Changing Nigerian Migration Trends and its Hungarian Context[1]

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Abstract:

In a country like Nigeria, there is a decades-long tradition of internal and international migration, which has begun to strengthen especially since the country gained its independence. While the postcolonial period - from the 1960s until the 2000s - was marked primarily by the internal migration of workers to administrative and economic centres, with the rise of unemployment in the 2000s, the international migration of the Nigerians also strengthened.

As a result of the diverse opportunities offered by international migration, at the 2015 migration summit, Nigerians turned up in relatively large numbers among migrants arriving in Europe via illegal routes. Although Nigerians are essentially leaving their country on legal routes, Nigerian illegal immigrants arriving in 2015-16 have aggravated the situation of Nigerian diaspora and painted a fundamentally negative image of Nigerians. Although most of them returned home, this still did not mean the elimination or alleviation of the problems that still spur migration in Nigeria.

Keywords:

Migration trends; Nigeria; Hungary; reasons of migration; Boko Haram; COVID-19.

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1. Introduction

Although migration as a concept has basically always been a part of human life, in recent years, it has increasingly become the center of attention. At the same time the phenomenon itself also received a rather negative charge.

As a consequence of globalization and technological advances, migration opportunities have intensified. Travelling to father parts of the world is much more accessible and it is increasingly common for someone to continue living in another city, country, or continent for a longer or shorter period.

The intercultural and economic relations that have developed during migration have as many dangers and sources of conflict as they have the potential for networking, development and security. Successful migration is based on realistic plans, legally and financially feasible and workable travel, and then integration into the host country. In the absence of these, both the migrant and the host community stand in the way of successful integration.

Nigeria, as the largest emitter of migrants in Africa, serves as an excellent example of the ambiguity of migration trends. Among Nigerians, migration is typical between states of the country, to neighboring countries, within the continent, and beyond. Nigeria, in addition to hundreds of thousands leaving its territory every year, also needs to pay serious attention to internal migration.

One of the most controversial forms of migration now is when people are forced to leave their homeland for their own security, that is, become a refugee. As a consequence of displacement, migrants arriving through unusual, illegal channels which may present skilled or unskilled labor, law-abiding citizens and criminals, a social stratum contributing to population growth, or a growing minority, an exotic, or a foreigner group (Verter and Darkwah 2014). The label attached to a particular minority group depends on the nowadays increasingly fragile relationship between the majority and the minority in that region.

Nigeria is not only struggling with their most skilled workers leaving the country, who make up one percent of the population. The country also has to face steadily rising unemployment due to which there is a high level of migration within the country, leading to depopulation of poor Nigerian states and overpopulation of cities (Ikuteyijo 2020).

2. Nigerians living worldwide

In the case of African countries, it is always difficult to provide adequate population statistics. The situation is the same with the number of African refugees. The number of people living in Nigeria in 2015 was about 183 million, according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 182 million in 2015, according to the UN (2015), and 181 million according to World Bank (n.d.) – finally they reached 200 million in 2019. (Trading economies 2020a) All of these data are, of course, roughly the same, but in the preface to the Nigerian census data, they highlight that 3

of the 36 states – by the way, the most densely populated ones – did not provide data and 7 states did not act in accordance with the communication requirement. Moreover, conducting a census in an African country using birth and death registries is not the most accurate method of data processing, since many people do not have such documents. So, despite the three types of mutually reinforcing data, we actually only have methodologically approximate information on population data. The same is true of Nigerian refugees.

Nigeria is the most populous country in West Africa, and one of the most developed countries in the continent, despite nearly 1% of the more than 200 million people living as refugees (UNHCR 2016) in various countries around the world, most of them in different regions of their own country (estimated at 1.7 million). Neighboring countries with the highest proportions of Nigerian refugees are Chad, Cameroon and Niger. In 2016, about 460,000 Nigerians left their homeland and were sent to refugee camps in these neighboring countries alone, according to UNHCR. The provision of these refugees is a great problem in the surrounding countries, so due to the miserable conditions there, many of them are moving on to Europe in the hope of a better life.

Nigeria has been a humanitarian focal point since the 2010s. There are numerous international and Nigerian organizations operating in the region: the Red Cross and UNHCR provide support for refugees primarily at the borders of neighboring countries, while others take care of refugees specifically around Abuja. Among the largest international organizations are USAID, the NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council), the NCA (Norwegian Church Aid) or the MDM (Médecins du Monde). One of Nigeria's largest NGOs helping refugees is the African Refugee Foundation (AREF). There are also some initiatives organized by Nigerians as the Nigerian branches of Save the Children Nigeria or VSO Nigeria which are the parts of international organizations, and the Foundation for Refugee Economic Empowerment, which is very active on Facebook. Despite the largest international and Nigerian organizations being involved in the provision of more than 2 million refugees, their effectiveness is difficult to control due to the widespread money laundering.

From January 2016 according to UNHCR (n.d.), nearly 40 000 Nigerians have arrived in the Mediterranean Meaning that most African people arriving to Europe were Nigerian citizens. They are only overtaken by Syrians and Afghans in numbers, but it is noteworthy that the number of Nigerians exceeds the number of Iraqis by more than 10,000.

Immigrants from Africa to Europe on illegal routes can basically flow in three directions: Western Mediterranean Route (WMR), Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) and Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR). These routes are provided primarily by junctions, but from one point to another there are several familiar or newly found routes that can pose dangers such as kidnapping, murder, slavery, or drug, arms, or human trafficking.

The Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) was one of the least preferred routes during the 2015, 2016 migration peak, but from 2018 onwards due to the weakening of CMR the traffic relocated from Italy to Spain. "In turn, the WMR became more predominant than the CMR in

2018, with approximately 65,300 migrants and refugees arriving in Spain. The number of migrants and refugees who arrived in Spain in 2018 constituted a more than twofold increase compared with 2017, when just over 28,700 arrivals were reported. In the first half of 2019, there was a slight decrease in the number of migrants and refugees who arrived in Spain relative to the same period in 2018." (Borgnäs and Schöfberger 2020, p. 41)

While in 2017 15% of those arriving at CMR were Nigerians, in 2018 it was only 5% and in 2019 it was less than 1%. The same change could be seen in the EMR, where African migrants, including the most dominant community, Nigerians, appeared almost overnight. At the WMR, Nigerians typically arrived in Europe with little or no access.

Of course, migration by illegal routes accounts for only a small proportion of Nigerian migration, and while 0.7% of the population lives as legal immigrants in many parts of the world (1.255 thousand people), only 0.1% of the population (238 thousand people) live as refugees. 31% of Nigerian immigrants live in the EU (389 thousand people) and only 12% (28 thousand people) of refugees reach the European Union. (Urso et al. 2019)

> Nigerians can be found in most countries of the world. Nigerians are numerous in the United States and the UK, followed by South Africa, UAE and other European countries such as Italy & Spain. As a US survey showed, Nigerians in the US are one of the highest educated migration groups. (Cuevas-Nohr 2019)

While in 2014 the most exaggerated estimates said that there were more than 17 million Nigerians living in different parts of the world (Subair 2014), now, according to 2019 data at least only 2 million Nigerians live worldwide, of which more than 400,000 are in the United States – so they are currently the largest diaspora in the world. In the United States, most Nigerians are located in Texas and New York. (Cuevas-Mohr 2019)

In Europe, the country with the largest population of Nigerians is, as an ex-colonist, the United Kingdom. In 2013, 3-4% of the London population was Nigerian. Of the 65 million people in the country, more than 216,000 were Nigerian-born, so 0.3% of the population has Nigerian origin, but not necessarily in asylum or refugee status - and most of these refugees arrived in England in the 1960s. (Migration Observatory, Oxford University)

3. Main reasons of Nigerian migration

Nigeria is officially a democratic, secularized state, the most populous country in Africa (and the seventh most populous country in the world). One of the most important features of the country is the ongoing population explosion. Despite the fertility rate having fallen since its peak in the mid-1980s (from 6.76 to 5.67), the population is still growing by more than 2.5% per year, which is not expected to fall below 2.5% by the middle of the century. This means that Nigeria's population is currently growing by 4.8 million per year, so in 2050 the country's population will reach 400 million.

This situation is worsened by the fact that while Nigeria's economy has been able to show GDP growth in excess of population growth since the mid-1990s, from 2014 the country's economy has plunged into recession. (GDP decreased by 2.58% in 2016.) Although there have been examples of GDP declining for up to a year in the past, the current decline in GDP has been ongoing since 2014. The reason for this decline should partly be the significant fall of prices in the oil industry – which accounts for 9% of GDP – and in the world market, although the Nigerian economy has nevertheless decreased.

As for their economic development, each Nigerian province differs significantly which results in an internal migration (Isiugo-Abanihe 2014; Odimegwu 2020). While in the Niger Delta or the state of Edo GDP per capita is around 3,500 to 4,000 $, GDP per capita is below 1,000 $ in some northern and eastern states. (In Borno State, which is the main area of Boko Haram operations, GDP per capita is 1,200 $.) In line with the unequal distribution of GDP, the poverty rate is formed similarly in different states. While in the Niger Delta, approximately one-third of the population lives below the poverty line, in the northern states more than half, in some cases 70-80%, live below the poverty line — that means that they live on less than $ 1.9 per day. (National Human Development Report 2015)

According to the WHO report (2015), the most common fatal diseases are malaria (especially among children under 5), HIV / AIDS, infectious meningitis, but also malnutrition. Fetal and infant deaths, maternal and postnatal deaths during pregnancies are also very frequent. All this is mainly due to extremely poor hygiene conditions, bad or poor medical care, primitive religious rites and water pollution.

In Nigeria, public security is very poor, and there are several major criminal organizations in the country that operate in various areas: armed robbery, armed roadblocks, rape, assault, and terrorism. A typical phenomenon in the Niger Delta is pipeline vandalism, illegal oil and fuel trafficking in the fight for oil. Financial fraud is also common across the country, and on the international level Nigerians are famous for internet frauds (marriage promises, business initiatives, humanitarian aid).

The increasingly unstable economic situation also manifests in the politics. On the one hand, the presence of Boko Haram in the north is strengthening which is blocking the pacification of the Niger Delta. On the other hand, from 2015, Muhammadu Buhari, who had previously staged a military coup and the situation led to the rise of a dictatorship for a year and a half (1983-1985), became the democratically elected president, and in 2019 he was reelected.

The majority of Nigerian refugees leave their homes due to the cruel activities of the Boko Haram terrorist organization in the north of the country, but the organization's operation also covers neighboring countries (e.g., Cameroon). Thus, most of the refugees cannot feel safe there either, and many Cameroonians leave their homeland also because of Boko Haram.

People fleeing from poor economic, political, public safety or health conditions usually have two options: they break out of their environment in some legal way - through employment, studies or starting a family; or applying for asylum in a country that promises better living conditions.

3.1. Economic problems in Nigeria versus European illusions

In many cases, Nigeria is left by its citizens due to existing economic problems (Ikuteyijo 2020), poor public health care, infrastructural difficulties, and inadequate public security. Many of them choose illegal routes to leave the country and apply for asylum together with the refugees because their financial means do not allow them to choose legal migration options. A small percentage turn to asylum because of the failure of their European studies which were funded by their family or local community. Since they can no longer be supported by the mother community, they do not dare to return to their homeland, and rather leaved their studies unfinished, because they are afraid of the revenge of their supporters.

Those who choose illegal routes will be 'cultivated' during the journey in terms of the asylum procedure, and they adjust their life stories to the immigration system of the target country. This makes the work of the European agencies or the opportunities for 'real' asylum seekers from other circumstances very difficult.

Many people who arrive in Eastern Europe for the first time encounter European conditions and difficulties affecting European African communities. Once they become aware of the problems that also exist in local European conditions, they try to continue their way to the West where the African diaspora is larger.

In the Hungarian conditions, for example, one of the biggest challenges is living without knowing the Hungarian language or learning it. Nevertheless, Africans are popular in the Hungarian labor market mainly because of their language skills. There are many illegal immigrants who started or completed their university studies in Africa, or spent several years in the Middle East, Turkey and/or the Balkans before arriving in Hungary, or perhaps have already visited Western Europe with little luck, only expelled or returned to Hungary, so they possibly speak three or four European or world languages (and let us not forget that they also have an excellent knowledge of at least one or two African languages).

Without the right education, language skills, integration assistance, and negative discrimination of Africans, these immigrants often face serious difficulties to find their place in the European communities.

3.2. Political problems in Nigeria: Biafra

Although Nigeria's leadership is currently democratically elected, corruption in the country is strong - be it economic or political one (Trading Economies 2020b).

However, since the declaration of independence, the Igbos have wanted to establish their own state, called Biafra, separate from Nigeria, with which non-Igbo states disagree, and the current political system seeks to eradicate these efforts or initiatives in a variety of ways.

Due to its natural resources (mainly oil), favorable geographical location (see Niger Delta) and the resulting economic benefits (Olajide 2014), the Republic of Biafra would be a potentially fast-growing, rich state not only in West Africa but throughout the continent, while the remaining areas would live in significantly worse conditions.

By May 30, 1967, the Igbos had already proclaimed independence during the Civil War and the Republic of Biafra had been established, but in January 1970, the Igbo territories came under the control of Nigeria again. Ethnics in Biafra also included, of course, smaller ethnic groups living in Eastern Nigeria, such as Efik, Ibibio, Eket or the Ijaw peoples as well, but the leadership was basically in the hands of the Igbos. After the civil war, which led to the death of more than half a million people, the Nigerian government is making every effort to prevent the emergence of similar independence aspirations, political organizations or armed actions.

The state, established in 1967, has been acknowledged by several African countries and backed by a few great powers, and finally in 1970 the end of the Republic of Biafra was the Nigerian-led economic blockade, which led to the starvation of the new country and death of hunger of more than 3 million Biafrans.

A Swedish-Nigerian research study made in 2010 found that among citizens born in the Republic of Biafra the appearance of diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and metabolic disorders have increased due to starvation, and that developmental disorders caused by famine e. g. cardiovascular diseases were also common (Hult et al. 2010).

The ongoing Movement of the Actualization for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) is one of the largest Igbo initiatives to revitalize the State of Biafra, but in addition to MASSOB, many smaller organizations have similar aims which, besides peaceful means, are often attempted to be carried out by armed forces. The current political leadership is trying to make a devastating statement about these efforts and react by armed forces to Igbos using even peaceful or terrorist means. Recently, for example, in January 2017, there was a major raid, or in February 2021, Nigerian government moved its military forces to ex-Biafra states to fight against the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra group (IPOB) (Nebe and Bello 2021) and Facebook also removed the page of Nigerian separatist leader Nnamdi Kanu for violating its rules on harm and hate speech (BBC 2021).

While the Igbos, who are fighting for their independence, are constantly confronted with political leadership, even occasionally, due to the political leadership just coming to power,

many people are leaving Nigeria because of political corruption — be it the opposition or later frustrated supporters of the elected government.

Corruption cases in previous governments are mostly investigated and punished by subsequent political leadership. During recent governments, the rate of corruption has declined according to Nigerian results. While, during Obasanjo's time, a huge scandal erupted over the corruption of his vice president, and under Jonathan Goodluck's leadership, several dubious deals by the former president came to light. Under the presidency of Yar'Adua and Goodluck, this rate has stagnated and even improved (Chima 2014) – until, of course, under Buhari's leadership, a matter can be found that can be rolled up.

3.3. Religious or ethnic reasons

The West African country is inhabited by more than 500 ethnicities (among whom, of course, several are close relatives). The three largest ethnics are Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo (all three represent about 30-30 million people). The Hausa are Muslims, the Igbos are Christians, and the Yoruba are roughly half Muslims or Christians. In the case of the Igbos and the Yoruba, the traditional animist faith still plays a significant role, although in addition to the great world religions, these faiths have been marginalized to some extent.

In Nigeria, members of different religious denominations live basically peacefully side by side, it gives an excellent example just to take a walk the streets of Lagos, where Christian and Islamic schools and communities can coexist and work side by side in peace.

Yet in a country so religiously and ethnically diverse, sudden ethnic or religious conflicts (in this case primarily between Muslims and Christians) are extremely common. Certain areas of the country resemble gunpowder barrels, and during conflicts within certain settlements on ethnic or tribal grounds, entire villages and small towns became extinct.

Their ethnicity is mainly referred to by the Igbos already mentioned, who also flee not because of their ethnicity but because of their political behavior, while refugees arrive from Northern Nigeria in a mixed way – regardless of ethnicity or religion.

In addition to minor ethnic and religious fights, there is a problem that is also active in intellectual circles, the issue of animism. Proponents of the Yoruba faith have a significant influence on the superstitious lifestyles of Nigerians, but 2008 research in Ibadan has also shown that elements of Yoruba culture and belief systems have spread not only throughout the country but across the continent through Yoruba home videos (Adejumo 2009).

Extreme manifestations of the Yoruba faith are life-threatening primarily for albinos and individuals who come into contact with extremist cult communities. Extreme views are a particular concern in university communities, where students are abducted, subjected to ritualistic rites that can sometimes end in death. Due to the fact that these communities are organized on a cultic basis, they are strongly and even violently closed communities, so there

is no opportunity to leave, and their members maintain regular and close contact with each other. Therefore, any relationship with cult groups (e.g., social, friendship, cohabitation, family), especially confrontation, is a continuous and targeted life-threatening situation.

However, religiously organized threats include the armed forces of the Boko Haram organization, which were organized in the northern regions of Nigeria on the model of terrorist organizations based on misinterpretations of Islamic teachings. They are passing unbearable laws for both Muslims and Christians and are a constant threat not only to Nigeria but also to the population in Niger and Cameroon.

3.4. Boko Haram as the largest representative of Islamic terrorism in Nigeria

Basically, due to the steady increase of poverty, armed groups organized on different political or religious grounds are constantly present in the Northern and Northeastern states of Nigeria. These groups are extremely hectic in terms of their ideological motivation, often the available foreign funders or sponsors determine what ideology they follow. Thus, for example, the most infamous organization today, Boko Haram, started as a syncretistic movement in the 1970s, which was based on charismatic and mystic Shi'ism, but by 2014 it had already joined ISIS as a Salafist or Takfirist organization.

By the way one of the reasons for the spread of Boko Haram was the mismanagement of the conflict, as under the presidency of Obasanjo, the ill-equipped, corrupt army embarked on a campaign against the local civilian population instead of military action, leading to a marked increase in support for Boko Haram in Borno State.

Boko Haram was renewed in 2002 under the leadership of Mohamed Yusuf, which defined the Takfirist background of today's organization. One of Boko Haram's goals was to exclude Western values from everyday life, also known as the group's name: Boko Haram, in Hausa, "the West is forbidden". Organizations with radical views are built on similar principles. For example the terrorist groups operating in Mali, Somalia hold their extremist opinion, that everything coming from Western, European, or American society is incompatible with Islam. Typically, a similar mindset appears in the Middle East among people who are not open to the world outside of Islam, mostly have no knowledge of the values of the Western world, so in the light of the misinformation circulating in their heads, the West is considered the realm of Satan. It is also important to remark that these ideas do not stem from the Qur'an or the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, but from human ignorance.

Even in the semi-Christian, semi-Muslim Yorubaland people still blame the colonial powers for illiteracy, political corruption and bad regional conditions – which plunder the country by paying local leaders and returning through the back gates according to their narratives.

Thus, the pan-African thought of the former colony confronting the West has a very fertile breeding ground, which was the cradle of pan-African thoughts, and similar thoughts are given

a very fertile breeding ground. As the organization also indirectly criticized the Nigerian leadership and tried to enforce its ideas in various, initially peaceful ways and establish the ideal Islamic regime in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram became a target of the Nigerian secret service and army even before it became a terrorist organization.

After the death of Mohamed Yusuf in 2009 in a clash between Boko Haram and local security forces, the organization became heavily radicalized (Barkindo 2016). From July 2009 to the present, Boko Haram's increasingly violent activities have left 5.5 million people displaced and hundreds of thousands have lost their lives, as the organization strengthened, so not only in Nigeria but also in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

Boko Haram has clearly adopted the Salafist mindset of extremist terrorist organizations formed after 11 September 2001 or radicalized at the time, according to which all Muslims, but also Christians, should identify with the scientific approach and cultural customs prevailing in the time of the Prophet Muhammad. However, there is no basis for this in the Islamic tradition. Mohamed was precisely the eminent thinker of his day: he was known for his modern political and religious views, according to the accounts of non-Muslim historians. But as religion always serves politics, politics also serves religion, both in Nigeria and Mali or even Somalia, negative views of ex-colonial powers of the West, which also became more popular in the Middle East, spread relatively fast in Africa.

From 2009, Boko Haram continued to operate as an international terrorist organization under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau; members of the group encountered al-Qaida and then formed an alliance with ISIS (Besenyő and Mayer 2015). Although in Africa these alliances are primarily political based, if a terrorist organization can prove to be affiliated with the largest, best-known terrorist organizations, it acquires believers relatively quickly over other similar organizations, making it easier to control crimes such as drug and human trafficking which no longer has anything to do with any religion, but still provides financial support for terrorist organizations.

In the most influential period of Boko Haram (in 2010), it controlled a significant part of the state of Borno, but its scope of activity extended to several neighboring states, including virtually the north-east of the country and some states in neighboring countries. It practically started during Jonathan Goodluck's presidency, and during a more effective military offensive during Bukhari's leadership, Boko Haram lost control of these territories and now operates primarily as a terrorist organization, so its activities have now weakened and narrowed. However, defeating Boko Haram will not solve the problems in these areas, as there are several reports that other armed groups will emerge in parallel with the decline of Boko Haram, e.g., also those who follow the original Shiite line of Boko Haram.

One of the reasons for the downfall of Boko Haram is that in 2016, the organization was torn in several directions and got disintegrated. Of course, Boko Haram is still an active organization that is currently carrying out attacks, but still sporadically. The most recent kidnappings took place in December (Kankara, Katsina state, 300) (BBC 2020) and February

(Kagara, Niger state, 42 student) (Hazzad and Muhammad 2021), during which hundreds of students were taken away - probably for recruitment purposes.

The list of crimes committed by Boko Haram is almost infinite in length, with numerous accounts of their history and horrors available both in scientific circles and based on media reports (Pérouse de Montclos 2014; START 2015; Walker 2012). However, it raised an interesting question in terms of migration. Most of the refugees remain within Nigeria, as no one is willing to leave their homeland easily, so most of the refugees settle in the more peaceful northern states or around the capital, with a small number fleeing to neighboring countries. A relatively small percentage of them leave the continent, mostly those, who are targeted and hunted by Boko Haram.

Nigerians forced to leave their homeland by the terrorist organization are therefore seeking refuge primarily in Nigeria or West Africa, and about 1-2% of the ever-moving mass of refugees leave for Europe, mostly those whose previous financial situation allows or their family members living elsewhere in Nigeria finance their trip to the West.

4. Nigerians living in Hungary

Refugees from Nigeria arrive in Europe on several routes. Of these, the two largest smuggling routes are the Libya-Italy route and the Middle East Greece route. Most Nigerians arrive in Western Europe via the former, and before 2015 they arrived in Germany on the Greece-Serbia-Hungary route (Eastern-Mediterranean Route - EMR).

The European presence of Nigerians will always show a constantly changing picture, as the motivation of refugees is quite different: linguistic environment, friendships or family ties, or rather the route set up by the smugglers determines the destination country. The Hungarian example paints one of the most layered pictures of the potential causes and the situation of Nigerian immigration. Due to Hungary's role as a transit country, the number of returning migrants was also particularly large in the last ten years.

In 2013, the first comprehensive survey of African immigrants living in Hungary was conducted, during which 238 of the 4-5,000 Africans living in the country were interviewed – with leadership of Marianna Kármán. (Kármán and Tesfay 2013) In the research the subjects were approached by using two types of interviews: a personal interview or a questionnaire-driven interview, during which we researched the migration habits, cultural integration and image of Hungary of Africans living there. After completing the basic research, from 2014 onwards another multi-year research was conducted specifically examining the life of African refugees inside and outside the camp, during which a similar survey was conducted on the lives of more than 100 refugees. Both researches were affected by national contexts of integration, but also concentrated on intercultural coherences. (Scholten et al. 2015)

According to 2013 data, almost 20% of Africans living in Hungary are Nigerian. Of the 156 questionnaires, 52 were Nigerian: based on these, 6% of Nigerians living in Hungary are immigrants (i.e., workers or entrepreneurs), 4% are asylum seekers, 6% has scholarship and 75% are students paying tuition fees, and 8% lives in Hungary with family reunification (mostly through a spouse). So, most Nigerians come to the country because of a good education or a family member living in Hungary.

Nigerians in Hungary are active members of Hungarian African communities. They regularly run community venues, which in many cases specifically host Nigerians, leaving the local 'pan-African' cohesive community. Within the Hungarian African community, their assessment is generally not good, because the number of offenders is higher among them, which sheds a bad light on the Africans living out of Africa. However, it would be a mistake to condemn the Hungarian African community, but also the Nigerian community, based on only one or two criminals.

African migration to Hungary as a destination country for immigration, should be divided into three periods in terms of motivation:

- before the change of regime (1989), the immigration of scholarship students is decisive – immigrants that arrived during this time have a particularly good knowledge of the Hungarian language and are highly qualified, and in most cases, they have a Hungarian wife, so they integrated more easily;
- after the change of regime, most of the scholarships ceased, the appearance of students paying tuition fees is much more typical, arrival of refugees and illegal immigrants is more pronounced, and Hungary as a destination country became less popular for Africans;
- the situation changed at the accession to the EU, when Hungary received the so-called outstanding role as a transit country, reinforced by the accession to the Schengen Convention.

In 2015 and 2016 not more than one Nigerian person per year was granted reception status. Nevertheless, several Nigerian asylum seekers visited Hungary in these years. Typically, due to a series of rejections, most people go further to Western Europe or interrupt their proceedings that have developed over years, due to marital relationships.

In recent years, the number of Nigerian students has increased significantly in Hungary. Among non-European regions, Nigeria is sending the third greatest number of students. Their largest host institution is the University of Debrecen. Of the 38 students surveyed in Budapest, 18 were Nigerians. This is a much lower rate than in rural cities. A significant number of Nigerian students study in Hungary because the tuition is lower than in other European countries, and the quality of education is also good. When they were asked why they chose Hungary, 72 percent of the students surveyed said it was because of the reputation of

education. In addition, according to one of the informants, students applying to Hungarian universities are trained in separate schools in Nigeria.

Overall, the composition of rural and urban African communities shows a different picture. The overall picture of Budapest (the capital) is extremely heterogeneous, so opinions are much more diverse. The opinion of African immigrants in rural towns about Hungarians is particularly sensitive to the circumstances, namely that the proximity of the earlier refugee camp and the behavior of Africans living there painted a negative image of African immigrants among the local population. Furthermore, in rural cities where the number of African immigrants is small (Pécs), the interviewed Africans have a better relationship with the locals than in the cities where the presence of the African diaspora is more perceptible (Debrecen, Szeged). African students living in rural areas are living in isolation, they do not know NGOs for African, nor do they have an active relationship with the older African generation living in Hungary.

Small Christian churches are very popular among West African immigrants. They advertise themselves as international communities and have contacts abroad, and they are happy to see any nationality among their members. Most small churches, however, are made up of only one or two nations, especially Nigerians. However, at one of our research sites, the community expressed its intention to reach as many Hungarians as possible. In addition to the churches visited mainly by Nigerians, there are also international branches of the Baptist or Methodist Churches, which also have significant African members, but these communities have much more heterogeneous composition compared to Nigerian ones.

Besides religious organizations, there are several civic initiatives that support the lives of Nigerians living in Hungary from an economic and cultural point of view, and there is also a presence of remedial activists.

5. Effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigerian migration

The Covid-19 pandemic clearly confined Nigerian migration in 2020. "Nigerian migrants, who were the single-largest nationality along the Central Mediterranean route in 2016–17, had all but disappeared as a major group." (World Bank 2020, p. 19)

Although the number of Nigerians has decreased considerably, migration has remained a significant political and humanitarian issue during the COVID-19 pandemic, as migrants are stuck in transit and rescue operations are being frustrated or ignored by some countries.

The first appearance of COVID-19 infection on the continent brought a series of restrictions on African countries. The closure of national borders has made illegal migration more difficult but has prevented not only travel to Europe but also return to countries of origin. This is how migrants got stuck on the main human trafficking lines.

In June 2020, Libya and Malta negotiated a new migration deal aimed at keeping migrants in unstable regions in Libya. In Greece, controversial restrictive measures by the government have resulted in migrants being expelled and abandoned in the sea. (Bisong 2020, p. 1)

According to a survey in Libya, more than a third of migrants stranded there have not given up their plans despite the outbreak of the coronavirus, and immediately intended to travel further to Europe. Only 7% of them thought about returning home, and almost half of them had changed their plans due to the epidemic: they changed their route, their destination, or decided to wait for the situation to ease. The survey also showed that half of Nigerians stranded there wanted to continue their journey, and only 5% thought of returning home (Mixed Migration Centre 2020).

The pandemic has not only exacerbated the situation of illegal migrants, but in many cases made migration cooperation between Europe and Africa impossible, and, among other things, the possibility of remittances has become more difficult, as the mainland favors the use of cash, but some money transfer operators closed due to the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping across Africa at the same time the continent is facing record numbers of forcibly displaced people. Due to conflicts or insecurity, Africa has registered more than 25 million forcibly displaced people who are either IDPs or refugees. Most of these displaced people originate from the following countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon. Many find themselves in informal settlements and managed camps hosting tens to hundreds of thousands of people. High densities of forcibly displaced populations and the mobility of migrants make both groups highly vulnerable to contagion, and therefore a priority in efforts to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus in Africa. (World Bank 2020, p. 29)

Returned or stranded migrants, in most cases, lived in impoverished, poor conditions, and the luckier ones tried to maintain themselves from daily work, waiting for restrictions to ease. But with the otherwise weakened economic situation and rising unemployment, many migrants have died in crowds, without proper hygiene, either from starvation or from coronavirus infection.

6. Conclusion

The migration habits of Nigerians have taken an extremely varied form over the last ten years. While they took an active part in migration to Europe in the pre-wave of 2013 and then at the 2015-16 summit, in 2017 – as a result of migration policy steps by Nigeria and Europe, migration of Nigerians on illegal routes has dramatically decreased. Around 2019-2020 and at

the time of the pandemic, even large numbers of Nigerian migrants appeared on illegal roads and despite the COVID-19 epidemic, they had strong intention to migrate to Europe, but the number of Nigerians fleeing international routes dropped dramatically by 2020.

Overall, a significant and clearly larger part of Nigerians are trying to reach Europe primarily through legal routes, where they had been steadily coming from the West African country since Nigeria gained independence. Although legal immigrants are usually intellectuals, businesspeople or university students and researchers, the overall perception of Nigerians remains negative due to the difficulties of integrating illegal migrants – especially in some parts of Europe. Knowledge of languages and localities (e.g., legal regulations), lack of education and features of non-European cultural and religious traditions that are not in line with European values, can be a particular and typical problem for applicants for refugee status.

Since 2016, the Nigerian government has continuously ensured the repatriation of Nigerian migrants, as in 2016 President Bukhari held several discussions with Germany and the EU. According to these agreements in the spring of 2017 about 10,000 Nigerians were deported e.g., from Germany (Tella and Jolaoso 2017). In March of 2017, an agreement was reached with Cameroon (Vanguard 2017), as a result of which from March of 2017 the government started the forcible expulsion of Nigerian refugees from the refugee camps in Cameroon (Guilbert 2017).

All these efforts were implicitly linked to the suppression of Boko Haram, and President Bukhari sought to prove his political and military power at international level, too. But the real cause of emigration based on economic and population growth indicators: poverty, corruption and public security has not been reduced by Nigerian government. As European governments do not currently classify Boko Haram's violence as a legitimate reason to apply for refugee status, there are more and more applications for other reasons, showing that the operation of the terrorist organization was only one option for Nigerians arriving in Europe to leave their country.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

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