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Migrant Political Mobilisation and Solidarity Building in the Global South

Mariama Awumbila, Faisal Garba, Akosua K. Darkwah, and Mariama Zaami

Introduction

This chapter examines how migrants from the Global South who move within the region organise themselves, the forms of solidarity that they extend to each other, and how these relate to broader working-class formations. It interrogates the dynamics of migrant organising, both formal and informal, and alliances, visible and not-so-visible, formed by migrants in the Global South. This is particularly important given the fact that South-South migration forms about 36% of total migrant stock (UN DESA, 2019) and that South-South migration is increasingly becoming a significant factor in the economic and social development of many developing countries. While xenophobia and othering are regular features of migrant-local interactions in the migration literature (Darkwah, 2019; Desai, 2008; Dodson, 2010), the extent to which its opposite, solidarity, occurs as a result of the workplace and

M. Awumbila (✉) · M. Zaami
Department of Geography and Resource Development, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana
e-mail: mawumbila@ug.edu.gh

F. Garba
Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
e-mail: faisal.garbamuhammed@uct.ac.za

A. K. Darkwah
Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

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community activism of migrants has received scant attention in the literature, hence our focus. How migrants organise themselves and how they relate to locals of similar social standing is important for a nuanced understanding of migrant experiences especially in the Global South where the majority of human mobility takes place (Dakas, 2018).

A desk study on migrant solidarity and political mobilisation undertaken as part of research for the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub in 2021,[1] identified three main levels (micro, meso, and macro) at which migrants mobilise to respond to their circumstances or conditions. At the micro-level, migrants organise largely around individual working conditions and terms of employment, while at the macro-level, the set of issues that migrants organise around takes a more structural approach where the focus is often on shifting society-wide structures of oppression and discrimination. However, as Pande (2012) notes, migrants also engage in mobilising and resistive activities that are neither micro nor macro and that may rather be labelled as meso-level resistance. We argue that meso-level organising and the solidarity networks formed by migrants in the Global South may provide them with the space to build solidarity in their own ways, and to fight their exploitation and oppression. This is because it provides them with the space to draw on the labour power of the group as a leverage against workplace abuses and unfavourable social conditions. Migrant meso-level organising therefore mirrors social movement unionism in that the issues of production, social reproduction, and social participation coalesce.

This chapter therefore focuses on how migrants within the Global South organise at the meso-level to defend and access their rights and the solidarity that they build among themselves as migrants and with social movements, working-class organisations, and other civil society actors. Although we focus on migrant mobilisation and solidarity building at the meso-level, we also draw attention to the linkages between the meso and the macro/micro-levels and examine how the different levels of organising reinforce each other and the many ways in which they relate with one another. Given the problems inherent in conceptualising a complex, multi-dimensional, and normative concept of transnational solidarity, we adopt a nuanced analysis of mobilisation and transnational solidarity practices for a better understanding of the complexities of the political action of both migrants and citizens.

Conceptualising Political Mobilisation and Solidarity Building

As with all other measurable theoretical constructs, there are multiple ways of defining and conceptualising mobilisation. A good starting point for any conceptualisation of political mobilisation is the work by Deutsch (1961), which has largely been accepted as the standard framework for research on mobilisation (Cameron, 1974). Deutsch (1961) defines social mobilisation as a process in which "old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior" (Deutsch, 1961, 493). Deutsch suggests that this uprooting and erosion occurs, with urbanisation, commercialisation, and industrialisation. He views these changes as the necessary prior conditions for political mobilisation, which involves the induction of the socially uprooted into stable, new patterns of behaviour and commitment (Deutsch, 1961).

This conception of political mobilisation has several drawbacks, however, as highlighted by a number of authors (Cameron, 1974). Cameron (1974) notes that these problems are not unique to Deutsch, but that indeed, they are evident in the work of virtually all who use the concept. Cameron (1974) categorises these problems into three: firstly, the failure to explain the process of mobilisation, that is, the process by which the socially available are inducted into new patterns of behaviour; secondly, the tendency to assume that mobilisation is one of the most significant features of the larger process of change termed "modernization"; and thirdly, the view that political mobilisation is socially determined and the dependent variable in a process of social change. (Cameron, 1974).

Critiquing Deutsch's (1961) conceptualisation further, Huntington (1996) argues that a major failure of all process analysis (as in Deutsch's definition), is a lack of linkage between the social and political aspects of the changes being described. That is, "the relation between the 'macro' socio- economic changes and 'macro' political changes which have to be mediated through 'micro' changes in the attitudes, values, and behavior of the individuals" (Huntington, 1996, 310). He argues further that most theories of change do not specify the manner in which "macro" change affects an individual's behaviour and therefore most conceptions of mobilisation retain the passivity implicit in Deutsch's definition (Huntington, 1996).

From the perspective of political communication, mobilisation is defined as "the process by which a passive collection of individuals in a society is transformed into an active group in the pursuit of common goals" (Kalyango & Adu-Kumi, 2013, 8). Kalyango and Adu-Kumi (2013) further highlight how

with globalisation and the introduction of new technologies, mobilisation processes have become more sophisticated. They argue that in today's globalised world of online media discussion groups, virtual social media platforms and other virtual participatory electronic devices have become the new tools for national or global mobilisation. In Africa particularly, the massive acquisition of social media tools and the adoption of new media technologies has provided opportunities for political as well as social mobilisation (Fair et al., 2009). For example, in 2008 the Committee for Joint Action (CJA) in Ghana was able to mobilise thousands of sympathisers to organise a demonstration to press for the reduction of fuel prices in 2008 (Kalyango & Adu-Kumi, 2013). The use of social media for purposes of political mobilisation is of course not unique to Ghana. Scholars have noted similar practices among the Rohingya (Ansar & Khaled, 2023), Nigerians (Nwoye & Okafor, 2014), and perhaps most well-known of all, among the participants in what became known as the Arab Spring (Comunello & Anzera, 2012; Khamis & Vaughn, 2014).

The above discussion indicates that conceptualisations of mobilisation until recent times were mainly in the area of political and electoral mobilisation (Rokkan, 1966). Linking this to migrants' mobilisation, studies indicate that migrants political mobilisation often revolves around obtaining more political, social, and economic rights in receiving states, and is determined by both transnational and domestic forces (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Wright & Bloemraad, 2012). Sending countries may assist their citizens in improving their status abroad and migrants' incorporation trajectories and receiving countries' integration policies both co-determine immigrants' desire to participate politically, and their capabilities. However, such a view risks overlooking important complexities, since migrants may also desire to participate politically when they experience social exclusion. Migrants may then organise around race and ethnicity, display solidarity through daily interactions and activities, and strategically mobilise relations with the majority society in order to protect group interests (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Although the concept of solidarity has a long history in the social sciences and more recently in migration and refugee studies, there is no consistent definition of or approach to this concept in the literature. Rather, various types of solidarity with different philosophical underpinnings co-exist. A common starting point for a conceptualisation of solidarity is the recognition that solidarity means different things to different actors, takes on different shapes in different contexts, and is invoked to explain and define a wide range of practices, discourses, positionings, and social relations (Birey et al., 2019). The concept of solidarity is thus complex, multi-dimensional, and normative.

Lahusen et al. (2021) define solidarity as a disposition and practice of help or support towards others but solidarity transcends unilateral concepts such as care, empathy, or altruism (Passy, 2001), even though it shares some of the same features. Solidarity is thus often linked to reciprocal expectations and practices between people expressing sameness, togetherness, and inclusiveness. However, solidarity could also be restricted to national communities, thus excluding outsiders (for instance, migrants), but often, solidarity implies a wider community of equals, thus eliminating the distinction between insiders and outsiders. In all cases, solidarity presupposes a conception of shared rights, responsibilities, and obligations (Lahusen et al., 2021).

Lahusen et al. (2021) further argue that solidarity particularly at the grassroots level, involves both civic and political components. With regard to the civic component of solidarity, these solidarity groups usually follow a philanthropic or humanitarian mission, aiming to meet the needs of fellow citizens and/or non-nationals. This approach to solidarity tends to focus on compassion, altruism, and care (Schroeder et al., 1995; Skitka & Tetlock, 1993; van Oorschot, 2000). Correspondingly, action activities usually focus on the provision of help and support, primarily in terms of services and goods. The political component of solidarity tends to highlight the advocacy element of collective actions with a focus on denouncing injustice, discrimination, and oppression suffered by specific groups or communities, because they speak out on behalf of their rights and engage in activities geared to improving their situation (Scholz, 2008). These groups might also be engaged in the delivery of services and goods, as well, (i.e. in civic solidarity) but the advocacy element is a more dominant part of their mission and activism, given that they rally publicly in order to pressure governments, political and economic elites, and other stakeholders to step up remedial actions. Action repertoires for political solidarity therefore make use of advocacy activities such as public awareness campaigns, consumer boycotts, lobbying activities, and various forms of political protests (della Porta & Caiani, 2009).

Other writers draw out the complex and at times contradictory microdynamics, tensions, and conflicts expressed in the everyday work of migrant activists, support groups, and solidarity actions. These studies question, for example, the view that solidarity is only possible between people with shared identities and a common history. They also raise questions about power hierarchies that generate gendered, racialised, class positionalities entangled with politics of place and history within migrants' solidarity movements (Ünsal, 2015). This highlights the need for any studies of migrant solidarity to draw out the complexities and nuances of solidarity struggles that involve differently positioned actors.

From the above analysis, we conclude that the plethora of meanings given to the concept of solidarity which generally follow different philosophical traditions, has led to the difficulties in defining and generally differentiating the concept from other core concepts of the social sciences. The use of the concept is therefore often complex, multi-dimensional, and normative. Reflecting this, and in line with other authors (Bauder & Juffs, 2020), we do not advocate for developing a single definition or application of the concept of solidarity, but rather, highlight the different types of solidarity occurring in the Global South, showing the variability and often contradictory uses of the concept.

The discussion in this chapter also highlights the need for migration scholars and researchers to adopt a more nuanced analysis of mobilisation and transnational solidarity practices for a better understanding of the complexities of the political action of both migrants and citizens. This will entail a conceptualisation of political mobilisation and solidarity building that captures the interaction and possible mutual influence between the micro, meso, and macro levels and at different levels in each society.

Migrant Organising at the Micro, Meso, and Macro Levels: An Overview

Migrants respond to their circumstances in various ways, including through mobilising one another and allies. Migrants often combine informal protection measures with their version of (semi) formal organising in/as part of working-class struggles. The literature on resistance to forms of subjugation and the different ways in which migrants respond can broadly be classified into three types; the private, the public, and what Pande (2012) refers to as the meso-level of collective activity. Private level activities (or the micro-level) are "individual and symbolic" forms of resistance that migrants engage in, while the public forms of resistance (macro-level organising) are "overt and organised" forms of resistance engaged in either by migrants alone or with the support of citizens (Pande, 2012, 382). In describing the resistive activities of domestic workers in Lebanon, Pande (2012) suggests that they engage in meso-level resistance, forms of resistance that are "neither private nor public."

Beginning with the private level or micro-level organising, the literature abounds with examples. Migrants and migrant workers respond to the oppressions they face through a range of identity-based loosely formed associations based on ethnic, national, or religious affiliation. These include those among undocumented Myanmar migrants in Thailand (Campbell,

2016), Ghanaian migrants in China (Obeng, 2019), Nigerian migrants in Ghana (Bosiakoh, 2011), Caribbean and Mexican migrants in rural Canada (Preibisch, 2004), and Senegalese migrants in Argentina (Freier & Zubrzycki, 2021). These associations are simply directed at building a sense of community to help migrants better cope with their circumstances and to enable them to survive in their host countries. Often, they organise social and religious events to enable them bond with each other (Pande, 2020). Bosiakoh's (2011) study of Nigerian immigrants in Ghana, for example, highlights how migrant associations support new arrivals to settle down, including providing temporary housing if needed, directing them to locations with affordable rent, providing financial assistance to cover medical bills and generally encouraging them through the struggles and challenges that come with being a refugee or a migrant worker. Similarly, Chereni (2018) documents how Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa draw on informal social support systems to survive the stresses of living in South Africa. These support systems can be created in church, at work, or among friends. While these informal forms of social protection are not necessarily substitutes for formal forms of protection, they nonetheless help migrants navigate the harsh social reality of life as migrants.

An important dimension of micro-level organising is the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) in mobilisation and defensive struggles against abuses and the protection of livelihoods (see also Harinandrath etal., this volume). These include the LGBTQI+ migrant community in Brazil (Theodoro & Cogo, 2019), and community organising among Chin refugees in Malaysia (McConnachie, 2019). Theodoro and Cogo (2019), for example, document how the LGBTQI+ migrant community in Sao Paolo drew on the social networking site, Facebook, to make visible their otherwise invisible status as members of a double minority group—migrant and non-heterosexual.

Unlike micro-level organising, macro-level organising among migrants is overtly political in nature, designed to change the circumstances under which they live and work as migrants, with the focus on shifting society-wide structures of oppression and discrimination such as documentation and right to work, among others. The nature of the protests ranges widely but regardless of the mode of protest they employ, the basis is to call for change for the better. Even when these macro-level organising efforts do not result in concrete changes in favour of the migrants, it does have symbolic value. For example, marches to protest about specific situations make visible an otherwise invisible population. Other forms of organising at the macro-level are not simply for the symbolic value, but result in real, structural change. Cooke (2007), for example, documents the successful efforts of rural migrant workers in China

who finally began in 2004 to vote with their feet, abandoning their jobs to protest the poor conditions of work that they had endured for several years. Employers who relied heavily on rural workers suddenly found it difficult to recruit them (Cooke, 2007, 560). Only then did a range of actors—the central government, local government, employment agencies, legal centre, and "*tongxiang hui*" (association of workers from the same region/village)—begin a much more concerted effort to address the issue at hand (Cooke, 2007; Froissart, 2005). These actions therefore tend to highlight the political component of solidarity.

Besides access to work and improved conditions of work, another major concern of migrants, particularly for migrants in the Global South, is access to basic services such as water and electricity. Alvarado (2020) describes the ways in which Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica do not necessarily engage in contestation with the state. Rather, they create their own avenues for gaining access to public services such as tapping water and electricity lines and then request local officials to legitimise that which they have accessed already. Scholars who focus on migrants in urban informal spaces thus highlight the fact that encounters with the state do not always have to be in the form of protests. Alvarado (2020) identifies informal interactions, moral claims, and face to face encounters with local state officials as equally effective strategies to provide migrants with services.

With regard to meso-level organising, while unionisation is a formal mechanism for channelling migrant grievances, in many countries in the Global South, migrants, especially those considered to be doing menial jobs—jobs characterised by the 3Ds, dangerous, dirty, and difficult—are denied the right to unionise. Yet, as Pande (2012) has documented for migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, that has not prevented them from organising to improve their circumstances as workers in precarious circumstances. She documents the meso-level resistance they engage in which ranges from strategic dyads restricted to balconies, smaller collectives of live-in workers that operate outside of ethnic churches to the much larger collectives operating in rented apartments that comprise illegal freelancers and runaways (Pande, 2012, 382). This form of resistance, neither private nor public, serves as the beginnings of what could become powerful acts of resistance against the domination they face. Similarly, Genc (2017) explains how migrants formed solidarity networks to address the precarity they faced in detention camps in Kumkapi, Istanbul. Over a hundred migrants protested over several issues, including the bureaucratic nature of the legal assistance and administrative supervision measures. These solidarity events eventually led to the formation of a Migrant Solidarity Network (MSN) in February 2010 (Genc, 2017).

Although there is a dearth of literature on migrant organising in sub-Saharan Africa at the meso-level, recent research indicates that migrants are using migration brokers to exercise and extend their agency and to cope with oppression and gain some improvements in working conditions (Awumbila et al., 2019; Deshingkar et al., 2019; Wee et al., 2019). In examining the inner workings of the migration industry and the roles of brokers, Deshingkar et al. (2019) note the role of the state and employers in positioning migrants from Ghana and Myanmar in exploitative work in Libya, the Middle East, Singapore, and Thailand, highlighting the ways in which migrants use brokerage to exercise agency by taking advantage of irregular migration routes and informal employment. Awumbila et al's (2017a, 2017b, 2019) research in Ghana indicates that brokers are integral to migrants being able to exercise agency by transcending local power inequalities, by accessing more remunerative work, and by switching jobs at the destination point. Although the transformative effects of migrant agency on structures of inequality and the potential for brokerage to offer opportunities for resistance against unequal power relations at destination have been questioned, they remain important parts of migrants' risk management strategies and efforts to minimise exploitation through meso-level actors.

Migrant Political Mobilisation Through Trade Unions

Across the globe, perhaps the most public form of meso-level organising to improve conditions of work for all workers is the trade union. Trade unions can give protection to all workers regardless of immigration status. The power of trade unions to change the working conditions and circumstances of workers is perhaps best illustrated in the work of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU). Through their efforts, the central government took a major step in 2003 to address the needs of migrant workers by finally classifying rural migrant workers in urban areas as members of the working class. Accepting rural migrant workers as part of the membership of the union was a significant step because the ACFTU was the only union recognised by the central government (Cooke, 2007). The legitimising impact of this act was very significant because it allowed for migrant workers to engage in collective action for better working conditions (Froissart, 2005). However, the success of their efforts was thwarted by the delay tactics employed by firms in recognising trade unions in their workplaces. Cooke (2007, 574) recounts the words of one trade union worker as follows:

> … They [employers] don't say no to us each time we go to see them about setting up a trade union. They are always very friendly and sound very sincere. They will say, "Yes, it is a very good idea [to set up a trade union in the company], we will think about it", "we are thinking about it", "we are making preparation to set one up", or "we are setting it up …" Five years later, they are still in the early stage of preparation to set one up.

Foreign owned companies were particularly notorious in this regard. In one such company, it took trade union workers 12 years to finally get a union in place. In addition to the fact that it took a long time to set up unions in various workplaces, trade unions also seem to have very little impact on the ground. They are not able to significantly improve wage levels or social insurance (Cooke, 2007). Trade unions seemed to serve as the mouthpiece of management, not workers with there being clear cases where it was obvious that trade unions had colluded with the management of enterprises, sometimes receiving bribes for such collusion. The general opinion migrants had of trade unions was thus not very positive. Froissart (2005, 37) notes:

> Migrants were scathing about the union: "No point to seek trade unions' help. They take your money and run", "Trade unions serve the capital, not the people", "Trade unions are full of conmen, and they never settle conflicts" were wide spread statements.

This is due perhaps to the fact that the ACFTU had not translated its interest in incorporating rural migrant workers into its ranks with a policy document outlining union operations and regulations (Cooke, 2007). It may also point to the weakness in general of trade unions in a state like China and point to the importance of the central government in passing and implementing regulations that protect workers (Froissart, 2005, 33).

Although Chinese urban workers were willing to incorporate rural migrants into their unions, this is not always the case especially when migrants originate from outside a nation state. Often in such circumstances, workers with legal protection are uncomfortable with the idea of including migrants in their unions because of the fear that migrants, given their insecure legal status, will simply serve to drive down wages and conditions of work in general (Munck & Hyland, 2014). In South Africa for example, this tension between migrant and indigenous workers is evident in spite of the conciliatory language of major South African trade unions. At a policy level, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa's largest trade union federation, has firmly supported the rights of migrants to decent work. In a communique on the Immigration Act of 2002, COSATU submitted as follows:

> [A] preoccupation with undocumented migration [which] results in a failure to provide a coherent immigration policy and in certain respects the avoidance of issues … [such a preoccupation would] further engender paranoia, which will then make it difficult to have a rational and humane approach to undocumented migration (Gordon & Maharaj, 2014, 131).

At a grassroots level, however, it is clear that citizens are not in favour of such an approach. Gordon and Maharaj (2014) document the logic provided by native members of the private security trade union for their reluctance to include undocumented migrant workers in the union. Rather than see these migrant workers as comrades, these workers, who live themselves on the economic margins given the precarious conditions (Standing, 2011) under which they work, see the undocumented foreign workers as competitors and are thus reluctant to partner with them to improve working conditions for both groups.

Other countries on the African continent have been slow to incorporate migrants into unions, but nonetheless have done so after years of effort on the part of migrant associations to ensure the regularisation of their migrant status. This is evident in Morocco where in the early part of the twenty-first century, two sub-Saharan African migrant associations were set up. These include the Council of sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco established in 2005 and the Collective of sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco set up in 2010. These political associations, although not legally recognised, advocate for the legalisation of sub-Saharan Africans initially enroute to Europe who choose to stay in Morocco instead (Üstübici, 2016, 310). The purpose of these associations is succinctly described by a member of one such organisation in the following words:

> There are many sub-Saharans living in Takadoum, it is the hottest neighborhood in Rabat. This [the neighbourhood violence] motivated us, sub-Saharans to come together to create an association, ALECMA. This is to denounce different problems we encounter in the country, then to defend our rights because as migrants, our rights need to be respected. This is why we regrouped under an association. We started this fight to be recognised (Üstübici, 2016, 311).

Another continued, "We are mobilising people to rise for their rights …. You have the right of workers, right to papers, right to access health, right to liberty. You should not stay in your corner. You need to claim your rights" (Üstübici, 2016, 311).

In 2012, the advocacy efforts of these political associations were eventually heard by the unions when Morocco's Democratic Organisation of Workers set up its first branch that included migrants. This new branch advocates for the regularisation of migrants within Morroco (Üstübici, 2016) and has support from transnational groups. One such transnational organisation offering crucial support to the work of the Democratic Organisation of Workers was the Association of Maghrebian Workers in France. Members of this association were particularly supportive of the efforts of migrant associations in Morocco because as migrants themselves, they were in a similar position as the migrants in Morocco. As the national coordinator of this association explained: "We do not comprehend claiming regularisation for hundreds of thousands of Moroccans abroad while Morocco will not even do it for a few thousand sub-Saharan immigrants" (Üstübici, 2016, 316). In 2013,[2] the state finally responded to the calls for regularisation of migrants with a revised migration policy, one that adopts a human rights rather than security approach to migrants. Concrete steps emanating from that policy include the creation of a Ministry concerned with migrant affairs, the Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs (Üstübici, 2016).

In Ghana, trade unions have been slow to incorporate migrants into their unions, however, with the increased arrival of migrants, particularly from the West African sub region in response to conflicts and crises in neighbouring countries, and a rise in some migration streams such as migration for domestic work in the Middle East and Gulf Countries, the Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) has had to address issues of migrants. In Ghana, migrant workers, face some of the most serious decent work deficits. Migrant workers are largely employed in the informal economy, in particular in hard-to-reach sectors, such as on cocoa farms, oil farms in rural areas, in quarries, on fishing vessels, or in private households as domestic workers or as commercial workers, thus making it difficult for unionisation.

Despite the importance of the informal economy in the Global South, employing about 83% of total labour force in Africa (ILO, 2021), and employing a large number of migrant workers as shown above, little attention has been focused on collective organising among people in the informal economy. Indeed, their collective organising is often ignored and in some cases, they are seen outright as lacking collective mobilisation capabilities. Rather than engaging in collective demand-making, it is argued that informal actors act in a quiet and "atomized " fashion to address their immediate needs (Lindell, 2010). In trying to rectify this, trade unions are increasingly attempting to reach out to informal and casual workers, many of whom are migrants, seeking to organise the "unorganized". Lindell (2010) argues that

such an approach may be dangerous as it implies that people in the informal economy are passive targets awaiting the "rescuing hand of trade unions." He further argues that people in the informal economy should be seen as *actors*, capable of various initiatives, including organising themselves, despite the many obstacles they often face (Lindell, 2010).

More recently, the significance of trade unions engaging more closely with *all* kinds of workers irrespective of *where* they work, including the informal economy, has gained international acceptance. (Trade unions therefore figure as key actors in the International Labour Organizations (ILO) campaign for creating decent work in the informal economy. The GTUC, for example, has subscribed to a decent work agenda that focuses on decent work for everyone regardless of location (GTUC, 2016). The Ghana TUC is also a member of the Trades Union Migration Network (ATUMNET), a network that addresses fair recruitment in relation to labour migration and has as recently as 2022 launched a national Migrant Recruitment Advisor (MRA), an internet hub that seeks to raise awareness of the rights of migrant workers, including informal sector workers and protect migrant workers from abusive employment practices (GTUC, 2022).

Informal sector workers comprising many internal migrants have also mobilised around their work associations in Ghana. These include the formation of workers' groups such as the Union of Informal Workers' Association (UNIWA), the Domestic Workers Union, the Ghana Youth Porters Association, and informal hawkers and vendors associations. These groups or associations have helped in giving voice, space, and protection to migrant workers, particularly internal migrants. For instance, the first trade union for workers in the informal sector, namely UNIWA, is set up to address and promote the interest of workers in the informal economy, a large percentage of whom are internal migrants. Despite this, immigrants particularly from the West African region are seen as threats to the livelihoods of Ghanaians as seen by recent tensions between the Ghana Union of Traders (GUTA) and the Nigerian Association of Traders (NAT).

In Tunisia, to address migrant workers' challenges with recruitment agencies, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) has set up a regional network where they are the point of contact when migrants arrive in Tunisia. This has helped to increase access to reliable information and to provide them with legal information on their rights and also providing them a directory of organisations that could help address the needs of migrants (ILO, 2021).

This evidence suggests that rather than seeing immigrants as a potential threat to conditions of work for citizens, adopting policies to ease the legalisation status of immigrants ensures that their bargaining power will improve

ultimately securing the bargaining power of citizens as well. Citizens' interests as workers are ultimately best served when they align their interest in better working conditions with migrant workers' interests in routes to citizenship and thus access to secure jobs with decent working conditions.

Migrants Workers, Non-migrant Workers: Solidarity and Contradiction

Other scholarly discussions on solidarity focus less on its origins and much more on the process by which solidarity is displayed or enacted. Solidarity between migrants and citizens, on one hand, or among different groups of migrants, on the other hand, is founded on shared political beliefs among these two groups. Brysk and Wehrenfenning (2010) explain that it is quite common to see solidarity among oppressed ethnic groups because the dominant group sets a threshold of their availability for normative appeals. Once the minority group, now rooted in the dominant group's society, has access to education and the media which provides them a sense of the dominant group's threshold for such appeals, they can then conceptualise their own experiences and appeal for better conditions. To ensure that the dominant group sympathises with the suppressed minority group, Brysk and Wehrenfenning (2010) explain that articulating and establishing the history of the group's persecution is important. Their argument draws on the experience of US Jews whom they argue were particularly successful at drawing on narratives of slavery, religious discrimination, and genocide to highlight their suppression and oppression.

Another set of literature emphasises the fact that solidarity movements that incorporate migrants and citizens are a positive step away from the overly humanitarian or philanthropic approach that has characterised the relationship between migrants and citizens as discussed under the conceptual issues section. When citizens are described as humanitarians giving charity, it places migrants in a passive category as victims, lacking agency to mitigate their own circumstances. The solidarity literature moves the discussion away from a focus on charity from citizens towards migrants, to a recognition of a transaction between peers. As Tazzioli (2018, 6) explains, "acting in solidarity entails supporting migrant struggles … more than it does acting in order to save or bring help to them." As described above, there are many ways in which this can be done. In Morocco, for example, Moroccan CSOs use their legal status to secure permission from the state to organise public protests at which sub-Saharan migrant associations can make their requests (Üstübici, 2016).

Another critique of the humanitarian approach centres less on the powerlessness it evokes of migrants but also on the ways in which it simply maintains the status quo without seeking to subvert it in any crucial manner. While humanitarianism can be described as a form of resistance, its effectiveness is increasingly being questioned in recent times with many scholars arguing that humanitarianism simply alleviates pain and suffering without dealing directly with the root causes of the suffering. Or as Cantat (2018) puts it, humanitarianism simply stabilises the dominant social order, it does not subvert it. In discussing humanitarianism, however, Zamponi (2017, 97) has developed the concept of direct social actions which he defines as "actions that do not primarily focus upon claiming something from the state or other power-holders but that instead focus upon directly transforming some specific aspects of society by means of the action itself." Unlike protest where the disenfranchised make claims on the state or employers, direct social action focuses on providing support of various forms to the disenfranchised such as food supplies, translation services, legal aid, free accommodation, and so on. Zamponi (2017) cautions us against reading protest as a higher form of politics than direct social action. He argues that direct social action is not simply humanitarian aid as often conceptualised in the literature but political action as well. One of his interviewees, a Lampendusa based activist echoes a similar sentiment in the words, "when we describe what we do, we always say that giving them tea, for us, is a political act" (Zamponi, 2017, 108).

In the current discourse on the matter, it is clear that solidarity movements that seek real substantive change are preferred to the humanitarian movements of the past that alleviated the suffering of migrants without necessarily changing their circumstances. Solidarity movements are also preferred because they incorporate migrants and do not distance them from the activity that is designed to improve their circumstances.

Conclusion

Although the literature is skewed towards migrant organising in the Global North, this chapter addresses an important gap and contributes to our understanding of how migrants in the Global South organise themselves. The chapter highlights the fact that at the meso-level, migrant organising in the Global South is varied, changing, and intersects with questions of livelihoods. Migrants' self-organisation in small, intermediate, and umbrella bodies enables them to cope and attempt to shift immediate questions of

livelihood, discrimination, and their structural underpinnings in the form of exclusionary state policy and xenophobia.

The success of these efforts varies. While in some countries, such as Morocco, migrant self-organsing has received the support of Moroccans living abroad leading to the eventual creation of a Ministry in Charge of Moroccans Living Abroad and Migration Affairs, other countries on the African continent have done a dismal job of incorporating the needs and concerns of migrant workers into that of citizens. While the largest South African trade union, COSATU ostensibly speaks to the interests of migrant workers, on the ground, average South Africans are antagonistic towards migrants seeing them more as a threat than as fellow workers subject to similar exploitation by capitalists. The discussion has also highlighted the more recent attempts by trade unions in African countries to engage more closely with all categories of workers irrespective of *where* they work. It is the hope that these engagements will centre on migrants, many of whom are in the informal economy, not as passive targets, but as actors capable of collective mobilisation. Successful or not, each effort on the part of migrants to have their needs met is important in its own right because it legitimises migrants and serves as a reminder that they are not victims but have agency.

Indeed, increasingly, humanitarian activists recognise the need to move away from conceptualising the migrants to whom they offer support as victims but rather as agents in their own right with whom they can build solidarity movements. A focus on meso-level organising in the Global South thus orients us to the possibilities for agency on the part of migrants both in terms of self-organising but also in terms of building community with citizens in the new nation states in which they find themselves.

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Notes

1. The Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub unpacks the complex and multi-dimensional relationships between migration and inequality in the context of the Global South. More at www.mideq.org
2. Morocco is not alone in its late interest in the status of migrants within their borders. Mexico passed its first migration law in 2011 (Basok & Rojas Wiesner, 2017).

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