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INTERNAL MIGRATION IN CAMEROON: *Constraint for or driver of urban and health development?*

The present study addresses the problem of the **interaction between internal migration, the urbanization crisis and health precariousness in Cameroon urban spaces**. One question emerged: **what is the impact of internal migration on the dynamics of urbanization and urban health in Cameroon?** The main research hypothesis stipulates that internal migration is a factor of the urbanization crisis and of health precariousness in Cameroonian cities. The objective was to carry out a structured analysis of the dialectic of internal migration, unmanaged urbanization and health precariousness surrounding urban areas by identifying the tangible opportunities internal migration offers to sustainable human development.

This structured analysis was done with the aim of **improving the institutional and programmatic framework and influencing the strategic management of internal migration in Cameroon**. A qualimetric method was used following a multidisciplinary and systematic approach. In practice, data were collected using a qualitative approach (direct interview). They were analysed using three complementary techniques: qualitative (content analysis), quantitative (mono and bi-varied analysis) and spatial (cartography).

According to the statistics published by the Central Bureau of Census and Population Studies (CBCPS, 2010), **internal migrants** represent 20.5 per cent of the population of the West, 18.9 per cent of the Central Region, 13.9 per cent of the Far North and and 3.9 per cent of Adamawa.

The present study has revealed **eight types of migration**: labour migration, health migration, educational migration, migration due to social conflict, environmental migration, professional migration (job assignment), forced migration (following the expropriation of land for public purposes) and asylum migration from poverty.

The qualitative analysis of internal migration routes towards urban areas led to **singling out two major dynamics: intraregional and interregional migration**. Each dynamic has **three main migratory movements: village-city migration** (rural exodus), **city-city migration** (inter-urban migration) and **village-city-city migration** (mixed internal migration). The study identified a **predominance (59%) of dynamic interregional urban migration routes**. Analysis of the origin of migrants shows that **26.2 per cent of internal migrants are originally from the West region of Cameroon**.

Urban migration is an undeniable factor of the urbanization crisis in general and, the spontaneous and insalubrious urbanization model that prevails in the surveyed cities. It is a factor of overpopulation, emergence of spontaneous and insalubrious slums and environmental crisis due to the lack of control of the spatial-demographic growth of the surveyed cities. In addition, **methods of land use and urban practices of migrants turn internal migration into a lever for epidemiologic vulnerability** in cities, notably in a context where the urban health system is overloaded due to increasingly important and unmanaged migratory flows.

Nevertheless, the study also found that that **internal migration is one of the main drivers of urban development, given its contributions to the informal sector**. Indeed, 76.4 per cent of internal migrants interviewed work in the informal sector, contributing to **reduced unemployment, income generation and improved living conditions**. The massive displacement of young people at the end of their academic and professional training towards national university megacities promotes the development of more qualified and diversified human capital. In addition to health issues, it was also found that under the same conditions of the general non-qualification of migrants, women integrate faster than men in the socioprofessional

milieu. They may undertake gainful activities and be self-employed. They could equally benefit from support from their partners to initiate an activity.

In this sense, internal migration can be a driver of urban and national economies as well as of human development of migrants themselves. Yet, improved governance of urban migration is necessary to fully take advantage of the opportunities for human development and decrease the related risks.

This study therefore proposes a **Framework for the Proactive Governance of Internal Migration (F-PGIM) in Cameroon**. Its aim is to transform internal migration into a driver of balanced national development and equal and sustainable human development through the **strengthening of institutional capacities, the improvement the programmatic framework and the strategic management of internal migration**.

In practice, seven pioneer recommendations were formulated for implementing the proactive governance of internal migration:

1. The creation of a **national institution for the proactive governance of internal migration** attached to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization in cooperation with several other government ministries;
2. The development of a **legislative and regulatory framework** for proactive governance of internal migration;
3. The outlining of national **geopolitics for the proactive governance of urban migration** implemented by the aforementioned institution;
4. The **Integration of the internal migration phenomenon into the national strategy of poverty reduction** and in any national development planning;

5. The **creation of a National Centre for the integrated monitoring of internal migration**; a related structure of the National Institution of Proactive Governance of Internal Migration based on studies and scientific research in collaboration with universities;
6. The **Contextualized use of the Method of Endogenous Potentialities and Opportunities/ MEPO** (Meva'a Abomo, 2013a) in the operation phase. The MEPO is a procedure for the effective and sustainable resolution of local development issues. It recommends a five-step approach: geostrategic diagnosis, geostrategic planning, feasibility studies, impact assessment and validation of the geostrategic assessment;
7. The **promotion of collaboration and cooperation to promote the exchange** of experiences with States and advanced institutions and organisms in the governance of internal migration.

The results of this study allowed the **development of the F-PGIM, a politically expedient managerial tool that is socially needed, economically feasible and culturally integrated**. A fundamental question emerges in relation to the feasibility of the F-PGIM: if internal migration is an opportunity for both urban and human development at the national level, shouldn't the mobilization of resources to carry out the F-PGIM be considered as a worthy public investment from the Cameroonian State?

Voir l'étude pour consulter les références