

HUMAN SECURITY, MIGRATION, AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AfCFTA)

CHIGUDU, D.

*Office of Graduate Studies and Research, College of Economic Management Sciences,
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa
(e-mail: danchigudu@gmail.com; ORCID: 0000-0003-0984-9337)*

(Received 7th Sep 2024; accepted 9th Dec 2024)

Abstract. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) allows Africa to boost intra-trade, structurally transform, diversify, and realise socio-economic objectives committed under the African Union Agenda 2063. The AfCFTA is a flagship for the global Agenda 2030 and 2063 projects. However, economic integration and trade agreements do not promote environmental sustainability and fair outcomes. This study seeks to assess the distributional effects of such an agreement to ensure that migration, trade, climate action, and human security are complementary. Informed by the interpretive approach and qualitative research through content analysis of secondary data, it is argued that it is imperative to complement the AfCFTA initiatives on fundamental human rights, such as human security and migration. The study reveals that AfCFTA could be Africa's beacon of development if several issues are addressed, including putting in place developmental migration, climate change considerations, and labour policies that ensure human security.

Keywords: *regional integration, cross-border trade, environmental sustainability, social protection, economic development*

Introduction

Environmental sustainability is one of the critical components of the African Union's Agenda 2063: 'The Africa We Want,' and yet, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) launched recently makes insignificant allusions to the environment (Vander-Ven and Signe, 2021). The study examines how migration trends influence human security and how both are impacted by climate change, particularly in the context of AfCFTA's trade policies. Concerning human security, most of the regional economic communities (RECs) have demonstrated their human rights commitment (Monyani and Maunganidze, 2022; Nwozor et al., 2021). The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Charter of Fundamental Social Rights stresses social protection and employment rights. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Common Markets of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) have committed to the improvement of citizens' quality of life (Monyani and Maunganidze, 2022). ECOWAS adopted the General Convention on Social Security, which provides, among others, for migrant workers who retired from its Member States to enjoy social security rights in their original countries. Additionally, most regional economic communities (RECs) have established legal instruments that facilitate regional mobility and encourage human rights impacts. The Protocol on the AfCFTA is envisaged to show the significance of international security, the rule of law, democracy, and human rights (Monyani and Maunganidze, 2022). The right to human security is enshrined in several international instruments. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights outlines these rights, highlighting that all people are entitled to equal protection of the law without any discrimination. The Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights protects women's rights in Africa, which states that every woman's

life should be respected, including her security and integrity (Nwozor et al., 2021). However, women engaged in informal cross-border trading are usually exposed to harassment and abuse despite the standards of human rights that African States have agreed to. It has been observed that sexual abuse perpetrated by border officials is a common human rights violation to personal security, as border officials allegedly request sexual favours from women who are into informal cross-border trade in return for crossing the border (Nwozor et al., 2021). If the AfCFTA does not protect informal cross-border dealers, it risks cultivating a scenario that exposes it to many human rights issues. Facilitating border crossings by women through the AfCFTA could help curb the abuse. This study aims to explore the intersections of human security, migration, and climate change within the framework of AfCFTA, with a focus on fostering sustainable development and inclusive economic integration.

Definition of key concepts

Human security protects individuals from critical and pervasive threats to their well-being, including economic, environmental, political, and personal safety. It emphasises freedom from fear, want, and the ability to live in dignity. In this study, human security consistently encompasses issues like food insecurity caused by climate variability, vulnerabilities of informal cross-border traders (mainly women), and broader implications for regional stability under AfCFTA. For example, human security challenges under AfCFTA include ensuring that informal traders, particularly women, are protected from harassment and abuse at borders while promoting equitable economic opportunities” (Nwozor et al., 2021).

Climate change impacts refer to the adverse effects of climate variability and extreme weather events on ecosystems, infrastructure, livelihoods, and migration patterns. These include rising temperatures, droughts, floods, sea-level rise, and biodiversity loss. Climate change impacts will be consistently linked to migration trends and African economic vulnerabilities. For example, the reduction in agricultural productivity by 34% in sub-Saharan Africa since 1961 due to climate variability has exacerbated food insecurity and driven rural-to-urban migration” (Williams, 2019; Mutava, 2023).

Migration trends refer to population movement within and across borders due to economic opportunities, conflict, governance issues, or environmental factors such as climate change. Migration trends regarding their socio-economic contributions (e.g., nostalgic trade) and challenges (e.g., displacement due to climate change) should be analysed. For example, African migration trends have shown a 44% increase in intra-African movement since 2010, primarily driven by seasonal economic opportunities and climate-induced displacements” (Horwood and Frouws, 2023). By adopting these standardised definitions and ensuring their consistent application throughout the manuscript, the discussion will achieve greater clarity and coherence while aligning with the study’s objectives.

Methodology

This study employs an interpretive research paradigm, recognising that human experiences and social contexts shape social reality. It requires analysis within its socio-historic context through a sense-making process rather than hypothesis testing (Berg,

2001). The qualitative framework allows for a holistic and contextual analysis of the complex relationships between human security, migration, and climate change within AfCFTA. The research methodology prioritises systematic and transparent secondary data collection and analysis approaches, focusing on language, signs, and meanings from the perspective of participants involved in the social phenomenon (Berg, 2001). This study's focus exclusively on secondary data was chosen because of compelling reasons aligned with the research objectives. For example, the study's focus on AfCFTA's intersection with climate change, migration and human security needs extensive current and historical data across multiple African regions. Secondary data from established institutions provides this broad coverage, mainly through policy documents from the African Union and Regional Economic Communities, reports from international organisations tracking migration patterns and climate impacts and academic studies examining trade relationships and human security concerns. Secondary data also allows access to verified statistics on climate impacts and migration trends across the continent. Secondary data explicitly supports the study's aims by providing the historical context necessary for understanding the evolution of regional integration initiatives.

This approach enables a rich understanding of how migration patterns, human security concerns, and climate change impacts intersect within the AfCFTA framework. Secondary data was selected based on five critical criteria. First, relevance to the core themes of human security, migration, climate change, and AfCFTA was essential (Moyo et al., n.d). Second, credibility was ensured by prioritising peer-reviewed journals, government publications, and reports from recognised institutions. Third, timeliness was considered, with a preference for data published within the last decade. Fourth, the geographic scope focused on African contexts to maintain relevance. Finally, accessibility was crucial to ensure transparency and replicability of findings (Moyo et al., n.d)

The analysis acknowledges several limitations inherent in relying on secondary data. First, the available data were not collected initially to address this study's specific research questions, potentially omitting important variables (Cheng and Phillips, 2014). Second, some datasets may lack comprehensive coverage of all African regions or demographic groups, potentially creating gaps in understanding (Cheng and Phillips, 2014). Third, to protect confidentiality, publicly available datasets often omit identifying variables that could be valuable for analysis (Cheng and Phillips, 2014). Fourth, the potential for bias in original data collection must be considered, as the original research purposes may differ from this study's objectives (Moyo et al., n.d). Despite these limitations, the interpretive approach allows for simultaneous data collection and analysis, enabling adjustments to research focus as new insights emerge (Berg, 2001). This flexibility and rigorous analysis of multiple data sources helps mitigate some limitations while maintaining the study's analytical integrity. The researcher's role as an instrument in interpretive research is acknowledged, requiring careful attention to potential personal biases while leveraging insights and knowledge of the social context to interpret the phenomenon (Berg, 2001) accurately. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of the interplay between human security, migration, and climate change within the AfCFTA framework.

Migration and AfCFTA

Migration in Africa plays a significant role in the regional agenda for integration (Maunganidze, 2017). There is evidence that migration adds to socio-economic

development in the destination countries and countries of origin, given that most host countries usually trade with countries from which migrants originate. Creating linkages through international activities like philanthropy, capital investment, entrepreneurship, and knowledge transfer are critical aspects of migration (Harima, 2023). It is argued that the integration of Africa could be a pipe dream if the basics for African citizenship are not genuinely being laid, particularly the free movement of people without the deterrent visa restrictions across the continent (ISS, 2008). Studies of econometrics that explore the effect of migration on African trade ascribe improved bilateral trade between countries of origin and recipient countries to the migrants' presence in a particular country (Coulibaly et al., 2018). This phenomenon is often called nostalgic trade, which implies trade in services and goods unique to migrants' home countries. Migrants consume goods from back home through nostalgic trade, which benefits recipients and home countries.

Migration in Africa

Migration in Africa has continued to experience upward forces—prolonging 20 years (Williams, 2024; Horwood and Frouws, 2023). Repressive governments, conflict, limited economic opportunity, climate change, and an increase in the youth population are the main drivers causing new migrants, estimated to be one million in the previous year (Mutava, 2023). This contributes to the projected 43 million African migrants (Horwood and Frouws, 2023). The majority of them, mainly single and young migrants, linger on the African continent—in search of job opportunities in urban areas. Others seek employment beyond the continent, mainly in Europe and the Middle East, though migrants from Africa comprise just 8.2 and 6.6 per cent of all the migrants in those hubs (Williams, 2024). A blend of governance and structural factors are adding to the steady African migration increase, which, if prevailing patterns continue, cross-border movement in Africa could extend to 11 or 12 million people in 2050 (Williams, 2024). Although Africa achieved strong economic growth in 2000, it has the lowest per capita average incomes worldwide (Horwood and Frouws, 2023). Most of the migration that is not conflict-driven is influenced regionally by seasonal economic opportunities. Since 2010, a 44% rise in intra-African countries migration has been recorded, according to Williams (2024). For instance, circular migration primarily includes South Africa as the economically dynamic destination in the SADC region. In the ECOWAS region, most migrants move through Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire. The most significant migration in Africa continues within the countries—typically circular from rural areas to urban. As the sustainability of rural livelihoods becomes extra tenuous owing to climate change, an increasing number of migrants—between 70 to 110 million could be compelled to move permanently (Mutava, 2023; Williams, 2024)). The migration from rural to urban could be the first stage toward transnational migration as migrants from urban areas gain more information and income about other job opportunities. *Figure 1* summarises the migration trends from 2000 and projections up to 2025.

Human insecurity and climate change

The conflict outbreak between Sudan's military factions in 2023 caused more than 6 million cross-border dislocations (WB, 2023; Mutava, 2023). This contributed to people's movements in South Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 1961, climate variability has caused a 34-percent decrease

in the growth of agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa, contributing further to first-time food insecurity recently (Williams, 2019). It is predicted that climate change could drive up to 10 per cent of all cross-border African migration by the mid-21st century. This is mainly due to more severe storms, drought, and flooding. Southern Africa is projected to experience the most significant cross-border mobility increase in Africa by 2050 because of impacts from climate change, with about 200,000 to 800,000 people migrating to neighbouring countries (Mutava, 2023).

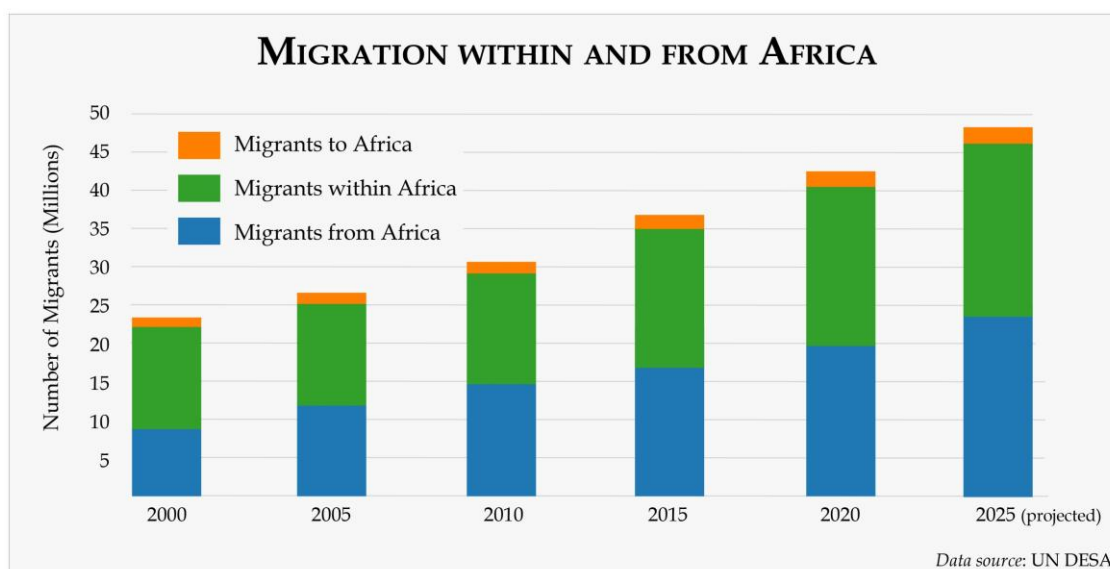


Figure 1. Source: ACSS (2023, online)

Border security on AfCFTA trade

Borderlands and borders in Africa have turned out to be the nexus of crime, security, politics, conflict, and development, often colliding and interfacing (Mokgonyana, 2023). Although Africa's formation of borders' is contentious, states sovereignty and territorial protection at domestic, regional, and international levels have become topical over the years because these boundaries have a substantial strategic, social, and political impact on states (AUBP, 2014). How a state determines and defines the functions and purposes of its boundaries is critical to controlling its territory, and this has a strong impact in many ways on its neighbouring countries. The residual delimitation effect of Africa's boundaries has significantly affected the diversity of the ethnic socio-economic structure, physical characteristics, and composition of the sub-region, with extensive spatial imports for trade relations and the spiral of conflict (AUBP, 2014). Take, for instance, the pull and push factors faced by Sudan, a country surrounded by states mired with conflict, economic challenges, and political subjugation in central Africa and the Horn of Africa. This makes Sudan the central transit zone for migrants from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea who are escaping poverty and hunger in their home countries in search of greener pastures in Europe. The porous and long borders with its neighbouring countries to the south worsen this and are compounded with weak borders, enabling many migrants to traverse international borders (Mokgonyana, 2023). Migrant trafficking has become lucrative such that those meant to curb it eventually profit from it, facilitate it, or pretend to be ignorant of the migrant flows.

Security threats related to border management, such as transnational organised crime, drug smuggling, violent migration, and human trafficking, have seen relevance in all domestic perceptions of security threats. The AfCFTA is expected to be the most significant trade area in the world, bringing together the African Union's 55 countries and 8 RECs to develop one market for goods and services in the continent (AUBP, 2014; Mokgonyana, 2023). The main idea behind the AfCFTA is to lower tariffs among the AU member states and cater for policy issues like services and trade facilitation, including regulatory processes like technical trade barriers and sanitary standards. The integration of trade across the continent has been restricted by out-of-date transport and border infrastructure coupled with a piecemeal of different regulations across several markets. The AfCFTA has a potential for deeper and broader economic integration that could create jobs, boost trade, attract investment, reduce poverty, and upturn shared prosperity in the continent (Mokgonyana, 2023). However, trade policy and trade can significantly affect the risk of conflict. Trade encourages and fosters the reallocation of resources to more efficient and practical activities, opening up new employment opportunities. However, relative price changes due to trade could also extinguish job opportunities in underperforming sectors, and those affected by such losses may turn to violence as a means of survival. Cross-border coordination of activities by government within a state and among other Member States of the AfCFTA is vital for the smooth, unhindered, and free flow of international trade (Mokgonyana, 2023). The nexus between trade and border conflict management is essential in facilitating inclusive economies, trade liberalisation, and economic integration in Africa.

Climate change and AfCFTA

The references made by AfCFTA to environmental sustainability and climate change are minimal. The preface of the agreement that established the AfCFTA confirms the State Parties' right to control environments within their confines. It affords flexibility for realising legitimate policy direction, including issues that relate to the environment (Van-der-Ven and Signe, 2021). The firming up of increased economic growth, intra-African state value chains, and improved human development are not the sole outcomes that could define the success of AfCFTA. In a rapidly progressing climate change and environmental degradation situation, the AfCFTA is also expected to serve as a force for sustainable growth (Van-der-Ven and Signe, 2021). At any rate, environmental sustainability is the mainstay of Africa's Agenda 2063, whose aspiration is to build a prosperous continent based on sustainable development and inclusive growth, stressing the significance of building communities and economies that are climate resilient and environmentally sustainable (AU, 2015). RECS has already adopted environmental policies at the regional level, with a focus, among others, on land, desertification, biodiversity loss and water degradation, and industrial and urban pollution. African states have also made firm commitments to address climate change, with over 90 per cent of countries endorsing the Paris Agreement. Seventy per cent of African countries have in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) committed towards agriculture and clean energy (UNFCCC, 2020a). Africa is faced with severe environmental challenges. Even though the African continent contributes the smallest amount to global warming in terms of per capita and absolute, research predicts that Africa will experience the most devastating climate change impacts (WEF, 2018). As revealed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the African continent could expect hostile climate effects on buildings, port facilities, airports,

roads, railways, and bridges because of sea levels going up and the phenomena of increased extreme weather occurrence (Van-der-Ven and Signe, 2021). Furthermore, trends in land degradation and deforestation are devastating weak ecosystems, leading to irreversible loss of biodiversity, scarcity of water, and debilitating effects, like mudslides and floods, on the deprived communities (Van-der-Ven and Signe, 2021). In urban areas, ineffective waste management and air pollution pose growing and serious problems. According to World Bank estimates, sub-Saharan Africa only produces about 62 million tonnes of waste, including plastic waste, annually, projected to double by 2025 (Mourdoukoutas, n.d).

Environmental degradation and climate change are extremely risky, weakening the predicted AfCFTA economic benefits (Xinhuanet, 2020). The study conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) shows that the increase in temperatures might reduce the gross domestic product (GDP) in Africa by 2.25 to 12.12 per cent, based on the extent of the temperature rise (UNFCCC, 2020b). Another study revealed that about half of the GDP in the African continent is prone to harsh climatic conditions (WEF, 2018). Moreover, such extreme climatic conditions could affect infrastructure vital for the transportation of goods, making continental trade more costly and slower. Extreme weather and warmer climates are also predicted to affect agricultural revenues given that sub-Saharan Africa is envisioned to have the worst situations (Keane et al., 2021) and affect biodiversity, which could directly have a bearing on Africa's nascent but developing tourism industry (Luke and Sommer, 2020). The focus on sustainable growth is ever more critical as the most significant three economies in the world, the United States, the European Union and China have either pledged or have made critical commitments to green their nations (Van-der-Ven and Signe, 2021). For Africa, what is particularly significant is the Green Deal ambition by the EU, which deals with environmental challenges and climate change by seeking to realise net zero emissions in 2050 and progressively transitioning to a circular economy (Van-der-Ven and Signe, 2021). The European Green Deal's main building block is the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP), which aims to reduce natural resources pressure by directing how products are fabricated, fostering circular economy developments, and supporting sustainable consumption (EU, n.d). It predicts the development of more rigid standards like eco-design necessities for various sectors and value chains. This includes ICT and electronics, vehicles and batteries, textiles, plastics, packaging, and high-impact intermediary products (EC, 2020). Notwithstanding their significance, environmentally based regulations crafted by the EU and some other developed economies could unintentionally weaken the benefits that African states enjoy under the preferential market access provisions (UNCTAD, 2023). The advent of an international landscape that is gradually passionate about environmental issues of trade should be dealt with if Africa is poised to compete globally (Van-der-Ven and Signe, 2021).

Results and discussion

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a transformative opportunity to address the intertwined challenges of human security, migration, and environmental sustainability. These issues are closely related since human insecurity is made worse by migration brought on by climate change. Still, inclusive trade policies under the AfCFTA could lessen these difficulties by promoting regional stability and economic resilience.

Climate-induced migration and human insecurity

Due to the effects of climate change, including droughts, floods, and decreased agricultural output, millions of Africans are forced to migrate in quest of better possibilities. For example, since 1961, climate variability has caused a 34% decrease in agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa, which has led to food poverty and displacement. It is estimated that up to 10% of cross-border migration in Africa by mid-century will be driven by climate change. Southern Africa is expected to experience the highest levels of mobility due to extreme weather events. This type of migration often leads to precarious living conditions for migrants, including inadequate access to food, shelter, healthcare, and safety. Women are particularly vulnerable; many informal cross-border traders face harassment and abuse at borders despite existing human rights protections. These dynamics demonstrate how migration brought on by climate change makes human insecurity worse by putting people in situations where they are unable to exercise their rights or meet their fundamental necessities. In host nations, migrants frequently face structural obstacles like restricted access to social protection or job prospects. These risks affect economic growth and regional stability when no focused responses exist.

The function of the AfCFTA in reducing difficulties

Through inclusive trade policies that support climate resilience and human security, AfCFTA can address these issues. For those displaced by climate change, this can offer alternate sources of income, especially in rural areas where agricultural profitability is dwindling. By guaranteeing secure border crossings and formalising their operations, policies under the AfCFTA can safeguard informal cross-border traders, many of whom are women. Further to enhancing their financial stability, this could reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Sustainable infrastructure investments under AfCFTA could alleviate the impact of climate change on trade. For example, improving transportation networks could reduce costs related to extreme weather events that disrupt supply chains.

Linking environmental sustainability with trade

While AfCFTA only references minimal environmental sustainability, integrating climate considerations into its framework could amplify its developmental impact. African states have already demonstrated commitment to climate action through initiatives like the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2063's aspiration for sustainable growth. Building on this momentum, AfCFTA could facilitate trade in environmental goods and services (e.g., renewable energy technologies), restrict trade in environmentally harmful products, and Encourage compliance with multilateral environmental agreements (e.g., the Basel Convention on hazardous waste). Such measures would align AfCFTA with global sustainability goals and ensure that environmental degradation does not undermine economic benefits. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is poised to transform Africa's economic and social landscape significantly. However, its environmental policies remain underdeveloped, which raises concerns about its ability to address the continent's pressing climate challenges. While the agreement has the potential to promote sustainable growth, there is insufficient evidence or explicit provisions within AfCFTA to ensure environmental sustainability is fully integrated into its framework. This

section provides additional evidence where possible and acknowledges existing data and policy landscape limitations.

Limited references to environmental sustainability

AfCFTA's founding documents make minimal references to environmental sustainability. The agreement's preamble acknowledges state parties' rights to control their environments but fails to establish binding commitments or detailed provisions for addressing climate change or environmental degradation. This omission contrasts sharply with Africa's broader developmental goals outlined in Agenda 2063, which emphasise building climate-resilient economies and sustainable growth pathways. For instance, while over 90% of African countries have ratified the Paris Agreement and included climate action in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), these commitments are not explicitly linked to AfCFTA's trade policies.

Potential for environmental integration

Despite these gaps, there are opportunities for AfCFTA to align with environmental goals. AfCFTA could facilitate trade in renewable energy technologies and other green products, reducing Africa's reliance on imported technologies and fostering local green industries. The agreement could incorporate clauses encouraging compliance with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), such as the Basel Convention on Hazardous Waste or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). By promoting investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, AfCFTA could mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events on trade logistics and supply chains. However, these measures remain largely aspirational without concrete mechanisms within AfCFTA to enforce or incentivise their implementation.

Data gaps and limitations

The lack of robust data on how AfCFTA interacts with environmental sustainability poses a significant limitation. For example, limited empirical research quantifies how trade liberalisation under AfCFTA will impact greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, or resource depletion. Few studies examine how specific industries—such as agriculture or manufacturing—will adapt to climate risks under AfCFTA's framework. Environmental challenges vary significantly across Africa's regions, yet there is insufficient data on how AfCFTA policies might address these localised issues. Additionally, while Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as ECOWAS and SADC have adopted environmental policies at the regional level, these efforts are fragmented and lack harmonisation with AfCFTA's overarching trade objectives.

Acknowledging risks

Environmental degradation could undermine the economic benefits projected under AfCFTA. For instance, rising temperatures are expected to reduce Africa's GDP by 2.25% to 12.12%, depending on the extent of warming; extreme weather events may disrupt critical trade infrastructure such as ports, railways, and roads, increasing costs and slowing trade flows; and unsustainable practices in agriculture and natural resource extraction could exacerbate deforestation, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss—further destabilising rural livelihoods.

Opportunities for green technologies

AfCFTA offers a platform to promote green industrialisation by fostering intra-African trade in environmental goods and services. For example, reducing tariffs on renewable energy technologies could accelerate the adoption of solar panels, wind turbines, and other sustainable solutions across the continent. The potential for low-carbon economic diversification through regional collaboration and sustainable value chains is shown by UNCTAD's initiative to incorporate green strategies into national AfCFTA implementation plans. AfCFTA can promote investments in climate-resilient infrastructure by harmonising with Africa's Agenda 2063 and international climate agreements like the Paris Agreement. This includes agricultural advances that improve food security despite changing climates and transportation networks that can endure extreme weather events. The AfCFTA Protocol on Investment offers ways to draw capital to environmentally friendly industries such as eco-friendly manufacturing, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy. By lowering reliance on fossil fuels, these investments could establish Africa as a pioneer in developing green industries. The green transition by AfCFTA could advance technological innovation through promoting regional cooperation in R&D. This would boost Africa's competitiveness in international markets for green products like electric vehicle batteries built from locally obtained minerals like cobalt and lithium and generate jobs in developing industries.

Recommendations

The nexus between border conflict management and trade is crucial in enabling economic integration, trade liberalisation, and inclusive economies in Africa. Poor border management due to conflicts can prevent effective AfCFTA implementation; hence, the AU Member States should understand that the economy's informal sector thrives together with the cross-border traders' informal activities. Using alternative language concerning informal traders, such as small-scale traders, and formulating official policies to sustain them could help stamp out the perception of illegality about these cross-border traders who deal with legitimate goods and services. Perhaps this could pave the way for better respect, treatment of human rights and dignity, and enhance economic integration and trade. For African countries to understand AfCFTA and its role in the continent's desire for green growth, it is pertinent to reconsider the link between environmental sustainability and trade agreements. Beyond what is stated in the AfCFTA's founding preamble document, there are no provisions for environmental sustainability. Although this oversight is an opportunity missed, it is never too late to build the relationship between the environment and AfCFTA. There are different ways in which fundamental provisions in free trade agreements (FTAs) could enhance environmental goals. For example, facilitation of trade in environmental services and goods, restriction or reduce trade in environmentally harmful products, and secure space for policy to embrace environmental regulation and take measures applicable to conform with the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) commitments. The AfCFTA could potentially speed up the development of sustainable infrastructure and technologies. Improved international trade in Africa through the AfCFTA could enable advancement into renewable resource-based technologies and green industries. By reducing trade barriers, the trade agreements could also enable the distribution of environmental goods and services. Lastly, trade agreements could prohibit or discourage environmentally harmful practices that negatively affect trade.

This includes the requirement that the Parties concerned comply with MEAs, like the Basel Convention that governs transboundary movements of harmful wastes and how they are disposed of or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Conclusion

Africa birthed the AfCFTA agreement to institute one of the most important free trade areas worldwide. This will make the continent's economy more sophisticated and integrated as it broadens job opportunities, reduces commodity and trade and costs, advances specialisation or industrialisation, and, above all, the free movement of goods and people will be the crucial aspect of the agreement. Africa is well known for the predominance of various types of problems and conflicts; this includes the porosity of borders, which presents a fertile ground for the burgeoning of different organised syndicates of crime and extremist groups. In addition, borders are the primary conduits for illicit cross-border trade dealings, smuggling of weaponry, and activities of human trafficking. Accordingly, for their aggrandisement, such groups could use AfCFTA, undermining the continent's already fragile peace and security. Hence, the continent is confronted with a situation that affects aspirations for development. Failure to incorporate detailed environmental provisions by the AfCFTA should be revisited, as it is not too late to build up the relationship between the climate objectives and AfCFTA in Africa's Agenda 2063. By developing an international market in Africa, the AfCFTA permits businesses to create green technologies, services, and goods, in that way developing value chains in Africa that reduce the dependency by the continent on imported green technologies, services, and goods from outside Africa.

REFERENCES

- [1] ACSS (2023): African migration trends to watch in 2023-Infographics. – <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-migration-trends-to-watch-in-2023/> [Accessed 5 April 2024].
- [2] AfCFTA (n.d.): State parties. – <https://au-afcfta.org/state-parties/> [Accessed 5 April 2024].
- [3] AU (2015): Agenda 2063: The Africa we want: A Shared Strategic Framework for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development. – African Union, Addis Ababa.
- [4] AUBP (2014): Delimitation and Demarcation of Boundaries in Africa: General Issues and Case Studies. – Commission of the African Union, Department of Peace and Security, Addis Ababa.
- [5] Berg, B. L. (2001): Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. 4th Ed. – Allyn & Bacon, Boston.
- [6] Cheng, H., Phillips, M. (2014): Secondary analysis of existing data: opportunities and implementation. – *Shanghai Arch Psychiatry* 26(6): 371-5.
- [7] Coulibaly, D., Gnimassoun, B., Mignon, V. (2018): Growth-enhancing effect of openness to trade and migrations: what is the effective transmission channel for Africa? – *Journal of African Economies*, August 27(4): 369-404.
- [8] EC (2020): A new circular economic action plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe. – https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:9903b325-6388-11ea-b735-01aa75ed71a1.0017.02/DOC_1&format=PDF [Accessed 15 April 2024].

- [9] Ehrhart, H., Le-Goff, M., Rocher, E., Singh, R. (2014): Does migration foster exports? Evidence from Africa. – <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2375458> [Accessed 5 April 2024].
- [10] EU (n.d.): Circular Economy Action Plan. – https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en [Accessed 24 April 2024].
- [11] Harima, A. (2022): Transnational migration entrepreneurship during a crisis: immediate response to challenges and opportunities emerging through the COVID-19 pandemic. – *Business and Society Review* 127(1): 223-251.
- [12] Horwood, C., Frouws, B. (2023a): Mixed migration review: regional issues through regional perspectives. – <https://mixedmigration.org/mmr2023/> [Accessed 13 March 2024].
- [13] Horwood, C., Frouws, B. (2023b): Patterns of inter-state irregular migration in Africa. – *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2024.1249805>.
- [14] ISS (2008): Monograph 140: Towards a Union Government for Africa. Challenges and Opportunities. – <https://issafrica.org/research/monographs/monograph-140-towards-a-union-government-for-africa-challenges-and-opportunities-edited-by-timothy-murithi> [Accessed 3 April 2024].
- [15] Keane, J., Mendez-Parra, M., Pettinotti, L. 2021. The climate and trade nexus in Africa: climate change and the transformation of African trade in Africa. – https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/climate_trade_nexus_v7.pdf [Accessed 13 April 2024].
- [16] Luke, D., Sommer, L. (2020): OPINION: To build back better, make African trade greener. – <https://news.trust.org/item/20201005102659-85oyc/> [Accessed 20 April 2024].
- [17] Lungu, L. (2019): A fresh chance for Africa's youth. Labour market effects of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). – Briefing Paper. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Bonn.
- [18] Madden, P. (2020): AFRICA IN FOCUS Figure of the week: the AfCFTA's effects on trade and wages in Africa. – <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/09/02/figure-of-the-week-the-afcftas-effects-on-trade-and-wages-in-africa/> [Accessed 7 April 2024].
- [19] Maunganidze, O. (2017): Freedom of movement: unlocking Africa's development potential. – <https://issafrica.org/research/policy-brief/freedom-of-movement-unlocking-africas-development-potential> [Accessed 4 May 2024].
- [20] Mokgonyana, K. (2023): Impact of border insecurity on AfCFTA trade facilitation. – <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/impact-of-border-insecurity-on-afcfta-trade-> [Accessed 8 April 2024].
- [21] Monyani, M., Maunganidze, O. (2022): Free trade and mobility in Africa: what is at stake? – <https://issafrica.org/research/policy-brief/free-trade-and-mobility-in-africa-what-is-at-stake> [Accessed 3 April 2024].
- [22] Mourdoukoutas, L. (n.d.): Africa's bumpy road to sustainable energy: environmental initiatives reduce pollution and embrace renewable energy. – <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/africa%E2%80%99s-bumpy-road-sustainable-energy> [Accessed 20 April 2024].
- [23] Moyo, T., Sibanda, E., Gombe, N. T., Juru, T. P., Govha, E., Omondi, M., Chadambuka, A., Tshimanga, M. (n.d.): Secondary data analysis of tuberculosis deaths in Bulawayo Province, Zimbabwe, 2016-2019. – *Open Journal of Epidemiology* 12(1): 57-67.
- [24] Mutava, M. (2023): An analysis of trends and patterns of migration in Africa. – <https://nsi.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/An-analysis-of-trends-and-patterns-of-migration-in-Africa.pdf> [Accessed 3 April 2024].
- [25] Nwozor, A., Owofeye, G., Olowojolu, O., Ake, M., Adedire, S., Ogundele, O. (2021): Nigeria's Quest for alternative clean energy through biofuels: an assessment. – *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 655: 0120541.

- [26] Nwozor, A., Okidu, O., Adedire, S. (2021): Agenda 2063 and the feasibility of sustainable development in Africa: Any silver bullet? – *Journal of Black Studies* 52(7): 688-715.
- [27] UNCTAD (2023): The Generalised Systems of Preferences. – https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditctsce2023d1_en.pdf [Accessed 12 April 2024].
- [28] UNFCCC (2020a): Climate change is an increasing threat to Africa. – <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-an-increasing-threat-to-africa#:~:text=Increases%20in%20temperature%20and%20changes,fever%2C%20malaria%20and%20yellow%20fever> [Accessed 15 April 2024].
- [29] UNFCCC (2020b): Climate change is an increasing threat to Africa. – <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-is-an-increasing-threat-to-africa> [Accessed 16 April 2024].
- [30] Van-der-Ven, C., Signe, L. (2021): Greening the AfCFTA: It Is Not Too Late. – Africa Growth Initiative, Brookings.
- [31] WB (2023): World Bank Development Report: Migrants, Refugees and Societies. – <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2023> [Accessed 1 April 2024].
- [32] WEF (2018): Africa's fastest-growing cities are the most vulnerable to climate change globally. – <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/africa-s-fastest-growing-cities-are-the-most-vulnerable-to-climate-change-globally/> [Accessed 15 April 2024].
- [33] Williams, D. R., Lawrence, J. A., Davis, B. A., Vu, C. (2019): Understanding how discrimination can affect health. – *Health Services Research* 54(S2): 1374-1388.
- [34] Williams, W. (2019): Shifting borders: Africa's displacement crisis and its security implications. – <https://africacenter.org/publication/shifting-borders-africas-displacement-crisis-and-its-security-implications/> [Accessed 5 April 2024].
- [35] Williams, W. (2024): African migration trends to watch in 2024. – <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-migration-trends-to-watch-in-2024/> [Accessed 5 April 2024].
- [36] Xinhuanet (2020): Climate change poses risk to Africa's free trade area: UN official. – http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-02/27/c_138823514.htm [Accessed 11 April 2024].