

Putting the 'safe' in labour migration governance in Africa: the role of regional organizations

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Abstract

About one-third of the migrants globally are labour migrants. In Africa, labour migrants within the formal sector accounted for about 2.8% of the total labour force in 2019. The numbers are speculated to be higher in the informal sector where for several reasons, most migrants work. Low-skilled migrants from sub-Saharan African countries working in destination countries, within and outside the African continent, are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, something which has become more apparent and amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. This presentation will provide an overview of the status of labour migration within the African continent, and to selected destination countries (in the Middle East). It identifies the regional measures taken by African governments to improve conditions for the recruitment and protection of African migrant workers in destination countries. The paper argues that regional organizations such as the African Union and regional economic communities – ECOWAS, IGAD and EAC – can play an important role in closing the regulatory gap in the recruitment and protection of low-skilled migrant workers from sub-Saharan African countries. It will explore the role of these regional organizations in promoting 'safe' labour migration governance in line with the commitments undertaken as part of the Global Compact on Migration and the African Union's migration policy framework. In conclusion, the presentation will explore options available to regional organizations and propose practical steps towards promoting 'safe' labour migration.

Biography

Amanda Bisong is Policy Officer in the Migration and Mobility Team of The Centre for Africa-Europe Relations in Maastricht, The Netherlands. She has a background in law and master's degrees in international law and economics (World Trade Institute) and international trade policy and trade law (Lund University). She is currently pursuing a PhD on migration governance in West Africa at the Faculty of Law, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research focuses on migration agreements, labour migration, migration governance, the linkages between trade and migration in Africa and the interplay between regional and national commitments. In recent years, she has published several research articles on migration governance.