

## **MIGRATION OF WOMEN FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA TO EUROPE: THE ROLE OF HIGHLY SKILLED WOMEN**

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**Abstract:** This contribution aims to analyze Sub-Saharan women's migration with a special focus on highly skilled women in order to create a framework to better understand the different factors shaping migration patterns, such as the push and pull factors, the increase of flows and the complexity associated with them.

In recent years the number of female Sub-Saharan migrants has grown at a rate much higher than the global average. In fact, in 2010 alone the number of female African migrants was 47.2% (World Bank, 2012), showing an increase of 5.2% since the 1960's when women constituted 42% of the total migration from Sub-Saharan Africa. The feminization of migration flows from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in recent years has also witnessed a diversification of the flows. One specific segment on the rise is labor migration, specifically, highly skilled migration, especially for tertiary students and physicians and nurses.

The study explores social geography and the geography of migration. The author considers two dimensions of analysis: women's migration patterns from SSA (with a special focus on the impacts of the flows) and highly skilled migration from SSA.

**Key Words:** women, Sub-Saharan Africa; Europe, highly skilled migration, gender roles, brain drain, brain gain.

### **Introduction**

Highly skilled female migration from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), a trend currently on the rise, is a relevant dimension of research. The reason for this is reiterated by the geographical division formulated by the African Union (AU), who affirm that the African Continent is divided into six geographical regions: North Africa; South Africa; West Africa; East Africa; Central Africa and the Diaspora. In 2005 the AU defined the diaspora as "Peoples of African origin and heritage living

outside the continent and who remain committed to contribute to the development of the continent and building of the African Union” (AU, 2005). In the present paper we consider both international migration of African women and highly skilled migration.

According to the World Bank database, in 2010, 104.4 million women represented 48.4% of the global population of international migrants (a total of 215.8 million). To date they make up the majority of immigrants in many countries, for example, the USA, Europe and the Middle East, and at the same time they comprise a large number of emigrants from Latin America and Asia. By 2005 there were slightly more female immigrants than males in all regions of the world except Africa and Asia. The increase in women’s migration, especially from and in SSA, was first registered in the nineties and for a long time has been attributed mainly to family reunifications and new marriages between co-nationals who emigrated abroad, at least since professional motivations became real pull factors for women’s migration. Nowadays, the participation of women in the migration process is directly linked to the social role of women in the origin country, to her autonomy and her capacity to make decisions, and to her access to resources either in the origin or destination countries. In addition to social norms, family code and gender relationships within the family and the community directly affect the possibility for women to migrate independently. This phenomenon is especially true for Africa where migration is a “family choice” and not an individual idea; in fact, it is usually the whole family that decide who can migrate (Adepoju, 2007). Often, standards and customs regarding women along with the vision of the man as the breadwinner influence women’s migration flows, not just in number but also in patterns. The migration experience itself is highly gendered, especially for social and family relationships, and employment experiences.

In order to understand the causes and consequences of international migration it is important to get a gendered perspective that can show women’s migration as movement of a segment of the population that has social and economic impact both in origin and destination countries. Gender inequality is a powerful barrier to economic, social and political progress and at the same time can be an important push factor for accessing migration, particularly when women have economic, political and social expectations which real opportunities at home do not meet (Martin, 2007). This is especially true for highly skilled women.

The main purpose of this article is to describe, at a macro level, the current migration patterns of women from Sub-Saharan Africa with a specific focus on the highly skilled in order to create a framework for new research, both qualitative and quantitative, and to foster new debates is this

segment of research. For the purpose of this paper the definition of highly skilled people, proposed by the European Blue Card (2009), considers highly skilled people as those with a first-degree or higher education diploma of at least three years, or five years' professional experience. The approach to the study is socio-geographical, related to the analysis of the flows and correlation among a specific group of people<sup>1</sup> and territories, taking into account that migrants are principal agents of the de-territorialization process, which indicates the loosening of constraints that traditionally bounded cultures, identities and territories (Appadurai, 2001).

The methodology used was the analysis of literature and data elaborated by the main international organizations connected to the topic, such as the World Bank, the United Nation Development Program (UNDP), OECD, European Migration Network, Eurostat and the International Organization of Migration, as well as the EU policies for highly skilled migration. A specific focus is dedicated to the study and correlation of social development indicators that together can be a starting point for the study of highly skilled migration of women. This paper proposes a way to study women's migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe through the correlation between the migration flows of highly skilled women and the overall social wellness and gender gap of the origin countries.

The article focuses on three different aspects of migration: women's migration from SSA, highly skilled migration from SSA and, specifically, highly professional women's movement from SSA. The work is divided into two sections. The first section explores women's migration from Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1960's, specifically how these flows became more constant (if we consider the number of women in movement) and more diversified. This section proposes a way to consider women's migration starting from the social condition of people, especially women, in the origin countries through the use and correlation of indicators elaborated by the United Nation Development Program which measures gender inequality and human development inside a country<sup>2</sup>. In order to create a socio-geographical starting point for the study of these flows, these indicators are then combined with the theory of Boyd and Grieco (2003) which outlines some of the principal factors (individual, familial and societal factors) that influence women's decisions to migrate or not. The second section analyzes the flows of highly skilled women from Sub-Saharan Africa. A short focus is dedicated to tertiary educated mobile students from the SSA region to

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<sup>1</sup> Sub-Saharan highly skilled women migrants.

<sup>2</sup> The Human Development Index is elaborated through the life expectancy at birth index, GDP and the alphabetization of the total population.

Europe which represents an interesting branch of migration that should improve a gender perspective. The work focuses the conclusion on the connection of women's migration and development, which will be one of the main challenges for SSA countries over the next decades (AU, 2005).

### **Women's Migration From Sub-Saharan Africa**

According to the World Bank, in 2010 there were 21.8 million international migrants from SSA representing 2.5% of the total population of the region<sup>3</sup>. The first 10 emigration countries were Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa. Contrary to common perceptions of the public opinion in Europe, African international migration remains principally in Africa (63%); only 24.8% of international migrants move to high income OECD countries<sup>4</sup>. These data are in accordance with international literature and the UNDP, according to whom migrants move mainly to countries within the same level of human development with a HDI<sup>5</sup> slightly higher than their own.

Major destination countries for Sub-Saharan international migrants are Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia. For non-African countries, the current leading destination country is France (9%) followed by Saudi Arabia (5%), UK and USA (4% each). Over the last decade Italy and Spain have also become important destinations for Sub-Saharan migrants, particularly from Senegal and Ghana, since the "0 migration" politics of France have taken effect.

If international migration in Africa experienced a huge boom in the eighties as a result of the severe economic and political crisis that struck the region in those years<sup>6</sup>, the feminization of these flows began in the nineties and, initially, was linked almost exclusively to family reunification.

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<sup>3</sup> The total population of SSA is about 840 million with an annual growth of 2.5% and an unemployment rate of the 22.5% in 2008. The urban population represents 36.9% of the total population (World Bank, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> 2.5% of international African migrants go to high income non-OECD countries, 1.8% move to other developing countries, and 7.8% go to unidentified destinations.

<sup>5</sup> HDI is the acronym for Human Development Index elaborated by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP).

<sup>6</sup> The eighties were named the "lost decade" of Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed a diversification and increase in the flows. In fact, in 2010 alone, the number of female African migrants was 47.2% (World Bank, 2011) registering an increase of 5.2% since the 1960's when women constituted just 42% of total migration from Sub-Saharan Africa.

*Table 1. International migration from SSA and Incidence of Women 1990-2010*

States	Population at mid-year (thousands)		Estimated number of international migrants at mid-year		Estimated number of female migrants at mid-year		Female migrants as percentage of all international migrants	
	1990	2010	1990	2010	1990	2010	1990	2010
Angola	10 662	18 993	33 517	65 387	15 375	34 674	45.9	53.0
Benin	4 795	9 212	76 212	232 036	36 120	105 596	47.4	45.5
Botswana	1 352	1 978	27 510	114 838	10 896	53 220	39.6	46.3
Burkina Faso	8 814	16 287	344 739	1 043 035	179 104	530 140	52.0	50.8
Burundi	5 681	8 519	333 110	60 770	169 843	33 174	51.0	54.6
Cameroon	12 233	19 958	265 344	196 570	119 817	89 842	45.2	45.7
Cape Verde	354	513	8 931	12 053	4 502	6 075	50.4	50.4
Central African Republic	2 929	4 506	62 713	80 492	29 215	37 500	46.6	46.6
Chad	6 105	11 506	74 342	388 251	34 209	186 360	46.0	48.0
Comoros	438	691	14 079	13 525	7 362	7 215	52.3	53.3
Congo	2 447	3 759	129 597	143 203	65 179	70 757	50.3	49.4
Côte d'Ivoire	12 610	21 571	1 816 426	2 406 713	804 677	1 085 428	44.3	45.1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	37 016	67 828	754 194	444 672	391 077	235 939	51.9	53.1
Djibouti	560	879	122 221	114 147	57 979	52 430	47.4	45.9
Equatorial Guinea	379	693	2 740	7 447	1 275	3 500	46.5	47.0
Eritrea	3 158	5 224	11 848	16 484	5 620	7 572	47.4	45.9
Ethiopia	48 292	84 976	1 155 390	547 984	548 106	257 945	47.4	47.1
Gabon	926	1 501	127 667	284 127	54 792	122 035	42.9	43.0
Gambia	896	1 751	118 123	290 104	51 817	146 364	43.9	50.5
Ghana	14 968	24 333	716 527	1 851 814	317 902	774 034	44.4	41.8
Guinea	6 147	10 324	241 121	394 557	122 248	209 339	50.7	53.1
Guinea Bissau	1 022	1 647	13866	19244	6 927	9 614	50.0	50.0
Kenya	23 433	40 863	162 981	817 747	79 850	415 688	49.0	50.8
Lesotho	1 602	2 084	8 240	6 328	3 922	2 887	47.6	45.5
Liberia	2 167	4 102	80 831	96 310	36 456	43 437	45.1	45.1
Madagascar	11 273	20 146	46 125	37 762	21 282	17 423	46.1	46.1
Malawi	9 452	15 692	1 156 878	275 851	595 485	142 445	51.5	51.6
Mali	8 655	13 323	165 275	162 677	80 208	77 386	48.5	47.6
Mauritania	1 988	3 366	93 878	99 229	39 217	41 912	41.8	42.2
Mauritius	1 056	1 297	8 736	42 917	4 450	27 162	50.9	63.3
Mozambique	13 543	23 406	121 912	450 020	63 625	234 365	52.2	52.1
Namibia	1 417	2 212	112 096	138 870	52 270	66 063	46.6	47.6
Niger	7 904	15 892	135 698	202 163	71 668	108 928	52.8	53.9
Nigeria	97 338	158 259	447 411	1 127 668	195 918	534 924	43.8	47.4
Rwanda	7 150	10 277	72 862	465 480	39 247	250 733	53.9	53.9
São Tomé and Príncipe	116	165	5 808	5 253	2 761	2 522	47.5	48.0
Senegal	7 538	12 861	268 574	210 061	129 718	107 462	48.3	51.2
Seychelles	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sierra Leone	4 084	5 836	154 460	106 776	64 965	48 781	42.1	45.7
Somalia	6 596	9 359	633 109	22 843	300 340	10 493	47.4	45.9
South Africa	36 745	50 492	1 224 368	1 862 889	456 902	794 526	37.3	42.7

<b>Sudan</b>	27 091	43 192	1 273 141	753 447	618 608	363 000	48.6	48.2
<b>Swaziland</b>	864	1 202	71 394	40 418	33 210	19 283	46.5	47.7
<b>Tanzania</b>	25 455	45 040	575 957	659 202	284 585	332 296	49.4	50.4
<b>Togo</b>	3 926	6 780	162 570	185 402	82 832	92 983	51.0	50.2
<b>Uganda</b>	17 731	33 797	550 429	646 548	259 862	322 896	47.2	49.9
<b>Zambia</b>	7 910	13 257	279 969	233 140	136 148	115 666	48.6	49.6
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	10 461	12 644	627 098	372 258	237 056	140 721	37.8	37.8

*Source: Author using data from United Nation Population Division, 2010.*

Table 1 shows that although female migration from Sub-Saharan Africa has increased by over 5% since the 1960's, growth has remained relatively constant for almost all Sub-Saharan States over the last twenty years (from 1990 to 2010). Mauritius, which has a Human Development Index (HDI) among the highest in the region with 63.3% of women in international migration, registers the highest growth rate (+12.4%) of female international migration. A large increase in female migration is recorded also in Angola (+7.1%), Botswana (6.7%), Gambia (+6.6%), South Africa (4.9%) and Nigeria (+3.6%). Rather stable rates are observed in Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. Conversely, a decrease in women's migration is registered in Ghana (-2.6%), Lesotho (-2.1%), Benin (-1.9%), Djibouti (-1.5%), Eritrea (-1.5%), Somalia (-1.5%), Burkina Faso (-1.2%), Republic of Congo (-0.9%), and Togo (-0.8%). It is worth noting that the decrease in the number of female migrants is, on average, about 1.5%. Moreover, 17 of the 48 states in the region showed a greater presence of women in international flows, while in Guinea Bissau there is absolute equality between men and women's flows. These data show once again how important it is (in order to understand causes and consequences of international migration from Sub-Saharan Africa) to acquire a gender perspective that can see women's migration not as a consequence of male migration but as a phenomenon in itself that involves half of the population in movement and that has a special impact, both economic and social, on territories of origin and destination.

In order to explore women's migration from SSA it is useful to acquire a micro and macro level of analysis that refers to the individual, community and familial factors (micro level) and to the overall social condition of the population within a country, such as human development and the gender gap (macro level). At the micro level a good scheme of analysis is proposed by Boyd and Grieco (2003) and argues that different factors at individual, familial and societal levels influence whether women will migrate internationally:

- Individual factors include: age, birth order, population group, urban/rural origins, marital status, role in the family (wife, daughter, widowed), reproductive status (children or not),

position in the family (authoritative or subordinate), educational status, occupational skills/training, labour force experience, and class position.

- Family factors include: size, age/sex composition, life-cycle stage, structure (nuclear or extended), status (single parents, two parents, etc.), and class standing.
- Societal factors include: those community norms and cultural values that determine whether or not women can migrate and, if they can, how (i.e. labour or family reunification) and with whom (alone or with family) (Martin, 2007).

At the macro level the use of social indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Gap Index (GGI)<sup>7</sup> of the origin country can help explain the social condition of people in movement and is useful for understanding push factors. It is widely known that a state where the Human Development Index is low is definitely a country with a strong propulsion for migration and, according to the UNDP (2009), this migration is directed mainly to a place with a HDI a bit higher, but still in the same range.

The intersection of GGI and HDI highlights the correlation between the gender gap and social empowerment of the origin country and is again useful for understanding push factors, specifically for the migration of women.

One more step at the macro level is the comparison of the GGI of the origin and destination countries which is useful for analyzing the possible impact of migration to women and to their communities.

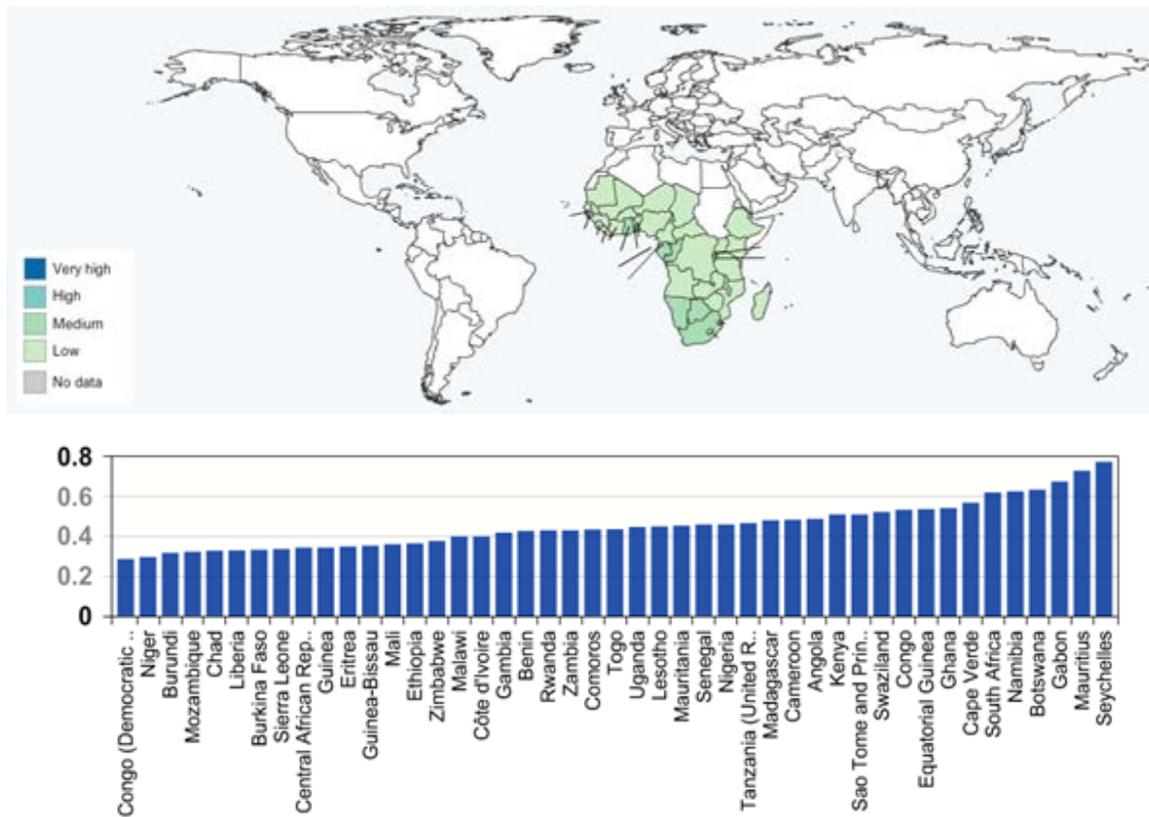
***Table 2. Micro and macro level of study***

<b>Micro level</b>	<b>Macro level</b>
Individual factors Family factors Societal factors	Intersection of social indicators such as Human Development Index and Gender Gap Index

*Source: Author*

<sup>7</sup> Elaborated by the United Nation Development Program (UNDP), [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org).

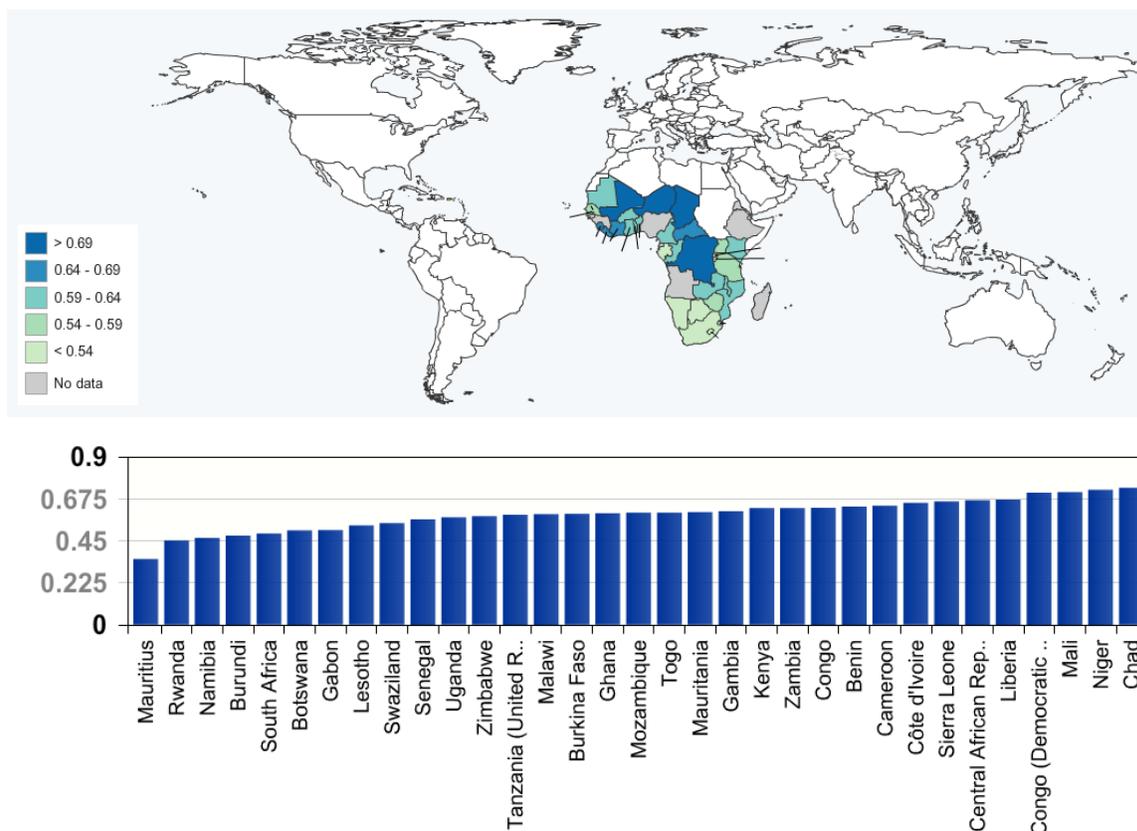
**Figure 3. Map and Index of Human Development Index (HDI) in SSA(2011)**



Source: UNDP, 2012

As shown in Figures 3 and 4 almost all of the SSA countries are located in the low end of the Human Development Index. Moreover, the Gender Inequality Index (Figures 3 and 4) reflects a huge inequality between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market in many countries, especially in Chad, Niger, Mali and Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC), which carry a long history of migration (due to conflicts, especially for RDC).

**Figure 4. Map and Index Gender Inequality Index (GII) in SSA (2011)**



Source: UNDP, 2012

Boyd and Grieco's (2003) scheme on the factors that influence women's international migration is also useful to understand the impact of migration for individual women and for the communities with which they interact, both in origin and destination countries. These factors include the possibility to capitalize the opportunities that the migratory route offers, the access and control of these resources and benefits, the participation in the decision-making process, the power within the family and/or community to which they belong and the satisfaction of common and/or individual interests. In addition, for both men and women the reasons and methods of migration, whether voluntary or forced, legal or illegal, have a strong influence on the results, on future prospects of integration into the host society and on impacts in the countries of origin.

To date, the main reasons that push Sub-Saharan women's migration are<sup>8</sup>: 1) family reunification or

<sup>8</sup> Forced migration caused by conflict and/or trafficking for sexual or business purposes is not included here.

marriage; 2) educational or professional experience; 3) financial independence (which includes the desire to get respect from their family and/or communities); 4) to “escape” from contexts that discriminate women and that strictly define rules and social expectations of gender (get married, have children, do not study and/or work) (Tabapssi, 2011). As we can observe, these reasons (except for family reunification) influence highly skilled women.

Moreover, many African societies’ norms and social structures seriously affect women’s access to credit, land and means of production to the point that migration is a good chance to escape from the situation. Although most women’s migration is voluntary, there are many women and girls who are forced to leave their country because of conflicts (i.e. DRC, Sudan, etc.), environmental degradation (i.e. Somalia), natural disasters and other situations that compromise their safety<sup>9</sup> or because they were victims of international trafficking linked to the sex and domestic work trade. Finally, over the past 15 years there has been an important increase in migration for highly skilled women mainly in the health and physics sectors.

### **Sub-Saharan Africa High Skilled Migrant: The Place of Women?**

*Recognising the presence of skilled women in global migrant streams will challenge the dominant narratives for understanding women’s place in contemporary and global political economy. This is also a politically necessary step if we are to avoid simply replacing the longstanding divide (in narratives of First World economies) between “productive man” and “reproductive women”, with a new one, which simply selects and incorporates indigenous women into narratives of productive labour, while casting migrant women as the sole providers of reproductive labour within the domestic sphere, even in its commodified forms (Kofman and Raghuram, 2006).*

These words are powerful if correlated with the Sub-Saharan context, where tertiary educated women are the lowest in the global scenario because of the general condition of women which leads to disparities in accessing the highest educational level.

Even though the importance of women’s education is highlighted in all the most important international declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 26; 1948), the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women in 1979, the Declaration of the Children’s Rights (1989) the Beijing Platform (1995) (and all the conference reviews: Beijing + 5,

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<sup>9</sup> Women represent half of the total number of refugees from and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

+ 10 and + 15) the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2000)<sup>10</sup>, the Maputo Conference 2003 and the African Women Decade (2010-2020), the ratio of female education is still the lowest on the planet at all levels<sup>11</sup>. The 3rd Millennium Development Goals underline the importance of equality between women and men and suggest giving power and responsibilities to women in order to create a concrete development for countries, especially those considered as “developing”. This goal is composed of sub-goals dedicated to education and it proposes to eradicate inequality in the access to education at the primary and secondary level and to narrow the gender gap at the tertiary level by 2015. The current situation of the Sub-Saharan region is quite far from reaching that goal.

As shown in Figure 5, the gender gap in enrolment at the primary level is still far from the objective, but in line with other developing regions of the world (e.g. Western and Southern Asia). The gap widens as the level of education increases, and is particularly high at the academic level where the region is still at a rate of 63, far below the 97-103 required to raise the goal. In this situation SSA is at the bottom of the range.

The data in Figure 5 help us to understand why the flows of highly skilled women from SSA countries are small in comparison with other developing regions, such as South America and South-Eastern Asia. Although they are not very large flows, the study of the impact of highly skilled migrant women from SSA is important for the origin and destination countries. As previously mentioned, there is a direct correlation between the diaspora and development, especially for Sub-Saharan countries, where highly skilled women have the potential to improve the education situation in their home country and to impact the social development of their families and communities.

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<sup>10</sup> The Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) are 8 goals that the international community has to raise, by 2015, in order to have an equal development in the world. The MDG's are part of the Declaration of Millennium signed by 189 members states of the United Nations in 2000.

<sup>11</sup> For the condition of women in SSA at educational, political, economic and health level see Primi A. and Varani N. (2011). *La condizione della donna in Africa sub-sahariana. Riflessioni geografiche*, Limena (PD), Libreriauniversitaria.it.

**Figure 5. The gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio in primary, secondary and tertiary education (Millennium Development Goals)**



Source: UNDP, *The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2012*

Many studies expose that women’s higher education is raising labor productivity, confirming that the educational gender gap is an impediment to economic development. A study from Docquier, Lower and Marfouk (2009) confirms that skilled women exhibit higher emigration rates than skilled men which means that skilled women have a higher propensity to migrate. This is especially true for women that come from low economy countries like SSA. This hypothesis seems to confirm that women’s highly skilled migration from Sub-Saharan Africa is directly linked to the low quality of life in their home countries. Moreover, these studies assume that skilled women tend to migrate shorter distances and are more likely to migrate internationally or between geographically close countries. This is true even for low and medium skilled women and it is in line with the UNDP theory explained above.

The positive and negative effects of highly skilled migration are still up for debate in international literature. Basically there are two very different points of view: one theory emphasises the depressive effects of the loss of the most educated national citizens, known as “brain drain” theory; the other theory focuses on the positive effects of migration of the highly skilled, otherwise known as “brain gain”. At present the majority of studies (Docquier and Marfouk, 2009; Nowak, 2009; Gonzalez-Ferrer and Graus, 2012; and others) try to analyse for each case the positive and negative effects on the origin and destination countries.

In general we can assume (with Docquier and Marfuk, 2006; Docquier, Lowell and Marfuk, 2009) that brain drain can be negative for the origin country in a short period if it involves a large group of people from the same area or country who work in one specific profession, such as the Ghanaian nurses that move permanently to the UK, the USA and South Africa. In the case of Ghana,

however, we can also see positive effects with the improvement of human capital formation if we consider that the idea of migration can increase the number of people that study medicine for the chance to migrate abroad, but then decide to work in the home country.

The main positive effects of women's highly skilled migration can be divided as follows:

1. Fosters human capital formation
2. Remittances, even though the real impact of the remittance seems to foster GDP, not development
3. Return migration after gaining additional knowledge
4. Creation of business
5. Creation of networks for development
6. Fosters the educational level of women in origin countries
7. Contributes to changing the gender roles

According to data collected by the World Bank (2011), the ten SSA countries that register the highest emigration rate of highly skilled people are Cape Verde (67.5%), Gambia (63.3%), Mauritius (56.2%), Seychelles (55.9%), Sierra Leone (52.5%), Ghana (46.9%), Mozambique (45.1%), Liberia (45.0%), Kenya (38.4%) and Uganda (35.6%). Physicians are the professionals that migrate the most outside their own country. In fact, they constitute 18.4% of the physicians trained in the region.

The sector with the second highest rate of emigration is the nursing sector: 53,298 Sub-Saharan nurses reside in a country other than their own and they represent 11% of nurses trained in the region. A study conducted by Dumont and Zurn (2007) for OECD shows that in 2000 there were approximately 53,400 SSA nurses working in OECD countries while there were 30,700 doctors. A qualitative study conducted by Joanne Nowak (2009) among the nurses from Ghana (migrant and non-migrant) exposed how skilled Ghanaian women are negotiating a number of gendered norms and responsibilities, a process which reshapes how their communities understand migration. For the nurses interviewed by Nowak, professional interest plays a key role in shaping a more positive perception of migration which represents a channel for changing gender norms, although in many cases women still need permission from a male in the family to migrate. The fact that women receive permission to move is a first step toward changing gender norms. Often through their migration, women become the breadwinner (like many of the low-skilled migrants from Latin America or Asia); in contrast with the low skilled female workers of West Africa (1% of female

migrants of the region) these women live in an environment where migration is part of everyday discussion.

Data on African highly skilled migration to OECD countries, elaborated by Docquier and Marfuk (2006), affirm that the percentage of African highly skilled immigrants was 23% in 1990, whilst the proportion of highly skilled workers in Africa was 2.2.% in 1990 and 3.6% in 2000. The brain drain from SSA increased by 1,800 people a year from 1960-75 as a result of the decolonization that brought many male students (in tertiary education) from African countries to European countries; that rate shot up to 4,400 people a year from 1975-84 and 23,000 from 1984-87. The trend continued through the nineties in the face of the increasingly “quality selective” immigration policies introduced by many OECD countries. The rate continued to increase exponentially from 1990-2000, especially for Angola (+ 18.4%), Equatorial Guinea (+ 29.7), Ghana (+9.2), Sao Tomè and Príncipe (+ 25.9%), Guinea Bissau (+23.5%), Liberia (+ 9.7%), Mauritania (+ 19.6%), Sierra Leone (+10.0%), Burundi (+14.9%), Mauritius (+10.8%), Mozambique (+23,8%), Rwanda (+9.6%) and Somalia (+19.7) (Docquier and Marfouk, 2006).

A phenomenon in great expansion is the mobility of tertiary students from Sub-Saharan Africa countries. In 2009 238.998 SSA students moved internationally, mainly to Europe, in order to receive a better education to apply principally in their own country or region. Table 6 shows that tertiary educated students from SSA migrate mainly to North America and Western Europe (61.5%) and just 22.5% move within the origin region. We can see that the preferred EU country for studying is France, the first destination choice for many SSA students from 19 different states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa and Tanzania. One other leading destination country is the UK, selected as a top destination country by Gabon, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal and Togo, although it mainly holds its place as the second or third destination for SSA tertiary educated students. Other main destinations are Portugal, Germany, Spain, Italy, Norway, Finland and Greece. A study conducted by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (Chien and Kot, 2012) on student mobility in SSA outlines that the number of SSA students that migrate has increased by about 20 times since the 1970's and, at present, tertiary students who migrate represent 4.5 % of the total number of tertiary students from the region (they move twice as much with respect to the world average of 2.0%). The data from OECD and UNESCO are not segregated by gender, once again confirming the lack of gender perspective in quantitative studies on highly skilled migration.

**Table 6. Tertiary students mobility from SSA in 2009 (outbound mobile students). Top five destinations Countries**

States	Top 5 destination Countries
Angola	Brazil (1,978), Portugal (1,663), South Africa (1,135), U.S.A. (535), Russian Fed. (391)
Benin	France (2,027), U.S.A. (323), Canada (167), Germany (127), Russian Fed. (82)
Botswana	South Africa (4,849), U.K. (710), Australia (468), U.S.A. (293), Namibia (198)
Burkina Faso	France (1,114), U.S.A. (559), Canada (188), Germany (85), Niger (83)
Burundi	France (334), Morocco (173), Canada (159), Norway (89), U.S.A. (84)
Cameroon	France (5,826), Germany (5,039), Italy (1,915), U.S.A. (1,796), Belgium (503)
Cape Verde	Portugal (1,677), Brazil (901), France (159), Morocco (126), Spain (126)
Central African Republic	France (597), U.S.A. (41), Cameroon (31), Saudi Arabia (16), Russian Fed. (12)
Chad	Cameroon (1229), France (453), C. African Rep. (397), Morocco (225), Russian Fed. (160)
Comoros	France (1,401), Madagascar (923), Morocco (51), Malaysia (37), U.S.A. (23)
Congo	France (2,712), Italy (299), Russian Fed. (259), Morocco (227), U.S.A. (205)
Côte d'Ivoire	France (3,444), U.S.A. (793), Morocco (304), Canada (263), Germany (203)
Democratic Republic of the Congo	South Africa (1,815), France (751), Burundi (276), U.S.A. (243), Canada (158)
Djibouti	Spain (703), Morocco (513), Russian Fed. (140), Malaysia (103), Cuba (92)
Equatorial Guinea	U.S.A. (165), Italy (105), Saudi Arabia (104), Jordan (98), Malaysia (61)
Eritrea	U.S.A. (1,557), Finland (428), Germany (343), Norway (333), India (290)
Ethiopia	France (3,870), South Africa (327), U.S.A. (258), Canada (257), Germany (184)
Gabon	U.K. (349), U.S.A. (323), Morocco (156), Venezuela (55), Russian Fed. (38)
Gambia	U.S.A. (2,939), U.K. (2,033), Finland (370), Canada (323), Germany (287)
Ghana	France (3,020), U.S.A. (187), Morocco (173), Spain (156), Canada (154)
Guinea	Brazil (750), Russian Fed. (174), Portugal (87), Saudi Arabia (59)
Guinea Bissau	U.S.A. (5,780), U.K. (2,394), Australia (1,426), Malaysia (685), India (508)
Kenya	South Africa (4,004), U.S.A. (60), U.K. (31), Cuba (24), Morocco (23)
Lesotho	U.S.A. (257), Norway (59), Ghana (43), Saudi Arabia (26), U.K. (25)
Liberia	France (3,484), U.S.A. (121), Canada (71), Switzerland (51), Germany (50)
Madagascar	South Africa (854), U.K. (494), U.S.A. (310), Australia (87), Morocco (81)
Malawi	France (1,896), U.S.A. (471), Niger (220), Canada (197) <sup>-2</sup> , Saudi Arabia (125)
Mali	France (1,703), U.K. (1,656), Australia (1,529), South Africa (1,108), India (497)
Mauritania	South Africa (823), Portugal (516), Brazil (121), U.S.A. (88), Cuba (61)
Mauritius	South Africa (7,264), Cuba (130), Russian Fed. (117), U.K. (76), U.S.A. (59)
Mozambique	France (741), U.S.A. (245), Togo (234), Greece (180), Canada (94)
Namibia	U.K. (14,380), U.S.A. (6,153), Malaysia (1,407), Ghana (1,349), South Africa (1,084)
Niger	France (556), U.S.A. (360), Burundi (217) <sup>-7</sup> , South Africa (193), Canada (132) <sup>-2</sup>
Nigeria	Cuba (270), Portugal (145), Brazil (116), France (47), Morocco (42)
Rwanda	France (8,948), U.S.A. (631), Morocco (551), Canada (419), Germany (173)
São Tomé and Príncipe	U.K. (113), Australia (93), South Africa (48), France (38), Malaysia (37)
Senegal	U.K. (221), U.S.A. (170), Saudi Arabia (35), Germany (33), Malaysia (26)
Seychelles	Malaysia (752), Saudi Arabia (144), U.K. (110), Jordan (92), Pakistan (80)
Sierra Leone	U.S.A. (1,675), U.K. (1,582), Australia (875), Cuba (387), Ireland (161)
Somalia	Brazil (1,978), Portugal (1,663), South Africa (1,135), U.S.A. (535), Russian Fed. (391)
South Africa	France (2,027), U.S.A. (323), Canada (167), Germany (127), Russian Fed. (82)
Sudan	Malaysia (1,355), U.K. (352), Saudi Arabia (280), U.S.A. (213), Germany (203)
Swaziland	South Africa (3,453), U.S.A. (153), Zimbabwe (131), U.K. (45), Russian Fed. (17)
Tanzania	France (1,399), U.S.A. (375), Germany (310), Morocco (181), Italy (130)
Togo	U.K. (1,038), U.S.A. (822), Malaysia (335) <sup>-1</sup> , Germany (126), Norway (126)
Uganda	U.S.A. (1,197), U.K. (1,116), South Africa (651), Malaysia (491), Russian Fed. (280)
Zambia	South Africa (1,529), U.S.A. (731), U.K. (643), Australia (514), Namibia (419)
Zimbabwe	South Africa (14,359), U.K. (1,740), Australia (1,373), U.S.A. (1,248), Malaysia (399)
Sub-Saharan Africa	North America and Western Europe (61.5%), Sub-Saharan Africa (22.5%), East Asia and the Pacific (6.0%), Arab States (2.9%), Central and Eastern Europe (3.1%), Latin America

	and the Caribbean (2.8%), South and West Asia (0.8%), Central Asia (0.01%)
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*Source: Elaborated by the author using data from UNESCO, 2012*

Literature on the relationship between migration and women's development in countries of origin is often divided between positive and negative aspects. The lack of data separated by gender, for example, relating to remittances, creates strong gaps. In fact, it is known that remittances are an important source of funding for African countries, yet we still do not know about their real impact on the medium and long-term development of these countries. It is also very difficult to know the real volume of remittances, as most of them do not go through institutional channels.

According to the World Bank, remittances account for about 9% of the GDP of Senegal and are mainly distributed in the following sectors: consumption (58%), rent (12.57%), health (9.43%), education (3.59%), clothes (2.49%), car (0.15%), business (1.29%) and other (11.98%). These data are an estimate and cannot be segregated by gender or by level of education. Currently, women's remittance behavior is unknown, but studies indicate that there may be significant gender differences in remitting behavior. It seems that men remit larger quantities of money, as they typically earn more money, but women remit more often; men remit money, whereas women generally prefer to remit goods and products.

Remittances do not constitute the only impact on development. Migrant women often form diaspora associations that remit funds and create a "bottom up transnational welfare" through the funds for infrastructure, health and education programs.

Governments and NGO's have started to realize the importance of women's associations in diasporas and have started to organize and promote projects that focus on migration and development. These associations make their requests for development projects to African women in the diaspora. One important association is the WMIDA project organized by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) in collaboration with the Italian Minister of International Cooperation, whose purpose is the empowerment of African women and the creation of a link between migration and development. The association seeks to attract women who are interested in using their remittances to establish small or medium enterprises in their countries of origin through joint ventures with Italian partners and host communities. These migrant women have professional training in business development, management and access to credit. WMIDA does not necessarily imply the permanent return of migrant entrepreneurs to their countries of origin, but rather their

involvement, even from afar, in carrying out development projects.

Additionally, the relatively young diaspora institution born in some Sub-Saharan countries like Benin, Mali, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone has started to refer to women in the diaspora to create or promote development projects and action in their origin countries. An interesting project is The African Diaspora Professional Women in Europe founded by a Togolese entrepreneur and UK resident in hopes of creating a network between highly skilled Africans in the EU in order to empower their position in Europe and to create development projects for African girls. Other projects with similar characteristics are African Women Development Fund, Pan African Women Philanthropy Network and Nigeria Diaspora Foundation in Europe.

## **Conclusion**

We can see that SSA women's migration has not only increased in the number of people in movement in an international route, but it has also become more diverse by the scope of the migration. Nowadays, more women are moving for working or studying, even from traditional countries like Senegal. This change in trend is probably the result of previous male migration patterns in the 1970's and 80's, which contribute to the changing role of women in home communities. Currently, women's migration seems to have a strong impact on the development of the origin countries, either at the economic level (through remittances), or at the social level. This is particularly true for the women that move for educational or professional reasons. In this field an interesting segment of research, and one that is still very underestimated, is highly skilled women's flows from SSA. This lack of information seems to be related to the low number of tertiary educated women in SSA and to a lack of gender perspective from the main institutions and organizations working on migration and development.

An interesting field of research that requires more in-depth research is the mobility of tertiary educated SSA girls in order to better understand the aims, strategies, processes and impacts of the phenomenon. At present the number of highly skilled women that migrate to other countries is quite low, but as the general level of education for girls is growing in the Sub-Saharan region, we can estimate that the number of tertiary students abroad will also increase in the next 20 years. It is important to study this phenomenon now in order to better understand the possible impacts on origin and destination countries and to create adequate policies. This study proposes a way to approach female highly skilled migration from Sub-Saharan Africa taking into account the potential on development in the origin communities and paying attention to the micro and macro level of

study. Nevertheless, there is still a shortage of data in current literature and in the international dataset. More specifically, data segregated by gender are virtually non-existent and studies, both quantitative and qualitative, are currently insufficient. Moreover, literature reviews show more qualitative than quantitative studies. Another gap is created by the absence of a unique definition for highly skilled migrants, which creates an unclear framework for researchers. Furthermore, there is a gap of indicators for creating a common language on the measures and a lack of an analysis on the impact of highly skilled SSA women in the origin and destination countries.

We should address some critical issues in order to better understand the potential of highly skilled women's migration from SSA. Most importantly we need to fill the gap of data since currently data on migration in SSA are often missing, out of date or inconsistent with definitions used in other countries. This is especially true for data segregated by gender due to, on the one hand, the porosity of the migration process, but also because of a lack of gender perspective in migration policies and programs in many origin and destination countries. Furthermore, the promotion of more research, both quantitative and qualitative, should be fostered to study the impact of the women's migrations flow from SSA. A special field of study should be implemented to focus on African highly skilled women in Europe.

Finally, governments from origin and destination countries need to create special agreements for women's migration in order to better channel these flows, to protect migrant women from abuse and exploitation, and to use the potential of a special growth resource: migrant women.

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