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The Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: Examining Methods and Motives in the EU's External Migration Agenda

Executive Summary

The European Commission's EU Trust Fund for Africa, meant to manage the root causes of irregular migration, is an aid instrument designed to quickly direct funds to development projects in the African countries that have been hardest hit by migration.

While the main "push" factors behind illegal migration require urgent attention, the EUTF does not yet adequately address them. Unlike more conventional development initiatives, the EUTF supports some security- and containment-oriented projects, leading critics to doubt the motivations behind the policy.

Currently, a majority of the EUTF's funding is redirected from other, more stringently-monitored EU development aid instruments, which may compromise its adherence to EU/OECD-DAC rules for development spending.

The EUTF represents a powerful opportunity for resilience-building and development in Africa, but its methods and aims can still be improved. By focusing more on humanitarian outcomes, addressing unresolved issues that are truly at the root of forced migration, and better engaging with African partner countries, the EUTF can be rendered more coherent with the EU's official policy objectives and with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

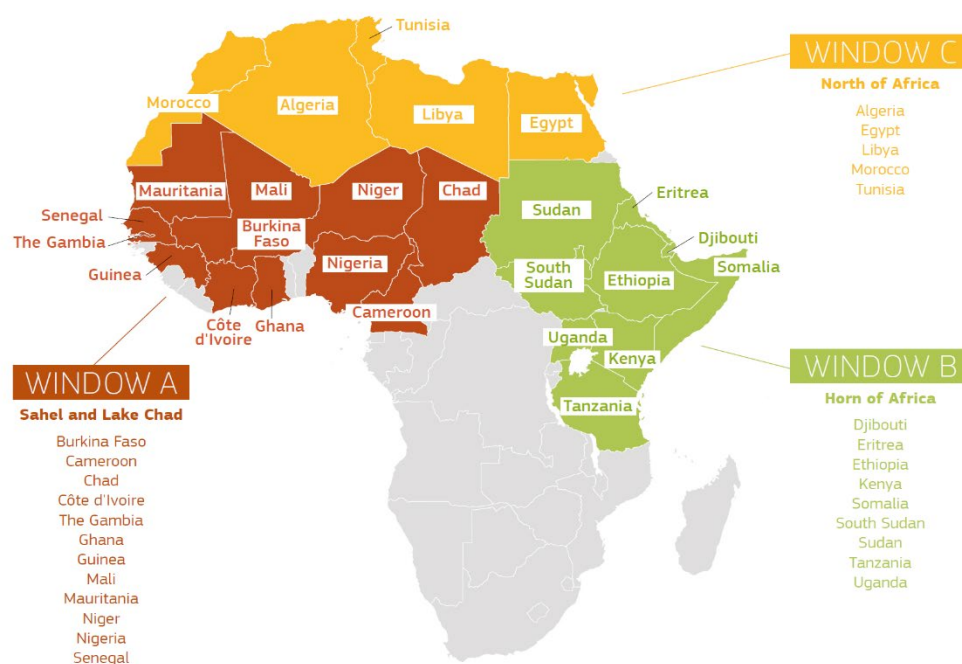
Introduction

The European Commission introduced the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) at the November 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration, amid the largest influx of asylum seekers on European territory since World War II. Featuring the description, "for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa," the EUTF has since been promoted by the Commission as a "rapid, flexible, and effective response to an emergency situation" (European Commission 2018a, 7). This novel instrument, similar to other trust funds recently deployed for migration-related aims, combines resources from several European Union reserves with contributions from Member States. It then swiftly directs funds to projects proposed for implementation in African states that have been heavily affected by migration, with implementing institutions ranging from NGOs and UN-related bodies to Member States themselves (responsible for over 40% of approved projects). As of June 2018, EUR 3.4 billion have been dedicated to the EUTF, which focuses on three core regions: the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa (European Commission 2018b) (Figure 1).

As evidenced by its tagline, the EUTF's chief purpose is to treat the root causes of illegal migration, avowedly to protect vulnerable populations which are forced into displacement. Conflict, severe political repression, changing climatic conditions, and economic distress are indeed compelling many across Africa to leave their homes and risk a difficult journey to another region or country, and this does require urgent attention. Flexible funding from the EUTF partially addresses these issues, with dozens of projects meant to engender stability and create favorable circumstances for resilience-building and development. Many projects demonstrably focus on building new opportunities for the youth in communities that have been hard-hit by conflict and mass departures, and the EU continually works alongside the IOM, UNHCR, the World Bank, UNICEF, and others to assess the on-the-ground situation and implement more relevant policy (European Commission 2018a, 14, 26).

However, many NGOs, think tanks, and scholars have expressed doubts about the Fund, claiming that the EUTF's creation denotes an externalization of EU migration policy and security to third-party countries. The European Commission has maintained an

Figure 1: EUTF for Africa Partner Countries



Source: "2017 Annual Report: EU Trust Fund for Africa," European Commission

emphasis on returns, readmissions, and reintegration, announcing its priority of improving the humanitarian situation in the Mediterranean (where African asylum seekers have made the dangerous crossing to Italy in large numbers); this leads detractors to suggest a camouflaged motive of stemming flows of northbound migrants, blurring the lines between crisis management and conventional development policy. Furthermore, the EUTF's financing is largely redirected from other EU aid instruments, including the more carefully monitored European Development Fund (EDF). This threatens the accountability and transparency of the initiative, running the risk of excluding African stakeholders in decision-making processes. Finally, the EUTF may not offer adequate incentives for African countries to cooperate, calling into question its overall effectiveness as a development instrument.

To improve the EUTF, this policy paper recommends a conscientious reevaluation of some of the instrument's aims, with a greater emphasis on humanitarian outcomes which may also prevent dangerous illegal migration. The EUTF should focus more attention on the conflicts and humanitarian crises that have forced so many to flee, with a goal to safeguard the human rights of African civilians. In addition, financing allocated through the EUTF should be subjected to judicious monitoring according to EDF standards, and the same rules of "ownership" for third-party actors applied as for other development projects. The EUTF must also bring about outcomes which are truly beneficial for African civilians, engendering state and local collaboration. These include the establishment of safe and legal migration routes, potentially through visa liberalization programs, as well as lowered fees on transfers for remittances. Such changes would better align the EUTF with the EU's values, and render it more powerful as a development initiative.

Addressing Push Factors

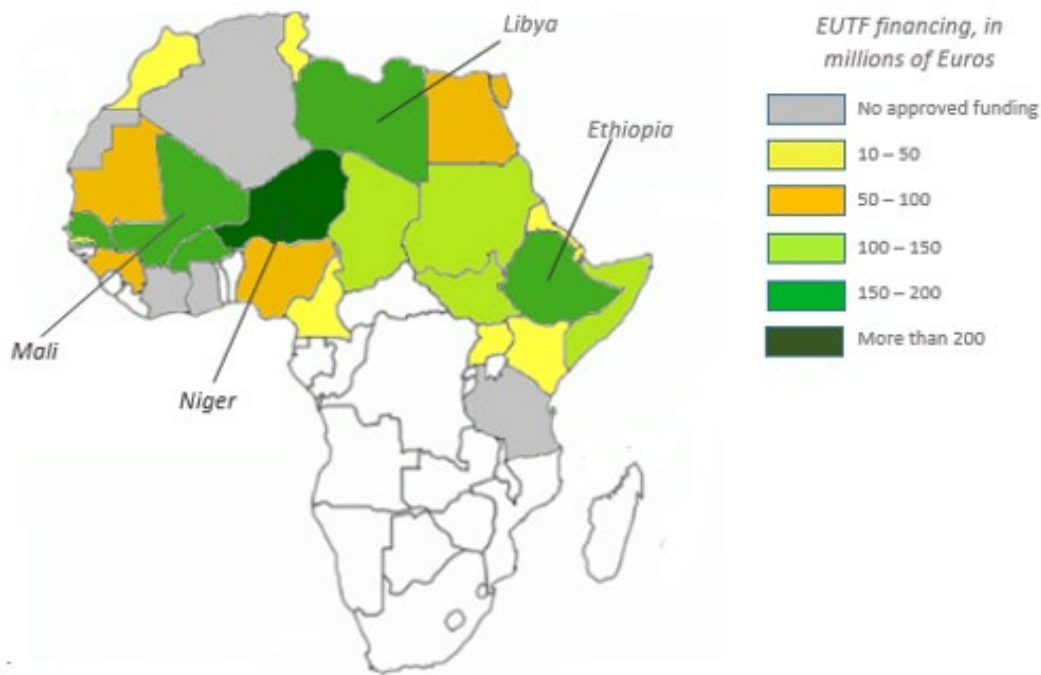
The EUTF's stated purpose is to treat the root causes of irregular migration, with a focus on four areas of development: "greater economic and employment

opportunities, strengthening resilience of communities, improved migration management, [and] improved governance and conflict prevention" (European Commission 2018a, 8-9). With the exception of the fourth, these proposed policy areas do not address the top push factors that force many Africans onto dangerous migration paths (Whitaker 2017, 213), including ongoing conflicts, repressive governments, and a lack of sufficient resources in refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) camps. Asylum seekers staying in such settlements may find themselves without access to work, health care, and even food, leading them to undertake a second arduous journey to safer climes. Moreover, research has shown that providing development aid to economically weak countries in the hope of lessening illegal migration is counterproductive and may even cause a migration "hump" (Kugiel 2016, 43-44, 47-48). This suggests a need for reorienting some of the EUTF's goals as well as its strategy.

Strong Focus on Border Security and Returns

Many NGOs and scholars have been critical of certain projects supported by the EUTF, claiming that financing disproportionately favors "containment" initiatives (Nshimbi 2016, 307). So far, a number of projects sponsored by the Trust Fund have centered on border management, anti-smuggling initiatives, and encouraging African states to accept returns (Collett 2016, 41). A 2017 study conducted by Oxfam International shows that roughly 22% of the EUTF has been set aside for migration management-type actions, a small fraction of which has been dedicated to establishing safer migration routes. The majority of initiatives under the "migration management" heading have been deterrent policies, including readmissions. 13.5% of the EUTF backs security and peace-building projects, with a large portion of these focused on strengthening security forces – a source of potential conflict in undemocratic countries. The remaining 64.5% of funding covers development cooperation and research initiatives (Kervyn and Shilhav 2017, 19).

Figure 2: EUTF Funding by Country



Whether EUTF financing goes toward containment or development policy appears to depend in part on recipient states' function vis-à-vis migration. In countries of origin, which include Somalia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Nigeria, Gambia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, but also Mali, Senegal, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Morocco (considered countries of origin and transit), there is considerable emphasis on development cooperation. However, in countries of transit (including Libya, Niger, Chad, Djibouti, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania), the emphasis on migration management and security concerns is greater, accounting for nearly half of the budget allocated to them. This distribution of resources may not sufficiently take into account the severe humanitarian needs of these countries of transit. To take the example of Niger, one of the least developed countries in the world, 8 out of 9 local EUTF projects approved by late 2017 focused primarily on managing the migration route that runs through it (Kervyn and Shilhav 2017, 21-23).

As of June 2018, the EUTF has approved 161 projects throughout Africa (European Commission 2018b). A closer look at funding amounts doled out shows heavier investment in countries of transit, or countries of both origin and transit (Figure 2, composed using

data from European Commission 2018a). Notable recipients include Niger, Libya, Mali, and Ethiopia.

This potential "securitization" of the migration-development nexus points to the moral dilemma introduced when development aid is directed toward decreasing migrant populations, a concern which has been voiced by many NGOs as well as the European Parliament (Castillejo 2017, 3). Critics note that development funding should be focused on humanitarian results rather than a reduction in migrants; however, if illegal migration remains a central concern, then projects should also contribute to protecting vulnerable populations and alleviating poverty. Potential areas of overlap between migration issues and development include strengthening local public services and ensuring access to them, promoting good governance practices and rule of law (European Parliament 2016), and supporting anti-corruption policies. Of the EUTF's areas of focus, improved governance is best-suited to slow down illegal migratory flows in a way that is truly beneficial to African civilians (Funk et al. 2017, 8-9). Means for achieving more orderly migration include providing necessary humanitarian aid and infrastructure to refugee settlements to avoid secondary relocations (Carling and Talleraas 2016, 33), as well as facilitating access to legal migration.

Unconventional Development Spending

In view of the EUTF's declared purpose, the funds that have so far been set aside for it are insufficient; irregular migration in Africa is a broad and complex issue, requiring long-term planning and considerable resources. The Trust Fund was meant to pool capital from EU Member States and the Commission, but Member States' contributions have been limited. This has led the European Commission to dip into the EDF's reserves and other traditional development instruments for nearly 90% of EUTF financial support, repurposing funding that was destined for other causes and removing certain legal constraints. The EUTF therefore brings little new and additional funding to the table, running the risk of diverting aid from important areas of development (Castillejo 2017, 2).

These issues are further compounded by a weakened monitoring mechanism. The EUTF's star feature is the quick and flexible support it brings to regions heavily impacted by migration, but this flexibility entails more informal decision-making and less careful assessment. The European Parliament has alleged that the EUTF is an "ad hoc instrument" that bypasses the legislative body's budgetary authority (European Parliament 2016), while the European Commission itself has divulged in a recent EDF report that the speedy nature of fund allocation under the EUTF may jeopardize the impact and sustainability of its projects (European Commission 2017, 9). Critics see the informal and opaque elements of the Fund as a means to circumvent OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) spending requirements, and the EU's own legal framework. While the DAC forbids self-interested development spending, the Treaty of Lisbon insists that development cooperation policy must have "as its primary objective the reduction and [...] eradication of poverty" (European Union 2007, Art. 188D, 93).

Another risk involved with the EUTF's unusual resource allocation methods is that African countries may be left with a smaller role than with more

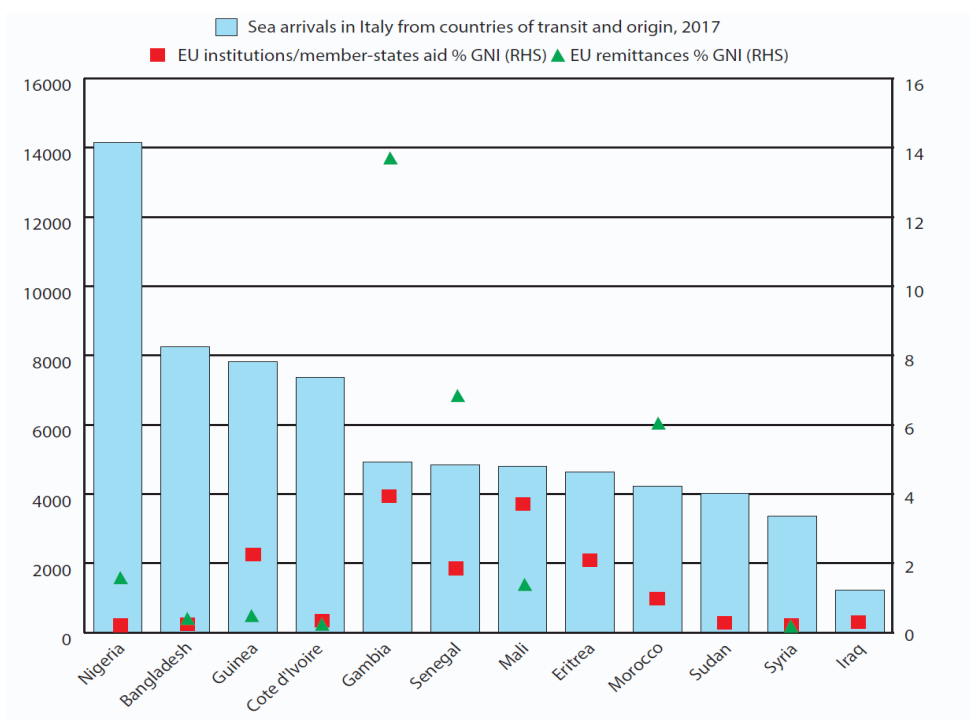
conventional forms of development aid. In the same EDF report mentioned above, the European Commission remarks that the role of partner countries in the EUTF is "reduced from that of equal partner in the EDF to that of an observer" (European Commission 2017, 9). Here, the Commission suggests that African partners are consulted, but without legal obligation; this again lacks coherency with European policy, as embodied by decades of development cooperation agreements. Representatives of African nations have taken note of the decrease in local ownership, with some expressing suspicion that the EUTF promotes EU interests over necessary African development (Castillejo 2017, 1).

Taking these factors into account, the EUTF as it has so far been financed and implemented lacks harmony with Europe's stated values and commitments in terms of development aid. To make it more congruent with official EU policy, the EUTF should be composed of more new and additional funding. Financing ought to be subjected to the same allocation rules and restraints as the EDF and should consistently reflect an aim to alleviate poverty. Transparent monitoring of the EUTF and its projects must be maintained, possibly by giving the European Parliament an oversight role. Finally, African stakeholders and civil society should be provided greater ownership in proposing and implementing projects through the EUTF.

The Need for Incentives for African Cooperation

In addition to leaving little room for African ownership, analysts suggest that the EUTF offers insufficient motivation for cooperation from African partner countries. European and African concerns in terms of migration diverge considerably; while many EU policymakers seek to contain illegal flows and simplify readmissions, African leaders are more likely to seek facilitated legal migration to Europe, increased development through remittances, and improved local resilience. Representatives of African countries have expressed their frustration that the EUTF overlooks many African interests, and observers of the

**Figure 3: European Development Aid versus Remittances from Europe
(Origin countries from Africa, South Asia, Middle East)**



Source: "How the EU and third countries can manage migration" Centre for European Reform, 2017

Trust Fund's implementation have noted that African leaders will be less apt to cooperate fully under such conditions (Castillejo 2017, 2).

The EU's relative difficulty in establishing readmission agreements with origin countries can partly be explained by the importance of remittances (Figure 3). In many African countries, Official Development Assistance and EUTF funds from Europe account for a fraction of what these nations gain in remittances from their own diaspora (Scazzieri and Springford 2017, 1, 8). In 2015, remittances to Sub-Saharan Africa totaled USD 35.2 billion, while the EUTF supplied only a few billion euros in migration-targeted aid (Funk et al. 2017, 5). Due to the essential role that remittances play in many African economies and the comparatively small amount of development aid on offer, local "cooperation" in reducing irregular migration may only be lip service.

However, the EU can engage African partner countries to develop more relevant policies, including new legal migration routes and liberalized visa programs (work permits, scholarships). Such measures could provide additional economic opportunities for both European and African countries. Another possibility is lowered fees on wire transfers, to facilitate sending

remittances (Funk et al. 2017, 6). Meanwhile, the EU should minimize its focus on returns and readmissions if it wants to improve its relationship with African actors. Incorporating African interests in the EUTF is an essential step toward ensuring on-the-ground benefits and could provide new openings for Europe to engage with its African partners in pursuing mutual goals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As has been demonstrated, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa offers quick and flexible financing to support new opportunities for resilience-building and development in Africa. Since its creation in 2015, it has faced criticism in terms of its objectives and effectiveness, with detractors alleging that its implementation has been incongruent with the EU's values and official development policy. Nevertheless, it can still be improved and carried out in a way that is more beneficial both to African and European stakeholders. This policy brief recommends the following changes:

- 1 The EUTF's methods should be reoriented to treat the most urgent "push" factors behind irregular migration, consistently with a view to pursue

humanitarian outcomes. More attention should be paid to **political solutions and conflict resolution** to protect the rights of African civilians.

- 2 All actions supported by the EUTF should **demonstrably contribute to poverty alleviation and community resilience**, particularly in countries of transit. Potential areas in which such actions overlap with preventing forced migration include **increased access to local public services** (such as health care and education), **good governance practices, and anti-corruption initiatives**. Additional humanitarian assistance should be directed toward refugee and IDP camps in origin and transit countries to mitigate secondary relocations.
- 3 **EUTF financing should be subjected to the same scrutiny, monitoring, and “ownership” rules for partner countries as the EDF** and other official European development aid funds. The European Parliament should be given oversight to make the Trust Fund more transparent, and African policy-makers and civil society must be better incorporated in decision-making processes.
- 4 The EU should **engage African partner countries by focusing more on their concerns**, including safe and legal migration routes, liberalized visa programs for work and study, and facilitated money transfers for remittances. A modified approach to working with African leaders could better ensure their cooperation.

Implementing these changes would make the EUTF more coherent with the EU’s own official policy objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Target 10.7 for planned and well-managed migration policies. It would also uphold SDG 16 by contributing to the accountability and transparency of EU governance and its institutions. Indeed, the European Union’s policymakers must continue to set an example of good governance and respect for human rights for the rest of the world to follow.

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