

Emigrants from Cameroon between 2000 and 2005: Whom they were, Their Main Reasons for Departure and their Destinations

Introduction

Migration across boundaries is an age old phenomenon but never in human history has international migration received as much attention as it is today. The intensity of emigration has evolved with changes in the socio-economic and technological situation of human populations.

From independence in 1960 up to 1979, the economy of Cameroon grew at rates of between 3% and 5% per annum in real terms. This period was characterized by rapid increase in job openings and a slow population growth. Emigration from Cameroon to other countries was minimal. The period ranging from 1980 to 1985 was characterized by accelerated economic growth of about 7% a year due to the rising prices of primary products which Cameroon exports such as cocoa, coffee, banana and petrol. This rapid economic growth was accompanied by very low rates of emigration. This period was followed by 10 years of negative economic growth and worsening living conditions. The national currency, the franc CFA was devalued by 50%, wages in the public sector were curtailed by more than 60%, many industries were closed down and recruitment into public service which is the main employer were highly reduced and in many cases there were retrenchments. Due to many adjustments and the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), government investments in key social sectors such as education and health were largely reduced. Since 1995, there have been some signs of economic recovery but the economic growth has been too slow to reverse the negative impacts of economic and social hardship caused by the economic crisis. Since the onset of the economic crisis, the number of departures from Cameroon as well as the emigration rate has increased. This has been facilitated by improvements in communication and transport and the fact that in many Developed Countries, well established networks of Cameroonians are already in existence. The massive exit of Cameroonians which is not more limited to people with specialized skills or people in search of high quality education has aroused a lot concern in Cameroon to such an extent that in the 2005 General Population and Housing Census and for the first time, questions on the sex and ages of those who left Cameroon between 2000 and 2005 as well as the main reasons and countries of destination were posed.

Hypotheses

This study entitled “Emigrants from Cameroon Between 2005: Whom were they, Their Main Reasons for Departure and where did go to?”, is to carried based on the following hypotheses:

-Emigrants from Cameroon within this period went in a large majority to the More Developed Countries especially the countries of North America and Western Countries;

-The main countries of Western Europe and North America where emigrants from Cameroon go in a large are those with a well established networks of Cameroonians who can provide them support and facilitate their adaptation process such as the U.S.A, Germany, the U.K, France, Canada and Belgium;

And the main motive for emigration from Cameroon is economic

Data for the Study

Data for this study come from information collected during the Third General Population and Housing Census of Cameroon carried in November 2005. These data concern information on the age of each emigrant at the time of departure from Cameroon, the sex, the main reason for departure, the year of departure as well as the country of destination.

Some Limitations of the Study

Even though this study has the great advantage of being the first nation wide study on emigration from Cameroon, it has some shortcomings which include:

-the fact that information on whole households that have moved out of Cameroon could not be available;

-only information on the main motive for emigration from Cameroon was asked and no information was collected on the secondary motives for emigration;

-information was collected only on the country of destination at the time of leaving Cameroon and not about the country of current residence;

-apart from sex and age at the time of departure from Cameroon, information was not collected on other socio-economic features of the emigrant.

Tables

Table 1 Distribution of Emigrants form Cameroon 2000-2005 by Age, Sex and Country or Group of Countries of Destination

Table 2 Distribution of Emigrants from Cameroon 2000-2005by Age, Sex and Main Reason for Departure

Table3 Distribution of Emigrants from Cameroon by Year of Departure and by Sex

Table 4 Distribution of Emigrants from Cameroon 2000-2005 by a Countries or Group of Countries of Destination, Main Reason for Departure and by Sex

Organization of the Study

A Introduction

B Summary of the Social, Economic and Demographic Situation of Cameroon

C Sex and Ages of Emigrants at the Time of Departure

D Major Destinations of Cameroonian Emigrants

E Main Reasons for Leaving Cameroon

F Evolution of the Number of Emigrants from Cameroon 2000-2005

G Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations.