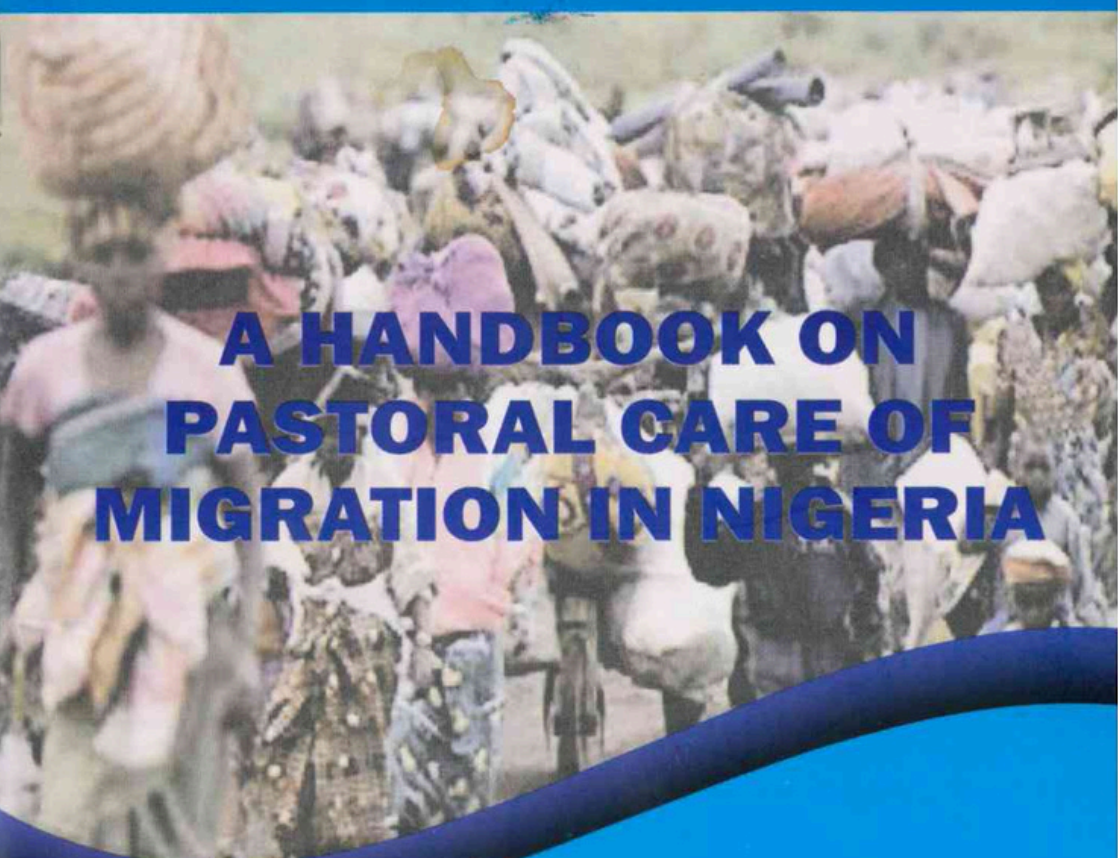




CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT OF NIGERIA
MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES UNIT



**A HANDBOOK ON
PASTORAL CARE OF
MIGRATION IN NIGERIA**

MARCH, 2025

FOREWORD

Migration is an age-old phenomenon as humans, for various reasons, have always moved from place to place. Even the earliest human society – the hunting and gathering society – was basically characterized by migration. However, the phenomenon of migration in the contemporary era is remarkably different from all previous manifestations of mass migration. Today, like before, people are still moving, but contemporary human movements are distinguished by their speed, volume and intensity. In addition, the increasingly diverse profiles of the people moving, as well as the motivations for or drivers of such movements, are considerably different. While advancements in technology have increased access to information, as well as the ease and speed of communication and travel in an exponential manner, increased socio-political instability across the globe and climate-related challenges are increasingly becoming the new drivers of migration.

The 2024 World Migration Report of the International Organization for Migration showed that there were about 281 million international migrants around the world in 2020 while 117 million people were living in different forms of displacement in 2022. The magnitude of this phenomenon can be appreciated only when the current data are juxtaposed with the data of one or two decades

ago. While data from Nigeria are sketchy and do not truly reflect the reality, anecdotal evidence shows that a great deal of human movements is taking place within the country, especially from rural to urban areas, and between Nigeria and other countries. These movements could be voluntary, such as movements motivated by the search for better economic opportunities or involuntary (forced) as witnessed in the rising phenomena of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), human trafficking, etc. in the country.

Migration is a complex phenomenon. Hence, it requires complex systems and multiple actors to manage effectively. Since moving people carry along with them their culture, particularly their religion, religious bodies become key stakeholders in the management of migration. From the earliest manifestations of mass migration, the Catholic Church has been a major player in the human migration phenomenon. This is evident in, not only the various migration-related pontifical documents and pastoral letters/guidelines issued by the Church's authorities or in the establishment of juridical bodies in the Roman Curia and in the national conferences of Bishops in order to respond to the pastoral challenges of migration, but also in the Church's practical initiatives that are aimed at welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating immigrants in their host communities.

The decision of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria to establish a Migrants and Refugees Unit at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria is a welcome development, may be long overdue. Nevertheless, the rate of voluntary internal migration as well as involuntary movements as evidenced in the burgeoning IDP and refugee camps across the country calls for serious pastoral imagination and strategies. While the Catholic Church in Nigeria cannot usurp the role of the government in mitigating the factors that are responsible for the mass movement of people around the country or in articulating and implementing policies for the effective management of migration in the country, its role in bringing succour and hope as well as in aiding the integration of migrants in host communities cannot be overemphasized. It is, therefore, necessary that all pastoral agents understand the essentials of the pastoral care for migrants, IDPs, refugees, etc. and also join hands in making the migration experience safe and less traumatic for all who have embarked on such journeys.

The present handbook is a bird's eye view of the social, theological, and pastoral dimensions of migration. The document introduces the reader to general issues around human mobility and, specifically, to the pastoral care for migrants and refugees in Nigeria, under the direction of the Migrants and Refugees Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. While commending the Secretary

of the Unit and his collaborators for preparing this basic guide to the pastoral care for migrants in Nigeria, I pray that this young but essential Unit of the Church's ministry in Nigeria will grow to maturity and bear much fruits. I believe that this special attention that the Nigerian Church is giving to people who have left their homelands, either voluntarily or involuntarily, will go a long way in making migration a source of enrichment to cultures and, ultimately, promote national integration rather than being a cause of social disorder.

Bishop Bulus Dauwa Yohanna

Chairman, Migrants & Refugees Unit
of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The number of people on the move in today's world is unprecedented in human history. Never have so many people left their homelands to settle in other places than they are doing today.

Migration is one of the most important issues today. On the international political scene, the traditional destination countries are faced with the challenge of stemming the tide of irregular migrations and protecting the rights of migrant minorities. In Nigeria, the challenge of migration management and governance is about stemming the rapid human capital flight, harnessing the economic development potentials of diaspora remittances and addressing the needs of internal displacements.

The engagement of non-governmental and faith-based organizations in the migration field is also a key feature of the phenomenon today. The fact that the human person is at the centre of migration makes it a compelling place of engagement for humanitarian organizations; but even more so for the Church. In the eyes of faith, the Church considers migration a mission territory, a place where pastoral ministry is to be carried out.

This work has been written to provide direction for a pastoral approach by the Church to the phenomenon of

migration in Nigeria. It presents a general understanding of migration as a social, economic and political as well as a spiritual phenomenon. It is meant to contribute to the (on-going) formation of pastoral agents, through whom the Church provides spiritual and material solicitude for people on the move within and from the country.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PHENOMENON OF MIGRATION (HUMAN MOBILITY)

In recent decades, intellectual discourse and practical action on migration have become more specialized. Many terms and concepts have been developed to capture the essence of a highly complex and complicated phenomenon. *Chapter One* outlines such terms and concepts as well as the trends, patterns and types of migration and migrants as they pertain to the Nigerian context.

1.1 The Concept of Migration

Migration refers to the activity of movement or mobility. When migrating, people leave a place, usually of birth or abode, to visit, live, work or settle in another one. Migration is a complex phenomenon that is experienced differently around the world. There is no universal definition that captures it in its entirety. Most definitions of migration are largely situational and intentional, based on political, social, economic or cultural considerations. As a widely acknowledged authority, the definition given by the International Organization on Migration (IOM) is worth considering: IOM: “Migration is the movement of

a person or group of persons from one geographical unit to another, across an administrative or political border, wishing to settle definitely or temporarily in a place other than their place of origin.”¹

1.1.1 Migration Flows

Migration happens across borders on individual and collective basis. Migration flows refers to the number of migrants who cross a border within a given period of time in order to establish residence there. It includes international migration flows (crossing national borders) and internal migration flows (moving within national borders). Migration flows can also be described as “inflows” (immigrants entering a given border) or “outflows” (emigrants leaving a given border). In addition, there are “mixed flows,” referring to complex migratory movements that include refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants and other types of migrants at the same or at different times.

1.1.2 Migration Trends and Patterns

Migration trends and patterns refer to the way people move around or from their countries that have been observed and documented. Some trends and patterns are regular while others are irregular or random. Migration trends and patterns also refer to the methods, means and

¹ IOM, World Migration Report 2003: Managing Migration Challenges and Responses for People on the Move, (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2003), p. 8.

routes that people use, as well as the destinations they head for.

1.2 Types of Migration

i. Internal Migration

Internal migration refers to movement within the same country from one administrative unit such as a local government area, state, or region to another, with the hope of settling definitely or temporarily. Internal migrants include internally displaced persons (IDPs) and people who engage in rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-urban and urban-rural migrations.

ii. International Migration

International migration refers to movement across one or several international borders, resulting in change of legal status. This includes the movements made by refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees and victims of international human-trafficking. Two kinds of international migration are identifiable: (a) temporary migration and (b) permanent migration.

(a) Temporary Migration

This refers to movements that imply return to the place of origin in the future. It includes seasonal migration by farmers, short or long stays by business people, tourists, students, expatriates, diplomatic personnel, etc. (although technically, these are not migrants because they are not

issued with a migrant visa). Temporary migration further comprises of circular migration and return migration. The former refers to repeated movement between an origin and a destination, involving more than one migration and return, while the later refers to a single emigration and return after a period of extended absence.

(b) Permanent Migration

Permanent migration is used to describe all forms of movement wherein migrants have no intention of returning to the place of origin. This type of migration can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary migration implies that people freely engage in movement from a place of origin to a destination, usually with the intention to establish a residence. Involuntary migration, on the other hand, happens in the forced movement of people, often occasioned by insecurity, conflict, famine or environmental / climatic factors.

1.3 The Concept of Migrant

A migrant is person who moves or has moved from his or her homeland to another place within or outside the country and is living there either temporally or permanently. There are different categories on migrants, depending on the intentions and circumstances of their movements.

1.3.1 Categories of Migrants

i. Regular Migrant

A regular migrant is a person who travels across international borders with valid documents such as a valid passport with a visa, work permit, residence permit, etc.

ii. Irregular Migrant

An irregular migrant is a person who travels across international borders without legitimate documents, avoiding entry controls, using false documents or overstaying in the host country.

iii. Migrant Worker

A migrant worker is a person who moves for reasons of specific work or remunerated activities to a country of which he or she is a non-national and establishes residence for the duration of work. A migrant worker is also called a “labour migrant,” and can be anyone of working age who migrates and subsequently enters the labour market. Labour migrants are the largest category of migrants around the world.

iv. Refugee

A refugee is a person who is taking shelter in a country that is not his or her place of origin. A refugee usually has left his or her country due to fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or holding a political opinion, or as

a result of displacement through environmental disasters and other factors, and is unable or unwilling to return.

v. Asylum-seeker

Asylum is a form of protection of foreigners by a State on its territory, based on the principle of non-refoulement (non-rejection) and the internationally and nationally recognized rights of the refugee. An asylum-seeker is a person who has crossed an international border but is yet to receive a decision on claim for refugee status. This includes persons who are yet to submit application for or are awaiting response after application for refugee status. According to the principle of non-refoulment, this class of migrants may not be returned until their claims have been fairly examined. Asylum-seekers, whose claims have been established, are admitted as refugees.

vi. Displaced Person

A displaced person is one who is forced to flee his or her habitual location due to adverse conditions such as arm conflict, widespread violence, systematic human rights violations or natural or man-made environmental disasters and their effects. Most displaced persons remain within the borders of their countries and are referred to as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

vii. Trafficked Person

A trafficked person is a victim of the process of recruitment, transportation, sale, harbouring or transfer for

the purpose of exploitation, including sexual abuse, servitude, forced labour, slavery or the removal of organs.

viii. Stateless Person

A stateless person is one who is not considered to be a citizen of any political State in accordance with applicable laws, or a person whose nationality is not proven.

ix. Unaccompanied Foreign Minor

An unaccompanied foreign minor is a person under 18 years of age who does not reside in his or her country of origin and is separated from his or her parents, or from whoever previously exercised parental authority over him or her.

x. Return Migrant (Returnee)

A return migrant (returnee) is a person who returns to his or her country of origin, citizenship or habitual residence, after having spent a significant period of time in another country or location. The return of such a migrant may be voluntary or involuntary. It may occur within the borders of a country, as in the case of the return of internally displaced persons, or from the host country (transit or destination) to the country of origin, as in the case of refugees and asylum seekers.

xi. Persons of Concern

This expression is used to refer generally to persons who are vulnerable and may require protection. All migrants, especially refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers and trafficked

persons are persons of concern because of their susceptibility to physical and mental harm.

1.4 Migration in Nigeria

As in many parts of the world, migration is a topical issue in Nigeria today. The movements of populations out of the country as well as within the country are unprecedented for peace-time scenarios. The historical and contemporary experiences of migration in Nigeria are highlighted in the following session.

1.4.1 Overview of Historical Migration in Nigeria

Migration is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It is a historical phenomenon rooted in the adventurous nature of the average Nigerian citizen. Migration in the country is traceable to the pre-colonial times when indigenes of the different ethnic groups and/or nationalities living under different kingdoms and empires within the geographical space of the present-day Nigeria voluntarily moved around, or were forced to do so as victims in slave-raiding, slave-trading, inter-ethnic conflicts and warfare.² Such movements had been taking place across the Sahara from as far back as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when slaves and gold were the important trading items. Cross-border migrations continued with cross-Atlantic movements, as people were forcibly taken to the western world, especially to the Americas or the ‘New World’ to

² Ibid.

work as slaves in the plantations.³ Trade, traditional, religious and socio-cultural practices such as nomadic and pastoral livestock grazing, pilgrimages to holy sites, as well as population pressures, landlessness and the search for fertile lands for agricultural purposes, contributed to migrations during this era.

Migrations continued in the colonial era when the people were introduced to new politics and leadership systems.⁴ The development of local, regional and national administrative capitals, places of higher education and new market centres brought about large scale rural-urban migration. Citizens from different parts of the country moved into regional headquarters, administrative, economic and commercial centres in search of trade and gainful employment.⁵ Cross-border migration also increased as many Nigerians relocated to other African states to seek wage employment in construction sites,

³ Samuel Antwi Darkwah and Nahanga Verter, 'Determinants of International Migration: The Nigerian Experience', *Acta Universitatis Agriculturae et Silviculturae Mendelianae Brunensis*, vol. 62. No. 2. (2014), p. 323.

⁴Abayomi-Alli Mayowa, 'Pre-Colonial Nigeria and the European's Fallacy', *American Research Institute for Policy Development, Review of History and Political Science*, Vol. 2. No. 2. (2014), pp. 17-27.

⁵Segun O. Osoba, 'The Phenomenon of Labour Migration in the Era of British Colonial Rule: A Neglected Aspect of Nigeria's Social History', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. IV. No. 4. (1969), p. 528.

mining and lumbering, and in the cocoa plantations.⁶ On the trans-continental scene, a number of young migrants embarked on temporary sojourns to Europe and North America to seek higher education after the period of the Second World War. Many would later return to constitute Nigeria's political and educated elite during the period leading to Independence.⁷

The migration patterns that were developed during the colonial era were also sustained into post-independent Nigeria. However, the bitter experiences of the Civil War destroyed the equilibrium created by the colonial administration, resulting in enormous involuntary migrations both within and from the country.⁸ The situation was reversed in the following years with the economic fortunes that followed the discovery of crude oil in the 1970s. Immigrations into the country increased through foreign nationals who came into Nigeria for reconstruction and the return of Nigerians from abroad. In the intervening decades, the country has been experiencing another reverse migratory transition due to a combination of socioeconomic and political factors,

⁶Adejumoke A. Afolayan et al., 'Dynamics of International Migration in Nigeria', *Review of Literature* (Ibadan, University of Ibadan, 2008), p. 11.

⁷Segun O. Osoba, Op. Cit., p. 534.

⁸Aderanti Adepoju and Arie van der Wiel, A., *Seeking Greener Pastures Abroad: A Migration Profile of Nigeria*, Ibadan: Safari Books Ltd, 2010. p. 125.

including mismanagement of resources, corruption, bad leadership, instability and insecurity, transforming it from a net immigration to a net emigration one.⁹

1.4.2 Contemporary Experience of Migration in Nigeria

In addition to the local socioeconomic and political factors, the scale of contemporary internal and international migrations in Nigeria is largely the result of the integration of local communities and national economics into global relationships.¹⁰ In the age of globalization, discoveries and advances in communication and transportation, greater access to material resources, social networks, education and the media have brought openings for many, creating new patterns of movements and bringing about enormous social transformations in both migrant-sending and receiving countries.¹¹ As more Nigerians get connected directly and indirectly to the local and international ‘world of work,’ the consciousness of migration becomes greater and the craving stronger.

⁹Richard Black et al., ‘Migration and pro-poor Policy in West Africa’, Working Paper C8 (Brighton, UK: *Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty*, University of Sussex, 2004), p. 11.

¹⁰See Stephen Castle, ‘International Migration at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: Global Trends and Issues’, *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 52. No. 3. (2000), p. 269.

¹¹Ibid.

Although there is paucity of reliable data, there are indications that most internal migrations in the country are of the rural-urban variant, with economic considerations being the major motivation. The rapid process of urbanization and the quest for education and economic opportunities continue to draw large populations, especially youths, to major towns, cities and economic hubs. It is estimated that almost half of Nigerians are living in towns and cities today, as against less than a quarter of the population around the time of Independence.¹² The desire and desperation to move to the urban areas have also brought about increase in internal human trafficking activities by well-organized syndicates that recruit unsuspecting victims for sexual or economic exploitation as sex-slaves, prostitutes, child brides, beggars, bonded labourers, child labourers, etc.¹³

For many Nigerian youths, rural-urban migration is the path to international migration. They embark on the long journey abroad by first moving to the cities, where they expect to find some jobs and earn some resources to finance their journey. While in the cities, the lack of job opportunities and the corresponding high cost of living,

¹² United Nations: 'Internal Migration Trends in Nigeria', www.hppts.nigeria.un.org/sites/default/files/2023, p. 2.

¹³ Regular stories of trafficking are reported almost on a daily basis in the Nigerian press.

coupled with the fact that many youths who have lived in the villages have not had access to proper education and training and are therefore lacking certificates and other basic requirements for employment, force some youths to launch at opportunity that can take them abroad, including embarking on the dangerous overland journeys, rather than return to the villages from where they came.

Other than rural-urban migrations, there are patterns of urban-urban, rural-rural and urban-rural migrations in Nigeria, driven by a host of factors that are not necessarily tied to the economy. Some of these factors are historical, social, political and cultural. For example, the outbreak of insurgency in 2009 is regarded as the greatest single cause of displacement in the Lake Chad Basin region.¹⁴ The adverse effects of climate change are also contributing to the large numbers of population dislocation in Nigeria. In 2022, there were an estimated 3,098,404 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria as a result of the combined impacts of the factors mentioned above.¹⁵

On the international scene, Nigeria remains a major country of origin for migration. The country features

¹⁴Kwaku Arhin-Sam, 'The Political Economy of Migration Governance in Nigeria', <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338174380>, December 2009.

¹⁵[Nigeria - Migrants & Refugees Section \(migrants-refugees.va\)](https://migrants-refugees.va.gov/).

prominently in many international migration discourses. There is virtually no country in the world where Nigerians are not found. In what has become known as the “japa” (to flee) syndrome, large numbers of citizens are constantly leaving the country, resulting in brain-drain and shortage of skilled manpower in critical service and development sectors. The trend of international emigrations from Nigeria in recent times has taken on the semblance of a mundane social process, one that transcends the previously familiar human mobility, to becoming a culture, a sort of rite of passage, especially for the youth. An Afrobarometer poll from 2018 found that one in three Nigerians, especially younger and more educated males, wanted to move outside the country to search for employment opportunities within or outside the continent. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies reported that in 2020 alone, 1,670,455 people emigrated from the country.¹⁶ A recent random oral interview conducted among about 1,000 students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) revealed that over 90% of students were planning to emigrate after their studies.

Migrations from Nigeria range from labour and family unification to studies, etc.; and the destinations are spread across the globe. Many international migrations from

¹⁶Africa Center for Strategic Studies, ‘African Migration Trends to Watch in 2022’, africacenter.org/spotlight/african-migration-trends-to-watch-in-2022/

Nigeria happen through regular and legitimate processes; many also happen through irregular and clandestine pathways. Driven by desperation, many embark on the dangerous journey to Europe, America or Asia through the desert by foot, hiding in luggages, compartments of commercial aircrafts and ship decks or through the trans-Mediterranean boats, operated by syndicates of human smugglers and traffickers.

With so many people leaving, Nigeria is considered an emigrant country. But it is also an immigration destination, playing host to a significant number of immigrants from neighbouring and faraway countries. In 2020, there were 1,308,568 migrants recorded in the country, mostly coming from Benin, Ghana, Mali, Togo, and the Niger Republic.¹⁷ There is a significant number of non-African immigrants living and working in Nigeria.

¹⁷[Nigeria - Migrants & Refugees Section \(migrants-refugees.va\)](#).

CHAPTER TWO

MIGRATION AS A SOCIAL ISSUE IN NIGERIA

With the scale and dimension of the phenomenon, migration in Nigeria has assumed the status of a social issue. Millions of people are profoundly affected one way or another by the trend of internal and international migrations within and from the country. Social issues are often complex phenomena, and can only be well understood from multiple perspectives. *Chapter Two* discusses migration in Nigeria from the socio-cultural, economic and political perspectives.

2.1 Socio-cultural Perspectives on Migration in Nigeria

Internal and international migrations in Nigeria are instruments of far-reaching socio-cultural change due to the enormous impact they create and the influence they have on people's lives and behaviours. The outcomes of migrations in Nigeria can be seen as positive or negative, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the pre-disposing factors, including (i) demography, (ii) education, (iii) family links and networks, (iv) foreign migration programmes, (v) perception of social status and (vi) gender consciousness.

(i) Demography

With a population of over 230 million people, Nigeria is a highly populated country. Increasing birth-rate means that the population continues to grow, with the attendant increase in human mobility.

(ii) Education

In addition to the frequent interruption of the school calendar, the type of education offered in Nigerian institutions emphasizes paper certificates and qualifications over technical and practical capabilities. Many Nigerians therefore go abroad to acquire post-graduate education as a way of gaining advantage in the highly competitive labour market.

(iii) Family links and networks

Many households in Nigeria have migrants abroad who provide them hope of survival and improved socio-economic conditions. Links and networks with members in the diaspora who have become well-established and integrated represent opportunities for younger relatives planning to join earlier migrants. These links and networks form part of the broader social imperative of the extended family system that encourages and sustains the migration chain in Nigeria.

(iv) Foreign migration programmes

A number of foreign migration programmes such as visa lottery and scholarships promote migrations from Nigeria,

particularly amongst the educated and highly-skilled.¹⁸ Many Nigerians also emigrate from the country as beneficiaries of overseas trainings and cultural exchange programmes.

(v) Perception of status

Migrants who return or visit home are often accorded high regard. The favourable perception of them is reinforced by their ostentatious display of wealth and lavish spending. This increases the urge of some Nigerians, particularly the youths, to want to migrate.¹⁹ Some parents and relatives also instigate the desire to migrate in their children by comparing them with those who have moved.

(vi) Gender consciousness

The struggle for gender equality is contributing more and more to labour migration from Nigeria. In a departure from the previous trend of male-dominated migration, many Nigerian females now go abroad as the socio-cultural roles of women continue to change. Many Nigerian women today see migration as a way of protecting their rights and/or escaping unfavourable

¹⁸Godwin S.M. Okeke, 'The Uprooted Emigrant: The Impact of Brain Drain, Brain Gain, and Brain Circulation on Africa's Development', in: Toyin Falola and Niyi Afolabi (eds.), *Trans-Atlantic Migration: The Paradox of Exile*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 132.

¹⁹Aderanti Adepoju, 'Migration in sub-Saharan Africa', *Current African Issues* 37 (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2008), p. 37.

socio-cultural practices related to such situations as singlehood, divorce, childlessness and widowhood.

There are many positive socio-cultural impacts of migrations within and from Nigeria. These include, but are not restricted to:

- i. Benefits in social capitals through migration networks and organizations
- ii. Exposure to different cultural and social norms, and being able to function in a globalized world through the development of language and other communication skills, leading to improvement of the ability to interact and work with people of different nationalities and cultures
- iii. Promotion of knowledge and awareness to correct myths and misconceptions surrounding life in general, thus helping to reduce oppressive and retrogressive socio-cultural norms, particularly those against women.
- iv. Returns on formal education, evident in the amount of migrants/diaspora investments on infrastructural buildings and equipment for studies in the various citadels of learning in the country, contributing to rise in the level of literacy.
- v. Returns on health-care through Nigerian professionals and medical practitioners, which have assisted in the building up of new skills and techniques to mitigate the impacts various diseases,

- including malaria, chicken-pox, typhoid, HIV/AIDS, Lassa Fever, Ebola, etc. in the country.
- vi. Boost in sanitary conditions, public health and life expectancy in the country through the introduction of new knowledge and effective disease control mechanisms

However, there are negative impacts associated with the migration experiences of Nigerians. Some of these include:

- i. Experience of ambivalence, evident in feelings of disappointments and irritability about the situations and how things are done at home. This often leads alienation from the society.
- ii. Failure to, or difficulties with reintegrating, leading to desire to re-migrate
- iii. Dissenting knowledge and skills that do not conform to the infrastructural, cultural and climatic conditions obtainable in the country. Due to discrepancy in skill and practice, returnees may not find jobs in the same sectors in which they had worked abroad.
- iv. Reduced productivity of returnees, due to illness, accident or old age, with their maintenance costs again being absorbed by their families at home. This often comes with reduced ability to exert much influence in family or societal matters.

- v. Danger of social deviancy, including alcoholism, abnormal sexual orientation, loss of accepted traditional norms and values.
- vi. Risk of breakdown of marriages and family cohesion as spouses suffer the emotional pains of separation and children the lack of parental reference, love and material care. Migrants who raise families abroad may also experience inter-generational and family conflicts, communication difficulties, reversal of roles, confusion of identity and conflict of loyalties to different cultures.

2.2 Political Perspectives on Migration in Nigeria

Despite being a major instrument of socio-cultural change in the country, migration has not always been an issue of major political interest in Nigeria. This could be due to the fact that migration has no measurable impact on the outcome of major elections in the country²⁰ as currently being experienced in Europe and America. However, there is a wide range of policy instruments for governance and management of human mobility within, from and back to the country. Some of these are the National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP, 2014), the National Migration Policy (NMP, 2015) and the National Policy on Diaspora Matters (NPDM, 2016). Nigeria has also assented to numerous regional, continental and global

²⁰Kwaku Arhin-Sam, *op. cit.*

migration protocols. There are equally numerous governmental ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) established to handle migration issues in Nigeria. Some of these are, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the National Population Commission (NPC) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Critics claim that the existence of a plethora of government policies and parastatals does necessarily indicate a strategic or coherent approach to migration issues in Nigeria. Furthermore, it would appear that government approach over the years has more reactive, ad-hoc or selective. The increase in political interest in migration in recent times could have been informed by number of compelling factors,²¹ including (i) the worryingly large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs), (ii) the massive exodus of harness-able human capital from the country (iii) the volume of diaspora remittances and (iv) international pressure from development partners funding migration initiatives.

²¹ As identified by Kwaku Arhin-Sam, *op. cit.*

- (i) The large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) has been a source of socio-political concern for some time now. The negative publicity about the situation of Nigerian refugees displaced by insurgency to neighbouring countries and the dehumanization of stranded irregular migrants in some African countries in particular, was a huge embarrassment to the government.
- (ii) The number of emigrations from the country and the resultant brain-drain and depletion of human capital is worrisome for the government. Equally distressing is the amount of dangerous and failed migrations by Nigerians, evident in the many fatalities and human-trafficking that are often widely reported.
- (iii) Diaspora remittances have grown exponentially in Nigeria in recent years. Although its members are still not able to vote in national elections, the Nigerian government identifies the diaspora community as a veritable source of resources for national development. Measures are being put in place to continue to engage with them, including enrolling them in a national identity database.
- (iv) Foreign development partners that fund most migrations initiatives in Nigeria have been

exerting pressure on the government to show more commitment, especially in stemming irregular migration and facilitating safe return and reintegration of migrants.

2.3 Economic Perspectives on Migration in Nigeria

Economic considerations are perhaps the most important among all the issues related to migration. There is a strong and direct cause-and-effect connection between the economy and migration – and all types of migration impact the economy directly or indirectly, and vice-versa. In Nigeria, the root causes of internal and international migrations are the issues relating to poverty and quality of life, including the search for job opportunities and social and economic security. These are often described as the *push factors*, because they somehow compel people to leave or abandon their places of abode to go to other places. The push factors are complemented by the *pull factors* such as availability of jobs, better placement and higher incomes, better social services and security, all of which attract people to new destinations.

The increasing rate of poverty in Nigeria, reinforced by joblessness of a large number of people in the country, stands in stark contrast to the reported steady growth in the economy and the abundant human and natural resources. Imbalances in the national economic structure allow the sources of wealth such as administrative,

economic and commercial activities, as well as infrastructure such as access roads, electricity, portable water and healthcare facilities, to be concentrated in urban centres. Government continues to pay far greater attention to production in the energy sector (oil exports), which employs a tiny fraction of the populace and contributes a small percentage of about 15% to the country's GDP, to the detriment of the rural areas and the agricultural sector which contributes more as over 40% to the national GDP and provides employment for an estimated 90% of the people.²² This leaves the larger percentage of Nigerians who live and work in the rural areas in poverty. This situation is the direct cause of unending waves of rural-urban migration, which is the most prevalent in the country. The restiveness, militancy and insurgency witnessed in the last decade or so are also attributable to the widespread poverty in rural areas. These have led to the displacements of millions of citizens around the country as well as massive departures from country.

In the urban centres, millions of youths roam the streets every day in search of jobs and income-earning activities. Many of these are graduates and young school-leavers. With little or no prospect of finding jobs, the only option would seem to be leaving the country. Even a good

²²Ejikeme Jombo Nwagwu, 'Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria: A Link to National Insecurity', *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, vol.2. No.1. (2014), p. 24.

number of those who are employed feel they can improve their chances of better earning and living by emigrating from the country. Usually, labour flows to areas where it has higher value use, migrating from low-wage to high-wage areas in pursuit of higher incomes. People migrate to maximize their income, which explains the fact that most emigrations from Nigeria are economic or labour migrations.

In Nigeria, the decision to migrate is often a family-based decision, rather than one made by individual actors alone. Migration is seen as a family strategy used to diversify sources of income, improve family welfare and secure the future. It is seen as a form of investment, into which families commit scarce resources (through sale of properties, savings, loans, etc) in the hope of return, in the form of remittances. Over the years, millions of families in Nigeria have benefitted immensely from remittances. Additional financial resources have enabled families to acquire durable goods that enhance their living and sanitary conditions, improved health care, and lower mortality rate. Remittances also provide working capitals for recipients to engage in or improve their entrepreneurial activities.²³ Many micro-businesses in

²³Oludele Akinloye Akinboade et al., 'Regulation, Cross Border Migrants and the Choice of Remittance Channels in South Africa', *Journal of Economics and Behavioural Studies*, vol. 9. No. 2. (2017), pp. 204-205.

Nigeria are funded through remittances. Communities also benefit directly from remittances through their impacts on developments in local capital markets and infrastructure, and indirectly on growth through their spill-over mechanisms maintained by households' increased consumption of local goods and services.²⁴ Remittances from diaspora associations have been used to erect physical infrastructures like schools, health-centres and town halls in many communities.

The poverty rate in households and communities that receive remittances is often lower than those that do not. The discrepancy in reception of remittances is often seen as one of the negative effects from migrants' remittances. This is because remittances create economic imbalance and deepen social inequality between households. Other negative effects are the high proclivity for consumption of imported products, wasteful spending, ostentatious display of wealth, idleness and the dependency syndrome that reduce incentives to work.

On the national scale, the weak nature of the Nigerian economy is related to the country's dependence on imported goods. Nigeria remains a consuming, rather than a producing nation, with the consumption patterns often

²⁴Admos Chimhowu, Jenifer Piesse and Caroline Pinder, 'The Impact of Remittances', (Manchester: Enterprise Development Impact, 2004), p. 18.

tailored towards non-essential goods manufactured abroad. Nigeria is one of the largest recipients of global remittances, with its share projected to hit 34.8 billion dollars by end 2023.²⁵ Remittances finance a huge chunk of Nigeria's imports,²⁶ and are therefore seen as a tangible contribution of migrants to the development of the country.²⁷ The benefits of remittances are evident in key areas of human and infrastructural developments like health care services, education, investments in real estate and agricultural production. Furthermore, remittances are a convenient source capital inflow into the Nigerian economy because unlike other debt-servicing or profit transfers, they are unilateral transfers that do not create future liabilities nor fluctuate with economic cycles, and are less volatile to the financial exchange regimes.

It is claimed in some quarters that the enormous benefits of remittances accounts for the interest of the government to see an increase in the diaspora community. Interfacing with the diaspora community and ensuring the regular inflow of remittances are considered to be quicker pay-

²⁵ Strength from Abroad: The Economic Power of Nigeria's Diaspora, <https://www.pwc.com/ng/en/pdf/the-economic-power-of-nigerias-diaspora.pdf>.

²⁶ The World Bank, Migration and Remittances: Recent Developments and Outlook. Migration and Development Brief 26, (Washington D.C.: IBRD/The World Bank, 2016), pp. 31-36.

²⁷ A research done in 2009 find out that the government was in consultation with the Central Bank of Nigeria to set up money transfer systems for Nigerians in the diaspora. See Kwaku Arhin-Sam, op. cit.

offs than the longer-term benefits of retaining so much amount of disaffected high and low-skilled persons, who will also put strains on the already weak political, social and economic infrastructures.²⁸ Furthermore, recruitment of its citizens abroad can also ease unemployment pressures as positions vacated by migrants can be occupied by job-seekers.

2.4 Humanitarian Approach to Migration: The Role of Inter-governmental and Non-Governmental Agencies

The humanitarian approach to migration is based on belief in the importance of humanity and the inherent value of human life. It entails the efforts to protect the life and uphold the dignity of the human person through relieving of human suffering. The humanitarian approach is part of the wider scope of development ethics, which arises from a social conscience and sense of responsibility. Humanitarian interventions in migration issues are premised on the claim that protection and safeguarding of migrants as well as provision for them and promoting their interests are both a legal and a moral imperative. Most intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations involved with migration follow a humanitarian approach, which has been institutionalized and enshrined in such human development agendas as the Sustainable Development Goals. They feel driven to respond to the

²⁸ Ibid.

plights of individuals and groups suffering the negative impacts of the uprooting experiences, making commitments to do so on the basis of non-discrimination due to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender or political affiliations.

The stark images of internally displaced people (IDPs) in squalid conditions, the poignant stories of refugees, victims of human-trafficking and returnees, as well as the tragic incidents of migrants stranded in desert routes or perishing at sea, have occupied global social consciousness in recent decades. Foremost migration agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that 2023 recorded the deadliest first quarter of such incidences since 2017, and that by 2nd of October of the same year alone, 2,517 people were accounted as dead or missing in the Central Mediterranean.²⁹ Nigerians account for a good number of irregular migrants who embark on such risky and often tragic journeys.

Other than helping to keep migration on the front burners of global, national and local affairs through policies and advocacy, many international organizations like the IOM,

²⁹International Organization on Migration (IOM), ‘A Decade After the Lampedusa Shipwreck, the Continuing Tragedies Need to End,’ <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press-releases/decade-after-lampedusa-shipwreck-continuing-tragedies-need-end>

the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), as well as a host of local organizations in Nigeria, promptly deploy to disaster zones to provide protection and emergency relief services. Far-reaching capacities have been developed to manage conflict situations and enormous human and material resources are deployed to respond to basic human needs. Such efforts are complemented by conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives as well as rehabilitation, recovery and reintegration processes. Many organizations also provide empowerment program to help migrants rebuilt their lives and futures.

There are organizations that are based outside the national borders of Nigeria that are constantly exploring possibilities and avenues of collaboration with governments at all levels to make migration management more effective. They also seek partnerships with other humanitarian actors like non-governmental organizations, the civil society and even those most directly affected – migrants, refugees and their families – to fulfil their mission.

CHAPTER THREE

PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRATION: THEOLOGY AND PRAXIS

Migration is not only a social reality, but also a spiritual one. Approaching the phenomenon with the eyes of faith necessarily has implications for Christian action. To be able to respond effectively as Christians to the challenges posed by migration today, it is necessary to understand the Scriptural, theological and Christo-historical background of the phenomenon. *Chapter Three* establishes the necessary link between theology and praxis in the apostolate of pastoral care of migration.

3.1 Theological Perspectives on Migration

Migration is both a human and spiritual reality. It is something that relates to God as much as it relates to man. Mobility is a quality embedded in human nature by God's creative power. It seems therefore improbable to escape thinking and talking about God when thinking and talking about human mobility. A theology of migration would be understood as reflection on the nature and action of God in the world in the light of human experience of migration. As theology is always done with faith, so is the migrant ministry undertaken in the eyes of faith – faith in action. This fact expresses a consequential relationship between both, analogous to the relationship between reflection and

action, between faith and good works. The faith-reflection about divine and human mobility is thus the theological foundation of the migrant ministry.

The Old and New Testaments of the Bible are filled with rich images of divine and human mobility. In the Old Testament, God creates the world out of nothing. He does so through a series of movements and thereafter sets creation in a perpetual motion of times and seasons. God is therefore, the first and primordial *Migrant* who reaches out and relates with his creation. The Judeo-Christian faith history records the call of Abraham to move from country to a foreign land, where God promised to make him a great nation and bless him exceedingly (Gen. 12:1-14). Jacob's family moved to Egypt with the same promise and the assurance by God to be with him (Gen. 46:1-7). After their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, the Israelites embark on the great journey to the Promised Land, under the instruction and guidance of God (narrative spread over four books: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Their wandering in the desert and eventual arrival in the Promised Land are significant moments in the history of God's relationship with his chosen people. This relationship comes to a climax with the Incarnation, when God in Christ crosses the divine-human divide to make a home with man. He experienced the painful plight of migrants and refugees through the escape to a foreign land as an infant, through

his homelessness and neediness as an itinerant worker during his ministry and through his death as one unjustly condemned. In *Erga Migrante Caritas Christi*, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People says that “[i]n migrants the Church has always contemplated the image of Christ who said, “I was a stranger and you made me welcome” (*Mt 25:35*). Their condition is, therefore, a challenge to the faith and love of believers, who are called on to heal the evils caused by migration and discover the plan God pursues through it even when caused by obvious injustices.”³⁰

Theological reflection on migration sees images of the Church in the biblical stories of human mobility. The Church is a pilgrim Church, one that is on a journey to the kingdom of God in eternity. This journey is a movement of faith and hope in God’s providence and love, for he is present and acts to guide his people through all the adversities and uncertainties they may experience. The Church exists to care for and lead all men, in their own journeys through time, to God who is the Beginning and the End. Hence, the call of God is the ultimate driving force behind human mobility, rather than the socioeconomic push-and-pull factors. Migration is therefore to be seen as a metaphor for the search for

³⁰ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, Vatican, n. 13.

deeper knowledge of God, for hope for a better life, and a path to salvation.³¹

Theological reflection on migration also dwells on the meaning of human life within the economy of creation and redemption. All human beings have been created in the image and likeness of God, and redeemed in Jesus Christ. Creation and redemption are thus the basis of a relationship of solidarity among all human beings. The created world is given to all for the sustenance of life and enhancement of human dignity. It is God's gift to be shared by all. This presupposes the right to migrate, if the place of birth or abode is no longer safe. Furthermore, the socio-cultural encounter and exchange with peoples of different backgrounds and the integration that happen through migration are not only mutually beneficial, but align with God's plan for human solidarity and communion in a world of disordered political economy, hatred, racism, individualism and fear of the other. It is the mission of the Church to help to realize God's plan.³² This much is attested to by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People: "In

³¹ Daniel Groody (2022), cited by Ilsup Ahn, Migration and Christian Theology, <https://www.ac.uk/Christianity/MigrationandChristianTheology>, 1 February, 2024.

³²See Ikechukwu Anthony Kalu et al., 'The Quest for a Theology of Migration', *Nnadiabube Journal of Religion, Culture & Society*, vol. 1 No 2 (2019).

migration faith discovers once more the universal message of the prophets, who denounce discrimination, oppression, deportation, dispersion and persecution as contrary to God's plan. At the same time they proclaim salvation for all, witnessing even in the chaotic events and contradictions of human history, that God continues to work out his plan of salvation until all things are brought together in Christ (cf. *Eph* 1:10).”³³

3.2 Migrants and Refugees in the Mission of the Church

The Church is missionary in nature, established by Jesus Christ to carry on his mission of bringing fullness of life to man (cf. *Jn.* 10:10). This mission is understood as encompassing the spiritual and temporal dimensions of human existence, for the Christian mission is not only to lead men to eternal salvation, but also to shape the world in which they are now living. The inseparability of the spiritual and temporal concerns of man in relation to the mission of the Church is affirmed by Pope Paul VI thus: “between the Gospel ... and human advancement there are in fact profound links. These include links of an anthropological order, because the man who is to be evangelized is not an abstract being but one subject to social and economic questions.”³⁴ This is the basis of the

³³ Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, op. cit. N. 13.

³⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Apostolic Exhortation), AAS 68 (1976) 9-6, n. 31.

Christian socio-ethical principle of integral human development.

The integral nature of the mission of the Church means that it is directed at all human beings, everywhere and at all times. However, the poor and the disadvantaged occupy a special place in this mission. Christian tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment narrated in the Gospel of Matthew (25:31-46) and therefore takes the needs of the poor and vulnerable seriously. Indeed, promoting the cause of the poor and vulnerable is an indispensable aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ because he so intimately identified himself with them.³⁵

Rediscovery in recent times of the Church's mission to the poor, the needy and vulnerable is related to the creation in 2017 of the "super" Dicastery for Promoting of Integral Human Development. The Dicastery is to take responsibility on issues regarding all those in need, including the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and unemployed, those suffering all forms of slavery and torture as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, including migrants and refugees.³⁶

³⁵ Kevin E. McKenna, *A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching*, Notre Dame-Indiana: Ave Maria 2002, p.57.

³⁶ Francis I, 'Statutes of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development' (*motu proprio*), Vatican, n. 3.

3.3 Historical Antecedents of Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees

The Church identifies intimately with migrants, previously called itinerant peoples, and sees remedying their plight as an integral aspect of her mission. This mission entails looking after them “with special care and unremitting aid, [seeking to preserve] intact in them the Faith of their fathers and a way of life confirm in moral law care.”³⁷

The concern of the Church with migrants goes a long way back, as we find in documents dating back to the patristic and mediaeval eras. Reviewing the engagement of the Church for migrants in the distant past, Pius XII noted that there should be serious and grave anxiety and anguish if the Church’s spiritual care was to be lacking in the past and present.³⁸ He also recalls that as Bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine, while advocating material support, insistently urged his priests not leave their displaced flock without pastoral care, especially regarding administration of the sacraments.³⁹ Origen, St. John Chrysostom and St. Ambrose of Milan are equally notable for their solicitude and commitment to the cause of migrants. Origen urged Christians to be active in welcoming the stranger and proactive in seeking out and helping those in need.

³⁷Pius XII, *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* (Apostolic Constitution), Vatican, 1952, n. 13.

³⁸*Ibid.*, n. 4.

³⁹*Ibid.*

The missionary path of caring for migrants has continued through the history of the Church. In the periods of the barbarian invasion, Christian civilization in the Roman Empire was under external pressures through the continuous droves of immigrants from central and northern Europe, but also some parts of Asia. The Church demonstrated her pastoral solicitude through the efforts of the clergy who “sought to bring newcomers to the true Faith and to introduce them into the social customs of [...] new countries. They also facilitated the assimilation of the uncultured invaders whom they introduced both to the Christian religion and to a new culture.”⁴⁰ The migrant ministry continued through the companionship of the clergy, religious congregations and lay apostolic associations to pilgrims as well as explorers who discovered new places and peoples during medieval times.⁴¹

With the unprecedented level of socioeconomic and political changes experienced from around the end of the 19th century, the Church began to issue magisterial documents, which have helped to shape the migrant ministry up to the present day. In 1888, Pope Leo XIII set the tone by issuing the letter *Quam aerumnosa* (“How sad”) in 1888, where he authorized the constitution of national parishes, societies and groups of priests to aid

⁴⁰ Ibid., n.8.

⁴¹Ibid., n. 10

immigrants. The plight of immigrants was part of the “social question” that was addressed by *Rerum Novarum*, which is considered the modern origin of the social teaching of the Church.

Continuing the tradition of magisterial teaching and action, Pope Pius X underlined the role of dioceses of origin in the care of migrants while Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI emphasized the complementary responsibility of the local church to welcome, to support and help to integrate them. Pope Benedict XV established the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 1914 as an occasion to draw the attention of the whole Church and the world to the plight of migrants.

With the terrible experience and effects of World II, such as massive deportations and waves of refugees, Pope Pius XII issued *Familia Exul* in 1952 to reaffirm the commitment of the Church to the migrant ministry, restating especially the right of people to migrate in order to save their lives and those of their families, while seeking a dignified existence. He founded the Superior Council for Emigrants and the General Secretariat for the Direction of the Apostolatus Maris in 1952, while Pope Paul VI founded the International Secretariat for the Direction of the Apostolatus Nomadum in 1965.

In 1970, Pope Paul VI condensed all sectors dealing with human mobility into the Pontifical Commission for the

Spiritual Care of Migrants and Itinerants. This preceded the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People established by Pope John Paul in 1988 and dedicated to the spiritual welfare of migrant and itinerant people. The commission was itself replaced in 2017 by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development established by the Pope Francis.

3.4 The Migrant Ministry in the Contemporary Era

The engagement of the Church for migrants and ministry is one of the hallmarks of the pontificate of Pope Francis. Through his words and actions, he has helped to bring the plight of migrants and refugees around the world more forcefully into global focus. Emphasizing the mercy and justice of God, the Holy Father has shown great ability to empathize with people who experience difficulties while on the move. He has also taught a world experiencing unprecedented human mobility that “migration is one of the phenomena that best represents and explains the identity and evolution of humanity and Christianity from its origins to the present day.”⁴²

In creating the Migrants and Refugees Section in the Dicastery for Promoting of Integral Human Development,

⁴² <https://jrseurope.org/en/news/the-12-main-documents-of-the-magisterium-of-the-church-on-human-mobility/>.

Pope Francis has set the direction for the migrant ministry in the contemporary era. Under his guidance and supervision, the Office is to support the Church in accompanying four fundamental phases of human migration: departure, transit, arrival of newcomers, and eventually, return. The Migrants and Refugees Section envisions a world “where migration will be a matter of choice, with all people assured the possibility of enjoying a dignified and fulfilling life in their own country, in accordance with the Lord's plan for humankind.”⁴³

To progressively realize this vision, the Catholic Church has “repeatedly expressed the will to work together with the international community to promote and adopt measures to protect the dignity, rights and freedoms of all persons on the move, including labour migrants”⁴⁴ who constitute the largest numbers of migrants in the world. In this regard, the Holy See prepared the *Twenty Action Points for the Global Compacts*, as a contribution to the United Nations process to produce the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (GCM). The *Twenty Points* are grouped under four headings or verbs, namely: (i) to welcome, (ii) to protect, (iii) to promote and (iv) to integrate. The verbs formed the essence of the Holy

⁴³ Fr. Fabio Baggio, “The Commitment of the Vatican's Migrants & Refugees Section to Labor Migrants”, <https://icmc.net/future-of-work/report/03-vatican-section/>.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Father's message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018 as proposals for a comprehensive response by Christians and indeed, all peoples, to the needs of migrants and refugees all over the world.⁴⁵ The verbs are summarized as follows:

i. To welcome

This entails changing prevailing negative or unfavourable perceptions about migrants and refugees; receiving them and finding ways to improve relations with them, for example, by removing language barriers and enhancing communication to make them feel at home.

ii. To protect

This entails encouraging formation or membership of associations and solidarity groups that can provide coverage and security for migrants and refugees against violence, abuse and exploitation. It also involves strengthening agencies and institutions that support them, and engaging in advocacy for them, especially in safeguarding their human rights.

iii. To promote

This has to do with promoting and supporting those actions whose main goal is the integral development of migrants and refugees, as well as the communities that

⁴⁵Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018
(14 January 2018)

receive them. It entails enhancing the human capacity of migrants and refugees to work for their own personal good and that of their host communities.

iv. To integrate

Integration refers to the reciprocal process through which residents and migrants and refugees engage in mutual and beneficial cultural exchange. This reciprocal process is driven by open and sincere interaction, as well as participation, in which both parties are prepared to learn from and enrich each other.

3.5 Pastoral Planning and Implementation of Programmes and Projects in the Migration Ministry

To domesticate the norms and principles propounded by Pope Francis, the Migrants and Refugees Section offers a wide variety of courses for actions, giving national and diocesan offices the chance to discern what is priority and necessity for them in operational terms. This means that such actions must be carried out in each context, depending on the actual conditions, possibilities and resources available in each local church.

Pastoral planning and action are tools for intervention in issues concerning migrants and refugees. They are also an opportunity for participation by several actors in the mission of the Church on the basis of subsidiarity and co-

responsibility. An effective migrant ministry therefore has to be integrated at the national, diocesan, and parish levels. This means that the national office, all the dioceses and parishes, religious congregations, aid (humanitarian and relief) agencies as well as volunteers and individual Christians are to be encouraged to be involved and work together, in deeds and prayers, to achieve a common goal, namely, meeting the spiritual and material needs of migrants and refugees in a country.

Confronting the phenomenon of migration necessarily requires studying and understanding it, especially from the different social scientific perspectives. Knowledge gained from observation, research and analysis helps to shape the missionary vision that can be actualized through concrete action plans. Effective implementation of plans then brings about desirable transformations in the lives of migrants and refugees and the pastoral agents themselves. The migrant ministry is therefore a sequence of commitments, from planning to implementation.

Planning and implementing an effective migrant ministry are two stages of a single process, which follows the “see, judge and act” model often adopted in Catholic social teaching and action. These three stages are discussed in the following section as (i) knowing the reality, (ii) defining a pastoral plan and (iii) organizing programmes and activities.

(i) Knowing the reality

It is necessary to know the socio-cultural context and environment in which one plans to act, due to the complexity and intertwining of different histories, sensitivities, cultures, languages, traditions, values, and communication codes. Contexts and environments can have significant negative or positive impact on pastoral work.⁴⁶ Knowing the contexts and environments will lead to the identification of the spiritual and material needs of those to be cared for. Pastoral care givers must avoid the temptation of rushing to give an immediate response to needs that seem apparent. It is important to give sufficient time to analyze the reality in the context of migration, including the religious, psychological, cultural, socioeconomic and political factors.

In this regard, national, diocesan or local offices can set up their own specific research teams made up of researchers from different disciplines of the social sciences. Such teams will help with quantitative and qualitative knowledge as well as analysis of the migratory phenomenon.⁴⁷ Knowing the reality can also happen through keeping up with the news and trends in the country. Pastoral agents must update themselves by reading newspapers, books, researches and studies

⁴⁶ The Migrants and Refugees Section, <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Linee-guida-EN-A5.pdf>, p. 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

conducted by national and international bodies, as well as having interaction and interviews with migrants, refugees and foreigners in general to hear their stories and know their needs.⁴⁸

A fair assessment by pastoral agents within their locality, which would entail the mapping or profiling of the population of migrants and / or members of their families in their parish / diocese / country, is necessary. This should be done in consultation with the main beneficiaries of the action. Since they are in the best position to identify their own needs. The output of this first phase should lead to the classification and prioritization of the pastoral challenges resulting from the assessment of the migration reality.

In addition, pastoral agents should continually study the historical tradition of the Church's pastoral care of migrants and refugees at all levels, including the local, diocesan, national and universal levels. The Magisterial documents related to human mobility provide good intellectual as well as practical orientation for carrying out the migrant ministry.

⁴⁸ Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 'Formation and Training Manual', <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SACBC-FORMATION-AND-TRAINING-MANUAL.pdf>, p. 127.

ii. Defining the Pastoral Vision

Beyond collation and processing of data and statistics, there is need to understand the more intangible aspects of the migration phenomenon. Through evangelical discernment, pastoral care of migration should detect the challenges as well as the opportunities presented by the phenomenon and channel them to the promotion of the overall mission of the Church. Based on the basic tenets of Christian spirituality, namely love of God and love of neighbour, a pastoral vision for the migrant ministry should be designed in a manner that addresses both immediate and long-term spiritual and physical needs of individual migrants and their host communities as well as the pastoral agents involved in providing care.

Through the migrant ministry, the Church envisions a world where the sufferings of migrants and refugees of all categories are minimized, their human dignity upheld and their well-being promoted. The Church also envisions the building of futures with migrants and refugees by host communities in the context of human solidarity and the common good. These two visions are the overarching goals and objectives that should inform any pastoral activity relating to migration.

By facilitating, creating and promoting welcoming and hospitable communities, societies can build great futures for themselves and the migrants and refugees they receive. Building the future with migrants and refugees

entails recognising the past contributions of migrants and refugees to host communities as well as the potential for enrichment that new migrants and refugees possess. In practical terms, it requires including them in the scheme of things, putting them at the centre and giving the chance to unleash their potentials, rather than excluding them or putting them on the fringes.⁴⁹

This vision of the migrant ministry aligns perfectly with the idea of building or becoming a Synodal Church – one that is not laid back but rather reaches out to people, especially those who are at the margin and most vulnerable.⁵⁰ The Synodal Church is also one that seeks opportunities to grow in humanity by promoting the encounter of cultures, races and peoples, leading to the “construction of societies that are culturally diverse, able to live out communion in diversity, which is the objective plan of God for humanity.”⁵¹

iii. Organizing and Structuring Activities

Organizing and structuring activities for the migrant ministry is concerned with practicalities. It entails drawing action plans for short, medium and long-term timeframes, taking into account the prospects and

⁴⁹ Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2022. (25 September 2022).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

constraints determined by available human and material resources. To properly ascertain what is possible, a SWOT analysis (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*) can be done with the help of professionals. This methodology is particularly effective because it helps to understand the internal as well as external characteristics of the institution or context under analysis.⁵²

In drafting activities in the pastoral plan, the following points⁵³ should be taken into consideration:

- The nature of the activity should be properly and clearly described or articulated, taking particular note of the context of reference
- The specific needs that the activity intends address as a response should be clearly stated
- The activity should correspond to the objectives or pastoral vision of the Church
- The activity should include results that are achievable
- The results of the activity should be measurable

⁵² The Migrants and Refugees Section, <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Linee-guida-EN-A5.pdf>, p. 20.

⁵³ Based on the outline of Sr. Maria de Lurdes Lodi Rissini, MSCS in Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 'Formation and Training Manual', op. cit. 129.

- The activity should be scheduled within a timeframe of the action (e.g. 6, 12 months), indicating the envisioned beginning and end of the activity
- The human resources necessary for the implementation of the activity should be identified, with roles and responsibilities clearly stated.
- The structures necessary for the implementation of the activity should be identified, with a distinction made between already existing ones and those to be established
- The possible partners to help carry out the activity should be mentioned, with prior contact and agreement secured
- The financial cost of the activity should be elaborated in a budget

iv. The implementation of the Pastoral Plan

The implementation of activities is the actualization of the pastoral planning exercise. Implementation follows certain strategies, that is, approaches or methods which are adopted as policy while undertaking different activities. Some of these include gender-sensitivity, inclusiveness, integrity, non-discrimination on the basis of tribe, race, religion or political persuasion.

Implementation also includes ongoing assessments and updates using performance and verifiable indicators to ascertain to what extent the outputs of the activity being carried out are meeting the declared objectives, and how the adopted strategies have been producing beneficial results. The process of implementation ends with evaluation, which itself can be the basis for drawing a new or the next pastoral plan⁵⁴ so as to ensure sustainability.

Finally, any good pastoral initiatives at the Diocesan level should get the approval of the Bishop. From the onset, the Diocesan Coordinator of pastoral care should inform the Bishop about any need identified for pastoral intervention, followed by the presentation of the plan when it has been developed. The Bishop should also be regularly updated and provided with relevant information and reports during the implementation process as well as at the end of the exercise.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 131.

CHAPTER FOUR

PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

Rightly does the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria observe at the 3rd National Pastoral Congress in 2022 that “[t]he Catholic Church has a role to play in the obviously contested Nigerian public space (economy, politics, health, education, governance, etc). This role cannot be fulfilled by chance but by deliberate assertion with a civil and determined approach.”⁵⁵ Indeed, there are many social problems in Nigeria today that require the continuous, concerted and determined engagement of the Church, for the good of the human person and the society.

The Church is to continue her mission despite, and because of the socioeconomic and political crises currently being experienced in Nigeria, developing resilience by God’s grace, strong in hope and trust. The unprecedented level of internal and external migration, a direct result of such crises, is one of such problems requiring the engagement of the Church. *Chapter Four* presents migration as a pastoral challenge for the Church

⁵⁵Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, ACTA for 3rd National Pastoral Congress, 2022, p. 292.

in Nigeria. Taking up this challenge is an imperative, requiring renewed commitment and creative initiative.

4.1 Migration Ministry in Nigeria: A New Mission Territory

The dire existential situation of large numbers of migrants and refugees in and from Nigeria presents the Church with a new pastoral challenge as well as an opportunity to fulfil her mission on earth. In a sense, pastoral care of migration can be regarded a new mission territory for the Church in Nigeria. This is because it is a commitment that requires an increased sense of Christian charity, hospitality and solidarity, expressed in concern and action for those experiencing hardships and suffering while moving within or in transit from the country or returning to it. This includes those fleeing conflicts or persecutions, those in situations of humanitarian emergencies, those victimized by human trafficking, as well as those that are vulnerable to exploitation and harassment due to irregular migrant status, gender or state of life, such as youth and children, especially unaccompanied minors, and returnees.

To be sure, the Nigerian Church has been working with different categories of people on the move for a long time. Through her various agencies, initiatives and programs, the Church has provided relief, humanitarian, protection and developmental services in addition to spiritual solicitude for them. The Church has also helped to create awareness about the plight of migrants and refugees in the

country and carried out advocacy on their behalf. In furtherance of the migration apostolate, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria established the Migrants and Refugees Unit at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria in 2023. The Unit is expected to help the Church provide a renewed, more concerted and more visible response to the migration crisis in the country. In organizing, publicising and amplifying the engagement of the Church in the field of migration, the Unit will seek to continue, encourage, expand and thus strengthen the apostolate of pastoral care of migration in Nigeria, using the established labyrinth of ecclesiastical and civil society structures at various levels.

4.2 Thematic Areas of Possible Intervention

The needs of migrants and refugees are often numerous and multi-faceted, depending on their reason for migrating and the situations in their destinations. Such needs range from survival to security, acceptance to (re)integration, empowerment to development. Though distinct, needs are often intertwined, as any one migrant or refugee can have an undetermined number of them at a given time, even without knowing. For the purpose of this work, the range of needs of migrants and refugees has been categorized into (i) spiritual (ii) physical (iii) psychological (iv) socio-cultural and (v) developmental needs. These categories of needs are highlighted in the following section.

i. Spiritual Needs

These are needs pertaining to the spiritual dimension of the human person, including migrants and refugees. Like every other person, the migrant or refugee can be a person of faith who needs to remain in constant relationship with God. As a spiritual entity, preserving and cultivating the faith of people on the move is the greatest priority in the Church's pastoral care. Pope Pius XII narrates the elaborate history of spiritual care for migrants and refugees in *Exsul Familia*, making special mention of the Pilgrims' Halls in the 8th century staffed by priests and clerics of their respective nationalities, who provided for the material and spiritual welfare of their people, especially the sick and the poor.⁵⁶ He enjoined Bishops of cities or dioceses where migrants and refugees arrive to "provide the proper men, who will celebrate the Liturgical Functions according to their rites and languages [because] ... the sacred ministry can be carried on more effectively among strangers and pilgrims if it is exercised by priests of their own nationality or at least who speak their language."⁵⁷

By organizing prayers, devotions, liturgical services, administering the Sacraments of the Church, providing sacramentals and instructing people, the Church's pastors, together with other pastoral agents, help migrants and

⁵⁶Pius XII, *Exsul Familia*, op. cit., n. 14

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 15.

refugees deal with the difficult experiences of their journeys through the eyes of faith. Arriving in foreign lands, migrants and refugees often see the Church as a haven, a place of welcome, refuge and safety. Victims of smuggling and trafficking who may be spiritually bonded by having sworn to charms and made fetish covenants often look to the Church for liberation and protection from feared spiritual reprisals. Regular visitations by pastoral agents and Church members to camps, events and places where migrants and refugees stay or come gather will reassure them of the Church's concern and closeness to them.

ii. Physical Needs

Physical needs are the most obvious and often the most urgent material requirements that enable people on the move to survive and sustain their lives. An overwhelming number of migrants and refugees are people fleeing from persecution, local conflicts and wars or are experiencing displacements due to adverse climatic conditions like floods and famines. Many of them have embarked on long tortuous journeys to get to their current destinations or to return home. For such, safety and survival are the primary objectives, followed by livelihood assistance. Intervention by the Church and other humanitarian and relief agencies would include the following:

- providing / organizing reception for migrants / returnees / victims of human trafficking

- providing protection for the vulnerable – women and children / minors
- providing food
- providing water
- providing clothing
- providing shelters / accommodation
- providing health and hygiene support
- contact tracing
- helping with resettlement

iii. Psychological Needs

Many migrants and refugees have experienced trauma and loss in the course of their journey. The uprooting experience from forced migration is often difficult to process. Being forced to flee means leaving behind the home, life and people, the social and physical environments that people have known (almost) all their lives, at times without hope of return. This brings about a profoundly painful sense of loss and despair, as relationships are severed, life's enterprise and investments lost. Some migrants and refugees may have barely escaped with their lives; others may have witnessed the death of their children, spouses, parents, relatives and friends. Then there are those who struggle with the unending feeling of failure or loss, having been deceived into believing and staking everything on non-existent jobs and development opportunities. There are also those who are traumatized by sexual exploitation, those whose sense of

self-worth and self-esteem have been destroyed by dehumanizing acts of physical assault or being sold and bought as slaves.

The internal and external trauma of past experience by migrants and refugees often leads to such acute psychological malaises as deep-seated fear, numbness, suicidal tendencies or the survivor's regret. Providing psycho-personal support such as listening, counselling, solidarity can help to restore emotional stability, bring consolation and help victims or survivors to process their experiences better. They can also bring about warmth and friendship as well as a sense of connection, reconnection or hope, and the feeling of being loved or cared for or being at home. All these are essential in helping migrants and refugees settle down in their new environments and embarking on the process of rebuilding their lives.

iv. Socio-cultural Needs

Needs pertaining the socio-cultural dimensions of migrants and refugees become more pronounced when the immediate personal needs of survival and protection have been reasonably met. Starting all over in a new environment, migrants and refugees feel the need for social and cultural connections. Culture shock often results; and the need to learn a new language and new ways of life become more urgent. Lack of adequate knowledge of or about the new environment can deepen the sense of loneliness and isolation.

Connecting with others who have the same or similar socio-cultural background helps migrants and refugees to accelerate their adaption and integration. It also helps them to preserve their identity and ethnic heritage, minimizing the sense of being “lost” in a foreign land. The Church can be the place of such socio-cultural connection. Arranging meetings of ethnic groups or nationalities among migrants and refugees will help to promote the sense of belongingness within the Church, where no one is stranger, and consolidate social cohesion in the community. The Church can also accompany migrants who return home through family tracing, reunification and reintegration processes as well as making burial arrangements for the bereaved persons and helping to have them returned to their places of origin.

Meeting socio-cultural needs also pertains to helping migrants and refugees secure the range of social, economic and political rights in the country of destination. This is the thrust of advocacy. It includes raising awareness about the plights of migrants and refugees and demanding necessary administrative action around their rights and privileges. It also includes networking with agencies that sensitize the people on all anti-human activities and enlighten them about the phenomenon of migration in general. Using her vast and penetrative community networks and sundry resources, the Church can make a great impact through the following activities:

- Collection of information, lobbying for migrants' rights and helping with legal representation (e.g for prisoners, detainees)
- Collaboration with other organizations and embassies to facilitate exit strategies, repatriations and voluntary returns
- Organizing information sessions about receiving country for arriving migrants and destination countries for intending migrants as well the general public
- Embarking on school visits and programs to proactively reach potential migrants / victims of human trafficking, exploitation and smuggling
- Conducting media (radio / TV program) sessions on migration trends within and outside the country
- Producing and distributing physical or digital information leaflets, flyers, skits and jingles on safe and dangerous migration practices
- Researching, writing and publishing materials (in the Church / secular periodic newspapers) to popularize the cause of migrants
- Organizing conferences, seminars and training workshops on migration and related issues
- Establishing a desk for provide consultation, direction and referrals for intending returnees

v. Development Needs

Together with the quest for safety, economic issues are the biggest apparent causes of migration. Migrants and refugees who leave or are forced to leave their homelands are often trying to overcome the biting effects of poverty and hoping to secure a better life and future for themselves and those that are dear to them. Typically, poverty alleviation or reduction for migrants is a process that begins with intervention, which is a programme designed to provide immediate or intermediate emergency support to ameliorate the adverse effects of relocation, displacement or failed migration. Once reasonably settled, migrants and refugees should be assisted to (re)integrate into the productive life of the society and move on, through gainful employment or entrepreneurship, to economic self-reliance. Gainful employment and entrepreneurship are veritable ways of realizing the hope of economic development and securing the future.

However, migrants often face a lot of obstacles in the labour market or find difficulties accessing economic opportunities due to a number of factors, including non-recognition of their professional qualifications, missing documents, lack of documentation, shortcomings in training and skills and the language barrier.

As a stakeholder and developmental partner, the Church can collaborate with relevant state and non-state players to facilities support for migrants and refugees in gaining

access to the labour market. While maintaining her independence, vision and mission she should key into the policy framework, that is, the mechanisms, processes, policies and legislation (at local, national, regional and international levels) that are relevant to intervention, poverty alleviation, economic empowerment, capacity-building and development in the country where migrants and refugees are to be supported.

Education is key to economic and social development. The Church can facilitate formal and informal education for migrants and refugees and their children. Organizing language classes, assisting with school enrolment, providing school stationery, school uniforms, paying school fees, e.t.c, are laudable interventions that are critical in the economic and social empowerment process. Offering vocational orientations will also help the young and those that are eligible to prepare for the world of work in their new environment.

Organizing and providing vocational training in different areas of engagement can provide migrants and refugees with great opportunities for economic empowerment and self-reliance. The Church can complete the process of empowerment by helping migrants and refugees with job placements in her facilities and elsewhere, providing them with credit facilities, tools and equipment for them to start small businesses and enterprises.

4.3 The Role of Pastoral Agents

Pastoral agents are the instruments through which the Church delivers pastoral care. The first agents of the pastoral ministry of migration are the pastors of the Church to whom the Lord Jesus entrusted his flock. Throughout history, the hierarchy of the Church has engaged people in the consecrated life as well as those in lay states to cater for those on the move. At the level of the local Church, the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria operates a national office for migration, namely the Migrants and Refugees Unit at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. It is headed by the Bishop Chairman who oversees the Church's response to the issues of migration in the country. The Unit animates and supports the activities of other pastoral agents around the country, chief among them, the coordinators of Diocesan migrants and refugee units. The roles of diocesan coordinators⁵⁸ are outlined below:

- i. To co-ordinate the affairs of migrants and refugees within the diocese.
- ii. To facilitate, create and promote a welcoming and hospitable environment for migrants and refugees (through visits, recognition in gatherings,

⁵⁸ As articulated by Sr. Maria de Lurdes Lodi Rissini, MSCS, <https://www.worldwidemagazine.org/vol-33-no-2/pastoral-care-of-migrants-welcome-protect-promote-and-integrate/>

featuring in life of Diocese) with the assistance of the Bishop, clergy, religious and lay faithful in the diocese. *Organizing an annual meeting or audience of the Bishop, clergy, religious and lay faithful with all immigrants in the diocese is recommended*

- iii. To help migrants to cultivate their faith, beliefs and cultures through religious and other activities
- iv. To create programmes for awareness and enlightenment about migration and create forums for discussion on issues of concern to both migrants and the local communities
- v. To liaise and collaborate with the Church and non-Church actors (Governmental and NGO groups) that are involved in humanitarian affairs, particularly those related to migration
- vi. To plan and adopt best practices concerning the assistance given to migrants and refugees
- vii. To facilitate the integration of migrants into the local community, such as through provision of language lessons, social or sporting activities
- viii. To help to provide advocacy services and support for migrants and refugees in their relation with the State.

4.3.1 Formation of Agents in the Pastoral Care of Human Mobility

As the phenomenon on migration has become more complicated, so has the need increased for proper formation and training of those involved in carrying out the apostolate of pastoral care for migrants and refugees on behalf of the Church. Pastoral agents carry out specialized functions; hence they have to be properly capacitated for their engagements. Formation and training for pastoral agents entails proper awareness of their roles and responsibilities in addressing the specific needs of people on the move. Through a combination of pastoral formation and professional training, pastoral agents should be able to integrate the key principles of the Church's social teachings with global humanitarian norms and principles such as those of safeguarding, protection and inclusivity, in providing for relief, rehabilitation, (re)integration and empowerment.

Pastoral agents of migration also require certain personal dispositions and profiles, such as availability, patience, empathy, communicability, creativity, confidence, honesty and humility. In planning and engaging people for the migrant ministry, only individuals who have strong passion and the right dispositions to work and / or experience working in the field of pastoral care should be identified and selected. They should then be formed through specialized studies in related sciences so they will become more knowledgeable about human mobility and effective resource persons in issues related to migration.

Formation and training for pastoral agents is to be an ongoing process. They must continue to be upgraded through education and taking advantage of professional development opportunities to ensure that they stay updated on best practices and emerging trends in the field of migration.⁵⁹ Formation and trainings can also happen with hands-on exercises and practical experience through internships or volunteer programmes with organizations that are involved in migration interventions. Experienced pastoral care providers who can serve as mentors and resource persons for newly trained agents can also provide invaluable knowledge and guide.⁶⁰

4.3.2 The Importance of Pastoral Collaboration and Networking in the Migration Ministry

Collaboration refers to two or more people working together to create or achieve similar or shared goals. It entails the pooling of resources by stakeholders to solve problems, which cannot be effectively solved individually.⁶¹ Collaboration has become more relevant for public, private sectors and third-sector organizations in recent times. It can happen within an organization or between organizations, for example, among Church partners or between Church and non-Church partners.⁶²

⁵⁹ Migrants and Refugees Section, <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Linee-guida-EN-A5.pdf>, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Francisca Agho, unpublished doctoral thesis.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Networking is an aspect of collaboration where there is exchange of information for mutual benefit between partners for the achievement of shared visions and goals as well as the common good. Both collaboration and networking are closely related to the concepts of coordination and cooperation, which have to do with sharing resources and enhancing the capacity of one another for mutual benefit.

A comprehensive and effective response to the issues around migration will normally be beyond the capacity of any single agency. Multiple actors provide different perspectives, whether they are overlapping, complementary or divergent. However, living in an adversarial and competitive world often creates the tendency for people to want out-do others and even undermine their efforts in the hope of gaining or maximizing their advantage. Opportunities to collaborate in overcoming evil and achieving the good can be and have often been squandered by unhealthy and unnecessary rivalry among pastoral agents.⁶³

Pastoral care of migration is necessarily a collaborative ministry, one that is based on the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and the commitment to work towards the common good. A collaborative approach is always best, since it makes use of the different capacities and expertise

⁶³ Ibid.

that may be available. The complexity of issues relating to migration makes collaboration and networking not only beneficial but inevitable. Whether within and outside the ecclesiastical circle, not much can be achieved in the field of migration today without networking. Pastoral agents and agencies of the Church at all levels must recognize their interdependence, form partnerships, develop synergy and cooperate with one another to carry out an effective ministry in the field of migration. National offices, diocesan offices, parishes and religious communities of consecrated men and women must be working in tandem to carry out the Church's mandate of pastoral care for migrants and refugees. Collaboration also includes working with the leaders, chaplains and coordinators of different ethnic or migrants groups and associations present in the diocesan territories, to promote inclusiveness and integration.

Furthermore, pastoral collaboration should entail recognition of the achievements of the trail-blazers and the commitment of the current actors, including religious and lay groups and movements, in the field of pastoral ministry of migration. Although the migration ministry is seen as a new mission territory, the "new-comers" must acknowledge the experience and expertise gained from previous engagements by older pastoral agents, and realize how much more they can learn and gain from mentorship.

Being increasingly aware of the mutual dependence in their attempt to meet up with their stated goals, Church actors or pastoral agents must also continue to seek acceptable ways of collaborating and networking with non-Church actors. This can happen through joint initiatives and programmes that harness partners' services, expertise and resources for the promotion of the cause of migrants and refugees. Non-Church agencies that can be collaborated and networked with include:

- i. Representatives and pastors of Christian migrants belonging to other denominations.
- ii. Religious leaders of migrants belonging to other religions
- iii. Associations and organized groups from civil society that deal with human mobility by offering various services: legal assistance, health-care, reception centres, listening and job-search centres, etc.
- iv. Representatives of the media, to promote a correct and humane image of migrants in public opinion
- v. Institutions promoting the development of laws and public strategies, in line with the four cardinal verbs of the migration pastoral care, namely to welcome, to protect, to promote, to integrate).

However, the pastoral agents must always maintain a critical distance to them

- vi. Representatives of businesses and the world of work, in order to facilitate the acquisition of employment by people with a migration or uprooting experience;
- vii. The world of education and universities (research)⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Migrants and Refugees Section, <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Linee-guida-EN-A5.pdf>, pp. 14-16.

SPIRITUAL ADVOCACY FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The Migration Crisis Today

There are hundreds of millions of people on the move worldwide. Most of these have been forcibly displaced by wars, communal conflicts, natural or environmental disasters. Others have been compelled by the unbearable impacts of economic difficulties and sufferings – poverty, joblessness, hopelessness, to leave their homes and embark on dangerous and risky journeys through forests, deserts and on the seas. Still others have been deceived and trafficked for exploitation or sold into slavery.

These people are real human beings, our brothers and sisters with whom we share common humanity. Let us take a moment to quieten our hearts and minds and reflect on the difficult and terrible conditions that these migrants and refugees find themselves in.

Biblical experiences and reflections on migration

Genesis 1:26: On the sixth day God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

This has implications for the dehumanization of migrants and refugees. They are human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, *imago Dei*. Yet they are often referred to as illegal or treated as objects or commodities.

Genesis 12:1-3: The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

God set Abraham on the journey, promising to be with him through it. Abraham was blessed in a foreign land. This tells the story of many migrants whom God has blessed abroad, far away from their homelands. Also, migrants are often God-sent to their host communities, helping to bring about great material and spiritual development.

In the **Book of Exodus**, we find the story of the movement of the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. The Exodus was an escape, a struggle for freedom. This connects with the stories of migrants who have left their home lands in search for freedom and peace. In their wandering in the wilderness for forty years, the Israelites endured homelessness, harsh climatic conditions, thirst,

hunger, sickness and death – just like many migrants today.

In **Matthew 2:13-18**, we find the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt to escape the murderous wrath of Herod. Pope Pius XII interprets the flight of the Holy Family of Nazareth as the archetype of every refugee family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, living in exile in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king mirror for all times and all places, the models of every migrant, alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land, his beloved parents and relatives, his close friends, and to seek solace in a foreign land.

A Prayer for Migrants and Refugees

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Lord Jesus, you understand what it feels like to be a foreigner, to be unwelcomed, to be homeless, to be scorned. We entrust to you all those who have left their homelands, enduring fear, uncertainty and humiliation, in order to reach a place of safety and hope.

You have called us to demonstrate solidarity with our sisters and brothers on the move around the world, welcoming the stranger and helping the needy. Open our minds that we may better understand the plight of those

who have been forced to migrate or flee their homes. Open our hearts that we may be moved to compassion and action to support those in search of safety and opportunity. Help us to welcome into our hearts and communities all who are displaced from their homes, that we may encounter you in them.

We pray for all migrants and refugees, that they find safety, belonging and love in their new homes, and the strength and opportunity to begin again. In caring for them may we seek a world where none are forced to leave their home and where all can live in freedom, dignity and peace. May we share with them the blessings we have received from your hand, and recognize that together, as one human family, we are all migrants, journeying in hope to you, our true home, where every tear will be wiped away, where we will be at peace and safe in your embrace.

We pray to you for all the men, women and children who have died after leaving their homelands in search of a better life. Though many of their graves bear no name, to you each one is known, loved and cherished. May we never forget them, but honour their sacrifice with deeds more than words.

Amen.

Our Father ... ; Hail Mary ...; Glory be ...

