

Shipton, Parker. "Ethnicity, Economy, and Mobility: A Preliminary Reflection on Confinement and Violence South of the Sahara"

(Abstract)

Many strategies introduced by foreign nations attempt to reform African ways in the name of development, such as land titling, credit and loan systems, have failed largely because these systems are not compatible with Africa's history and widely diverse cultural conditions.

To help address the issue of developmental aid, a paradigm shift in thinking is necessary. The current thinking by aid agencies is that goods (money, seeds, knowledge, etc.) must be transferred through sending. This follows the assumption that the beneficiaries of aid cannot or will not travel overseas on their own to satisfy local needs at home for themselves or for their kith and kin. Allowing people to move freely in and out of their countries and continents will allow people to find goods and ideas and bring or send them back themselves.

Among reasons why Africans remain "bottled up" is that so many people in richer countries fear disease, incomprehensible languages, loss of jobs, supposedly impure blood, etc. Nation states prevent movement through immigration work processes, regulation of transportation, quotas, tests, and medical/educational requirements. Among the problems caused by restriction of movement (and in some contexts, by internal displacement too) are high competition for land, the sharpening of inter-ethnic divisions, and gang violence, sometimes organized or abetted by national politicians. Joblessness leads to disappointment and frustration among the educated. Sexual frustration, and the blocking of routes to prestige dependent on parenthood because of diminished ability to pay customary marriage dues, contributes to epidemics of rape and other forms of violence.

Freeing up human movement – both within and between continents -- is one answer likely to reduce competition for land, and to advance other solutions as well.