

Critical Migration Policy Narratives from West Africa |

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While population mobility has historically been an integral part of livelihoods in West Africa, there are contesting views on how to maximize the developmental impacts of migration from the sub-region. Although it is generally acknowledged that a deeper understanding of the interests and perspectives of various policy actors can help identify potential areas of engagement with different stakeholders, there is little understanding of the migration policy narratives of different actors. Relying on a desk-review of key migration policy documents and data collected from migrants and recruitment agents, this paper seeks to map and examine the competing interests and narratives shaping migration management in West Africa. The findings indicate that while various stakeholders have championed divergent narratives on the drivers and impacts of migration, many of the migration management initiatives adopted by both countries of origin and destination are based on narratives of powerful policy actors, especially the media and politicians, although there were situations where these narratives were not supported by any strong evidence.