Migration Governance Assessment of the ECOWAS Sub-region: A rank-based approach

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Abstract

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) developed the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) in 2015 to assist nations in defining what a well-managed migration policy should be. While this is beneficial, it does not provide a benchmark for measuring and assessing the migration governance performance of countries, nor does it provide a simplified framework for internationally comparable analysis, because it is an assessment rather than a ranking tool. Relying on the migration governance framework to quantitatively rank countries, this study uses the IOM and United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs computational methodology for measuring SDG target 10.7(facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration, etc.) to quantify and construct a migration governance index for ECOWAS member

states. The index is used to construct a rank table that reveals how countries converge towards a common migration governance policy stance. The result revealed that migration governance integration among countries in the ECOWAS region is inconsistent, with most of the countries falling into different clusters and performing poorly in several domains/Dimensions. The study also revealed that with the countries' low performance in the whole of the government approach and facilitating a safe, ordered, and regular migration, ECOWAS as a sub-region is still far from achieving the SDG goal 10.7. The study recommends that ECOWAS should strengthen its members' institutional capacities and also strive to enforce migration governance compliance.

Keywords: *Administration, Governance, Indicators, Migration, Regional cooperation.*

JEL Classification: F22, J6, P48

Introduction

Facilitating a safe, orderly, and regular migration is at the core of migration discourse and has remained one of the greatest concerns in migration governance. It involves making bold decisions and implementing measures that mitigate risks associated with the movement of people from one location to another. In certain situations, the spread of infectious diseases is curtailed through effective health checks at the borders. Moreover, illegal entry and exit, human trafficking, and terrorism are predominantly prevented through regulated migration, explicit collection, documentation of migrants, and quick responses to mobility-related crises (United Nations International Organisation for Migration [IOM], 2020).

Migration governance is usually considered good when there is evidence of a strong partnership on migration issues among governmental, non-governmental organizations, and the international community (Karabacak et al., 2024). According to IOM (2020), this partnership is essential in broadening the understanding of migration and in developing comprehensive and effective approaches. Good migration governance has been talked about so much over the years that researchers, like Tandardini and Tolay (2020), questioned whether assessing performance really matters in migration governance. They argued that assessing migration governance performance is only marginally important and is mostly used by political leaders, although technically.

A contrary view to this by IOM (2024) explains that understanding and measuring migration dynamics are crucial in making informed decisions and policies on migration issues and challenges, especially as countries continue to experience continuous shifts in their migration patterns. The experience is, therefore, not different in West Africa. This is because the West African sub-region is well known for its high levels of mobility (Mckeon, 2018). This movement, which happens for so many reasons such as economic opportunities, education, and forced displacement, is said to date back to pre-colonial times (Adepoju, 2005; Teye, 2022). The resultant outcome of this mobility is a robust drive for human development and economic growth (Onyechi, 2024).

Despite having a large number of populations leave the sub-region for other regions, the West African region plays host to a large chunk of migrants from other geopolitical locations. According to IOM (2023), an estimated 7.6 million international migrants resided in the region by the middle of 2020, though temporary and seasonal migrants are not fully captured by the available data. It is estimated that 5 out of 8 West African migrants move within the region (IOM, 2023). Mckeon (2018) argues that intra-regional migration represents 70 percent of West African migration patterns. This intra-regional mobility is believed to be facilitated by the regional migration policies of the Economic Community of West African States - ECOWAS (Sattler & Cook, 2021).

The ECOWAS region is known to be characterised by a high level of human mobility (Dick & Schraven, 2018). The region is replete with individuals who not only move within the region in a dynamic and diverse way, but also, according to the seasons (Onyechi, 2024). These sets of migrants are known as seasonal labour migrants and are mostly pastoralists. Unfortunately, all ECOWAS countries are classified as net emigrants, leading to a huge loss in human capital, also known as brain drain. Ozulumba et al. (2024) found that a one percent increase in net migration results in a 9.43 percent decrease in human capital development in the ECOWAS region. There are arguments that the loss in economic growth arising from brain drain may be offset by the rising levels of remittances. This is supported by the United Nations 2024 Fact sheet, which reported that remittances to West Africa represent 66 percent of total foreign financial flows, with a 7.58 percent remittance as a percentage of GDP. The IOM 2024 world report shows that there has been a 650 percent increase in international remittances from 2000-2022, a whopping rise from USD 128 billion to USD 831 billion.

Surprisingly, the IOM reports that out of the USD 831 billion in global remittances, USD 647 billion were sent by migrants to low and middle-income countries, comprising mostly West African states. Consequently, remittances now constitute a huge portion of these countries' GDP. With remittances rising above foreign direct investment (IOM, 2024), migration governance within the region is imperative. Regional cooperation in addressing migration issues cannot be overemphasised because of the usefulness of migration policies in the harmonisation of trade, economic development, and growth. The evidence is seen clearly in the number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are related to migration. This idea is corroborated by Robinson (2020), who argued that nearly all SDGs are linked to migrational dimensions.

The responsibility however, has been on the International Organisation for Migration to assist its member countries in the assessment of the progress made so far and in the advancement of efforts that are desperately needed for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (Robinson, 2020). Evidence of record uniformity in the migration policies and programmes adopted across regions and continents abounds, but in-between, there is a deep-seated struggle with effective programme implementation and collective negotiations with critical stakeholders (Sempijja, 2021). On the flip side, the regional cooperation expected from these ECOWAS protocols has been undermined by poor implementation of migration policies and egregious acts by member states that violate migrants' rights, such as mass deportations, especially in crisis situations (Flahaux & Hass, 2016).

According to Danziger (2018), migration in the West African region is not just complex but a very challenging experience. Outlining factors like human trafficking, poor humanitarian assistance, weak border controls and management, and insufficient migration data, Danziger suggests that a well-managed, orderly migration framework that incorporates practical, humane, and rights-based operational solutions is needed. Czaika et al. (2020) noted that the volatility and uncertainty of migration make its governance very challenging. This is corroborated by Yaro (2009), who explained that a major challenge with migration in the West African region is the paucity of enforcement of the ECOWAS protocol on entry, residence, and settlement. At the heart of these challenges lies an unanswered question: Are countries within the West African region measuring up with one another in implementing policies geared towards addressing migration problems?

For several decades, there was no way to assess this until the introduction of migration governance frameworks and indicators. Before this, the ECOWAS sub-region had adopted the 1979 freedom of movement protocols, which allow citizens of member states with valid passports to travel within the sub-region visa-free for 90 days (Bastide, 2017). Besides, the ECOWAS common approach paper on migration has been used since 2008 as a benchmark policy and guiding document for migration management in the sub-region (Urso & Hakami, 2018; Attoh & Ishola, 2021).Discussions on how migration governance statistics can be improved upon have taken precedence in international gatherings and congresses on migration. This move for further improvement is emphasized by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which reports that migration statistics are not perfect and are not internationally comparable.

With the introduction of the migration governance frameworks and indicators, the ease with which each country's migration governance is assessed has accelerated. According to IOM (2023), the migration governance indicators collect relevant and comprehensive information on various aspects of migration. There are 90 migration governance indicators in six domains or dimensions: safe, orderly, and regular migration, migrant wellbeing, partnership and the whole of government approach, migrants' rights, and mobility dimensions of crises. But these indicators are not quantified, so they can only serve as an assessment tool rather than a ranking tool (IOM, 2023), which limits its relevance in two ways: it does not provide a benchmark for the measurement and assessment of the migration governance performance of countries; nor does it provide a simplified framework for internationally comparable analysis. Filling this gap however, forms the fundamental interest of this study.

Meanwhile, a remarkable thing the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs have done is develop indices that measure various aspects of migration governance. This became imperative with the realization that previous indices focused only on one region and one area of migration policy and, therefore, had outlived their usefulness (IOM, 2019). Also, subsequent MGI assessments have only produced a list of indicators without producing an overall index. Robinson (2020) emphasized that the IOM migration governance indicators are better than the existing indices.

This inability to have known numerical values assigned to the migration indicators has highlighted fundamental lacunae in the measurement of migration governance. This paper would build on the efforts of IOM and UNDESA to set the stage for a more realistic approach to quantifying migration governance rank and reveal the performance levels of countries in the various migration governance domains. In doing this, there is no inventing of new wheels. Rather, all additions are, at best, fundamental extensions of the IOM framework with some attempts to create a ranking order by assigning numeric values of 1 or 0 to the sub-categories found in each domain.

A unique way this study addresses the identified problem is by relying on the migration governance frameworks to quantify the migration governance indicators and subsequently, rank the performance of these countries using the constructed index. Fortunately, the governance profile explicitly states whether the country has the different dimensions in operation or not, which makes it very easy to capture their status by assigning numerical values. Quantifying migration governance is important because it guides policy interventions and allows policymakers to demonstrate and report on progress. The data that emerges from measuring migration governance is expected to establish baselines and provide the basis for setting targets for improvement, identify trends and projections that address areas of poor performance, as well as inform economies of the impact of policy directives on migration issues. These assertions are also supported by Solano and Huddleton (2022) which explained that aggregating indicators is necessary because it summarises the phenomenon in ways that are easy to interpret.

Literature Review

Several theories of migration governance abound in migration literature, just like there are several theories explaining why people move from one location to another. The liberal institutionalist theory in the context of migration governance explains that international organisations like the United Nations typically influence how migration policies are instituted and governed across nations. It focuses on how global cooperation among states helps to shape migration governance institutions through the administration of treaties, conventions, and other mutually beneficial pacts while ensuring that the sovereignty of states remains uncompromised. The theory is anchored on cooperation, which makes it even more suitable and tightly fused to the ideas developed in this study.

While this theory is relevant in migration governance discourse, it is not directly credited to any known scholar. Rather, its ideas were curated from the liberal institutionalist thoughts in international relations and adapted to migration studies by James Hollifield (2004), Alenxander Betts (2011) and Sandra Lavenex (2016). However, the efforts and contributions of Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye (1977) and Keohane (1984) in developing the liberal institutionalist theory are still largely recognised.

The realist/state-centric theory of migration governance appears to be an antithesis of the liberal institutionalist theory. Contrary to the liberals' views, the real theorists place sovereignty of nations strictly above cooperation. It believes that states would embrace cooperation only if it enhances their national power, values unilateral rather than bi-lateral policies and institutes border-controls, more or less securitization of migration. Just like the liberal institutional theory, its roots are traced to political realism in international relations and adapted in migration studies by Gary freeman (1995) and Jef Huysman (2006).

Another theory of interest to this study is the regional migration governance theory, which was popularised by Andrew Geddes (2003) and Sandra Lavenex (2016). The theory asserts that countries that form regional blocs do not only advance economic development but also manage migration within and across its borders. This regional approach to migration governance is evident in the operations of the European Union (EU), ASEAN's, African Union (AU), Schengen, and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) blocs. This theory posits that countries within a certain region is compelled by agreement to cede migration controls and related decisions to the regional body.

Over the last decade, especially after the introduction of the IOM-Migration Governance frameworks and indicators, growing concerns over what is considered as the right tool and indexes for measuring and assessing migration policies and indeed governance widened. A critical review of extant literature on migration governance assessment methods revealed the efforts that various researchers in the field of migration have made to address these concerns. It is true that the IOM set the stage for migration governance assessment but there appears to be a void evident in the measurement of cross-country differences in migration policies and governance, considering that the IOM's MGI is merely qualitative and an assessment tool rather than a ranking tool. Researchers have over the last two decades created indicators and indexes for country-specific comparison of migration policies (Solano & Huddleston, 2022).

Helbling and Solano (2021), in the past, have also created such aggregation with summary scores showing the character of migration policies. Other attempts have also been made to assess same across space and over time (Gest et al., 2014). Solano and Huddleton (2020) utilised the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) to assess how well migrants were integrated into their destination countries across 5 continents. The indicators are assigned scores that are averaged across each of the eight policy areas for each country. They argued that MIPEX is the most reliable and comprehensive tool for comparing integration policies but its use is limited to the study of migrant integration. Pasetti and Lebon-McGregor (2023) employed the indicator approach to measuring good migration governance. The effectiveness of this method was stalled by the absence of an evidence-based approach to migration governance in the three countries studied – Turkey, the Netherlands and Spain.

Questions such as knowing the impact of migration regimes, the processes of regional governance systems, and the effectiveness of regional migration governance were addressed by Dick and Schraven (2018). They introduced a framework for analysing regional migration governance, which highlights the diversity in migration realities of different economies. The approach uses historical views and trends to identify the challenges and gaps in migration governance. It is, however, qualitative and thus serves mostly as a conceptual guideline for empirical literature (Dick & Schraven, 2018). A similar approach was also adopted by Geddess et al. (2019), which used the essential characteristics of regions to make an attempt at explaining the dynamics of regional migration governance.

Moreover, aggregation index like the weighing methods have been used by other researchers even as Bjerre et al. (2019) asserts that different aggregation method yields different ranking results for countries. Conversely, the Joint Research Centre and OECD in 2008 observed that these methods of migration assessment have some shortcomings (Solano & Huddleton, 2022). They argued for the possibility of a country whose performances are average, scoring the same with another country, which performs high on one indicator and poorly in another indicator.

Following these observations, this study is empirically relevant in a number of intriguing ways: The adoption of the IOM-UNDESA 2022 methodology thankfully closes the methodological gap observed in the literature, especially the submission of the 2008 Joint Research Centre and OECD, which is cited in the preceding paragraph. The IOM-

UNDESA approach is not only reliable but also the most current measure of migration policy assessment. Again, the quantification of IOM's migration assessment indicators extends the migration governance indicators from merely being a self–assessment tool as reported by IOM (2023) to a ranking tool. Quantifying these indicators also allows for cross country comparison of migration governance performance. In addition, this study's observation that very few studies have been conducted on migration governance in Sub-Saharan African region and the ECOWAS sub-region is supported by (Czaika et al., 2020; Geddess et al., 2019 & Solano and Huddleton (2022), which affirmed that dearth of literature in migration governance assessment points to the level of neglect and disinterest of developing countries in migration governance issues.

Methodology

The indicators aggregated in this study are drawn from each country's IOM's Migration Governance Profile. The migration governance indicators which are found in these profiles set standards for countries to assess their policies and as well, identify areas of migration governance that need further development and strengthening. It comprises 90 indicators grouped into six dimensions or domains: safe, orderly, and regular migration; migrant wellbeing; partnership; whole-of-government approach; migrant's rights; and mobility dimensions of crises. Since the Migration Governance Indicators were designed as a self–assessment tool with a list of indicators without an overall index, this study adopted the IOM and United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) computational methodology for measuring SDG target 10.7 to aggregate these indicators into an index and construct a migration governance index in six dimensions for the ECOWAS sub-region. The method is given as:

$$D_i = \frac{\sum_j^n S_{ji}}{n} \times 100$$

The methodology is an unweighted average of the values across 30 subcategories, which is then applied to the assessments presented in the MGI profile to capture each domain or dimension: where D_i refers to the value for each domain, $\sum_j^n S_{ji}$ is the sum of values

across subcategories in each domain, and n is the number of subcategories in each domain, which is 5 in this case. Results are reported as percentages. For each domain, values range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 100%.

Table 1: Domains/dimensions of Migration Governance Indicators

S/N	Domain
1	Migrant Rights
2	Whole of government/ Evidence based policies
3	Cooperation and partnerships
4	Socioeconomic wellbeing
5	Mobility dimension of crises
6	Safe orderly and regular migration

Source: *IOM & UN-DESA harmonised Meta data template 10-7-2 for SDG 10.7*

Table 2: Questions and sub-categories for measuring indicators

Domain	Question	Sub category
1	Does government provide non-nationals equal access to the following services, welfare benefits and rights?	Essential and/or emergency health care Public education Equal pay for equal work Social protection Access to justice
2	Does government have any of the following institutions, policies, or strategies to govern immigration or emigration?	A dedicated government agency to implement national migration policy A national policy or strategy for regular migration pathways, including labour migration A national policy or strategy to promote the inclusion or integration of migrants Formal mechanisms to ensure that the migration policy is gender responsive A mechanism to ensure that migration policy is formed by data, appropriately disaggregated
3	Does the government take any of the following measures to foster cooperation among countries and encourage stake holder inclusion and participation in migration policy?	An inter-ministerial coordination mechanism on migration' Bilateral agreements on migration ,including labour migration Regional agreement promoting mobility Agreements for cooperation with other countries on return and readmission Formal mechanisms to engage civil society and the private sector in the formulation and implementation of migration policy
4	Does the government take any of the following measures to maximise the positive development impact of migration and the socioeconomic well-	Align, through periodic assessments, labour migration policies with actual and projected labour market needs Facilitate the portability of social security

		benefits
	being of migrants?	Facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired abroad
		Facilitate or promote the free flow of remittances
		Promote fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers
5	Does the government take any of the following measures to respond to refugees and other forcibly displaced across international borders?	System for receiving, processing and identifying those forced to flee across international borders
		Contingency planning for displaced populations in terms of basic needs such as food, sanitation, education, and medical care
		Specific measures to provide assistance to citizens residing abroad in countries in crisis or post crisis situations
		A national disaster risk reduction strategy with specific provisions for addressing the displacement impacts of disasters
		Grant permission for temporary stay or temporary protection for those forcibly displaced across international borders and those unable to return
6	Does government address regular or irregular immigration through any of the following measures?	System to monitor visa overstays
		Pre-arrival authorization controls
		Provisions for unaccompanied minors or separated children
		Migration information and awareness-raising campaigns
		Formal strategies to address trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling

Source: *IOM & UN-DESA harmonised Meta data template 10-7-2 for SDG 10.7*

With this information, each country in the ECOWAS sub-region is assessed using its MGI profile by assigning 1 to each sub-category if it exists and 0 if it does not exist. The researchers reviewed the migration governance profile of all the selected countries and subsequently, assigned real scores (values) to each country's migration governance indicators as published in the IOM migration governance profiles. Limitations with repurposing the tool were minimised by the clear and explicit manner in which the indicators were reported-indicating whether the sub-category is present or not. However, interpreting the indicators requires researchers' precision and expertise as indicators are entirely descriptive and some sub-categories in the methodology were captured under different domains in the MGI.

Following this, the study assigned 1 where each country has evidence of the sub-category for measuring migration governance indicators in table 2 and 0 where it does not exist. It is however, noteworthy to state that the value "0" was only assigned to sub-categories where its absence was clearly stated. The results are shown in tables 3 and 4. Out of the 12 countries in the ECOWAS sub-region, only 8 countries: Nigeria (NG), Gambia (GAMB), Guinea (GUIN), Côte d'Ivoire (COT), Ghana (GH), Cabo Verde (CB), Guinea Bissau, and Sierra Leone (SLN) have had their migration governance assessed and their migration governance profile published by first quarter of 2025.

Result and Discussion

Migration governance index in the ECOWAS sub-region

This section presents and discusses the migration governance index for the ECOWAS sub region. Following the method stated in section 3, the value 1 is assigned where a sub-category for measuring migration governance indicators exists in a country's migration governance profile and 0 if the sub-category does not exist. The following scores were obtained for each of the countries.

Table 3: MGI scores for selected countries in ECOWAS sub region

		NG	GAMB	GUIN	COT	GH	CB	SLN	G.BISSAU
Domain (See table 3.2)	Sub.C (see table 3.2)	Score (1/0)	Score (1/0)	score (1/0)	score (1/0)	score (1/0)	score (1/0)	Score (1/0)	score (1/0)
1	a.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	b	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
	c.	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	d	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
	e	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	a.	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
	b	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
	c	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	d	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	e	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	a	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
	b	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1
	c	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
	d	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	e	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
4	a.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	b	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
	c	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	d	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
	e	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
5	a.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	b	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
	c	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
	d	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
	e	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
6	a.	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
	b	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	c	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
	d	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
	e	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1

Source: *Constructed by the authors with information from the MGI profile of each country*

Using the information in table 3, the study applies the IOM and UNDESA methods:

as presented in Section 3 to construct a Migration Governance Index for each country selected.

Where Di refers to the value for each domain, is the sum of values across subcategories in each domain and n is the number of subcategories in each domain, which is 5 sub- categories as seen in table 2. Results are reported in percentages. For each domain, values range from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 100%.

Table 4: Migration Governance index for some selected countries in ECOWAS sub-region in percentile

Country	Migrant right %	Whole of government approach %	Cooperation and Partnership %	Socio economic wellbeing %	Mobility dimensions of crises %	Safe, orderly and regular migration %
Nigeria	80	80	80	80	40	60
Gambia	80	60	40	20	0	20
Guinea	60	0	60	60	60	20
Côte d'Ivoire	80	0	60	0	40	20
Ghana	60	40	60	40	20	40
Cabo Verde	60	40	80	40	0	40
G.Bissau	60	60	40	40	20	60
Sierra Leone	40	20	40	40	60	60

Source: *Authors' computation with scores from 2021 MGI profile assessment of each country*

For easy interpretation of migration governance index, the IOM/UNDESA 2022 SDG indicator data template suggests that values of less than 40 shows the domain requires "further progress", 40 to less than 80 shows "partially meets", values of 80 to less than 100 shows "meets" and values of 100 shows "fully meets". The index presented in table 4 shows that Nigeria, Gambia, and Côte d'Ivoire meet the requirements for enforcing migrants' rights, while Guinea, Ghana, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, and Sierra Leone partially meet migrants' rights requirements. Only Nigeria meets the requirement for a whole-government approach. Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, and Cabo Verde partially meet, while Côte d'ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone need further progress.

None of the countries fully meets the standard for cooperation and partnership. Nigeria and Cabo Verde meet the standard while Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, and Sierra Leone partially meet the requirement. Only Nigeria meets the requirement for promoting the socioeconomic wellbeing of migrants. Guinea, Ghana, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, and Sierra Leone partially meet the requirement, while Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire need further progress. Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone

partially meet the requirement for mobility dimensions of the crisis, while Gambia, Ghana, and Cape Verde need further progress. Nigeria, Ghana, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone partially meet the standard for safe, orderly, and regular migration, while Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea need further progress.

Policy relevance of findings

The findings of this study are clear reflection of the varying levels of institutional strength, policy coordination and socio-economic realities of different countries, which are members of the ECOWAS bloc. All these put together influence each country's migration governance realities. For instance, Nigeria stands out as the best in the whole of government approach in the sub-region, which could be attributed to its strong leadership position in ECOWAS and a very strong inter-ministerial coordination, which allows for a seamless implementation of the whole of government approach. Nigeria has in the past not only led regional migration initiatives but has adopted strong institutional frameworks like the National Migration Policy of 2015, which fosters cross-country collaborations that address key issues of migration.

Other countries that are in partial compliance like Ghana, Gambia, and Cape Verde demonstrates certain levels of inter-state collaborations but does not have a standard institutional framework for implementation. For instance, Ghana has improved but still battles with policy inconsistency across various sectors. The other countries - Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, which need further progress in the whole of government approach have very weak institutional frameworks that require urgent intervention. In Cooperation and Partnership, Nigeria and Cape Verde, which are leading within the region have a strong presence, and this boosts their participation and cooperation with the organisations initiatives and bi-lateral agreements. The other countries' strong reliance on external funding for the execution of migration-based projects stir-up struggles with their cooperation and partnership decisions. Even though Cape Verde benefits from diaspora funding, its proximity to the European Union region is a big advantage.

In terms of socio-economic wellbeing of migrants, Nigeria's position as the largest economy in West Africa enables it to effectively integrate migrants better than others. This move is rewarding to its economy due to remittances inflows. Even though the countries, which are in partial compliance have strong migrant inclusion policies, they lack institutional

framework for full implementation. Côte d'Ivoire with its political instability still battles to promote migrant wellbeing. For Gambia, it is more a case of limited economic opportunities. In the mobility dimensions of crisis and maintaining a safe, orderly and regular migration, most of the countries are in partial compliance, with some needing further progress. Most of these countries are battling with funds and institutional weaknesses in handling migration during crises. Border management and challenges of irregular migration are also overwhelming.

In addition, reports on migrants' rights show that Nigeria, Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire are meeting the requirement. Nigeria's advanced legal framework and institutional strength have helped it in the enforcement of migrants' rights. Gambia's small population gives it an advantage while Côte d'Ivoire on the other hand is known as the regional hub of migration in West Africa because of its hospitality.
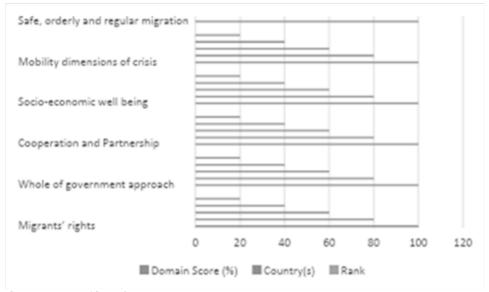
Having obtained real scores for each of the domains or dimensions of migration governance for all the selected countries in the ECOWAS region, the study goes further to show from the results obtained, the possibility of different countries being at the same performance level in various domains as well as their ranks. This is illustrated in table 5 below.

Table 5: Performance report and rank of selected countries in migration governance domains

Domain/Dimensions of migration governance	Domain Score (%)	Country(s)	Rank
Migrants' rights	100	Nil	-
	80	Nigeria, Gambia, Cote dívoire	1st
	60	Guinea, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Guinea Bissau	2nd
	40	Sierra Leone	3rd
	20	Nil	-
	0	Nil	-
Whole of government approach	100	Nil	-
	80	Nigeria	1st

	60	Gambia, Guinea Bissau	2nd
	40	Ghana, Cabo Verde	3rd
	20	Sierra Leone	4th
	0	Guinea ,Cote dívoire	5th
Cooperation and Partnership	100	Nil	-
	80	Nigeria ,Cabo Verde	1st
	60	Guinea, Cote dívoire, Ghana	2nd
	40	Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau	3rd
	20	Nil	
	0	Nil	
Socio-economic well being	100	Nil	
	80	Nigeria	1st
	60	Guinea	2nd
	40	Ghana, Cabo Verde, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau	3rd
	20	Gambia	4th
	0	Cote dívoire	5th
Mobility dimensions of crisis	100	Nil	-
	80	Nil	-

	60	Guinea, Sierra Leone	1st
	40	Nigeria, Cote dívoire	2nd
	20	Ghana, Guinea Bissau	3rd
	0	Gambia, Cabo Verde	4th
Safe, orderly and regular migration	100	Nil	-
	80	Nil	-
	60	Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau	1st
	40	Ghana, Cabo Verde	2nd
	20	Gambia, Guinea, Cote dívoire	3rd
	0	Nil	-

Source: *computed by authors*
Figure 1: *Migration Governance Performance of countries in ECOWAS region*

Source: Constructed by the authors using the data on table 5

Table 5 groups ECOWAS countries into different performance categories and ranks these groups according to their domain scores. This harmonisation reveals the intrinsic differences and similarities that exist among countries in the region, which is not only crucial for fostering regional cooperation but also perfect for tailoring the needed interventions. The grouping of countries in clusters, which is informed by the domain scores reveals how adhering to international treaties, conventions and co-operations in accordance with liberal institutional ideologies help to enforce shared standards. Having two or more countries in the same performance groups like Nigeria, Gambia, and Côte d'Ivoire leading in migrants' rights, supports this theory's claims that institutional agreements promote collective progress in migration governance.

While the ECOWAS regional block tries to enforce cooperation among its members, the existential differences in performance levels clearly indicates the region's respect for member countries' sovereignty. The differences in performance which was evident in countries with very low performance may suggest the possibilities of these countries prioritising self-interest over regional cooperation, which aligns with the realist or state-centric theorist. This ideology clearly reinforces selective cooperation with states choosing policies that they feel will be of greater

benefit to them while considering resource and security constraints. Although there could also be instances where divergence may be a result of weak institutional framework, but then, the states that embrace this realist ideology may implement stringent migration measures, such as adopting a tight border security to limit cross-border migration.

Countries like Gambia and Ghana continues to be on the lower echelon in all the governance domains, while Nigeria, Cote Côte d'Ivoire and Cape Verde consistently maintained high performance across several domains. The leading countries demonstrate strong regional cooperation and compliance with the region's migration governance policies which aligns with the regional migration governance theory. The outcome also reveals each country's strength and focus areas as evidently seen in some countries experiencing high performance in some domains but very low scores in some other domains.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The IOM-UNDESA methodology has proven to be a very simple and easy to use tool in assessing and quantifying migration governance. It is noteworthy that this methodology can be adopted as a general tool and applied to similar studies for regional blocs in Africa and other continents. However, with this methodology, there is a possibility to conduct a cross regional comparisons of migration governance performance as the methodology also offers the possibility of constructing migration governance index for each country globally. Nevertheless, quantifying migration governance indicators lends statistical credence to migration governance assessment and the unique ranks assigned to the clusters highlights each country's progress in migration governance and areas that need urgent attention. While there is a significant progress in migration governance cooperation in the ECOWAS region, the regional integration of migration governance is inconsistent and still very far to be achieved. However, considering the very poor performances of countries in facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, the hope of the ECOWAS region in achieving the SDG goal 10.7 remains very bleak. The low performance in the whole of the governmental approach clearly shows that the low performing countries within the region lack frameworks that strengthen migration governance.

Following the study's findings, and also drawing insights from the migration governance profile recommendation on areas that need further

strengthening, this study recommends that to fill the gaps in the domains, ECOWAS needs to strengthen policy coordination and implementation, which will enforce governance compliance by strengthening members' institutional capacities and legal framework. Nevertheless, mild sanctions or compliance rewards could be initiated to encourage members' cooperation and also, specific measures that tackle gaps in each domain should be adopted by low performing countries. For instance, in addressing the gap in cooperation and partnership, the low performing countries in this domain should be encouraged to embrace bilateral and multi sectoral agreements to boost joint efforts in addressing cross-border migration issues and the mobility dimensions of crises.

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