# URBANIZATION, MIGRATION, AND HUMAN SECURITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

**Damian Kehinde, Adesegha, Ph.D.**
Department of Conflict, Peace and Strategic Studies Department
Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
*Email*: adeseghadk@pg.abuad.edu.ng

&

**Adeshina Iyanuoluwa, Omotayo, Ph.D.**
Department of Conflict, Peace and Strategic Studies Department
Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
*Email*: omotayoai@pg.abuad.edu.ng

## Abstract

*Urbanization refers to the gradual increase in the proportion of a population living in urban areas, and the corresponding decline in rural areas. Migration is also global phenomenon that involves a complex and multifaceted process that deals with the movement of individuals or groups from one geographical location to another for various reasons. Today, urbanization continues to be a major trend worldwide, with more than half of the world's population now living in urban areas. At its core, the concept of human security emphasizes the protection and empowerment of people, rather than just states or territories. This study examines the complex relationship between urbanization, migration, and human security in Africa and their implications for sustainable development. The continent's rapid urbanization and internal migration have created new challenges for policymakers, particularly in the areas of human security and sustainable development. While urbanization can be a driver of economic growth and human development, it also poses significant challenges to human security. Urbanization and migration often lead to overcrowding, inadequate housing, and limited access to basic services such as water and healthcare. These conditions increase the vulnerability of urban populations to a range of security threats, including crime, disease outbreaks, and environmental disasters.*

**Keywords:** Urbanization, Migration, Human Security, Immigration, Sustainable Development, Economic Security, Environment, Environmental Security

## 1.0 Introduction

Urbanization and migration are two of the most significant demographic trends of our time. As cities continue to grow and economies become more interconnected, people are

increasingly moving from rural areas to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities and a higher standard of living (United Nations, 2018). However, this trend towards urbanization and migration also poses significant challenges for human security and sustainable development. In recent years, scholars and policymakers have paid increasing attention to the potential impacts of urbanization and migration on human security, which refers to the protection and promotion of individual well-being in the face of various threats, including poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation (UNDP, 1994).

In Africa, migration is high and on the increase which is mainly directed to Europe, North America, Asia, Oceanic and other parts of the world (Marie-Laurence, 2016). In fact, Africa actually experiences significant migration that is essentially intra-continental migration, consisting of regional mobility by refugees, undocumented migrants, and seasonal labour migrants (Reem, 2018). Emigrants to advanced countries include skilled workers, students, semi-skilled and unskilled laborers and recently autonomous female migrants (Hatton, 2016). The trends and patterns of international migration in and out from Africa are influenced by continent's fast population increase, uncertain political climate, intensifying ethnic conflicts, insistent economic hardship, poverty, and environmental deterioration conditions (Fitzgerald, 2018). As such, the traditional pattern of migration destinations in Africa is more clandestine and spontaneous**.**

The implications of these demographic changes for sustainable development are complex and multifaceted. On one hand, urbanization and migration can contribute to economic growth and social development, as cities often serve as hubs of innovation and productivity (Henderson, 2003). On the other hand, rapid urbanization and large-scale migration can also lead to environmental degradation, social inequality, and political instability (Bilsborrow, 2017). Thus, it is essential to understand the potential impacts of urbanization and migration on different dimensions of sustainability, including environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and economic sustainability.

## 2.0 Conceptual Discourse

### 2.1 The concept of Urbanization

Urbanization refers to the gradual increase in the proportion of a population living in urban areas, and the corresponding decline in rural areas. It is a complex process that involves changes in demographics, economics, politics, and culture. Urbanization has been a global phenomenon, driven by factors such as economic growth, industrialization, globalization, and migration (Batty, 2018).According to Batty (2018), the history of urbanization can be traced back to the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, where the first cities emerged as centers of trade, culture, and power. However, it was during the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries that urbanization accelerated in Europe and North America, as people migrated from the countryside to work in factories and mills in the cities.

One of the consequences of urbanization is the transformation of urban spaces. As cities grow, they consume more land and resources, leading to changes in the landscape and natural environment. This can result in loss of biodiversity, increased pollution, and climate change (McGranahan& Satterthwaite, 2014). Additionally, urbanization affects the social fabric of communities, as people with different backgrounds and lifestyles come into contact with each other and interact in new ways (Florida, 2002). Today, urbanization continues to be a major trend worldwide, with more than half of the world's population now living in urban areas (United Nations, 2018). While urbanization has brought many benefits such as improved access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, it has also created challenges such as overcrowding, environmental degradation, and social inequality (Adepoju, 2004).

Furthermore, urbanization has implications for policy and governance. Local governments must manage the complex challenges posed by urbanization, balancing economic development with social and environmental concerns. They must also ensure equitable access to public services and infrastructure, and involve citizens in decision-making processes (United Nations, 2018).Urbanization is a complex and ongoing process that has shaped human societies for thousands of years. While it has brought many benefits, it has

also created challenges that require careful management and planning. As our world continues to urbanize, it is important to understand the impacts of urbanization on our environment, society, and governance, and work towards creating sustainable and equitable cities.

### 2.1.2 The Concept of Migration

Migration is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the movement of individuals or groups from one geographical location to another for various reasons. It has been studied in numerous fields, including sociology, anthropology, geography, and economics, among others. Migration can be voluntary or involuntary, temporary or permanent, and can occur within a country or across international borders.

The former UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, examined migration as an expression of human aspiration for dignity, safety and better future. It is a part of social fabric and part of our very make-up as a human family. Humans have been migrating in search of better livelihoods, greater opportunities and improved security (UNDP, 2009). There is an advancement in human migration just as we have it in technologies and growing world population.

The concept of migration has been defined and analyzed by scholars in different ways. According to Massey et al. (1993), migration can be understood as a response to social and economic inequalities between sending and receiving regions. They argue that people migrate to improve their economic status and opportunities, to escape political oppression and conflict, and to reunite with family members who have already migrated. Others, such as Appleyard (1996), emphasize the role of environmental factors in migration. He suggests that environmental degradation and natural disasters can force people to move from their homes in search of better living conditions. Similarly, Stark and Bloom (1985) highlight the importance of social networks and information flow in promoting migration. They argue that migrants often rely on social connections to find employment and housing in new locations.

In recent years, migration has become an increasingly contentious issue in many countries around the world. Debates

surrounding immigration policies and border control have emerged in response to rising concerns about security, cultural identity, and economic competition. Some argue that migration can have negative impacts on both sending and receiving communities, while others point to the benefits of diversity and multiculturalism. Despite these debates, migration remains an essential aspect of human mobility and has profound implications for individuals, communities, and nations. As such, it continues to be an active area of research and policy development across multiple disciplines.

### 2.1.3 The Concept of Human Security

The concept of human security is a relatively new framework for understanding global security issues. It emerged in response to the limitations of traditional state-centric approaches, which have often failed to adequately address the complex and interconnected challenges facing individuals and communities around the world.

At its core, the concept of human security emphasizes the protection and empowerment of people, rather than just states or territories. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), human security is "a condition that results from the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as the availability of basic necessities, such as food, shelter, and health care" (UNDP, 1994). In other words, human security is about ensuring that all individuals have access to the resources and opportunities they need to live fulfilling lives free from violence, oppression, and poverty.It is pertinent to note that, since the end of Cold War, the UN has accepted human security as a guiding principle for the international community (Elisher, 2018). The organization believes that it is useful in assisting member states in identifying and addressing widespread and crosscutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people, as it calls for people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people(United Nations, 2018).

Human security has also been defined and applied in various ways by scholars and policymakers. Some emphasize its relevance to specific issue areas, such as conflict prevention,

environmental sustainability, or economic development. Others see it as a broader framework for understanding the interconnections between different forms of insecurity, including political, economic, social, and environmental factors. Before moving deeper into the different understandings of human security, Hoffmann (2018) argues that, human insecurity in Africa is one of the causes for emigration of Africans to other nations in quest of better opportunities and safety. Accordingly, in order to accomplish positive growth and development in any nation, human security issues must be given top priority because human security increases citizens' potential to advance the economy.

Former United Nations' Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette (1999) states that human security are those things that men and women anywhere in the world cherish most: enough food for the family; adequate shelter; good health; schooling for the children; protection from violence whether inflicted by man or by nature; and a State which does not oppress its citizens but rules with their consent. In addition, the systems in place, within a country, which further perpetuate violence and marginalize certain groups, should be considered when devising strategies for the achievement of human security (Gomez and Gasper, 2013). Those systems and structures need to be addressed within the human security concept, in order to bring about total human security for the people. The political-social systems that prevent citizens, groups, and states from being able to access their freedom, hinder human security. In addition, human security is concerned with reducing, and if possible, removing the insecurities that plague human lives. This definition is expanded by the commission on human security. In this sense, it embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her own potential.

Despite its growing popularity, the concept of human security has also faced criticism and debate. Critics argue that it is too broad and vague to be practically useful, and that it lacks a clear set of policy prescriptions or implementation strategies. Others suggest that it undermines the importance of state

sovereignty and territorial integrity, and may even encourage interventionism or neocolonialism.

### 2.2 The Implications of Migration on Sustainable Development

Migration can have both positive and negative implications on sustainable development, depending on the specific circumstances. Here are some examples of how migration can impact sustainable development:

*Positive implications:*

- Remittances: Migration can result in remittances sent back to the migrant's country of origin, which can support sustainable development activities such as investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure.
- Knowledge and skill transfer: Migrants can bring knowledge, skills, and expertise from their host country back to their country of origin, which can contribute to sustainable development through improved productivity, innovation, and economic growth.
- Access to better jobs and opportunities: Migration can provide access to better job opportunities, higher wages, and improved living standards, which can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

*Negative implications:*

- Brain drain: Migration of highly skilled workers from developing countries can result in a brain drain, where the loss of talented individuals hinders economic development and sustainability in the country of origin.
- Environmental consequences: Migration can lead to increased consumption of natural resources, land-use change, and environmental degradation, particularly in areas hosting large numbers of migrants.
- Social impacts: Migrant populations may experience discrimination, marginalization, and lack of access to basic services, which can negatively impact their well-being and hinder sustainable development efforts.

### 2.4 The Implication of Urbanisation on SustainableDevelopment

While urbanisation can bring about economic growth and development, it also has numerous implications on sustainable development.

*Positive Implications*:

- Economic Growth: Urbanisation can lead to increased economic activity, job creation, and higher productivity due to agglomeration effects. This can ultimately lead to better living standards and poverty reduction for the population.
- Energy Efficiency: Urbanisation can result in more efficient use of energy and resources due to the concentration of people and infrastructure in a smaller area. This can lead to lower carbon emissions, reduced energy costs, and improved environmental sustainability.
- Innovation: Cities are centers of innovation, where ideas and knowledge are exchanged and new technologies are developed. This can lead to improvements in health, transportation, and energy efficiency, among others, which can contribute to sustainable development.

*Negative Implications:*

- Environmental Challenges: Urbanisation can lead to increased emissions of greenhouse gases, air and water pollution, and deforestation, which can negatively impact the environment and hamper sustainable development efforts.
- Social Inequality: Urbanisation can exacerbate inequality, leading to the formation of slums, where residents lack basic services such as clean water and sanitation. This can lead to poor living conditions and exacerbate social problems such as crime and disease.
- Resource Depletion: Urbanisation can lead to the depletion of natural resources such as water, land, and minerals, which can negatively affect the sustainability of the surrounding ecosystems.

## 2.5 Human Security and Development

Smith (2019) states that human security is the ability to enjoy the fruits of human development in a safe environment. One starting point for exploring human security is the relationship between human security and human development. Lack of human development may lead to insecurity. The implications of human security on development are numerous. Here are some of them:

1. Human-centered Development: The concept of human security shifts the focus of development from solely economic growth to improving the well-being of individuals. This approach prioritizes the basic needs of people, including access to healthcare, education, housing, and employment. In this sense, human security can be seen as a fundamental component of development.
2. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups: Human security recognizes the vulnerabilities of certain groups, such as women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. By addressing the specific needs and concerns of these groups, development efforts become more inclusive and equitable.
3. Conflict Prevention and Resolution: Human security aims to prevent conflicts by addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. By promoting peaceful coexistence and resolving conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, development can be sustained for the long-term benefit of all.
4. Environmental Sustainability: Human security also recognizes the importance of environmental sustainability for development. By protecting natural resources and ecosystems, human security contributes to the sustainability of economic growth, social development, and overall human well-being.
5. Global Cooperation: Human security requires cooperation at all levels, from local to global. Development cannot be achieved if countries act independently of one another. A joint effort is needed to

address common challenges and reduce inequalities between nations.

## 3.0 Conclusion

Urbanization and migration are two interconnected phenomena that have significant implications for human security and sustainable development in Africa. Over the past few decades, Africa has experienced rapid urbanization, with its population shifting from rural to urban areas at an unprecedented rate. This process has been driven by a combination of factors, including economic growth, demographic changes, environmental degradation, and political instability. Urbanization in Africa has led to several challenges, including increased pressure on infrastructure, services, and natural resources, as well as rising levels of inequality and social exclusion. Rapid urbanization has also led to the proliferation of informal settlements and slums, which are characterized by poor living conditions, inadequate housing, and limited access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and healthcare.

At the same time, internal and external migration has become a major feature of African society, with millions of people moving within the country and across international borders in search of better economic opportunities, safety, and security. These migrations have often been driven by conflicts, economic crises, and environmental disasters, among other factors. The impact of migration on human security and sustainable development in Africa is complex. While migration can bring benefits such as remittances, knowledge transfer, and cultural diversity, it can also lead to social tensions, xenophobia, and exploitation. In addition, migration can exacerbate existing environmental and social problems, such as deforestation, land degradation, and water scarcity.

## 4.0 Recommendations

1. Develop comprehensive urban planning policies: Governments should develop comprehensive urban planning policies that take into account the needs of both current and future residents, as well as the impact of urbanization on the environment. This will help ensure that cities are designed to be more sustainable, livable, and resilient, while also reducing inequalities.

2. Promote inclusive growth: Governments should prioritize policies that promote inclusive growth, including investments in education, health care, and social protection. This will help reduce poverty and inequality, and provide people with the skills and resources they need to participate in the formal economy.

3. Address the root causes of migration: Governments should address the root causes of migration by investing in economic development and job creation in rural areas, improving access to education and healthcare, and promoting political stability and human rights. This will help reduce the push factors that drive people to migrate, and encourage people to stay in their communities.

4. Protect the rights of migrants and refugees: Governments should protect the rights of migrants and refugees, including their right to work, access to healthcare and education, and protection from exploitation and abuse. This will help ensure that migrants and refugees are able to contribute to society and participate in the economy, while also protecting their dignity and well-being.

5. Strengthen international cooperation: The challenges of urbanization, migration, and human security are global in nature, and require international cooperation and coordination. Governments should work together to share best practices, coordinate efforts, and mobilize resources to address these challenges, while also protecting the rights and dignity of all people.

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