



2021

# Lived Experiences of African Women Journalists Covering Labour Migration in Africa

PREPARED BY



This report was published by **African Women in Media (AWiM)** for the African Union Commission as part of the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) and funded by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Organization of Migration (IOM).

### **African Union Commission**

The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999). The main objectives of the OAU were to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity amongst African States; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States and to promote international cooperation.

### **Joint Labour Migration Programme**

The African Union Commission (AUC)-International Labour Organization (ILO)-International Organization for Migration (IOM)-Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration (better known as the Joint Labour Migration Programme or JLMP) in Africa is a long-term joint undertaking between the four organizations, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to implement the 5th Key Priority Area of the Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development adopted by the Assembly of Heads of States and Governments (AU/Assembly/AU/20(XXIV)/Annex 3, January 2015) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2015. Its strategy focuses on intra-African labour migration and supports achievement of the First 2023 Ten Year Plan of the AU's Agenda 2063 and of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **International Labour Organization**

The International Labour Organization was founded in 1919, in the wake of a destructive war, to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice. The ILO became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946. The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

### **International Labour Organization (ILO)**

*4 route des Morillons - CH-1211 Genève 22 -Switzerland*

*Website: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)*

### International Organization for Migration

Established in 1951, the International Organization for Migration is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. With 173 member states, a further 8 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants. IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people. The IOM Constitution recognizes the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development, as well as to the right of freedom of movement.

*17 Route des Morillons*

*1218 Grand-Saconnex*

*Switzerland*

*Website: [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)*

### African Women in Media

African Women in Media (AWiM) is an international nongovernmental organization that aims to positively impact the way media functions in relation to African women. AWiM collaborates with a variety of partners to achieve our vision that 'One day African women will have equal access to representation and opportunities in media industries and media content'. AWiM's activities create opportunities for knowledge exchange, building networks, and economic empowerment of women in media.

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# Foreword

## *Dear Reader,*

The decision to carry out a study on *'Lived Experiences of Labour Migration Journalists in Africa'* was prompted by the need to document the experiences of reporters, editors and other media professionals alike covering labour migration in Africa.

The aim is to bring out the relevance of their roles, the intricacies of their work and the peculiarities of their experiences with the sole aim of creating a dynamic avenue for the development of a wider campaign and a platform that will provide support and capacity building for labour migration journalists in Africa.

For countries in Africa (or any country of the world for that matter), whether it is internal or external, international or transnational, migration is an inevitable occurrence and as such reporting on quality stories concerning migration cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore, it should be significantly featured in mainstream reporting, to bring awareness to crosscutting dimensions of labour migration and the experiences of the journalists bringing these stories to light.

You will discover as you read along the pages of this study that many African labour migration journalists have had to struggle with several issues including discrimination, little to no data, limited training and facilities to carry out their duties, reception of editors to stories relating to migration, limited funding, their mental health, as it affects their individual works. This study touches on these issues and other themes such as gender policies in the workplace, work-life balance for women, all of which borders on labour migration news coverage.

Despite these realities, we hope that relevant stakeholders in governance and decision-making can find this study useful in guiding their choices, decisions and policies pertaining to the journalism and labour migration in Africa.

We thank the participants of this study who bravely shared their stories with us through the questionnaire, focus groups and interviews. We are also indebted to the various networks and associations who shared this questionnaire with their members. We are grateful to the Joint Labour Migration Programme for the generous support in producing this study.

We are grateful to the Joint Labour Migration Programme Priority Project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for the generous support in producing this study.

This research was carried out by **Adebisi Ogunmusire**, a research and training consultant and a change management expert in Nigeria.

# Executive Summary

Labour migration journalism is a unique aspect of the journalism profession that involves gathering and presentation of information and data pertaining to migration. Over the years, more emphasis has been placed on the migrant stories, but not much has been said about the stories and the lived experiences and perceptions of the editors, journalists and other media workers who have been fully engaged in reporting labour migration events. This study sought to shed light on the regular realities of what it is to be a labour migration journalist in Africa.

The study incorporated a mix of an online survey, a focus group discussion and three virtual in-depth interviews. Respondents from countries in the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Central regions of Africa participated in the survey mix. The respondents were a combination of journalists, editors and other media professionals working with a variety of media outlets from countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Uganda and Egypt.

Findings show that 73% of respondents agreed that high unemployment rates are a major cause of labour migration in Africa. Followed by this is the search for better pay, which a 23% consensus of respondents also agreed upon. About 1.9% of respondents blame the rampant nature of labour migration in Africa on cultural hegemony. When speaking on the representation of Africa in terms of labour migration, indications are that 73% believed that Africa has not been portrayed well. Contrary to this stance are the opinions of 17% of respondents who felt that Africa is well portrayed.

Journalists also shared the challenges of having limited access to data and funding, little remuneration, discrimination, unreliable sources and non-receptiveness of their editors.

This study makes several recommendations, key of which is for media organizations to put in place policies that safeguard and protect journalists covering migration topics, from harm. It also recognizes the need for work/ life balance for journalists in labour migration including legal support for those experiencing physical abuse and attacks in line of their duties. Better pay and work environments for migration journalists and more collaborations between national, international and regional journalism federations and/or organizations. More job opportunities for women in labour migration, workshops and seminars in the use of data-handling software and applications, should be encouraged. Considering how delicate labour migration journalism can be, trainings in safety and security will prove useful.

Conclusively, access to resource hubs and updated databases in migration studies and research data will go a long way to help labour migration journalists and encourage up and coming ones to harness and make better use of their skills and acquire new knowledge.

# Operational Definition of Terms & Acronyms

**Labour Migration:** all international migrants who are currently employed or unemployed and seeking employment in their present country of residence (International Labour Organization, 2015)

**ILO:** International Labour Organization

**IOM:** International Organization for Migration

**GCIM:** Global Commission on International Migration

**3Ds:** Development, Demography and Democracy, the driving forces of international migration (Global Commission on International Migration)

**Women:** Adult female human being. In this study, women and female will be used interchangeably.

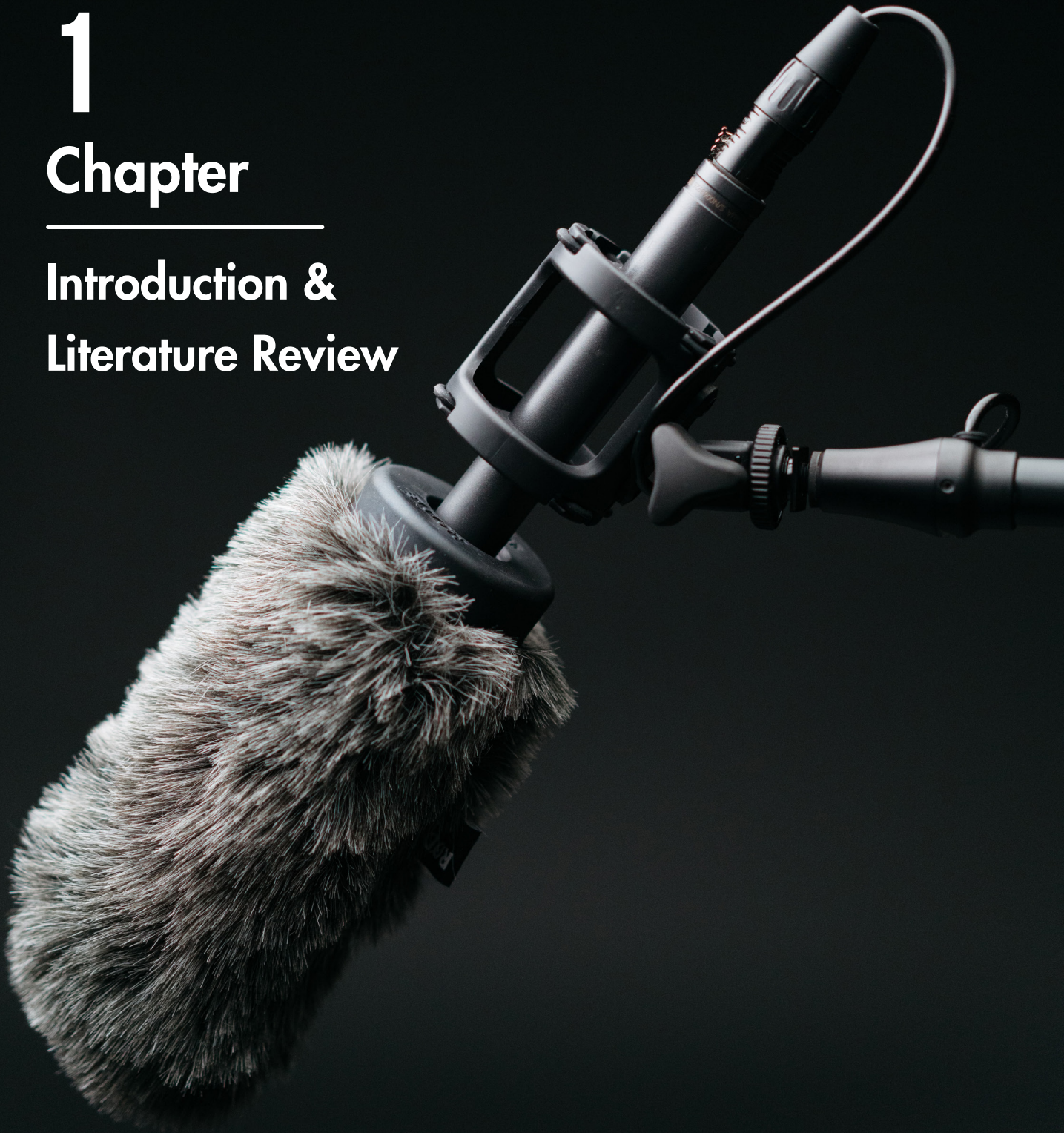
**Beat:** A genre of journalism that is focused of a particular sector, issue or institution. It will also be referred to as 'area' in this study.

# 1

## Chapter

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### Introduction & Literature Review





# Introduction

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines labour migration as '*the movement of person(s) from their home State to another State for the purpose of employment*'. A "migrant worker" is defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments as "a person who migrates from one country to another (or who has migrated from one country to another) with a view to being employed other than on his own account, and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant for employment." It is the quest for higher wages and better opportunities that motivates most migrants to leave their home countries. While many respond to the demand for their skills abroad, others are forced to relocate to another country for extreme reasons like natural disasters, famine, violent conflicts and persecution in their fatherland.

In 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that about 86 million persons in the world are either working or living in a country other than their country of birth. Africa is not left out of this data as there is hardly any African country not participating in migration flows, whether as countries of origin, transit or destination. Demand in economic sectors such as agriculture, fishing, mining and construction as well as services such as domestic work, health care, cleaning, restaurants and hotels, and retail trade are significant drivers of labour migration within the continent. It is common practice that migrant workers find domestic and care work in the homes and institutions of countries richer than theirs. This uncovers much about social change that can be observed in the twenty-first century. With much involvement of Africans and African countries in migration, particularly labour migration, it becomes imperative to better understand how labour migration affects the African continent in terms of development and growth.

# Background

**Labour migration in Africa** is largely intra-regional (80%) and mainly characterized by the **migration** of low-skilled workers. Of great importance in the region is the consolidation of significant **South-South** migration corridors to neighboring **labour** markets in the search for a job and better wages (International Labour Organization).

According to the African Union, “Africa is recognized as one of the most demographically dynamic continents with a population of over one billion people with a young majority” (West Africa Brief, 2017). Hence, the rate of the influx or out-flux of Africans within or outside the continent definitely has numerous effects on the origin and destination countries economically and socially. African migrants, asylum seekers and forcibly displaced persons often use the same migration routes.

The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) describes the driving forces in international migration in terms of “3Ds” i.e. development, demography and democracy. (GCIM, 2005). Organized and well-managed labour migration has enormous potential for governments, communities, migrants, employers and other stakeholders in countries of origin and destination. While job creation at home is the first best option, an increasing number of countries see international labour migration as an integral part of national development and employment strategies by taking advantage of global employment opportunities and bringing in foreign exchange. In countries of origin, labour migration can relieve pressure on unemployment and can contribute to development through the channeling of remittances, transfer of knowledge, and the creation of business and trade networks. In countries of destination facing labour shortages, orderly and well-managed labour migration can lighten labour scarcity, facilitate mobility, and add to the human capital stock.

Today, labour migration has become a crucial element in the economy and should not be underestimated. This is where the media comes in as they may be assumed to be the agenda-setters as well as the framing tool. According to the **World Migration Report 2018**, media, in all its forms, plays a significant role in the framing of policy discourses that affect how people act, what people think, how policymakers prioritize agendas, and how migrants make decisions. This brings out the significance of labour migration as a beat in journalism.

However, there is an assumption that priority may be given to other beats over labour migration as it may not be as popular as other beats.

From observation, there has been little or no work done in this area. This study will be useful to the academic field in terms of data storage, bridging knowledge gaps, research and analysis, the field of journalism and the media in terms of shared experience, the government in terms of security, sponsorship and provisions and the society in terms of information.

In addition, research on labour migration journalism seems to focus more on media contents than the experiences of the journalists that cover the beat as well as the role the gender of the journalist plays in covering this beat. Hence, policy makers and governing bodies will find this study relevant.

The necessity of frequent reporting of quality migration stories cannot be over emphasized and as such, it should be significantly featured in mainstream reporting, to bring awareness to cross cutting dimensions of labour migration and the experiences of the journalists bringing the stories to light. This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of labour migration journalists and the perception of experts in the media industry on media coverage of migration in Africa with particular focus on labour migration.

At the end of the study, it is expected that the following research questions would have been adequately answered:

- i. Who are the women covering labour migration in Africa?
- ii. What are the general perceptions of media editors on labour migration journalism?
- iii. What are the unique experiences of labour migration journalists?
- iv. How many women journalists specialize in labour migration in Africa?
- v. What are the capacity gaps for women journalists in labour migration?

## Literature Review

The Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs estimated that, in 2019, approximately 272 million people live and work in a country in which they were not born. This means that, in terms of size, the migrant population would constitute the fifth largest country in the world. Between 1990 and 2013, the migrant population in the world increased by 50 percent. If distributed into continents, it means that there are 18 million migrants in Africa, 70 million in Asia, 72 million in Europe, 8 million in Latin America, 53 million in North America and almost 8 million in Oceania.

Media, in all its forms, plays a significant role in the framing of policy discourses that affect how people act, what people think, how policymakers prioritize agendas, and how migrants make decisions (World Migration Report 2018: International Organization for Migration, 2018).

According to International Labour Organization (ILO), media initiative aims to advance the migrant protection agenda in two distinct ways. First, by providing an opportunity to explain and debate with the media and trade unionists the relevance of international labour standards as well as its policy agenda on fair migration. Second, by helping to build bridges between the labour movement, human rights organizations, grassroots NGOs and journalists reporting on human and labour rights, allowing them to explore together “untold” stories and defend democratic values.

Many journalistic reports have been written and scholarly researches carried out on the subject of migration as well as on several of its sub-topics including labour migration journalism. Researches such as that of Adepoju (2005) in a report on “Labour migration and employment of ECOWAS nationals in Nigeria” who found out that labour migration journalism in many African countries is shaped by economic conditions, infrastructure, and political power structures. Closely supporting this premise on labour migration journalism in Africa being shaped by political power structures is the assertion by Kalyango (2011) on the use of seditious libel charges by government as an effective tool to prosecute journalists in line of duty. This is the most consistent way that labour migration journalists go unprotected particularly in many Sub-Saharan African countries.

However, Moore, Gross & Threadgold (2012) opined that migration and the media critically explores the global reporting of “migration crises,” bringing together a range of original interdisciplinary research from the fields of migration studies and journalism, media and cultural studies. The implication of which, for instance, for infrastructure, the relative distance between the location in which a topic or event is covered could impact how the event is covered and the conditions under which it is covered. As such, in some circumstances, the logistics and mobility costs involved for these cash-strapped journalists in many African societies may dissuade coverage or depend on the event sponsors to aid them in covering the events (such as borders on labour migration). Although this analysis and the cases have been examined in a few African countries with varying socio-political backgrounds and labour migration journalistic experiences, the findings in various African media systems show common features that allow the discussion of these phenomena in general comparative descriptions.

Experiences of female journalists must not be left out as they are equally of great relevance to the media industry, the society and the world at large. On the perception of female journalists’ of their profession, roles and influences is a recent study by Rao & Rodny-Gumede (2020) titled “Gazing past the glass ceiling: Indian and South African female journalists’ perceptions of their role and power in the newsroom”. Using two large media-saturated countries and emerging democracies -India and South Africa- they found out that, while it appears that female journalists believe that women have made some strides in covering political news, they still see their influence as limited and continue to battle pre-existing professional stereotypes. India and South Africa are both nations that are trying to overcome historical legacies of patriarchal structures and gendered attitudes about women’s role.

A study by Boateng (2020) examines how Ghanaian female journalists manage a balance between various domestic and social obligations with the complexities of journalism work-time arrangements and the Ghana Institute of Journalism’ (GIJ) enrolment and graduation record data to help establish the idea of the degree of ‘feminization’ of the journalism profession in Ghana. The findings revealed gaps in gender-media studies in Africa and “journalism work times are non-standard, irregular, and generally considered socially unfriendly and highly unsuitable to and conflicts with numerous other socio-domestic obligations of most Ghanaian female journalists. Ghanaian female journalists, like most other Ghanaian women, are traditionally obligated to take care of children, the elderly, and the infirm, including managing the domestic sphere.”

This suggests a capacity gap in practice of journalism generally, which may include labour migration journalism

This therefore, brings us to the appropriateness of this study that seeks to discover the lived experiences of women journalists covering labour migration in Africa, in order to bring out the relevance of their roles with the aim of creating a wholesome platform for the development of a wider campaign.

# 2

## Chapter

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## Methodology

## Methodology

A desktop research, conceptual and empirical reviews of the concept of journalism in Africa and the lived experiences of female journalists covering labour migration in Africa was conducted at the initial stage of this study. This was followed by empirical research, which involved a good, correct and adequate gathering of data. The method used for this research design was a mix of both qualitative and quantitative analysis. It was then narrowed down to the descriptive research design. This method was used because the researcher is solely interested in describing the situation under the research study. The population comprised of women journalists that cover labour migration in Africa according to the geographical zones in Africa.

## Quantitative Research

A survey was done to enable the researcher conduct a thorough examination and description of the experiences faced by women labour migration journalists as well as the demographics of journalists covering labour migration. A questionnaire was designed with the use of Survey Monkey. This was dispersed via email and WhatsApp and 78 responses were received from Nigeria, Namibia, Kenya, Botswana, Uganda, Tunisia, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Zambia, Benin, South Africa, Tanzania, Rwanda, Algeria, Zimbabwe and Somalia. 42.3% of the respondents were from Nigeria and 57.7% were from the other countries listed above. This was due to accessibility of respondents, time constraints and poor internet connection. However, a good representation of countries in Africa was achieved.

## Qualitative Research

Interviews and focus group discussion were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams, Zoom and Skype due to the nature of the proximity of the respondents. They were both appropriate research instruments for this study as it allowed for closer contacts with respondents and needed information (especially follow-up information) was received from them, as they were able to air their views freely. Each interview ran for approximately 30 minutes and the focus group discussion ran for an hour.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Responses from the questionnaire were collected automatically and presented in simple percentage and bar charts. Summary of the demography was presented, followed by analysis based on the objectives of the study.



# 3

## Chapter

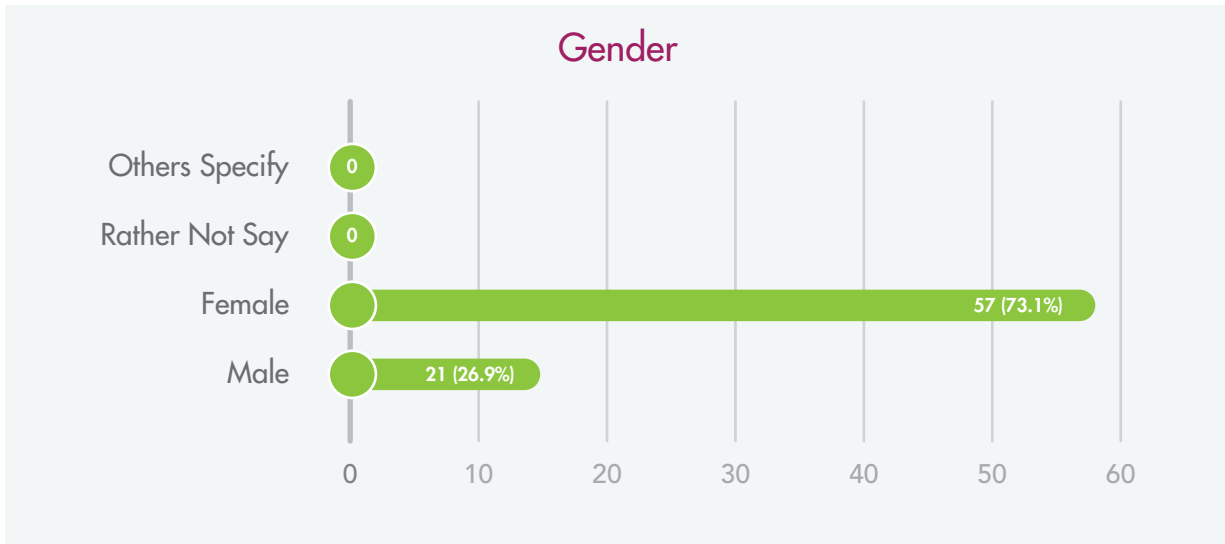
### Data Presentation and Analysis

# Quantitative Research Findings

## Demographic Data

Below is the summary of the demographic data of the respondents.

### i. Gender

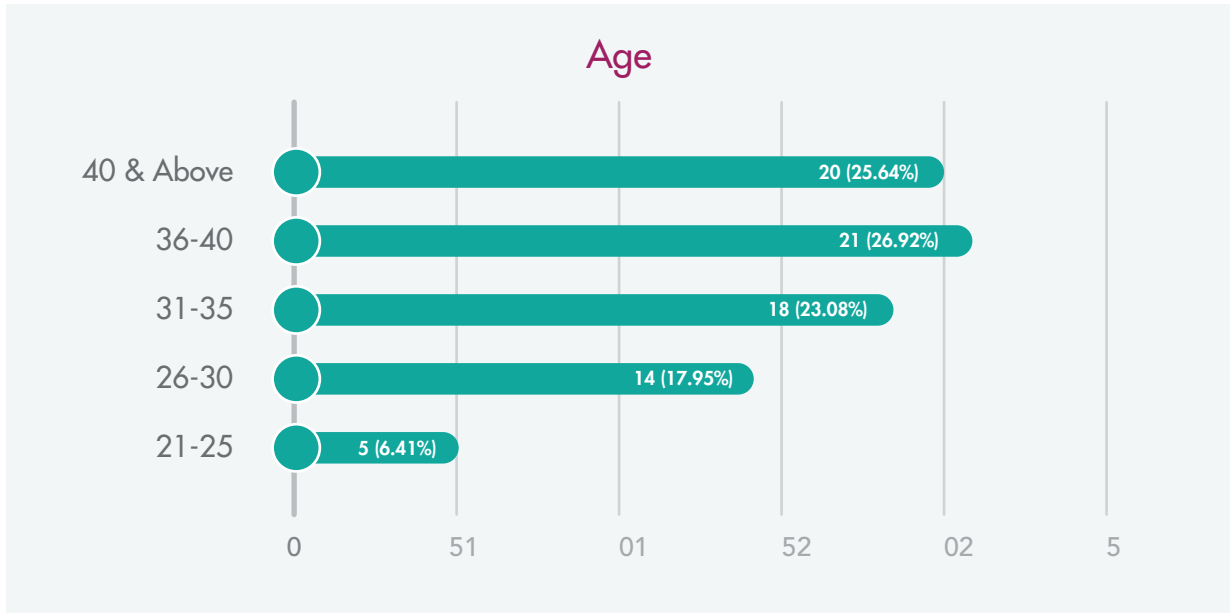


**Figure 1: Gender**

The above figure shows that majority of the respondents are of women, 73.10% while 26.9% are men. This is a good representation for the study.



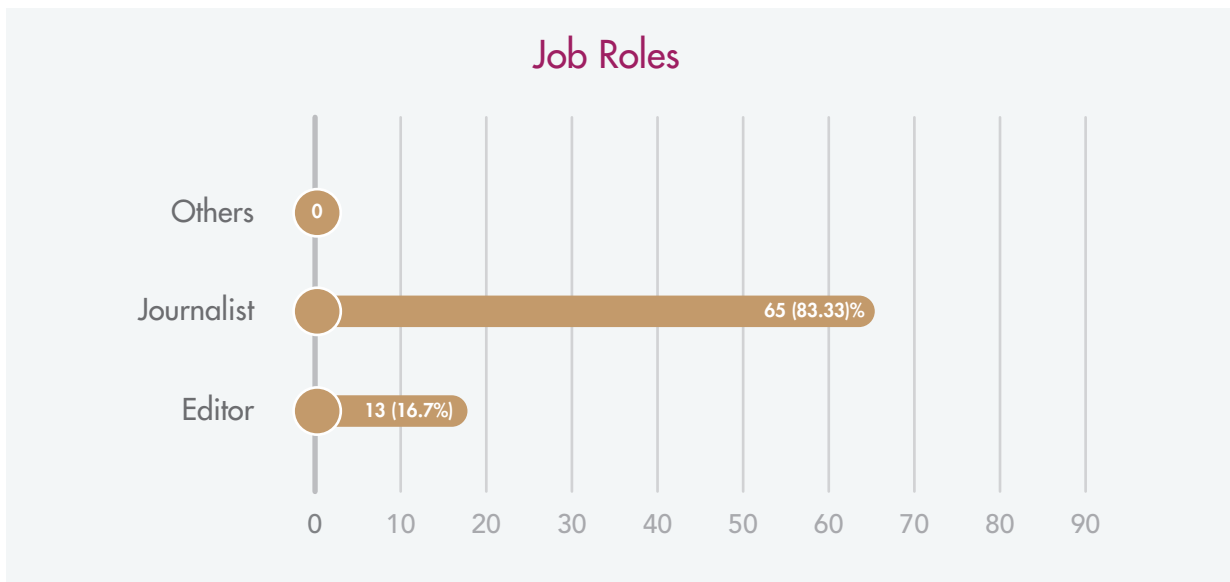
### iii. Job Roles



**Figure 2: Age**

Respondents between ages 21-25 are 6.41%, percentage of respondents that fall within the age range of 26-30 is 17.95%; percentage of those within the age range of 31-35 is 23.08%; within the age range of 36-40 is 26.92% and 25.64% are 40 and above. There is a good level of representation respondents that are at the active working age.

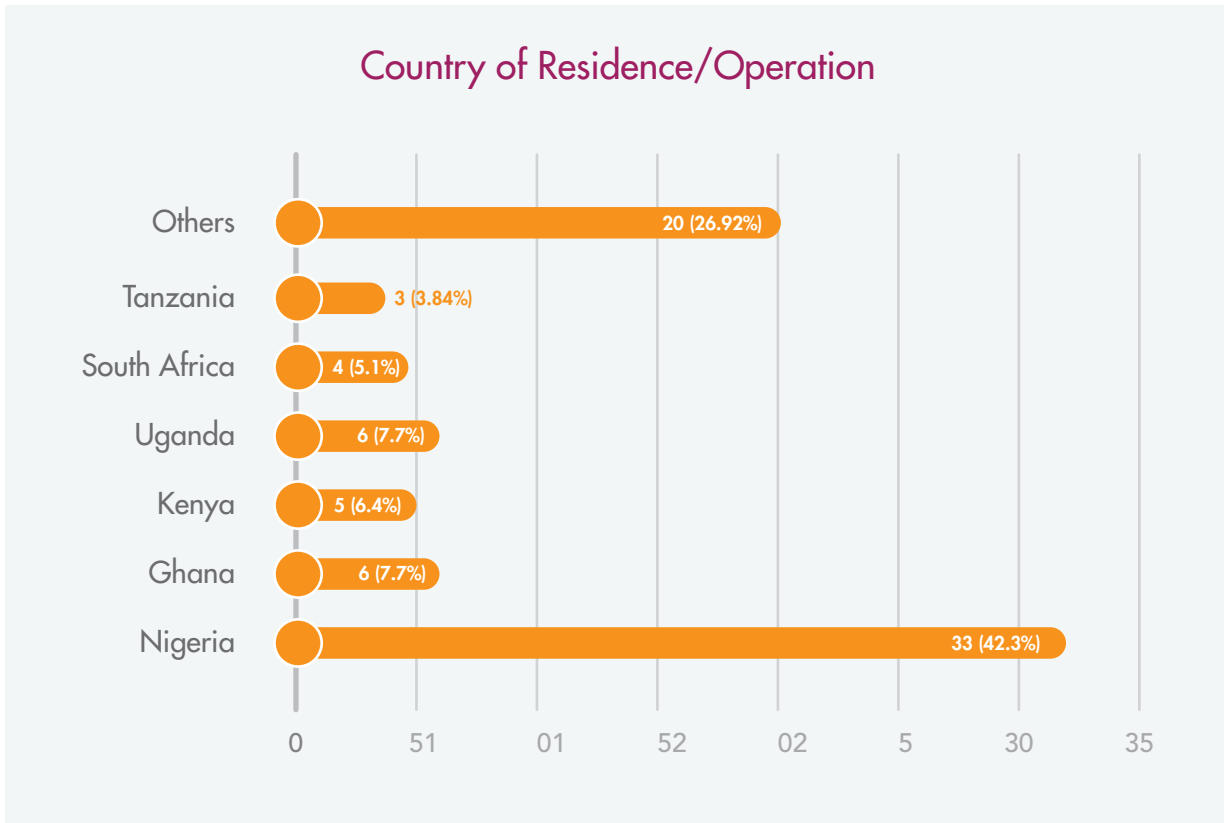
### iii. Job Roles



**Figure 3: Job roles**

83.33% of the respondents are journalists while 16.67% of the respondents are editors.

#### iv. Country of Residence/Operation



**Figure 4: Country of Residence/Operation**

The figure shows that 42.31% of the respondents are from Nigeria. Other countries represented include Ghana (7.69%), Uganda (7.69%), Kenya (6.14%), South Africa (5.12%), Tanzania (3.84%). However, due to space some other African countries could not be represented in the graph like respondents from Namibia (1.28%), Botswana (1.28%), Sierra Leone (1.28%), Egypt (1.28%), Burkina Faso (1.28%), Zambia (1.28%), and Rwanda (2.6%) The Gambia (1.28%), Cameroon (2.6%), South Sudan (1.28%), Benin Republic (1.28%), Tunisia (2.6) Algeria (2.5%) and Somalia (1.28%).

Of the 78 respondents, 52 of answered all questions on the questionnaire. The analysis are shown below based on points drawn out from the research questions of the study.

# 1. General perception of media editors on labour migration journalism.

## i. What is Labour Migration Journalism?

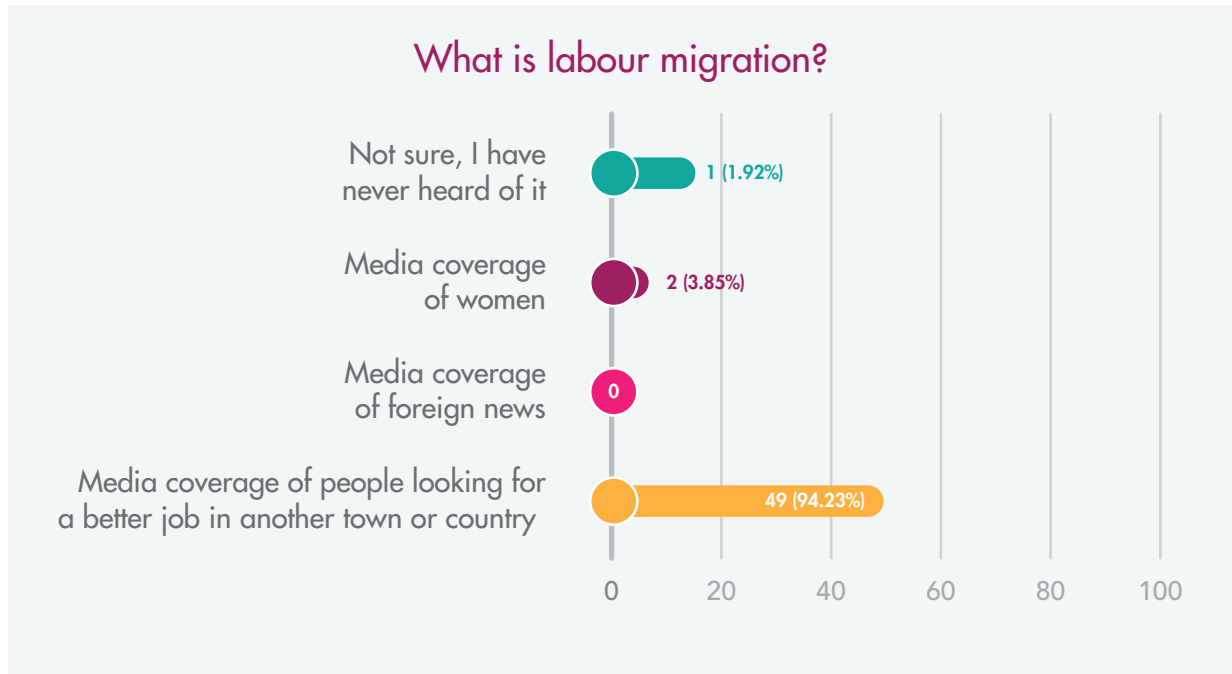
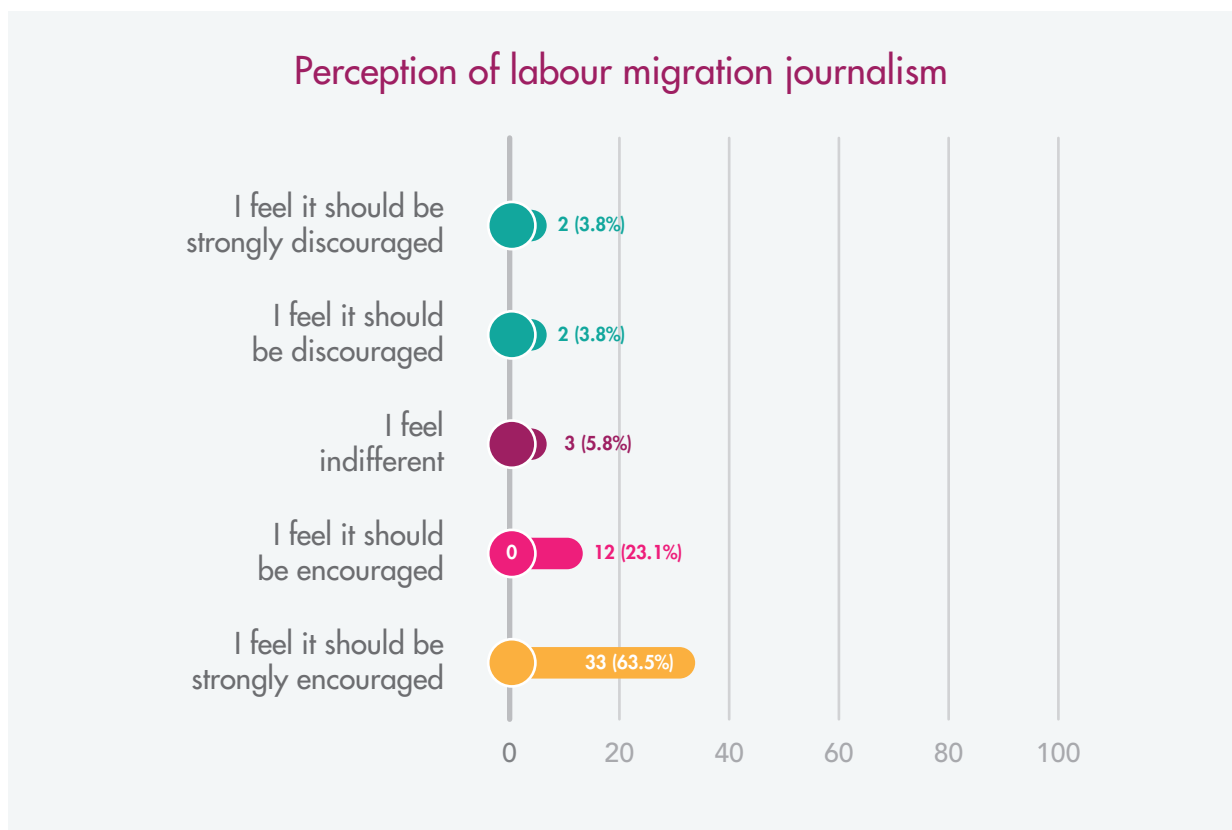


Figure 5: What is labour migration.

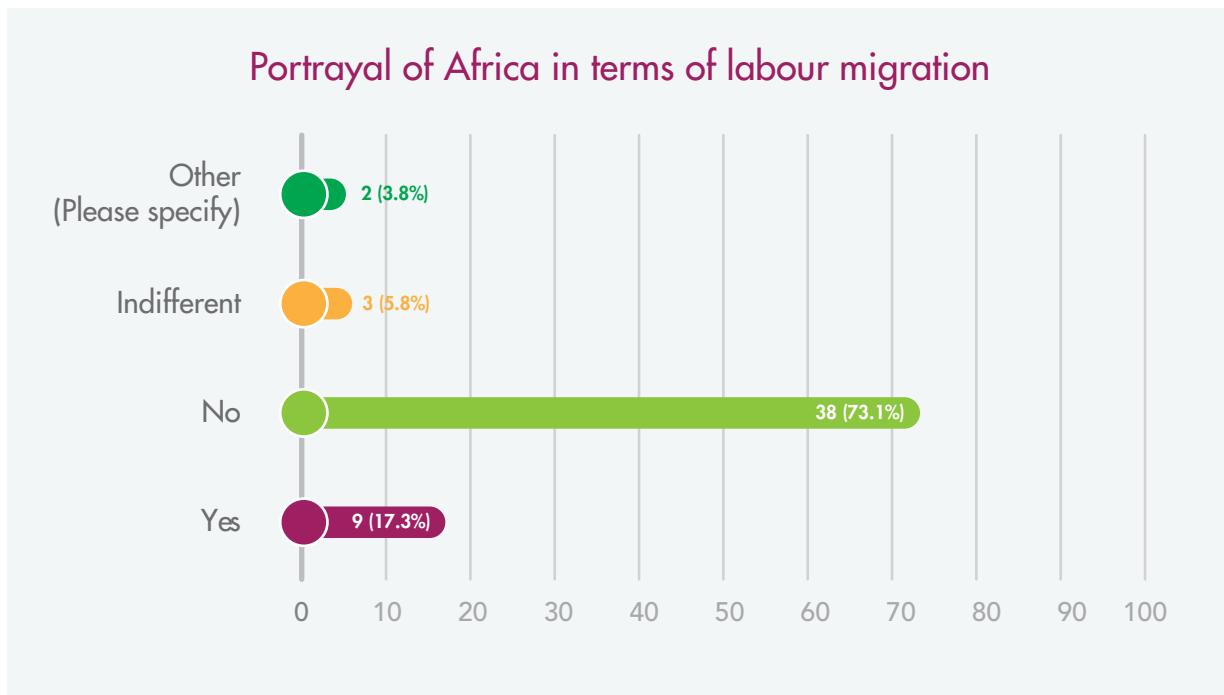
## ii. What is your perception on labour migration journalism?



**Figure 6: Perception of labour migration.**

A large percentage of the respondents (63.46%) feel that labour migration journalism should be strongly encouraged, 23.08% feel it should be encouraged. A minority of the respondents are either indifferent or feel it should be discouraged. This shows a tendency for a huge acceptance of labour migration as a beat if it is well supported.

**iii. Do you think Africa is well portrayed in terms of Labour Migration?**



**Figure 7: Portrayal of Africa in labour migration stories**

17.23% of the respondents think Africa is well portrayed in terms of labour migration, 73.08% do not think Africa is well portrayed in terms of labour migration, 5.77% are indifferent while 3.85% majorly specified that they were not so sure if Africa is well portrayed in terms of labour migration.

#### iv. Why is Labour Migration Rampant in Africa?

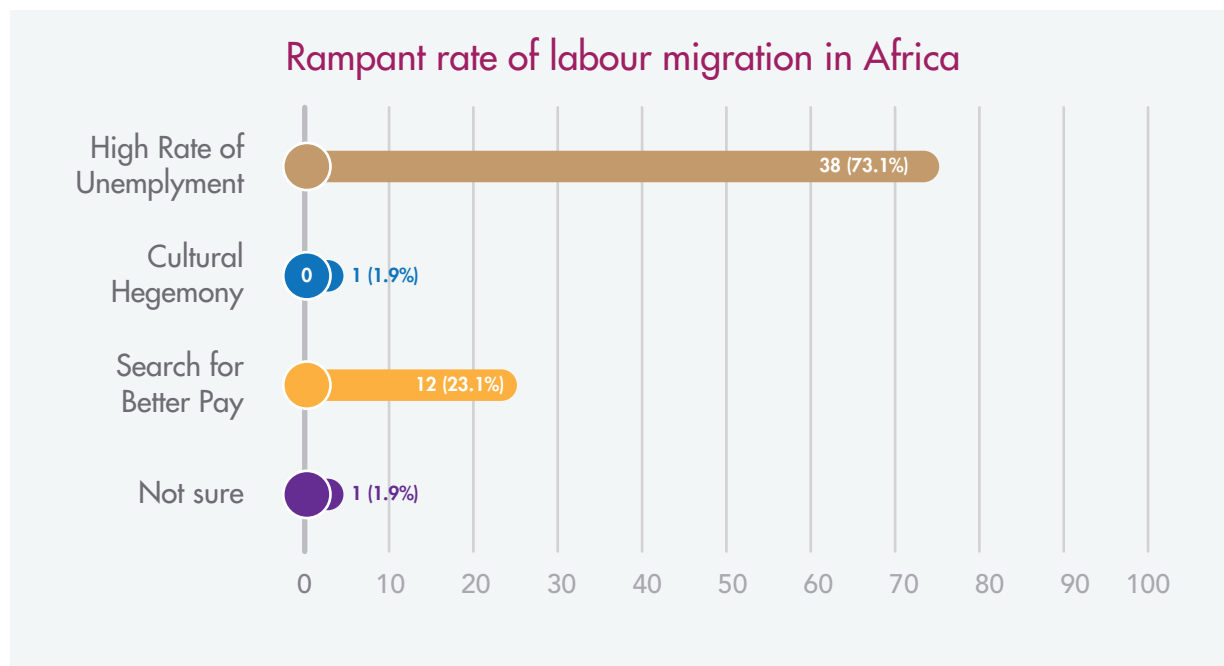


Figure 8: Why is labour migration rampant in Africa

73.08% of the respondents chose high rate of unemployment as reasons why labour migration is rampant in Africa, while 23.08% of the respondents picked search for a better pay. 1.92% picked cultural hegemony and 1.92% were not sure

## 2. Unique experiences of labour migration journalists.

### i. What have your experiences and challenges as a Labour Migration Journalist been?

For this open-ended question, nearly all the responses point to fact that the focus of labour migration journalism and reporting in Africa is limited and focused on contents, that is, migrants' stories and their experience alone. Some do not even place it as a priority. This is influenced by some government policies and the unpopularity of the specialized beat in many African media.

Some of the major challenges identified by respondents include:

- Little to no data on migrants
- Lack of funds to cover travel costs
- Little remuneration for journalists (especially those specialized in labour migration)
- Unreliable sources (as many stakeholders in labour migration in Africa are not open to talking to the press)
- Discrimination against women journalists
- Newsroom editors are not receptive to labour migration stories and are usually unwilling to publish them.

## ii. What solutions would you like to see in place that can address the challenges stated in your answer to the previous question?

Respondents were at liberty to type in their responses and proffer solutions to the challenges identified in the previous question above.

Some of the major solutions that the respondents suggested are highlighted below:

- More training and funding for labour migration journalism by governments, international NGOs and media houses.
- Better coordination of the collection of data on migrants and other labour migration-related issues.
- Advocacy for better salaries and incentives for labour migration journalists.
- More collaborations between national, international and regional journalism federations and/or organizations towards pushing for frameworks to promote labour migration journalism in Africa.
- Laws and policies that give journalists easy access to data and information.

## iii. Have these challenges shaped your career?

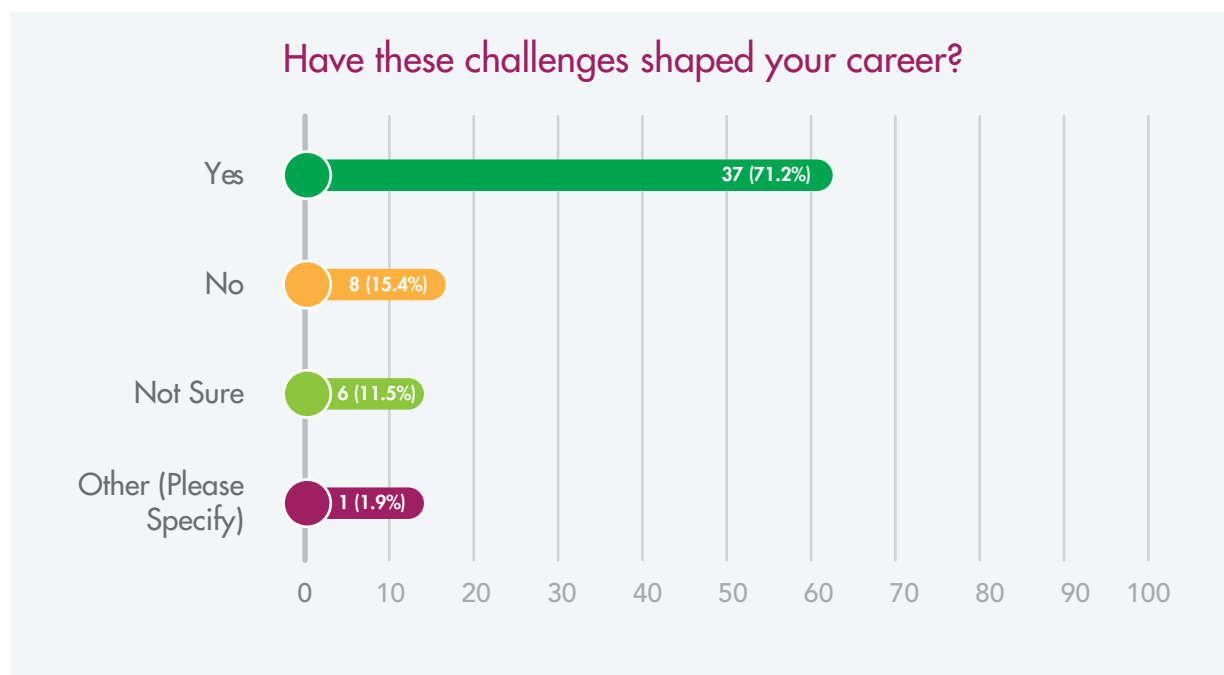
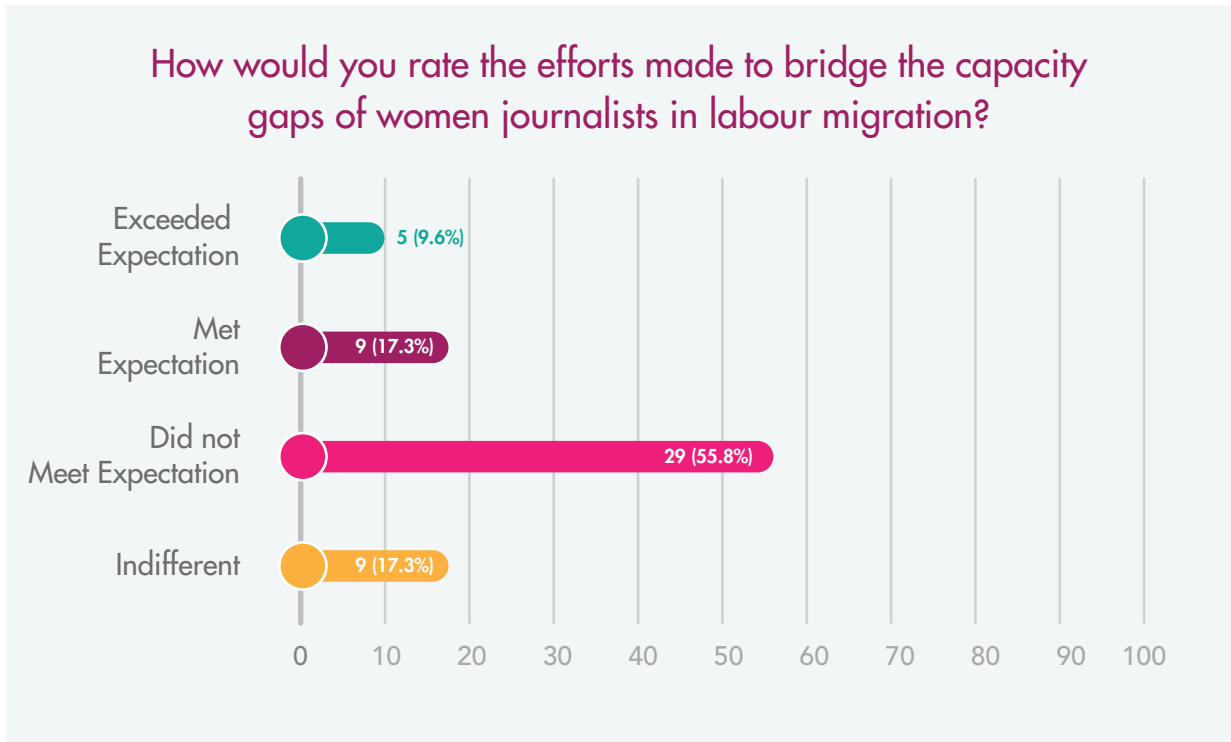


Figure 9: Have these challenges shaped your career?

Majority of the respondents (71.2%) agree that these challenges shaped their career. 15.4 % of them think that the experiences (and challenges) to a large extent have not shaped their career.

## iv. Capacity gaps for women journalists in labour migration.

How would you rate the efforts made to bridge the capacity gaps of women journalists in labour migration?



*Figure 10: How would you rate the efforts made to bridge the capacity gaps of women journalists in labour migration?*

55.8% opined that efforts to bridge the capacity gaps for women journalists in labour migration did not meet their expectations.

# Qualitative Research Findings

## Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

In order to investigate further the outcomes of the questionnaire, focus group discussions and interviews were carried out with journalists and editors from Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia and Ghana. Nine editors/journalists participated in the focus group and interviews. The breakdown in terms of country representation and numbers were as follows Nigeria (4); South Africa (1); Namibia (1); Uganda (1); Zimbabwe (1) and Ghana (1).

### i. Country of Residence/ Operation

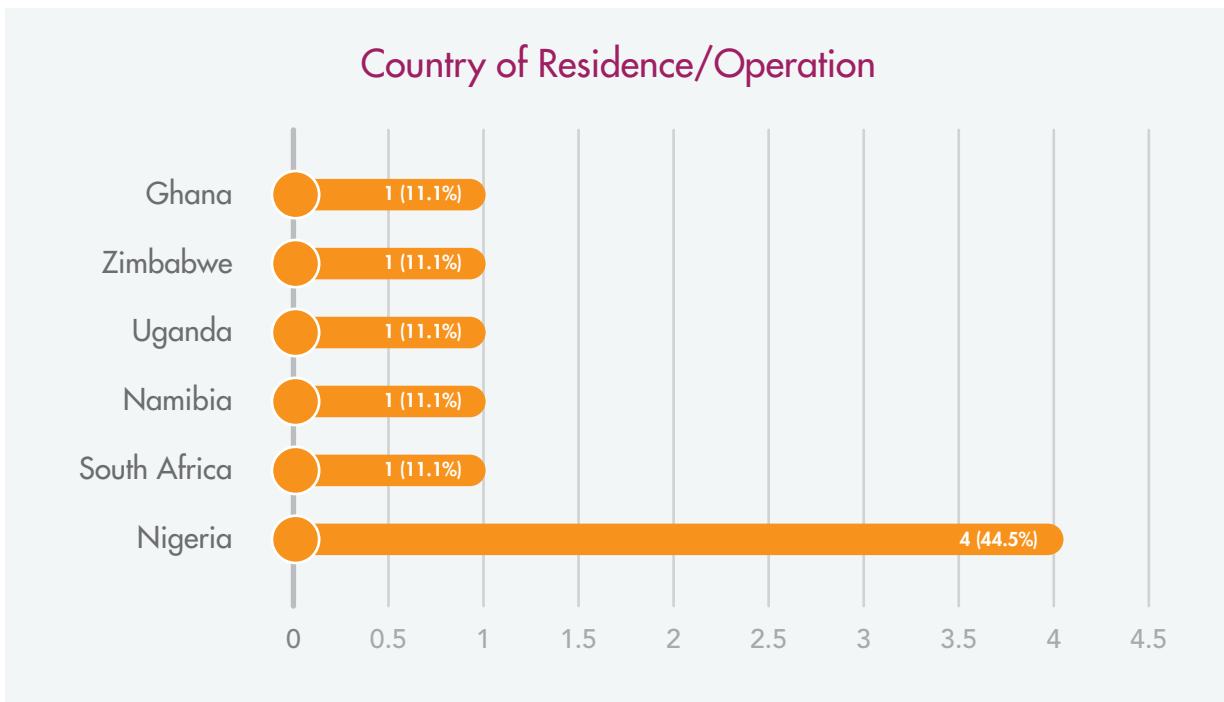


Figure 11: Country of Residence/ Operation

44.45% are Nigerians. Other countries are evenly distributed from.



### i. Country of Residence/ Operation

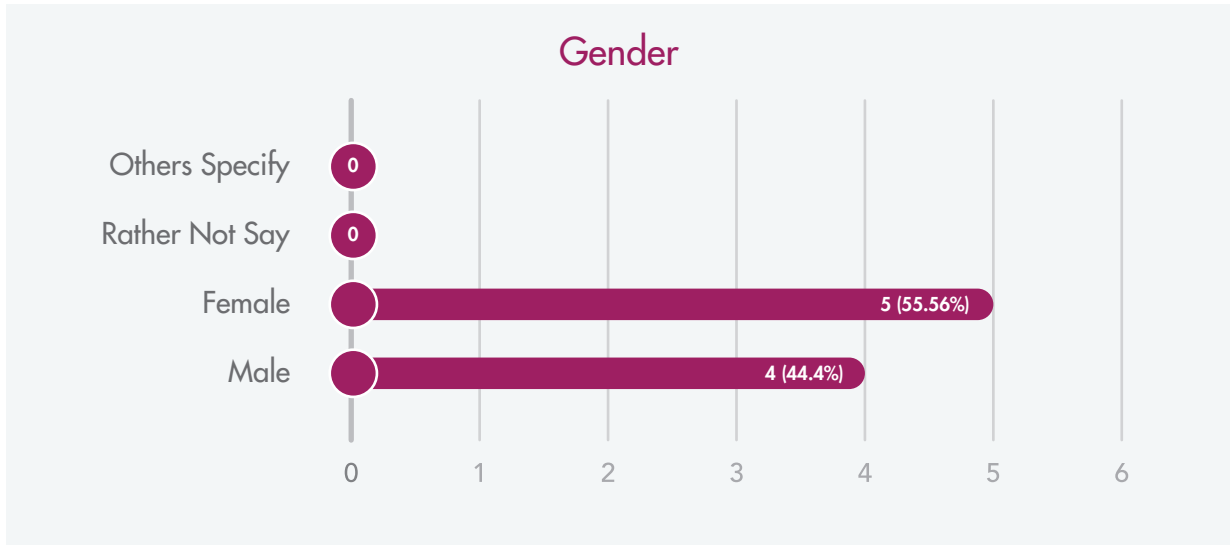


Figure 12: Gender

55.56% were women, while 44.44% were men.

### iii. Age

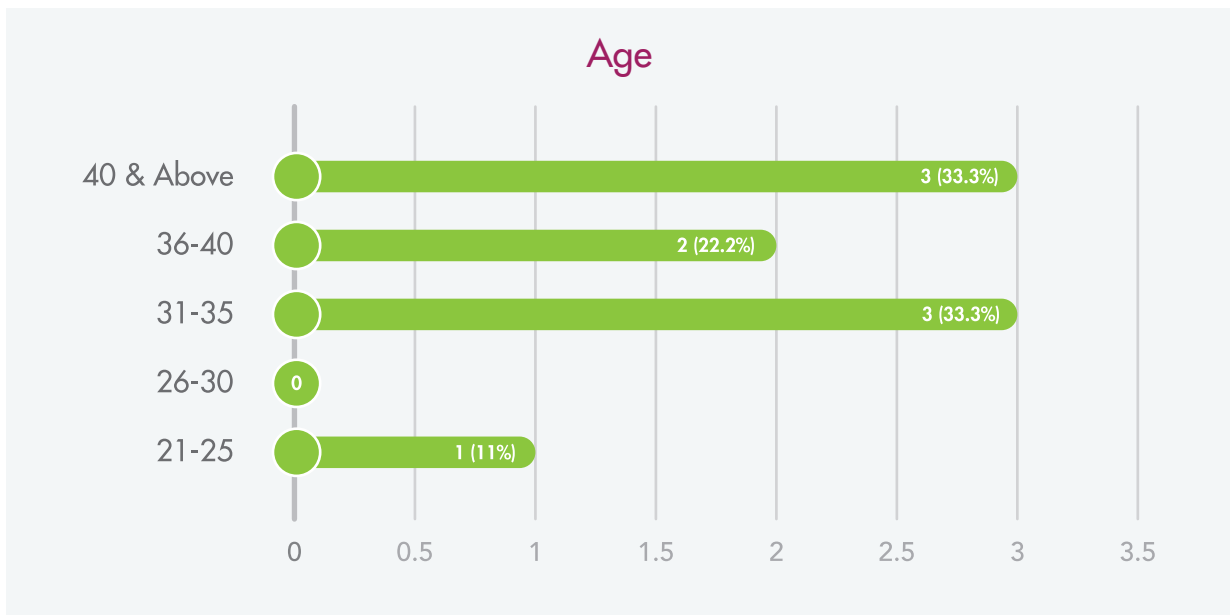
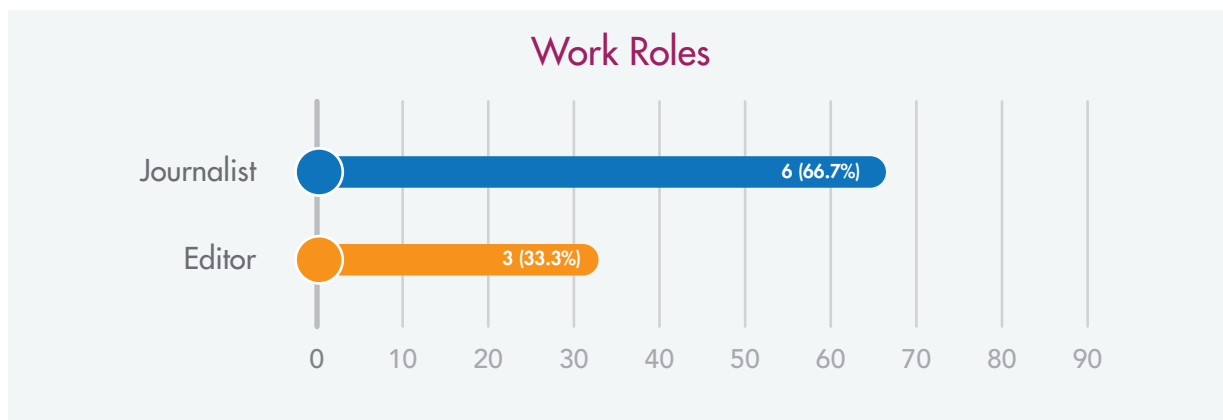


Figure 12: Age

The graph above clearly shows that majority of our respondents in the focus group discussions and the interview were either between the ages of 31- 35 (33.33%) and 40 and above (also 33.33%).

### i. Work roles



**Figure 14: Work Roles**

Journalists made up 83.3% of the respondents while 16.67% were editors. This shows that majority of the respondents were journalists.

## Themes

This study sought to document the experience of journalists covering labour migration in Africa in order to bring out the relevance of their roles and make sense of the peculiarities of their experiences, with the aim of creating a wholesome platform to develop a wider campaign, for labour migration journalists.

The following themes were explored:

**Theme 1:** Perception

**Theme 2:** Experience

**Theme 3:** Awareness

**Theme 4:** Labour Migration Journalism

### Theme 1: Perception

Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment. It is the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted.

### Theme 2: Experience

Experience is something that one does or that happens to someone. It is something important that affects that person. It refers to the unique stories of African women journalists. The experiences could be positive or negative, personal or indirect.

### Theme 3: Awareness

Awareness connotes knowledge of a situation or fact. It is also a concern about and well-informed interest in a particular situation or development. In this work, it refers to the level of exposure/knowledge editors and journalists have about African female journalists that specialize in labour migration.

### Theme 4: Labour Migration Journalism

Labour migration journalism refers to the work or area of specialization of an individual in the field of journalism. It is career based. Here, we take a closer look at labour migration journalism in Africa as a career for women from the angle of the popularity of the desk/role/career to the angle of those performing those duties, either as journalists or editors. It will be analyzed from

1. The angle of editors
2. The angle of African journalists

The popularity of the beat was also explored, efforts made to bridge the capacity gaps as well as suggestions on how to make the beat more popular, safe and lucrative.

# Thematic Analysis and Interpretation of FGDs and Interviews

From the focus group discussion and interviews carried out, it was observed that labour migration journalism is not a common beat in Africa. Some women journalists covering labour migration are freelancers while some work for international organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

## 1. Perception

From the findings, journalists and editors have a positive and clear perception of what labour migration is. They see it as a search for better pay and better work environment. A journalist from South Africa aptly puts it, *“Labour migration is search for work away from home. That is leaving one’s country of origin in search for greener pastures abroad.”* Many have worked in that capacity or have friends who are migrant journalists. Concerning the role of gender, many believe both genders are given equal opportunities though some believe the women journalists are not daring enough.

All participants agreed that the labour migration beat in journalism practice is not so popular and their stories tend to get turned down because their editors feel that *“It will not interest the readers”*. A respondent from South Africa described her experience with an editor as interesting because the editor was weary of the response the newspaper would get from the government if the story got out.

According to some respondents, they get little or no support from their editors and colleagues due to expectations of board members/ owners of the press houses. Female journalists are also intimidated by the social or political repercussions that they may suffer from telling a labour migration story.

## 2. Unique Experiences

The lived experiences of African women journalists covering labour migration are mixed. However, information from the focus group and interviews revealed that their experiences tilt more to the negative side. In spite of their *“not so friendly”* experience, what keeps them going is the passion for the job; the process of sourcing for new information on migration, following it up and ensuring the story gets published is what drives them.

There were experiences shared revealing the attitude of their colleagues, the editors and the public.

“ *When I worked undercover as a labour migrant, my experience was an interesting one. However, when I got back to the newsroom with my story, some of the editors tried to put me down and discourage me. But because I hit so hard, I sacrificed my time, did research, I made sure I could produce evidence to support my stories, in case I get sued. So, editors had no choice, but to run with my story. I am honestly enjoying this though it has not been easy.”*

This echoes the response of the other respondents who also shared experiences of having to work hard to convince editors to support their labour migration stories. They are not willing to accept their stories and most of the time, they have to get more creative and determined like the respondent stated above, and they accept it as a challenge to do more research, get strong facts and put in a lot of creativity in producing a good news story. Respondents said they see this as an adventure, which drives them to keep going in spite of the negative energy that surrounds them.

They went further with the discussion by describing some of the challenging aspects of the work African women journalist covering labour migration face. Some respondents stressed that some of the most challenging parts of the work include gathering evidence to support their stories as they do not get enough sources willing to give them information and it is difficult to get access to materials to work with. Sometimes, in the process, they are threatened with litigation, other times, they are treated like criminals and those active in human trafficking go after them out of fear of their identities being revealed.

As opined by this respondent:

“**Gathering evidence is the most challenging. I have had threats of a law suit, luckily my editors have always looked out for me. Reporting on labour migration needs people who are passionate as it is not for the faint hearted.**”

Also pointed out in the focus group discussions and interviews was the issue of access to data. In some African countries, data collection and data keeping, which is vital for getting information for their stories, is not available most of the time. The respondents highlighted the need for access to data in order to build on a labour migration story.

In all the expressions of the respondents, there is a mix of excitement, worry and frustration as they share interesting experiences about their work and highlight the disturbing challenges they go through covering labour migration but despite the challenges most of the respondents face as labour migration journalists, they derive satisfaction in knowing that their stories are being read globally and they have a good chance to positively impact the lives of migrants. Apart from their passion for writing, the expected result of having a positive influence on labour migration, laws and policies are the driving forces for their job as labour migration journalist. This is why it is necessary to find a lasting solution to the issues surrounding labour migration. On finding lasting solutions, it was gathered that the media plays a huge role in sensitizing people on labour migration and its relevance to their community. For these respondents, this will aid better experience in covering labour migration beat.

### **3. Awareness**

Findings of the focus group and interviews revealed that awareness of labour migration beat by women journalist is on the rise. A respondent from Nigeria opined that;

“**A lot of female journalists are starting to take interest in the labour migration beat but we are still few. Most online searches will bring up Western journalists.**”

In spite of the fact that the labour migration beat exists, the awareness is relatively low, a number of publishers are not willing to publish labour migration for various reasons ranging from risks it might attract to readers not being interested in such stories. This leads to women journalists losing interest in the beat as stated by a participant from Ghana:

“Not many women are interested in being in labour migration beat because it is hard to get stories on labour migration published.”

However, a journalist from Uganda had a different view. She said;

“In Uganda, women really specialize in it. I cover labour migration so I think my interpretation of that is, there are women who would willingly want to cover that beat”.

This implies that labour migration beat may be more popular in some African countries than the others as it was pointed out by the respondents above. In the interviews, a female editor from Nigeria argued that although many female journalists are aware of the labour migration beat, they are not daring enough to go undercover.

#### 4. Labour Migration Journalism

Labour migration journalism has been previously described as an area of specialization of an individual in the field of journalism. The various views of this beat is analyzed from the angle of the editor to the angle of the journalist. In addition, the capacity gaps for the women journalists in labour migration is being analyzed.

##### i) The angle of an editor

A respondent from Ghana who happens to be an editor opines thus;

“No one really wants to cover Labour Migration and I don’t understand why. I agree with most of what the other participants have said; it’s probably fear of the consequences from government officials who may not want information to get out”

As noted in the focus groups and interviews, editors are moderately positive about publishing the labour migration beat for various reasons. The most salient of these is that they appear to want to avoid the un-avoidable social, political or economic repercussions attached to any significant labour migration story. A second reason is that most female journalists are less suited to cover labour migration because of lack of sufficient training in this area. Most of the editors agreed that a solution would be for media organizations to adequately prepare female journalists to deal successfully with labour migration writing and reporting.

## ii) The angle of a journalist

The respondents expressed that although it may be challenging to cover labour migration, their passion for their job is what drives them. A respondent from South Africa gave her account of her experience as a migrant from Zimbabwe and as a labour migration journalist in South Africa. She ended her statement with:

“*I am very passionate about covering labour migration for professional and personal reasons. Our stories as migrants must be told and although it is challenging, I am determined to publish as many stories about this as I can.*”

The challenges they face covering the beat make it really hard for them to pull through. Some of the respondents confessed to crying and having sleepless nights in the process of getting a news story. They have a hard time getting access to information from expert sources particularly from the immigration services. This situation has discouraged many female journalists.

Responses from the focus group reveal that the most rewarding aspect of their work is the idea of their stories being read by their colleagues in the media industry, the government bodies, citizen of their various counties, migrants and various people all over the world. They are also encouraged knowing that they can make positive impact in the lives of migrants.

## iii) Capacity Gaps for Women Journalists in Labour Migration.

The factors contributing to the capacity gaps for women journalists are two fold; those from within the media organizations and those external to it. Media organizations play a huge role in ensuring that their journalists feel empowered and encouraged to undertake the labour migration beat. When an editor is receptive towards labour migration related stories, it goes a long way in encouraging and cultivating interest in the beat.

A second internal factor is that most media organizations lack a full-time labour migration beat and as such do not offer their journalists the necessary training to report competently on it. From this research, it is clear that female journalists are particularly interested in covering the labour migration beat and would benefit greatly from such a training.

Externally, government policies that make information about labour migration inaccessible to the public make it difficult for journalists, and particularly female journalists to tell the whole story. Labour migration stories cannot be told separately from the policies that facilitate and influence them and therefore local governments- sending and receiving must make this information available.

A second significant factor, is the social environment in which female journalists have to work while covering a labour migration story. Often times, there are safety risks and concerns while carrying out investigative work which are significantly heightened for females as opposed to their male counterparts.

The political environment was also pointed out by another respondent. The public and the private stakeholders that operate, influence and interact with the media, as well as the political and economic system, can also stimulate a change and maximize positive work output for women labour migration journalists.

Another relevant external factor is the reliable source. Currently, sources are afraid of being victimized so they are reluctant to be interviewed or give out any information that can build up a good story. A respondent pointed out that;

“It is hard to even get information from them (sources). If someone is not even willing to share information, you can't cover your beat and your research successfully. So I believe that the media... is supposed to keep sensitizing people, you know, to be able to encourage people to open up to talk to share experiences.”

In the interviews, most respondents stressed that the noticeable disparity in capacity had a lot to do with funding. Unlike journalists in the western world, journalists in Africa have little or no access to funds and trainings to help them pursue migration stories. For instance, journalists in international media outfits like CNN did an exposé on irregular labour migration in Nigeria, taking off from communities in Edo, a hot market for low-skilled migrants, through the transit routes of Kankia and ending at the slave market in Libya, where captured migrants are auctioned.

Labour Migration journalists in Africa do not have access to resources to go that far. However, there are substantial reports of Nigerians tricked leaving the country for 'greener pastures'. There are also second hand reports of those tricked to Middle East countries.

It was also apparent that there were gender biases in some media organizations where the perception of female journalists was that of a non-daring and emotional reporter and their capability as a journalist judged through the gender lens.

From the focus group and interview findings, it is clear that the whole ecosystem made up of the media industry, the government and policy makers, all play a huge role in bridging the capacity gaps of female journalists covering labour migration by i) changing the negative perception of labour migration as a news beat, ii) creating a conducive environment where female journalists reporting on labour migration can safely work in and iii) empowering female journalist through upskilling and publishing their work. The next part of this report discuss the above issues more extensively.





# 4

## Chapter

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### Discussion of Findings

While more than two-thirds of the respondents (76.70%) feel that labour migration journalism should be encouraged, the remaining one-third of them (23.30%) are either sitting on the fence or opined that it be discouraged. Even though an obvious fact, the unfortunate situation in Africa is that labour migration, despite its importance as a newsroom beat, is not popular and some respondents share experiences that suggest it is not a beat that is sought after by editors in their media organizations.

Nearly all the responses from all the three survey tools point to the following factors that influence whether female journalists cover the beat successfully. They are; unfavorable government policies, limited resources and data, limited access to training, insecurity for the journalists and the unpopularity of the specialized beat. To break this down further, the following major challenges were identified by respondents and discussed in this study;

- Little to no access to data on migrants
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of access to reliable sources
- Government laws and policies
- Publication gap
- Gender bias and discrimination in the workplace

### **Little to no access to data on migrants**

Data on labour migration are scattered mainly because it is difficult to collect reliable data on migrant workers. According to the Global Migration Group's Handbook for Improving the Production and Use of Migration Data for Development (2017), data collection faces the following gaps and challenges:

- Lack of good quality data, including missing populations of interest, inconsistent periods of data collection, or key characteristics not being collected
- Limited data comparability due to different concepts, definitions and measurement methods
- Lack of infrastructure to process data in national institutions or at border crossing points
- Insufficient expertise among staff collecting or analyzing data
- Lack of infrastructure to publish key characteristics, populations or places of interest
- Insufficient priority given to labour migration in national policy agendas and related budget allocation.

There is an ongoing effort to streamline international standards and common methodologies within the field of labour migration data collection including successful efforts by the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP), a joint programme between the AU, ILO and IOM. The JLMP has been rolling out capacity-building programs to improve the production of labour migration data in the continent by organizing workshops and trainings at the regional and continental level to strengthen and support member states in the collection, analysis and dissemination of labour migration statistics. Through implementation of these activities, the production of a first and second edition of the Report on Labour Migration Statistics in Africa (a third edition is to be launched in 2021) has been achieved. The purpose of the report is to allow for better knowledge and understanding of labour migration dynamics in Africa and to inform policymakers who are tasked with putting in place adequate, appropriate evidence-based migration policies.

## Resources

The resources needed for a labour migration journalist to work is of great importance. The respondents pointed out three basic needs;

- Funds to cover costs of news coverage
- Training to boost creativity and work output
- Considerable remuneration

“It’s a two-way thing. One, you would want to earn what you are worth and two, you would want to operate where you are wanted, where you are appreciated and where you can get the information that you need”.

The issue of remuneration and economic resources to enable journalists to cover labour migration is significant, especially when we speak of the representation of Africa, and changing the narrative. Some respondents compared their economic support with those of western media journalists, who have greater access to resources. The implication is that the journalists working for western media organizations, are better able to report on labour migration in Africa, than the African journalists themselves.

From the interviews and focus group discussions, it was gathered that access to information from public offices are a major challenge to journalists covering labour migration. When they go to public offices to obtain data, they are told to wait for international reports, which take time to be released. This puts a strain on their work, making it hard to gather information. The respondents stressed on the issue of access to reliable sources being a major setback for them when covering a story as the statistics are not readily available. So as a journalist, if the information needed cannot be gotten, the statistics needed is not available, making a credible story will become close to impossible.

Respondents also identified training as a key need. While organizations like the International Labour Organization and African Women in the Media (AWiM) have offered labour migration reporting programmes, the frequency of such trainings is still low and the accessibility limited. These are important questions, which will be a huge step closer to improving work output and better experience for women journalists that cover labour migration.

## National Legal and Political Framework

Nearly all the responses from all the three survey tools point to the fact that the government law and policies play a huge role in the smooth process of covering labour migration stories, hence, the need for legal and political framework for labour migration to be to be created and/or adopt legal and political framework at the international level. This will bind international laws and promote the best practice for labour migration journalists at the local, regional, country and international level.

At the focus group, it was stated that a clear, detailed and well implemented policy along with media sensitization would improve the public perception of labour migration. When laws and policies are well implemented and the media have a better understanding on the laws and processes of labour migration, it will be easier to disseminate information on labour migration to the general public effectively.

Various legal and political frameworks geared towards migration exist in many parts of Africa. A migration policy framework was developed by the African Union (AU) and they also adopted a policy framework in agreement with the European Union. International Labour Organization (ILO) also developed several conventions with the aim of guiding their Labour Migration and Labour Mobility Work.

In 2014, The Nigerian government drew up a National policy on labour migration with the strong support of IOM and ILO. They also supported African countries like Egypt, Ghana, and Guinea in drawing up a legal and normative framework.

It has become vital for policymakers and practitioners at all levels to have a clear understanding of these frameworks and how they form the basis of African migration policies. This will create a positive effect and development in the areas of labour migration and in the long run, ease the covering of labour migration stories by journalists in Africa, especially women journalists.

## Publication Gap

This study revealed the challenges respondents face in convincing editors to publish their labour migration stories. Respondents described being told “the story is not interesting”, “It won’t interest the readers”, “it’s not healthy to publish this”, and many more. It takes some extra effort and creativity to get the labour migration stories published.


Respondents shared that, in their media organizations, labour migration beat is either part of other beats like the foreign desk, or they do not even have the beat at all so most of the labour migration journalists are freelancers. For these journalists, the major issue is getting their stories appreciated and published. Finding the right channel to publish their stories may seem to be a herculean task for them.

## Gender bias

Responses in the focus groups and interviews highlight the existence of gender biases in some news organizations and negative perceptions of female journalists as either too emotional or not daring enough to cover the labour migration beat.

Women’s groups from around the world reported that gender discrimination in the workplace, combined with a general lack of respect for women’s human rights in many cultures, creates barriers for women entering, remaining and progressing in the journalism industry (AWiM and Fojo, 2020). In many countries including African countries, women seeking to enter the media face sexist attitudes, sexual harassment, pay inequalities, discrimination in assignments and promotions, inflexible work environments, and a lack of support mechanisms for working women. (Morna, 2002).

The lived experiences of African women journalists who specialize in labour migration is eye opening.



# 5

## Chapter

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### Conclusions & Recommendations

The labour migration beat is one of the most interesting and exciting but under-rated area of specialized reporting in Africa. The respondents of this study share various experiences that illustrate this.

Little work with focus on labour migration journalism has been done. Focus is more on content. Research works concentrate on how migration stories are written and disseminated. There is little information on what the journalists go through to get these stories especially the female journalists given the obvious gender imbalance in most countries in Africa. This is very vital information not to be taken for granted because the labour migration beat is as relevant as any other specialized reporting in media houses. In fact, it may be more relevant than some beats.

Despite a rising interest from female journalists to cover this beat, there are many internal and external challenges that make reporting on labour migration difficult for many. The women that cover the labour migration beat in Africa, are passionate about migration stories because of the positive outcome in the short and long-run and this is what drives them.

Editors like the idea of having the labour migration beat but are reluctant to encourage publishing the stories due to various factors that include organizational and governmental policies. This goes a long way in influencing the process of covering labour migration stories.

The general perceptions of media editors on labour migration journalism is a mix of both positive and negative as the study revealed that editors see it as an interesting beat but it is not a popular one therefore, it is not so welcoming in most press houses. A few press houses infuse the beat into the foreign desk.

The unique experiences of female labour migration journalists can be described as both exciting and traumatic. Exciting because of the interesting discoveries they make while covering a labour migration issue and the positive outcome it brings. It is traumatic because the process can be brisk with little or no support from fellow journalists, editors, media organizations and the government.

This research did not determine the exact number of women journalists covering labour migration in Africa but a database of about 200 women journalists that cover labour migration in Africa was created.

Also, there is a huge gap between the labour migration beat and every other regular specialized reporting in the aspect of professionalism and gender. The importance of labour migration beat is highly under-rated as there are only a few journalists who have genuine passion for covering this area. Drastic measures should be taken to encourage women journalists in labour migration.

## Recommendations

Further research should be carried out involving more African countries to get a broader view of the experiences of female journalists covering the labour migration beat. This will create awareness on the journalistic practice in labour migration. Focus can be on the media house, government policies and capacity gaps of women journalists that cover labour migration.

Media organizations need to sensitize fellow colleagues, people and public offices on sharing information and resources with journalists covering labour migration. In addition, reception of migrant journalists should be encouraged. This support will not only go a long way in improving work output but also in improving the journalists' career and self-development.

Gender policies, recognizing the need for work-life balance for women in the media need to be enacted. This is important because in Africa, women are misrepresented in the work space and it is not limited to the newsroom. Women in the media work as hard as their male counterparts and tend to go through various challenges which include the issue of gender bias. A strong and well implemented policy would go a long way for women journalists in labour migration beat. It will boost their performance and output positively.

Governments should also enforce security measures for journalists in line of their duties. According to Audronius Ažubalis Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania "The true quality of a nation's democracy can be measured by the security and safety of its journalists" (Horsley 2012). Like Republic of Lithuania, 57 countries in Europe, Central Asia and North America are registered under a platform called Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) which addresses a wide range of security-related concerns including freedom of the media and safety of journalists (which is one of their priorities)

Countries in Africa can either get involved OSCE or set up a similar body which will go a long way in ensuring the safety of journalists and freedom of the media. When these journalists feel safe, they can work better, be more ethical and produce great stories.

Women journalists' associations and unions need to be strengthened to provide psychosocial and legal support for members experiencing career ethical as well as mental health challenges and sexual harassments. These issues are talked about but there's still a lot to be done as it affects the work output of female journalists. Support from colleagues within and outside the beat should be encouraged.

Women journalists in the region need training to be able to discharge their duties effortlessly. Training should be planned and implemented locally and internationally for journalists for better understanding of reporting stories on migration, and better understanding of the languages, media law and ethics for reporting migration

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# Appendices

**Appendix 1:** [www.surveymonkey.com/r/6Z78KL9](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6Z78KL9) (Link to Questionnaire)

**Appendix 2:** Focus Group Discussion Consent Form (Contained within Appendix 1)

## Lived Experiences of African Women Journalists Covering Labour Migration in Africa

