



European
Research Area

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



**Factors of migration between Africa & Europe:
Assessing the role of education, family & policy**
MAFE PROJECT Briefing Paper No. 3

January 2013

Project overview: The Migrations between Africa and Europe (MAFE) Project focuses on all phases of the migration process, encompassing migration, return, routes of transit, economic implications and transnational relationships. Its findings are based on multi-sited and comparative surveys, including over 5,000 retrospective longitudinal interviews with individual migrants and non-migrants in six European countries and three African countries, and 4,000 interviews of urban African households, conducted in 2008-2009. The four main areas of the MAFE Project's enquiry are: (1) changing patterns of migration over time; (2) determinants of migration; (3) economic integration of migrants, and re-integration of returnees; and (4) transnational families and networks. For more information visit: www.mafeproject.eu.

Key findings: Investigating the role of individual, household and contextual factors

- **MAFE research shows that Africans with at least some tertiary education are more likely to migrate to Europe.** However, education levels apparently have little impact on the probability of return.
- **Migration from Africa is selective on the basis of age and sex, but not consistently across all countries.** In Senegal and Ghana, those aged under 35 have a higher likelihood of migrating to Europe, but this is not true in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Senegal, men are more likely to migrate to Europe than women, but there is no significant difference between men and women in Ghana or DR Congo.
- **Initial migration is often affected by the location of family members, friends and acquaintances, re-affirming previous**

research findings about the importance of social networks in facilitating mobility. Having an adult relative – especially a partner – in Europe was found to substantially increase the probability of migration. However, the significance of nuclear family links should not be overstated as one-quarter of Africans who moved to Europe were single at the time of their migration.

- **The likelihood of return migration among African migrants in Europe is often linked to reasons for initial migration.** For example, migrants from Ghana and DR Congo who went to Europe to study were over five times more likely to return than migrants who left for other reasons, whereas those who left DR Congo for political reasons were extremely unlikely to return.
- **In instances where migrants retain strong links with their country of origin, this is not a guarantee of imminent return migration.** Indeed, Congolese and Senegalese migrants who had sent remittances to or visited their country of origin were found, paradoxically, to be more likely to delay return.

Determinants of migration: Overview of the MAFE approach

The MAFE Project's unique approach to determinants of migration looked at both African migration to Europe and the return of African migrants to their countries of origin. **MAFE analysis focused on three key areas: (1) migrant characteristics; (2) access to resources; and (3) the role of contextual and institutional factors.**

In the case of migrant characteristics, MAFE considered the effects of education, unemployment and poverty on the likelihood of migration to Europe as well as return. In terms of access to resources, MAFE assessed the effect of skills and education, economic assets of the household and access to social networks abroad. Finally, the institutional and contextual factors considered by MAFE included changing economic conditions in countries of origin, reasons for departure and legal status at destination – although MAFE stopped short of a comprehensive analysis of how migration policies act as migration determinants¹.

The statistical significance of each determinant was identified using a multivariate regression model where all the relevant variables were simultaneously included. **Importantly, the MAFE Project's analysis on the determinants of migration only considered factors related to the first adult migration from Africa to Europe and any instance of return from Europe to Africa, excluding short-term migration (of less than one year in duration) and transit migration.** The analysis also accounted for relevant changes in variables over time².

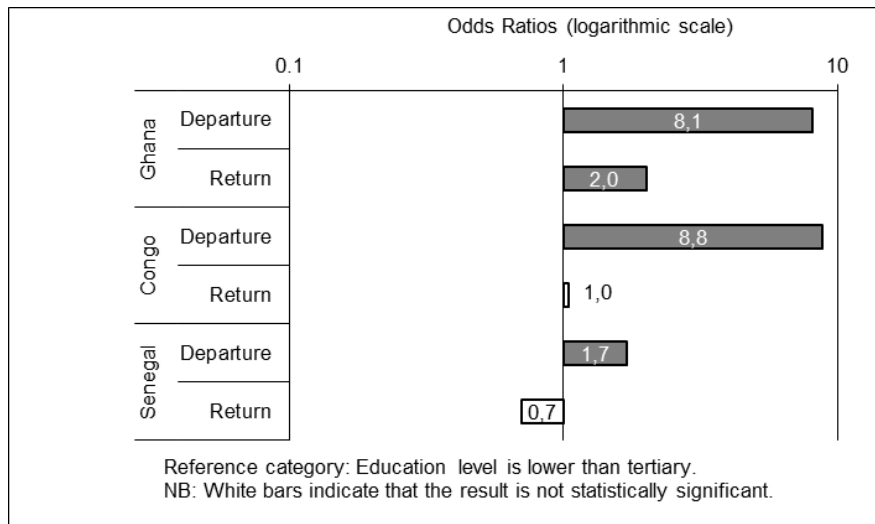
¹ For more on the effect of policies as a determinant of migration, please see MAFE Working Paper 34 in the 'Key resources' section of this briefing.

² For more information on the methodology for this analysis, please see MAFE Working Paper 22 in the 'Key resources' section of this briefing.

The role of individual factors in initial migration: Education, age and gender

MAFE data show that having access to education in the country of origin enhances the likelihood of migration to Europe, with having at least some tertiary education being a significant determinant of migration across all countries. In fact, those with at least some tertiary-level education were between two-to-eight times more likely to migrate to Europe (see Fig 1).

FIG 1: EFFECT OF HAVING SOME TERTIARY EDUCATION ON THE PROBABILITY OF MIGRATION TO EUROPE



Note on reading all figures: Graphs in this document are based on odds ratios obtained from time-discrete logistic regressions. For each group (Congolese, Ghanaians and Senegalese), separate models were used to study the factors of departure and the factors of return. Each bar (ratio) indicates whether the category of interest (e.g. having some tertiary education) has an effect on migration (either departure or return) by comparison with the reference category (e.g. having an education level lower than tertiary). A logarithmic scale is used to make the size of positive and negative effects comparable.

All other things being equal, a value higher than 1 indicates that a variable is associated with a higher likelihood of migration. For example, Ghanaian migrants with a tertiary education are 8.1 times more likely to return than those who have a lower level of education. A value below 1 indicates a reduced likelihood of migration. For example, with a value of 0.7, Senegalese migrants with a tertiary level of education are 30 per cent (1-0.7) less likely to return than those with a lesser education. Note however that this result is not statistically significant (white bar).

For more details see MAFE Working Paper 22 in the 'Further resources' section of this briefing paper.

MAFE findings also point to the occurrence of economic migration to Europe undertaken by young people, particularly among Senegalese and Ghanaians. In these two countries, young people (under 35) are more likely to migrate to Europe than other age groups. However, this was not a significant determinant of Congolese migration to Europe³. Based on these results, the expected demographic 'youth bulge' in sub-Saharan Africa in the

³ These data are not shown in this policy brief; please refer to MAFE Working Paper 22 in the 'Key resources' section for more information.

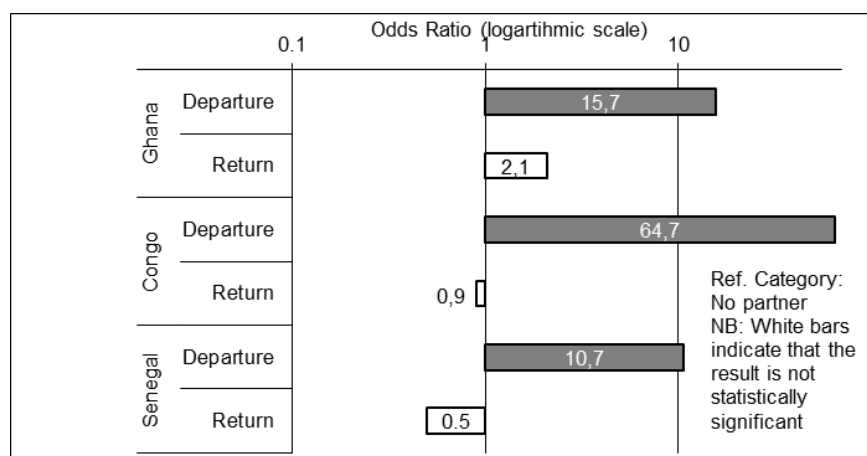
coming decades – the region’s population is predicted to more than double by 2050 – is likely to have country-specific impacts on migration to Europe.

Of the three migration flows, gender was only found to be a significant determinant of migration likelihood among Senegalese migrants. Senegalese women were less likely to migrate to Europe than their male counterparts; in Ghana and DR Congo, on the other hand, gender made no difference once other factors were controlled for⁴.

The role of family and social networks in migration and return

Notwithstanding the individual determinants of migration noted above, **across all three African countries of origin, access to social networks in Europe was a significant determinant of migration.** Regardless of whether these links involved members of the nuclear family such as a partner or child, or more extended kin or friends, those who had international connections were more likely to migrate than those who lacked them (see Fig 2 for specific effect of having partner in Europe).

FIG 2: EFFECT OF HAVING A PARTNER IN EUROPE ON LIKELIHOOD OF MIGRATION TO EUROPE AND RETURN MIGRATION



Once Africans had entered Europe, however, the effect of family ties on migration trajectories was less clear-cut. Having a partner in an EU country does not have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of return once other relevant variables are controlled for. Moreover, having a child in Europe appears to make Senegalese migrants less likely to return, while having a child living in the country of origin makes it more likely for Ghanaians and Congolese to return⁵.

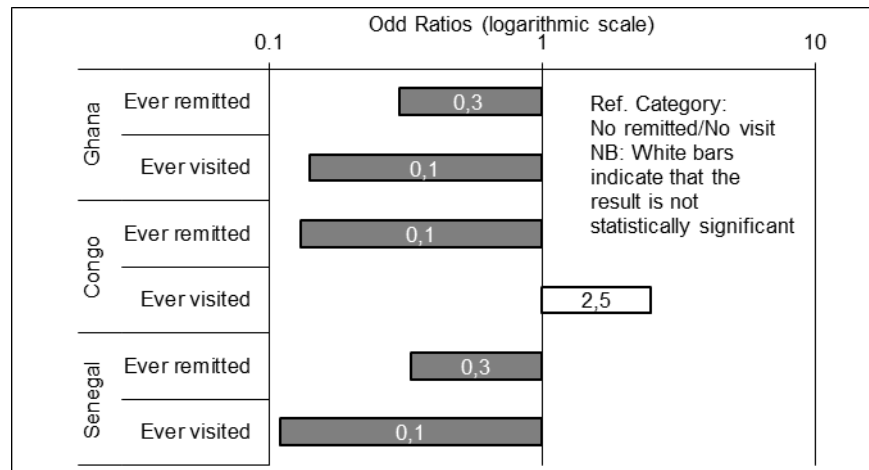
Significantly, **MAFE research shows that strong transnational linkages to the origin country are not a guarantee that migrants will immediately return.** In fact, African migrants who had sent remittances home or who visited their country of origin

⁴ These data are not shown in this policy brief; please refer to MAFE Working Paper 22 in the ‘Key resources’ section for more information.

⁵ These data are not shown in this policy brief; please refer to MAFE Working Paper 22 in the ‘Key resources’ section for more information.

during their stay in Europe were found to be *less* likely to return home soon (see Fig 3). Thus remittances or visits may be a signal that return is not imminent, even where migrants' intentions are to eventually return.

FIG 3: EFFECT OF REMITTANCES AND VISITS TO THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN ON THE PROBABILITY TO RETURN



Return migration: Legal status and path dependency

The determinants of return migration⁶ from Europe are arguably less well-understood than the determinants of initial migration, not least because there is a poor understanding of how reasons for initial migration relate to return.

In this context, MAFE research suggests that **an important determinant of return migration is the reason for initial migration**. In particular, Congolese and Ghanaian migrants who went to Europe for study were significantly more likely to return to their country of origin than those who left for other reasons (see Fig 4). Conversely, Congolese migrants who emigrated for political reasons were much less likely to return, re-affirming previous research findings for this type of migration.

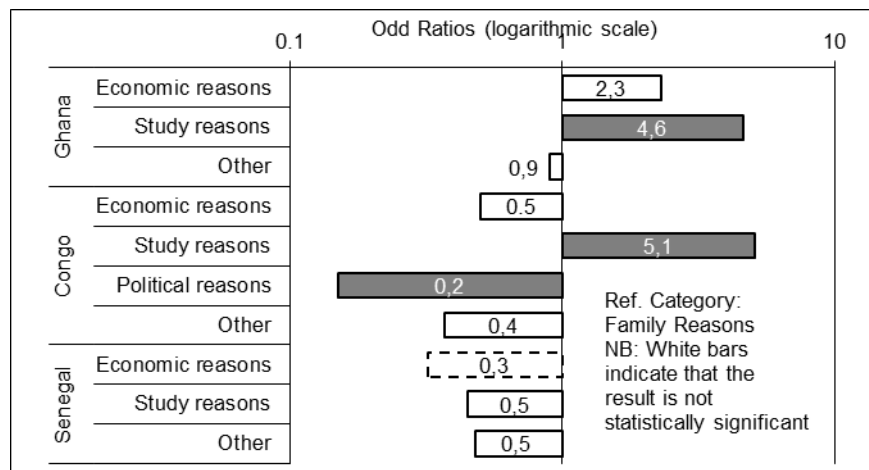
Migrants' legal status also had an impact on the likelihood of return for Congolese and Senegalese migrants in Europe, with documented Congolese almost 22 times more likely to return than their undocumented counterparts, and documented Senegalese twice as likely⁷. In contrast, undocumented Ghanaians in the UK and the Netherlands were about three times *more* likely to return, although the sample of returnees in the latter country was quite small⁸. This trend may be explained by the fact that undocumented Ghanaians in the UK, in particular, are relatively marginalised, as the majority of Ghanaians in the UK are documented (see MAFE Policy Briefing No. 2 on Changing Patterns of Migration).

⁶ The bulk of the return considered by MAFE results consists of voluntary and spontaneous return from Europe, as opposed to forced returns.

⁷ As noted in MAFE Briefing Paper No. 2, the majority of Congolese and Senegalese migrants have regular legal status in Europe.

⁸ These data are not shown in this policy brief; please refer to MAFE Working Paper 22 in the 'Key resources' section for more information.

FIG 4. THE EFFECT OF REASONS FOR INITIAL MIGRATION ON THE PROBABILITY OF RETURN TO THE HOME COUNTRY



Just as age is important in initial migration, **Ghanaians and Senegalese who have stayed in European destinations for a three-to-ten year period are also the statistically most likely group to return home**, compared to more recent or more established migrants⁹. This suggests that those who migrate with the intention to return often do so within this timeframe.

Policy implications

- **MAFE data support the view that African migration to Europe is a migration of skills.** European policies could welcome such migration, but need to pay attention to the consequences for availability of skills in African countries.
- Given that those migrating for education were found to be more likely to return to Africa than other migrant groups, **policies promoting student mobility and exchange could be deployed to encourage 'brain circulation'**.
- **Access to family networks in Europe increased the probability of migration across all three countries studied in the MAFE Project – but the importance of family reunification should not be overstated.** As highlighted in MAFE Briefing Paper No. 5, 25 per cent of African migrants are single when they migrate to Europe, and of those who do have families, 40 per cent are part of transnational families where at least one member of the nuclear family lives in another country.
- **The legal status of migrants has a significant bearing on the likelihood of return for Congolese and Senegalese migrants, with those who are documented much more likely to return.** This suggests, counter-intuitively, that policies to promote return could start with measures to regularise migrants' status in Europe, depending on the country context.
- **Policies to promote return migration could take into account the time period – 3-to-10 years – within which return is more likely to occur.** This is a period in which many

⁹ These data are not shown in this policy brief; please refer to MAFE Working Paper 22 in the 'Key resources' section for more information.

migrants have earned sufficient money to use productively back home, without establishing the kinds of ties that in some cases discourage return. European policies on temporary migration need to consider this timeframe.

Key resources

González-Ferrer, A., Kraus, E., Baizán, P., Beauchemin, C., Black, R., and Schoumaker, B., (2013) 'Factors of migration between Africa and Europe: Assessing the role of resources, networks and context. A comparative approach.' MAFE Working Paper 22. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Flahaux, M.-L., Schoumaker, B., González-Ferrer, A., and Obucina, O. (2013) 'Determinants of migration between Africa and Europe: The DR Congo case'. MAFE Working Paper 23. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

González-Ferrer, A., Black, R., Kraus, E., and Quartey, P. (2013) 'Determinants of migration between Ghana and Europe'. MAFE Working Paper 24. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Baizán, P., Beauchemin, C., and González-Ferrer, A. (2013) 'Determinants of migration between Senegal and France, Italy and Spain'. MAFE Working Paper 25. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Liu, M.-M. (2011). 'Migrant networks and international migration: Testing Weak Ties'. MAFE Working Paper 14. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Toma, S., and Vause, S. (2011) 'The role of kin and friends in male and female international mobility from Senegal and DR Congo.' MAFE Working Paper 13. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Mezger, C. (2008) 'Who comes back? The case of Senegalese returning to Dakar'. MAFE Working Paper 4. Paris: MAFE Project, INED.

Mezger, C. and González-Ferrer, A. (forthcoming 2013) 'The ImPol database: A new tool to measure immigration policies in France, Italy and Spain since the 1960s.' MAFE Working Paper 34: MAFE Project, INED.

MAFE working papers and briefing papers are available online at:
<www.mafeproject.eu/publications>

Project identity

Coordinator	Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (France) Cris Beauchemin
Partners	<p>Université Catholique de Louvain, Research Centre in Demography and Societies (Belgium) Bruno Schoumaker</p> <p>Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, IPDSP (Senegal) Papa Sakho</p> <p>University of Kinshasa, Department des Sciences, de la Population et du Développement (The Democratic Republic of Congo) José Mangalu</p> <p>University of Ghana, Centre for Migration Studies (Ghana) Peter Quartey</p> <p>University Pompeu Fabra, Department of Political and Social Sciences (Spain) Pau Baizan</p> <p>Forum Internationale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull'Immigrazione - FIERI (Italy) Eleonora Castagnone</p> <p>University of Sussex, Sussex Centre for Migration Research (UK) Richard Black</p> <p>Maastricht University, Dept of Technology & Society Studies (the Netherlands) Valentina Mazzucato</p> <p>Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Research Group on Demographic Dynamics (Spain) Amparo González-Ferrer</p>
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This briefing paper was prepared by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research (UK) in collaboration with Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas (Spain) and INED (France). For more information on the MAFE Project contact Catherine Daurele at <catherine.daurele@ined.fr>.