

# Understanding how irregular migration may relate to insufficient social protection provision and limited access to development opportunities in the country of origin

Desk Review - Nigeria  
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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Seefar was commissioned by the Austrian Ministry of Interior to conduct a large-scale research project focused on irregular migration from Nigeria. The research explores whether and how inadequate social protection provision and the lack of access to development opportunities are linked to irregular migration. This includes first-instance movements among potential migrants in Nigeria as well as secondary movements and intentions to re-migrate amongst Nigerian refugees and returnees.

This desk review informed the second phase of the study which draws on primary data collection. Table 1 below outlines the research questions (RQs) used to guide the evidence review and a summary of an assessment of the levels of existing information; where information levels are 'Low', the topic is set to receive more focus in the primary data collection.

## Approach

This literature review was conducted using the Seefar Evidence Review Approach (SERA). SERA screens, reviews and scores sources for cogency, relevance, credibility and timeliness, consistent with best-practice guidance. Sources achieving minimum quality undergo systematic analysis. The aim of the SERA exercise was to:

- Identify the degree to which the research questions could be answered reliably using information in the public domain; and
- Identify conceptual parameters and critical definition elements that provide the main study some delimitations: what does social protection refer to, who engages in secondary migration, and what is included in development programming?

We focused the desk review on known sources of academic and grey literature, in addition to consulting public databases and research repositories such as Google Scholar. Known sources included key research and practice organisations, such as Seefar, Samuel Hall, Altai Consulting, the World Bank, ILO, and UNICEF.

**Table 1: The research areas directing desk review**

Research Area	Research Questions	Level of existing information
Situational	Macro-scale migration drivers in Nigeria for primary and secondary irregular migration (2019–2021) such as trust levels, good governance in fragile states, conflict and war.	high
Motivations for irregular primary and secondary migration	What are the underlying personal and familial migration motivations and push factors for irregular migration? i.e. family wellbeing, unemployment, poverty, social capital, etc.	high
Linkages between development aid and/or social protection with migration intentions		
Development aid/ programming	Can development aid be a way to manage migration?	medium – with mixed findings
	Does access to and usage of development programming have any influence over migration decision making – either primary or secondary movements?	low
	Do these impacts differ between primary and secondary movements?	low
Social protection mechanisms/ programming	Can social protection mechanisms and/or national policies influence irregular migration and why/how?	medium – with mixed findings
	Does access to and usage of social protection programming have any influence over migration decision making?	medium
	Do these impacts differ between primary and secondary movements?	low

## Conceptual Considerations

- **Social Protection:** Mechanisms that allow access to the human right to social security, including initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.<sup>1</sup>
- **Social Protection Programming:** Globally, social protection instruments can be contributory or non-contributory. Non-contributory schemes target the poor and vulnerable and can include social care and social assistance programmes such as social safety nets, social transfers and public works programmes.<sup>2</sup> Contributory schemes fall under labour market schemes or social insurance provision, such as old age pensions and health insurance.
- **Development Aid:** Financial assistance (conditional or unconditional) given by governments and other agencies to support the economic, environmental, social, and political development of low-income or developing countries. Closely related concepts include foreign aid, international aid, overseas aid, developmental aid and official development assistance (ODA). As opposed to humanitarian aid, which is short-term relief, development aid aims to achieve sustained improvement. Development aid is thus widely seen as a major way to meet the first Sustainable Development Goal (end poverty in all its forms everywhere) for developing nations.<sup>3</sup>
- **Development Programming:** Development programming is a multidimensional undertaking delivered by state and/or non-state actors to achieve a higher quality of life for all people. Economic development, social development and environmental protection projects are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of development programming. Support can be provided to affected populations or beneficiaries that indirectly impacts household wellbeing through poverty reduction, vocational training, livelihood programming, and access to economic support (for example, micro-loans).<sup>4</sup>

## Overall conclusions of what the research says:

- Policy makers and donor governments looking to support governments of developing countries to fulfil the dual objectives of reducing poverty and irregular migration have limited evidence on which to base investment or strategy decisions.
- The evidence suggests that though development aid can reduce migration, irregular migration can also in fact be driven by an increase in development aid and programming aiming to impact household wellbeing through poverty reduction, vocational training, livelihood programming, and access to economic support.
- Addressing any negative push factors such as youth unemployment, lack of economic prospects, insecurity or lack of educational opportunities through development aid can also “promote, rather than impede, out-migration by increasing household income”.<sup>5</sup>
- At the same time, research into social protection – state-led initiatives and mechanisms that allow access to the human right to social security – has failed to offer conclusive insights into how these

1 [Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung Spitzenverband, \(2017\). Social Protection as an Alternative to Migration?](#)

2 For some development actors, safety nets denote a more short-term and/or emergency-focused form of social protection, particularly to help people meet immediate basic needs in times of crisis. See [IDS, Topic Guide: Social Protection](#).

3 [Concern Worldwide. Explained: The Sustainable Development Goals \(2018\).](#)

4 [United Nations Library \(key terms\).](#)

5 [De Haas et al., \(2019\). International Migration: Trends, Determinants, and Policy Effects.](#)

mechanisms might contribute to tackling irregular migration. There is some likelihood that these sets of policies and programmes to reduce poverty and provide a safety net for the poorest and most marginalised people and communities can also increase the number of people choosing to migrate. At the same time, social protection can bring about sustainable long-term development and has great potential for counteracting the causes of flight and migration.

- The direction of impact of social protection schemes (whether they push migration or reduce migration) at individual and household levels is directly influenced by three aspects: how adequately the programming meets household needs, how frequent the benefits are and how reliable the scheme is.

### What is missing from the literature that is pertinent to research design:

- Few studies have looked into the ways in which macro, meso and micro factors intersect to push migration or influence decision making at the individual or household levels.
- Few studies have included the perspectives of those who are already in transit, asylum seekers already in the EU, returnees as well as families left behind.
- There is scant research on how potential migrants themselves view social protection programmes that address poverty and exclusion through cash assistance or social safety nets in relation to their migration decision making.
- Few studies employ qualitative tools to look at the influence of the lack of social protection provisions and/or access to development programming offered by either state or non-state actors on migration intentions.
- Despite the extensive research conducted in Nigeria on migration decision making, little is known about whether and how a lack of access or availability of development opportunities for social protection provisions influences migratory movements within and outside of the country, including the influence of the lack of social protection provisions and/or access to development programming offered by either state or non-state actors.

There is ample empirical space for research that provides a novel in-depth look into how access to development programming including social protection impacts on the lives of migrants during the different stages of their irregular migration journey to Europe, including during transit and after arrival in a destination country. Qualitative research would further provide a unique glimpse into the ways in which potential migrants perceive the effectiveness of social protection and development programming on their lives, and how access to programming may impact on their decision-making processes.

# SECTION I: DEVELOPMENT AID, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

## Development aid/assistance as a means to manage migration

Official overseas development assistance (ODA) and development aid budgets across European Union (EU) member states have been decreasing on an annual basis for a decade. Yet, using aid to reduce poverty in less developed countries and address the root causes of migration from these countries to the EU continues to be a critical priority.<sup>6</sup> In EU policy, the root causes of migration “encompass a wide range of casualties such as poverty, human rights violations, conflict, political instability, food insecurity, and a lack of access to natural resources.”<sup>7</sup> According to the Institute for Economics and Peace in 2020, “more than one billion people are at risk of displacement due to rapid population growth, shortage of food and water and increased exposure to natural disasters which could lead to increased migration flows to Europe by 2050.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite the strong linkages between poverty and migration, it is unclear whether development aid or assistance (hereon referred to as development) can be a means to tackle irregular migrations’ root causes. Recent discussions indicate increasingly divergent views within the development community on its role in managing migration and on how to do it effectively with limited resources. Some development experts advocate for a continued focus on the root causes of poverty, while treating migrants as a particularly vulnerable group, as part of a “leave no one behind” approach.<sup>9</sup> Others favour adjustments in the geographical focus of aid to concentrate more on countries of origin and transit, or for “saving the European commitment to asylum” using development as a tool to help decrease migration flows to Europe.<sup>10</sup>

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6 For instance, addressing these root causes through development is one of the elements of the European Commission's proposal of November 2016 for a new European Consensus on Development as well as one of the main objectives of the European External Investment Plan. See [Brzozowski, 2020. Ecology threats likely to send more climate refugees towards Europe by 2050.](#)

7 [Marco Funk, Frank Mc Namara, Romain Pardo, Norma Rose. \(2017\). Tackling irregular migration through development: A Discussion Paper.](#)

8 [Brzozowski, \(2020\). Ecology threats likely to send more climate refugees towards Europe by 2050.](#)

9 [Dennison, Fine and Gowan. \(2019\). False Moves: Migration and Development Aid.](#)

10 [Ibid.](#)

The body of research reviewed suggests that while there is no straightforward answer, two dominant views direct discussions around the various ways development may impact on migration management. On the one hand, there is the logic that increased economic opportunity means increased means to migrate; migration requires some economic resources, so development programming or assistance which increases the economic resources held by a population increases their ability to migrate. On the other hand, there is the logic that increased opportunities at home means increased satisfaction at home; increased economic opportunity in the country of origin decreases the gap in economic opportunities between countries of origin and destination countries in the EU.<sup>11</sup> This may be an imperative to stay home.

Addressing root causes of migration through development programmes requires strategies that consider both premises. For example, it is not the poorest who migrate and so any increase in GDP leads to increase in migration. It is assumed that people with more skills, education, and livelihood opportunities are often motivated to migrate. Thus, practically, out-migration can be driven by both an increase in development opportunities, such as poverty reduction programmes, as well as negative development indicators such as youth unemployment, lack of economic prospects, insecurity, lack of educational opportunities, and environmental degradation. At the same time, addressing the negative development factors through development programmes can also “promote, rather than impede, out-migration by increasing household income”.<sup>12</sup> There is some evidence, however, that this is more the case in low income or less developed countries. As Funk, Namara, Pardo and Rose note, “While increasing development in middle-income countries can indeed decrease migration from those countries, aid to lower-income countries may actually have the unintended and opposite effect of increasing migration.”<sup>13</sup> This may be due to lopsided development that often takes place in lower-income countries. Take for instance, a person who may enjoy increased education opportunities but, once graduates, had no further employment opportunities. They may then decide to migrate in order to match employment with their skillset.

There is increasing discussion around an understudied yet possibly more straightforward pathway by which development can impede out-migration. Apparently, development proposals aimed at “promoting good governance” and thus “directed toward strengthening government and civil society” is the least funded but possibly the most effective way to “eradicate less obvious push factors of migration such as political instability, corruption-induced discrimination, repression and under-representation.”<sup>14</sup> Recent research has shown a mere 10% of global development aid is directed toward and invested in good governance, “even though it is the category of development aid best equipped to have a significant impact on emigration rates.”<sup>15</sup>

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11 European Investment Bank. (2016). [Migration and the EU Challenges, opportunities, the role of EIB.](#)

12 De Haas et al., (2019). [International Migration: Trends, Determinants, and Policy Effects.](#)

13 Marco Funk, Frank Mc Namara, Romain Pardo, Norma Rose (2017). [Tackling irregular migration through development: A Discussion Paper.](#)

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.



## Social protection and irregular migration

There is little disagreement amongst policy makers and donor governments on the importance of social protection systems in national efforts to tackle issues of poverty, inequality and ensuring universal access to basic human rights. Access to social protection is itself considered a fundamental human right.<sup>16</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO), in their 2030 social protection agenda, includes the adoption of social protection policies and social protection systems and measures for all.<sup>17</sup> The European Commission further states that “social protection systems help build a country’s resilience and capacity to respond to crises...manage disasters...and can be extremely effective in situations of extreme fragility and protracted crises, providing support to affected populations and victims of forced displacement.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite the importance of social protection, only 49.6% of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit.<sup>19</sup> It is clear from the evidence that developing countries have the least coverage as they face greater barriers to achieving effective social protection programming than middle-income or developed countries. These barriers include “limited budgets, weaker government institutions, audit mechanisms, and formal financial systems to deliver assistance.”<sup>20</sup> These barriers are especially noted to impact effective implementation of programming in so-called fragile states. As Devereux notes:

*“One of the main mechanisms to help build resilience and protect the poor and vulnerable is context-specific, effective social protection programming. However, it is often the case that the greater the need for social protection, the lower the capacity of the state to provide it.”<sup>21</sup>*

To fill a lacuna in the evidence, the European Commission recently created a Guidance Package on social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus. The rationale for doing so is that social protection has the potential to “transform short-term humanitarian interventions into development processes to achieve resilience, peace, stabilisation, and economic growth in countries in crises.” The guidance aims to address an empirical gap in the existing research, namely “how to bridge the humanitarian and development interventions in crisis contexts.”<sup>22</sup>

But *how exactly* the availability of social protection relates to migration decision making in any context is not straightforward. It is also under-researched in light of the fundamental importance provision of social protection has in ensuring migrants’ and refugees’ access to human rights and dignity. Like the debates surrounding development, existing research has established that nuanced complexities surround the role that social protection may play in migration decision making and the results are often mixed. A

16 “The right to social protection is also a core component of global development and migration governance frameworks such as the 2012 Social Protection Floors Recommendation 202, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. As such, it is embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through Goal 1.3, which aims to substantially increase coverage of poor and vulnerable people in social protection systems.” See [UNICEF \(2021\). Improving Social Protection for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers: An Overview of International Practices](#), p.4.

17 [International Labour Organization. \(2021\). World Social Protection Report.](#)

18 [European Commission. \(2022\). Social Protection.](#)

19 [International Labour Organization. \(2021\). World Social Protection Report. p.42.](#)

20 Hanna, R. (2020). [Social protection in fragile states](#). Harvard Kennedy School.

21 [Ovadiya, M., Kryeziu, A. Masood, S. & Zaperro, E. \(2015\). Social Protection in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries Trends and Challenges. World Bank. \(p.2\).](#)

22 [Mouawad, Z. \(2019\). European Commission Guidance Package: Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus.](#)

recent large-scale, multi-country quantitative study suggested, for instance, that “social protection may facilitate as well as impede migration, and the extent to which it influences migration decisions largely depends on the conditions and the predominant motives for emigration and flight in the countries of origin.”<sup>23</sup> Social protection has been shown to influence families’ income level by replacing the income that may have been gotten through migration, thereby providing support for individuals and households in origin countries. Having increased access to income may facilitate migration or it may be an imperative to stay home, especially if the increased opportunities include enhancement of livelihood strategies and increased basic standard of living through healthcare provision, employment opportunities, etc. The lack of access to social protection can also make survival or livelihood strategies limited; putting the household or individuals at risk, and encouraging migration as a favourable strategy.<sup>24</sup>

### The pathways by which social protection mechanisms can influence migration

Overall, the existing research indicates that the relationship between social protection and migration is multi-faceted; there are several possible links between migration and social protection and they can be assessed through a number of perspectives.<sup>25</sup> Drawing from the evidence, these include:

- **Social protection as a preventive tool for migration in crisis contexts.** Access to social protection can provide stability and security for individuals and families, enabling them to plan for the future and making them less susceptible to destitution. This logic does not change during times of crisis. As such, some scholars have noted that, “access to forms of social protection might act as a substitute for migration, where benefits derived from a social programme can act as an alternative to remittances for potential migrants, for instance.”<sup>26</sup> This also is linked to recently emerging evidence that social protection can be used in the contexts that demand programming across the development-humanitarian nexus, as discussed above.
- **Migration as a form of informal social protection in times of shock or crisis.** Migration is or can be perceived to be a way of protecting oneself or one’s family and, thus, to be a type of informal social protection, particularly during times of shock such as natural disasters or drought whereby migration may be either internal or cross-border. Whereas formal social protection is social protection provided by the state and non-state organisations, informal social protection is understood as that provided by interpersonal networks. Either form can be bi-directional: migrants navigate formal state-bounded social protection provisions to informally provide for themselves or their families back home.<sup>27</sup>
- **Social protection for migrants in destination countries.** Numerous studies have indicated that migrants from countries mainly in the Global South are rarely covered by social protection either in their country of origin or while they are in destination countries.<sup>28</sup> Yet, the need for support remain high during and after migration; though migration may be seen as a social protection strategy in situations of shock, migration is also often a process that leads to increased vulnerabilities which require access to protection measures since migrants encounter different vulnerabilities during the various stages of their migration trajectories – i.e. before departure, during transit, after arrival and upon return.<sup>29</sup> According to UNICEF, “refugees and asylum seekers often

23 Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung Spitzenverband, (2017). [Social Protection as an Alternative to Migration?](#)

24 Ibid.

25 Da Silveira Steffens, I. (2018). [Migration and social protection in crisis contexts.](#)

26 Food and Agriculture Organization, (2021. p.12). [Social Protection and Migration.](#)

27 Mingot & Mazzucato, (2018). [Providing social protection to mobile populations: symbiotic relationships between migrants and welfare institutions.](#)

28 Avato, Koettl & Sabates-Wheeler, (2010). [Social Security Regimes, Global Estimates, and Good Practices: The Status of Social Protection for International Migrants.](#)

29 Sabates-Wheeler & Waite. (2003). [Migration and Social Protection: A Concept Paper.](#)

face significant challenges in living safely and productively, and in enjoying access to basic public services, labour rights and social protection”.<sup>30</sup> Allowing migrants and refugees to access essential services acts to safeguard their economic, social, physical and emotional well-being.

In 2017, academics from the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and the Institute for Political Science and Sociology at the University of Bonn conducted one of the first major studies on the linkages between social protection and migration.<sup>31</sup> The main authors, Schuring and Kronenberg, concluded overall and across four different country case study contexts that the effectiveness of implementation of social protection systems and the influence the system may have on migration are directly contingent on how well designed they are.<sup>32</sup> Specifically, migration decision making at individual and household levels is directly influenced by three aspects: how adequately the programming meets household needs; how frequent the benefits are; and how reliable the scheme is.

Other relevant conclusions/recommendations the authors detail in the study include:

- If the governments in destination countries were to direct their attention to social protection in the migrants’ countries of origin, it would make a significant contribution to reducing (future) migration pressures.
- Migrants who consider returning to their home countries have a much greater likelihood to go back if a functional social protection system is in place.
- Social protection’s established effect of reducing poverty and inequality by pointing out its direct and indirect impact on the factors which push migration. Social protection can have direct effects on either impeding or facilitating migration by increasing household income, reducing poverty and increasing individual’s capacity to cope with life cycle risks.
- Ensuring basic living standards in the country of origin can prevent emigration under conditions of reliability, adequacy and equity.
- A lack of access to essential services such as decent health care services and fair employment conditions can nudge potential migrants towards leaving their country.
- The capacities of a state including its physical and financial infrastructure, as well as external shocks like droughts or floods, influence the efficiency and quality of social protection programmes and hence the migration decisions of the population.
- Social protection has a significant impact not only on those factors which determine the decision to emigrate but also on those which affect the decision to return.

## The role of trust in implementing effective social protection programming

Importantly, Schuring and Kronenberg note that “adequacy and reliability of social protection schemes in the countries of origin play an important role in migration”, since the lack of reliability can create mistrust in state and government officials and can end up boosting emigration.”<sup>33</sup> An older study by the ILO indicated the same: in many cases, the minimum benefit level fails to “*provide beneficiaries with the means to a life in dignity*”; in other cases, transfers which are unreliable or unpunctual will, in turn, create mistrust.<sup>34</sup>

30 UNICEF (2021). *Improving Social Protection for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers: An Overview of International Practices*.

31 Schuring and Kronenberg (2017). *Social Protection as an Alternative to Migration? An assessment of the role of social protection in reducing push factors for migration in different country contexts*.

32 Ibid.

33 Schuring and Kronenberg. (2017). *Social Protection as an Alternative to Migration? An assessment of the role of social protection in reducing push factors for migration in different country contexts*.

34 ILO. (2012) *Social Protection and Human Rights. Adequacy of benefits*.

Research conducted in fragile states found that trust in government may be very low to begin with, which negatively affects implementation of social protection programming: “Making tough decisions on who should receive assistance could potentially further erode trust or exacerbate existing internal conflicts.”<sup>35</sup> At the programming level, experiences where support did not meet expectations often negatively impacted migrants’ trust in organisations. According to a Seefar/IMREF study, for instance, experiences where humanitarian support did not meet expectations often negatively impacted migrants’ trust in organisations. The study also showed that some migrants experienced inappropriate behaviours from field staff including inappropriate conduct with women, threatening behaviour including insults and getting angry at aid recipients. This resulted in the migrants having decreased trust levels with the staff, especially when the available support does not meet their needs.<sup>36</sup>

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35 Ibid.

36 IMREF (2021). [Exploring migrants’ trust in humanitarian organisations](#), p. 12.

# SECTION II: RESEARCH CONTEXT

Nigeria, with a population of over 206 million people, suffers from extreme levels of impoverishment and underemployment, with the highest rate of extreme poverty in the world.<sup>37</sup> In 2020, nearly 50% of the total population were reported to be living in extreme poverty and living on under USD 1.90 per day.<sup>38</sup> The overall rate of un/underemployment was reported to be 27%, while “in 2021, the unemployment rate in Nigeria [was] estimated to reach 31%. This figure is projected to increase further in 2022.”<sup>39</sup>

In addition to poverty, the north suffers from volatile political instability, violence and insecurity, with the North East states currently embroiled in a “crisis which has prompted the displacement of about 2.2 million people.”<sup>40</sup> While the south is less conflict-ridden, it is a well-known hub, particularly Edo State, for human smuggling and trafficking.<sup>41</sup> In recent research conducted by Seefar, the most pressing push factors for migration among those living in the south of Nigeria are the economic trends which have left an increasing number of young people in extreme poverty and without opportunity for gainful employment or entrepreneurship, and the low wages endemic to menial jobs.

## Migration Context

- Nigeria remained in the top ten sending countries for first-time asylum applicants in the EU at the end of 2020;
- Between the third quarter of 2019 and the third quarter of 2020, the EU received 10,660 first-time asylum applications from Nigeria, which is 43% less than the same period the year before. This decrease in applications is likely, at least in part, the result of the containment measures of COVID-19;<sup>42</sup>
- France received the highest number of first-time asylum applications from Nigeria (receiving 38% of first-time applicants), followed by Germany (33%), and the Netherlands (8%);
- The primary destination countries for trafficked Nigerians in 2019 and 2020 included Italy, Spain, Germany and France.

37 Nigeria is home to the most extremely poor, globally. See [Reuters \(2021\). Nigerian growth lags, poverty rising](#). See [ILO \(2022\). Social Protection and Public Finance Management: Nigeria](#); See also [Quartz Africa \(2018\). Nigeria has become the poverty capital of the world](#).

38 [World Poverty Clock, Nigeria \(2020\)](#).

39 [Statista \(2021\). Forecasted unemployment rate Nigeria](#).

40 [EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, 2020](#).

41 [Muhammad. \(2021\) Irregular Migration and Security Challenges in North Western Nigeria: Trends, Issues and the way Forward](#).

42 [Seefar, \(2021\). The Impacts of Covid-19 on Migrant Decision-Making and Human Trafficking in Benin City](#).

### Push and Pull Factors

- EU countries are perceived to promise economic prosperity and security;
- Un/underemployment and low wages are main push factors for young people - unemployment rates for youths aged 15–24 stand at 41%, and at 31% for those aged 25–34;<sup>43</sup>
- Political instability, conflict, general insecurity and high crime rates, and poor infrastructure (roads, electricity) are also frequently cited reasons amongst respondents who choose migration;
- Incomes and economic situations have been heavily impacted by COVID-19 since early 2020;
- Family and friends are sources of information, finances, logistics and can also pressure the potential migrant into making the perilous journey;
- Ineffective social security system: the absence of an effective social security system that would allow youth to attain their educational aspirations.<sup>44</sup>

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Potential Migrants<sup>45</sup>

- Young people aged 15–35 constitute the largest population of migrants from Nigeria, with high levels of irregular migration of both men and women;
- Though potential migrants tend to be unemployed or underemployed, their education levels can be quite high, i.e. an undergraduate degree;
- The age range of most victims of trafficking (VoT) in Edo State is between 15 and early 30s, while the majority of the cases generally are of those under the age of 25 years.

## Development aid in Nigeria

In 2020 Nigeria's GDP was USD 432 billion making it the largest economy in Africa.<sup>46</sup> Yet, while Nigeria has progressed socio-economically, the country has experienced several recessions in recent years, the most severe due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>47</sup> It also faces "massive developmental challenges, including the need to reduce the dependency on oil and diversify the economy, address insufficient infrastructure, build strong and effective institutions, as well as address governance issues and public

43 Ibid.

44 Ikuteyijo, L. (2019). *Irregular Migration as Survival Strategy: Narratives from Youth in Urban Nigeria*.

45 Ibid.

46 World bank (ND).

47 EASO. (2020). *Country Guidance: Nigeria*.

financial management systems.”<sup>48</sup> Inflation, 70% of which was related to food prices over the past year, has contributed significantly to the current poverty and food insecurity crisis, as has rising insecurity and climate-related events. Internal migration from the north of the country impacted by conflict has led to the displacement of 2.9 million Nigerians.<sup>49</sup> An additional 325,830 Nigerian refugees are currently in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.<sup>50</sup> The World Bank has also identified a changing profile of those impacted by poverty in Nigeria due to the COVID-19 recession, with poverty impacting more of the urban populations in the south of the country.<sup>51</sup>

Both the humanitarian and development needs are dire. In February 2021, Nigeria was ranked in the top ten countries globally receiving Official Development Assistance.<sup>52</sup> The EU has given more than EUR 340 million to the country since 2014, with EUR 52 million in 2021 alone. A portion of the assistance is directed to supporting the government with the ongoing humanitarian response in the conflict-affected north.<sup>53</sup>

#### Development aid in Nigeria<sup>54</sup>

Top locations	Central Nigeria, Abuja, Kanje/Marhai, Kaduna, Lagos
Top donors	The EU, World Bank, United Kingdom, African Development Bank, USAID
Primary types of programming	Basic health (21%), Government and civil society (12%), Emergency response (12%), Population policies/programmes and reproductive health (11%)

Nigeria is currently a EU pilot country for “projects bringing together humanitarian, development and peace-building dimensions to address the needs of vulnerable people and offer them social protection through a more long-term and holistic approach.” By directing its development assistance into social protection schemes within conflict-affected communities, the EU aims to “build long-term resilience in conflict-affected communities by addressing the underlying causes of violent conflict, supporting basic services and helping people to support themselves.”<sup>55</sup>

48 World Bank (2020). [The World Bank in Nigeria](#).

49 UNHCR. (2021). [The Nigerian Situation](#).

50 UNHCR. (2021). [The Nigerian Situation](#).

51 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/using-data-combat-ongoing-crisis-and-next-nigeria>.

52 World Bank (2021). [Aid at a Glance](#).

53 This includes food aid, shelter, access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation, protection, education and basic health care. Assistance is also provided to severely malnourished children through cash transfers, food rations, essential medicines and vouchers. See European Commission (2022). [Nigeria Fact Sheet](#).

54 [IATI Database - Nigeria](#).

55 European Commission (2022). [Nigeria Fact Sheet](#).

## Social protection in Nigeria

By 2010, international development actors, regional institutions (e.g. the African Union) and national governments were progressively using social protection as a policy measure for tackling developmental problems across the continent.<sup>56</sup> Regional and global bodies that participated in social protection believed that promoting both social and economic development would promote a more sustainable pro-poor expansion model – particularly in Nigeria, where solid economic growth was not benefitting the poor.<sup>57</sup>

In 2012, the Government of Nigeria took important steps to set up the foundations of the national social protection system in support of a pro-poor agenda. In 2015, the World Bank assessed the status of social protection in Nigeria through the Nigerian Social Protection Status Report, which classified interventions in the country according to the UNICEF transformational approach and the types of risks that they address. A key outcome of the review was, in 2016, Nigeria adopted a National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) with the plan to establish a social protection floor. A social assistance coordination platform that utilised the National Social Register (NSR) was also set up around the same time.<sup>58</sup> The NSPP is deemed an umbrella policy framework that incorporates related social agenda paradigms intended to reduce poverty and provide a life of dignity for all citizens with the aim of addressing poverty in the country and improving the quality of life of Nigerians.<sup>59</sup> The NSPP's life cycle approach aims to ensure that social protection interventions are age-appropriate, that they address risks and vulnerabilities throughout the recipients' life cycle and that they are non-discriminatory and fair to all.<sup>60</sup>

At that time, the 2016 NSPP was demarcated into eight categories:

1. **Education and health services:** This policy offers financial transfers, scholarships, uniforms, and instructional materials for children from low-income families and children with impairments. It also offers free medical services to pregnant women, nursing mothers, children under the age of five, the elderly (those above the age of 65), and persons with disabilities.
2. **Social welfare and child protection:** This policy empowers victims of violence, child abuse, human trafficking, child labour, and child rape with health care, psychosocial assistance, and counseling.
3. **Social housing:** This policy provides affordable and sustainable housing for the financially challenged and families that live in congested and unpleasant circumstances.
4. **Livelihood employment and enhancement:** This policy promotes sustainable development by providing skills training, access to land, inputs for small-scale farmers, equal treatment for youth and women's employment, and access to capital for small, micro, and cooperative businesses.
5. **Social insurance scheme:** Pertinent pensions are accessible to all people 60 years old and above.
6. **Social assistance:** Focus on providing cash payments to families and cash for work schemes that are activated when an emergency occurs.
7. **Traditional family and community support:** Assist family and community-based structures and procedures that help the desired beneficiaries deal with shocks and abject poverty.
8. **Legislation and regulation:** Create a legal structure that safeguards designated beneficiaries including children, via childcare services, inheritance rights, and birth registration.

In 2017, the Government of Nigeria (GoN) laid out the foundations for establishing a revised national

56 [Holmes et al. \(2012\). Social protection in Nigeria: Mapping programmes and their effectiveness.](#)

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 [National Society Safety Net Coordinating Office. \(2022\). Social Protection: Social Protection Policy.](#)

60 [Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning. \(2021\). Revised Draft National Social Protection Policy.](#)



social protection system with the ratification of the social protection policy framework under the leadership of the Federal Executive Council. Concurrently, a social registry of poor and vulnerable households was established at state and national levels. A social protection coordinating platform was also set up in the Presidency to provide oversight and coordination to all social safety net interventions at federal and state level. The GoN increased budget allocation at national and federal levels to social protection activities as part of a specialised social investment programme to build on and/or develop key social protection interventions. The programme was mainly targeted to the poor and vulnerable and included cash transfer, school feeding, microcredit to women and traders and skills acquisition and job opportunities for unemployed youths. According to the federal government, more than 1.5 million Nigerians benefited from these interventions.

In 2019, to bolster and support their social protection agenda, the Nigerian government announced a commitment to lift 100 million citizens out of poverty.<sup>61</sup> To support this commitment, the World Bank approved a USD 800 million credit from the International Development Association (IDA) for Nigeria's National Social Safety Net Program Scale-Up (NASSP-SU) in 2021, with the aim of supporting poor and/or vulnerable Nigerians under the government's existing social safety programmes.<sup>62</sup>

The previous 2016 social protection measures were then revised and in 2021 the policy measures were updated and classified into four categories:<sup>63</sup>

2021 social protection policy measures in Nigeria <sup>64</sup>			
<p><b>Social assistance</b></p> <p>Free meals, health care and removal of user fees for selected basic social services to the poorest and most vulnerable groups including people living with disabilities, children under five, the elderly and pregnant and lactating women.</p>	<p><b>Social care</b></p> <p>Support and home care for families in distress and for people in vulnerable situations; health services (including mental and psychosocial) to survivors of sexual violence and child labour; free capacity building programmes for care workers.</p>	<p><b>Social insurance</b></p> <p>Social health insurance schemes, pensions to citizens aged 60 and above, and insurance for crops and livestock which can be activated during economic shocks provided to the poorest and most vulnerable against risks and shocks.</p>	<p><b>Labour market intervention</b></p> <p>Job training and adapting job seeker's skills. Includes skills training and development, access to land for smallholder farmers, access to financial services for small enterprises and cooperatives and providing unemployment subsidies.</p>

## Examples of key social protection interventions in Nigeria

- **Family Economic Advancement Programme:** an ILO supported poverty alleviation and economic empowerment programme for individuals and families through the institution of necessary microeconomic activities at various localities within the country.

61 ILO. (2022). *Social Protection and Public Finance Management: Nigeria*.

62 World Bank. (2021). *Nigeria to Scale-up Delivery of Social Assistance to 10.2 Million Households*.

63 Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning. (2021). *Revised Draft National Social Protection Policy*.

64 Ibid.

- **NPower:** addresses the issues of youth unemployment and helps increase social development. The scheme was created as a component of [National Social Investment Program](#), to provide a structure for large scale and relevant work skills acquisition and development and to ensure that each participant will learn and practise most of what is necessary to find or create work.
- **Child Development Grant Program (CDGP):** a DFID funded project which is implemented by Save the Children and Action Against Hunger in Zamfara and Jigawa States.
- **Cash Transfer Program (CTP):** The National Cash Transfer Program (CTP) came into existence after the establishment of the National Cash Transfer Office (NCTO) in 2016. The role of the office is to provide cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households under an expanded national social safety nets system.
- **Public Welfare (PWF):** provides support to the participating State governments to provide immediate labour intensive work opportunities for unskilled youths from poor and vulnerable households.
- **Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP):** provides microloans for traders, artisans, farmers, enterprising youths and above all vulnerable women.

Despite a decade-long history of advancing social protection policies and advocating for a pro-poor agenda, strategies and programming, social protection in Nigeria is characterized by poor administration and financing, a significant lack of coverage and corruption.<sup>65</sup> A major critique of Nigeria's social protection programming<sup>66</sup> is a lack of funding, and poorly designed social protection schemes. According to the research, policy inconsistency and trouble with implementation has plagued the country for decades, which impacts on coverage rates and accountability. As Nnajiolor, Ifeakor and Mgbemena wrote in 2013, "Over the years in Nigeria, numerous brilliant policies have been formulated, but the paradox is that only a negligible part of these numerous policies are implemented." The country's social protection policies are, unfortunately, no exception.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, with the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become evident that the NSR which was supposed to guide all social assistance and humanitarian efforts in the country, has been unable to fulfil its mandate due to limited coverage and insufficient connections with the health and humanitarian sectors to name a few.

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65 Schuring and Kronenberg. (2017). [Social Protection as an Alternative to Migration? An assessment of the role of social protection in reducing push factors for migration in different country contexts.](#)

66 Awojobi. (2017). [Remittance, Migration and Development: Investigating African Diaspora in Germany.](#)

67 Nnajiolor, Ifeakor and Mgbemena. (2013). [Nigeria and the enigma of policy implementation.](#)

**Table 2: Some key actors involved in social protection**

<b>Federal and state-level government institutions</b>	<p><b>National Planning Commission now known as the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and Planning (Budget and National Planning Arm)</b></p> <p>They are responsible for coordinating the country's social protection programmes and play a significant part in social protection coordination.<sup>68</sup></p>
	<p><b>Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on the MDGs</b></p> <p>This is a financing body established as part of the MDGs-DRG, which supports the country's two major government-led social safety programmes, COPE and MCH.<sup>69</sup></p>
	<p><b>Ministries of Women's Affairs and Social Development, Youth Development, Education, and Health</b></p> <p>They are all substantial actors in social protection, both directly (through cash transfer and health charge exemptions and insurance) and indirectly (e.g. through and HIV support, child protection).<sup>70</sup></p>
	<p><b>National Health Insurance Scheme</b></p> <p>This is a governing body, but when the MDG programmes began, it also became an implementation body.<sup>71</sup></p>
	<p><b>Ministry of Agriculture</b></p> <p>MoA plays a crucial role in financing agricultural subsidies and inputs, as well as providing employment. Studies show that a well-developed agricultural field could transform the African economy.<sup>72</sup></p>
<b>International donors and NGOs (often working in partnership with the government)</b>	<p><b>DFID</b></p> <p>DFID / FCDO is interested in investigating the possibility of unrestricted transfers in the nation. DFID / FCDO also supports Phase II of the Partnership for Transforming Health Systems (PATHS 2), which has offered technical help to the NHIS in creating a study to collect resources to facilitate choices on the placement, management, and structure of the CBHIS (PATHS2, 2010).</p>

68 Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning. (2022).

69 Office of the Senior Special Assistance to the President on Millennium Development Goals. (2015). Millennium Development Goals: End-point Report.

70 Holmes et al., (2012). Social protection in Nigeria: Mapping programmes and their effectiveness.

71 Ibid.

72 Ogbalubi & Wokocha. (2013). Agricultural Development and Employment Generation: The Nigeria Experience.

**International donors and NGOs (often working in partnership with the government)**

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### **ILO**

ILO runs development programmes such as the International Labour Organization Initiative for Labour Migration, Job, and Reintegration in Nigeria and Ghana (LMER) which intends to generate transparent and safe labour migration governance structures while also promoting employment and revenue possibilities for prospective and returning migrants. (ILO, 2020). The initiative is aiding Ghana and Nigeria with their labour migration structural reforms. Endorsement and adoption of relevant ILO instruments are recommended to enhance governments' ability to protect migrant workers' human and labour rights during recruiting, reintegration, employment, and return.

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### **UNICEF, ILO, Save the Children**

The Social Protection Review is an agreement that was made between the Nigerian Ministry of National Planning and Budget, ILO, Save the Children and UNICEF to support Nigeria's social protection sector.<sup>73</sup>

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### **UNODC/EU**

The EU/UNODC is currently a major funder of Nigerian anti-trafficking measures, and a primary funder of UNODC's projects in the country. In August 2011, UNODC received an EU grant of USD 6,864,000 for a four-year programme aimed at "promoting better management of migration in Nigeria by combating and reducing irregular migration that occurs, inter alia, through trafficking in persons (TIP) and smuggling of migrants (SOM)". Thirty-three anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking efforts are intertwined for the same purpose of reducing outward migration.

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### **World Bank**

In Nigeria, the World Bank has played a significant role in social protection. It contributed to the drafting of the draft Social Protection Policy in 2004 and continues to assist the NPC in establishing a social protection strategy.<sup>74</sup> This is done through financial aid and supporting the country's National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) framework with the aim of lowering poverty rates and protecting families and individuals from economic shocks.<sup>75</sup>

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### **Oxfam**

Oxfam mostly actively contributes and collaborates with other NGOs and works on projects such as sustainable livelihoods and food security, job creation for young people, and investment in agriculture.<sup>76</sup> There are also a large number of local civil society organisations working on behalf of the disadvantaged in Nigeria; they do this by tackling both social and economic hazards.

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73 International Labour Organization. (2019). *Social Protection Sector Review in Nigeria*.

74 Holmes et al., (2012). *Social protection in Nigeria: Mapping programmes and their effectiveness*.

75 World Bank. (2021). *Nigeria to Scale-up Delivery of Social Assistance to 10.2 Million Households*.

76 OXFAM Nigeria. (2022). *What we do*.

**International donors and NGOs (often working in partnership with the government)**

**IOM/The Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)/EU**

The MRC was established by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration within the framework of the EU-funded project. It provides a range of support services to migrants and would-be migrants. The centre supports the government's efforts in managing organized labour migration in and from Nigeria. It also serves as a one-stop shop where intending, actual and returning migrants access relevant migration information on legal, organized and humane migration, rights and protection of migrants, and pre-departure orientation. They have dedicated labour officers in Lagos, Abuja and Benin City.

**UNICEF**

UNICEF works on several social protection projects in Nigeria and their projects include the Girl's Education Project, local capacity building, supporting the design and drafting of bills on national social protection and in-kind support to access health services.<sup>77</sup>

**SOS Children's Villages**

SOS Children's Villages has several projects including a Family Based Care Programme that supports children in danger of losing parental care by building family support that includes education and training that is tailored to each child's needs; the Family Strengthening Programme focuses on the prevention of child abandonment by supporting children in the community and empowering their families and communities; and the Agric Programme which offers support and training that includes mentorship for young people in their agricultural business start up.<sup>78</sup> Informal social protection provided through social networks also exists and is important in Nigeria, as households that face idiosyncratic shocks usually rely on informal social arrangements where formal arrangements are weak or non-existent.<sup>79</sup>

**National/Civil Society Organisations**

**Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGO)**

The is a membership body for civil society that addresses effective advocacy on many developmental issues, including poverty and one of their goals is reducing poverty through social protection.<sup>80</sup>

77 UNICEF Nigeria. (2022). Social Protection.

78 SOS Children's Villages Nigeria. (2022). Programmes.

79 Sesan, T. (2021). Enabling Social Protection within the Informal Economy: Lessons from Worker-led Schemes in Nigeria, Uganda and Togo.

80 NNNGO, 2022. Description.

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