibrium as the Solution**

In view of the double-neglect consequences triggered by migration and remittances, one might say that migration should be absolutely discouraged and remittances should be totally discounted. For us, this is an extreme way of dealing with the problem. But migration as a go-to-solution and over-reliance on remittances, as we have already discussed, are also problematic, and for us they are another extreme.

The proper way to deal with the problem, in our view, is to create a balance: between absolutely discouraging migration and seeing migration as the-go-to-solution; and between totally discounting remittances and over-reliance on remittances. In other words, countries affected by the double-neglect problems should adopt a strategy which will create equilibrium: between the absolute discouragement of migration and seeing migration as the go-to-solution; and between the total discounting of remittances and over-reliance on remittances.

In our conception of equilibrium as a strategy, we are adopting the concept of market equilibrium from microeconomics and adapting it to our subject matter. In microeconomics, market equilibrium helps balance the forces of supply and demand. *Ceteris paribus*, "demand is a schedule or a curve that shows the various amount of a product [or resource] that customers [or businesses] are willing and able to purchase at each of a series of possible prices during a specified period of time" (McConnell, Brue, & Flynn, 2009, p. 46). The law of demand says that, *ceteris paribus*: the lower the price of a product or resource, the higher the quantity demanded; inversely, the higher the price of a product or resource, the lower the quantity demanded (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 47).

Changes in the determinants of demand or demand shifters such as consumer tastes, consumer expectations, consumer income, the prices of substitute goods, the prices of complimentary goods, and the number of buyers in the market shift the demand curve either to the right (increase demand) or to the left (decrease demand) (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 51). While a change in price changes the quantity demanded, resulting in “a movement from one point to another on a fixed demand curve” (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 51). On the one hand, an increase in price decreases the quantity demanded. On the other hand, a decrease in price increases the quantity demanded.

*Ceteris paribus*, “supply is a schedule or curve showing the various amounts of a product [or resource] that producers or owners are willing and able to make available for sale at each of a series of possible prices during a specified period” (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 51). The law of supply says that, *ceteris paribus*: the higher the price of a product or resource, the higher the quantity supplied; and the lower the price of a product or resource, the lower the quantity supplied (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 51).

The determinants of supply or supply shifters such as prices of resources, prices of other goods, producer expectations, technology, taxes, subsidies, and the number of sellers in the market either shift the supply curve to the right (increase supply) or to the left (decrease supply) (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 52). While a change in price changes the quantity supplied, resulting in “a movement from one point to another on a fixed supply curve” (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 54). On the one hand, an increase in price increases the quantity supplied. On the other hand, a decrease in price decreases the quantity supplied.

The forces of supply and demand are balanced by market equilibrium. Market equilibrium helps reconcile the intentions of sellers with the intentions of buyers. It has two parts namely equilibrium price and equilibrium quantity. Firstly, the equilibrium price, also known as market-clearing price, is the price where the intentions of buyers meet with the intentions of sellers. In other words, it is the price where quantity supplied is equal to quantity demanded (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 54). Secondly, the equilibrium quantity is the point at which quantity demanded intersects with quantity supplied at the equilibrium price (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 54).

In summary, graphically market equilibrium is the point at which the supply curve intersects with the demand curve. On the one hand, when prices are above the equilibrium price, quantity supplied will exceed quantity demanded which will result in surplus. Surpluses force competing suppliers or sellers to sell at lower prices which in turn drive buyers to buy more. Due to lower prices, consumers are incentivised to buy more while sellers are discouraged from producing. Hence the latter will lower the

quantity produced and supplied (McConnell, et al., 2009, p. 55). Consequently, the market will sooner than later return to equilibrium.

On the other hand, when prices are below the equilibrium price, quantity demanded will exceed quantity supplied which will result in shortage. Shortages force competing buyers to buy at higher prices which in turn drive producers to produce more. Due to higher prices, producers are incentivised to produce more while consumers are discouraged from buying. Hence the latter will lower the quantity demanded (McConnell et al., 2009, p. 55). Consequently, the market will sooner than later return to equilibrium.

From the above discussion, we can deduce that the two main advantages of market equilibrium are: market equilibrium helps eliminate surpluses and shortages; or at least market equilibrium helps to reduce the level, duration and frequency of surpluses and shortages in a competitive market. In the context of our subject matter, the absolute discouragement of migration and the total discounting of remittances on the one side, and the seeing of migration as the go-to-solution and over-reliance on remittances on the other side, can be dealt with as if they were supply and demand and then employ equilibrium to balance them. Therefore, situations of 'surpluses' and 'shortages', or in our context the situations of the double-neglect, will be eliminated or at least reduced.

### **Conclusion**

In the foregoing discussion we analysed how migration from low income economies to high income economies can actually have negative rather than positive consequences on development and low income economies. While brain drain, separation from family, etc. are the noticed ways in which migration has negative effects on sending-countries, our analysis reveals that there are unnoticed ways in which migration negatively affects development and low income economies.

We argued that the relationship between migration and underdevelopment is a complex rather than a simple one. It is simple to see how underdevelopment causes migration. But to see that migration in turn reinforces underdevelopment, one needs to engage in some complex analysis. Alarmingly, the end-result of the complex analysis revealed that migration and remittances, while alleviating poverty, can actually make: citizens neglect their duty to hold their government responsible for underdevelopment; and governments neglect their duty to find long-term and viable solutions to the problem of underdevelopment.

The two situations above are what we respectively referred to as the citizens-neglect situation and the government-neglect situation. Jointly the two situations are what we referred to as the double-neglect situations. Because of the double-neglect situations, we realised that although migration is always seen as a consequence of

underdevelopment, migration can in turn reinforce underdevelopment thereby leading to a vicious cycle.

Finally, in view of the overall discussion in this paper, this paper can be said to have at least tried to make three theoretical contributions to reshaping the way we think about the discourse on underdevelopment and migration. Firstly, it shows that migration can have unintended consequences which are less obvious than brain-drain, separation from family, etc. Secondly, it shows that remittances can have unintended consequences. In other words, it shows that remittances do not always have positive impact; they can also have negative consequences. Thirdly, it suggests that the microeconomic concept of market equilibrium can be adapted and applied to resolving the migration and remittances dilemma.

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