

## Free Movement in West Africa: Achievements and challenges to the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol

Joseph Kofi Teye, University of Ghana

### Abstract

While media and political narratives tend to suggest an exodus from West Africa to Europe, a majority of migrants from West Africa have been moving to destinations within the sub-region. In recognition of the potential and actual benefits of intra-regional mobility, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment in 1979 (Protocol A/P.1/5/79). This was followed by the formulation of a number of agreements and supplementary protocols aimed at facilitating the mobility of labour and goods within the ECOWAS region. Although these instruments provide guidelines for promoting intra-regional mobility and regional integration, there is enough evidence to suggest that the full implementation of the protocol has not been achieved. This presentation seeks to examine the achievements and challenges to the implementation of ECOWAS free movement protocol. The presentation will demonstrate that while free movement of persons has contributed to intra-regional trade, flow of remittances, and improved livelihoods for some Community citizens, the full implementation of the ECOWAS free movement protocol has not been achieved due to a number of challenges, including harassment of migrants at the borders, lack of travel documents by some citizens, low level of knowledge about the protocol, and lack of coherence between the member states' national laws and the ECOWAS Protocol. The presentation will conclude with recommendations for improving the governance of migration within West Africa.

### Biography

**Joseph Teye** is Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana. He is also Co-Director of the United Kingdom Research Innovation South-South Migration, Inequality and Development Hub. His current research interests include migration and development, migration governance, environmental change and migration, and natural resource governance. Joseph Teye has participated in large research projects funded by international organizations, including UK Research & Innovation; European Union; African, Caribbean and Pacific Observatory on Migration at the International Organization for Migration (IOM); International Labour Organization (ILO); and International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). He has been working with international organizations, regional bodies (e.g. ECOWAS and African Union Commission), and various African governments to develop migration policies. He was a lead consultant for the development of the National Labour Migration Policy and the national migration policies in a number of African countries including Ghana, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.