



Economic Push Factors of African-Western Migration as Depicted in Selected African Novels

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v6i9.1618>

Abstract

This article looks at issues of the economy in African countries, that push Africans to move to Western countries, in search of greener pastures, as these issues are demonstrated in African novels. The novels to be considered for this discourse are Dirie and Miller's *Desert Flower*, Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and Mungoshi's *Waiting for The Rain*. While the discussion is on economic issues pushing Africans to Western countries, when and where necessary, allusion will be made to emigration to other countries, even within Africa as well. The subheadings of this research are introduction, unemployment, hunger and starvation, and conclusion. The concepts of push factors, economy and African-Western migration are defined as part of the introductory section of this discourse.

Keywords: *Economy; Push Factors; African-Western Migration; African Novels*

Introduction

Most African countries are still developing. Because of this phase of development, there are quite several issues leading to the deterioration of their economies. This deterioration leads to high rates of unemployment, poverty, hunger, and starvation, as well as the devaluation of the African currencies, among other things. Individuals and families are often compelled by these circumstances to migrate to Western communities in search of better living conditions.

Authors of African literature (written in English) present factors of African-Western migration in their literary works. These factors include economic, political, social, and environmental factors, among others. This discourse aims at discussing the economic factors of this phenomenon. As much as African literature reveals these factors of African-Western migration, very little has been done to study such literature, focusing on these aspects. Gwambiwa (2022), whose doctoral study this article is based on, is probably the only one who has done so, so far.

Thet (2014:3) defines push factors as factors that compel a person, due to different reasons, to leave a place and go to another one. Also, according to Zanabazar *et al.* (2021:3), push factors refer to challenges that lead people to flee from their countries of origin to settle somewhere else. Generally, these push factors have negative impacts on lives. This entails that they are usually problems such as low productivity, unemployment, unfavourable economic circumstances, natural disasters, and resource depletion, among others. From the above definitions, one can therefore define push factors as uncomfortable forces which drive people away from their homes, in search of comfortable homes somewhere else. In this study, economic push factors are discussed as they are depicted in African literature.

Economy is the process by which resources are used to produce goods and services in a country. According to Kenton (2022:1), economy is a complex system of interrelated production, consumption, and distribution of goods, and services combine to fulfil the needs of those living and operating within the economy.

Africa is a continent commonly known for poverty, unemployment, and unstable economies. Flahaux and Haas (2016:1) summarise that “Africa is often seen as a continent of mass migration and displacement caused by poverty, violent conflict and environmental stress.” Due to these factors, most Africans are compelled to seek refuge in the West.

African-Western migration refers to the movement of Africans from Africa to the West in search of greener pastures and better living conditions. According to Obadare (2022:1): “As African states have struggled with infrastructural decay, poverty and corruption, highly skilled Africans have sought fresh starts in various parts of the Western hemisphere”. This entails that African-Western migration is the movement of Africans from Africa to Western countries, because of various reasons which include unemployment, starvation, and poverty among others. The Western countries Africans emigrate to are mostly those in Europe and/or America.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a situation whereby people actively look for jobs but cannot find any. It occurs when people of working age want to work and are unable to find jobs. It is also the measure of the health of a country’s economy. This implies that high rates of unemployment in a country signal economic distress while low rates of unemployment signify an overheated country’s economy. One can bring it forward that, if more people in a country are unemployed, the rate of production deteriorates. This is a sign of the economic distress of a country.

Lack of employment opportunities in African states is one of the major forces pushing Africans to migrate to Western countries. Africa has few employment opportunities, and most people are left without options, except leaving, to earn an income. Even most educated Africans cannot secure jobs due to harsh economic conditions in the continent. Dustmann and Yoram (2007:237) comment: “Throughout human history, economic motives for migration and motives related to natural disaster or persecution are the main reasons why individuals migrate”. Adepoju (1998:387) further clarifies that international migration signifies, to a large extent, inequalities in development, employment opportunities and, especially income and living conditions between countries, particularly developed and developing countries. Since most African countries are still developing, most citizens are failing to secure employment opportunities. This is the primary drive forcing Africans to the West, in search of employment.

Unemployment, as a burning issue, is addressed in *Desert Flower*. Waris’ uncle, Uncle Sayyid, must migrate to Saudi Arabia in search of employment for him to take care of his family. His wife, Aunt L’ uul raises three children alone at home, while the husband is working and sending her money. In the novel, it is revealed:

However, she spends her days raising their three children alone, as he was living in Saudi Arabia. Because the economy in Somalia was so poor, Uncle worked in Saudi and sent money back home to support his family.

(Page 72)

Although Saudi Arabia is not a Western country, this discussion is included to support that Africans do leave their countries for others. Because of the scarcity of jobs, Uncle Sayyid weighs the two: the value of staying with family while unemployed or migrating to Saudi Arabia, earning a job, and taking care of the family. He decides to get a job at the expense of living together with the family. African economy is so bad that citizens are often left with no option except to migrate. If they stay at home, they will just drown in poverty because of lack of employment opportunities. Even though he needs to stay with his family while unemployed, Uncle Sayyid is still obliged to provide for them, as he is the father. This is difficult since it is hard to secure employment in Somalia, where the economy is deteriorating. This is the scenario with some African families, whereby people are forced to leave and look for employment elsewhere, to take care of their families. One can therefore bring it forward that unemployment leaves African descendants with no choice except of migrating to lead a decent life, whereby a father will be able to fend for his family.

Poor economic conditions in Somalia are further addressed in the same novel through the protagonist, Waris, who becomes the breadwinner for her mother and siblings at a very tender age. She migrates to London because of the scarcity of employment opportunities in Somalia. She cannot secure a job in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia. Waris joins construction as a bricklayer (in London) because of desperation. She acts so excitedly when she is offered the job as a construction worker. She narrates:

“Hey you are wrong, I assured him, ‘I can do it- I’m very strong really,’” I pointed at the guys mixing the mortar, they stood there with their pants hanging down to their buttocks. “I can help them. I can bring all the sand, and mix as much as they can” ... “Be here at six and we’ll see what you can do.” I floated back to Auntie Sahru’s without touching the ground. I had a job! I would be earning real cash! And I would save every penny and send it to Mama.

(Page 76)

Waris refers to a conversation between her and the manager in the construction company. The dropping of the pants that the construction men are wearing is a true reflection of the heaviness of the job itself. It is heavy for them. The reader can imagine how happy Waris is, as her level of desperation for a job is shown. Although she is still young, she knows that her mother surely needs the money, considering the life her family is living back home. The above quotation brings the idea that things are so tough in Africa to an extent that a thirteen-year-old girl sacrifices herself, for her to take care of her mother and siblings. Since she is left with no choice, she grabs the opportunity which is there for her to earn some cash. Circumstances therefore force African children to grab every migrating opportunity which comes their way to look for employment.

As shown in the quotation above, the job offered to Waris is so manual that even strong men feel its intensity. For Waris, an undernourished young girl, the pain of doing this job is unbearable. She accepts it since she is supposed to look after her mother and siblings back home, which is impossible by staying and helping her aunt (Sahru) for free. She hangs on the job for a month although it brings a great deal of pain, as she says:

“My career as a construction worker began. And it was horrible. I struggled to carry back-breaking loads of sand the whole day, I didn’t have gloves and the bucket handle cut into my hands. Then, along my palms, I developed enormous blisters. By the end of the day, the blisters had burst, and my hands were bleeding.”

(Page 77)

From the above explanation, Waris goes through a traumatic experience, as a construction worker at thirteen years of age. She does not have an option. For her to send her mother some money, the only option she has is to take the construction job. There is nowhere else she can be employed.

Aunt Sahru, who is staying with Waris, fails to believe her when she hears that Waris got a job just like that. She suspects some form of abuse, in exchange for the job, as she says: "... you got a job, where? ... And exactly what are you going to do for these men?" (Page 77). Aunt Sahru knows that getting a job in Somalia is a golden opportunity. Because men, who can carry out the work of construction, are failing to get such jobs and Waris being offered it, to her (Aunt Sahru), it means that in return for this job, there could be some form of abuse which is going to take place. The belief that someone can accept a job in exchange for sex, indicates the value that is being placed on job opportunities as they are limited in Somalia. It is difficult for someone to survive without a source of income. This means that, because of the lack of employment that ensures Africans an income within an agreed stipulated time, Africans therefore resort to migrating.

The month in which Waris works at construction is horrible and full of unbearable agony and pain for her. She then decides to quit. When Waris leaves her job as a construction worker, her uncle who is a Somali ambassador to London, Mohammed Chama Farah, offers her a job as their maid.

The issue of unemployment in Somalia associates Waris with a Somali cook who is working for her aunt and uncle (in London). The cook does anything to keep his job. He bad-mouths Waris to her aunt for him to look good and hard-working to his master. As a grown-up man can decide to migrate from Somalia to London to work as a cook, one can therefore conclude that the situation in Somalia is not very friendly for its citizens. The Somalis flee from their country in search of employment in the Western world in this novel. It can be said that the poor economic conditions in Somalia particularly, and Africa in general, then trigger African-Western migration. Africans live in poverty and hunger at their home. Hunger has never been friendly to anyone. It makes Africans foreigners in their own homes.

When Uncle Mohammed's term as a Somali ambassador to London lapses, his family is supposed to return home to Somalia. Waris is disappointed about the news of getting back home, because of the economic conditions there, as it is difficult for her to get a job. She views London as her place of salvation. She wants to return home when she is rich. She decides to hide her passport so that she will be left behind. Being an illegal citizen is okay with Waris rather than going back to an impoverished home country. All her efforts are for buying her mother a house and taking care of her. She hopes for better employment opportunities in London than back home. At the age of 15, Waris understands that Somalia means her downfall and poverty since it will be difficult to find a job there. The decision to remain alone, with no one to look after her as a child, in London, at her age is very risky. Taking that risk on its own, reveals that the lack of employment opportunities in Africa is torture which is driving away its sons and daughters to other continents, in search of greener pastures.

The novel *We Need New Names* also addresses unemployment in Zimbabwe. Men and women are living in Paradise, sort of a squatter camp, not because they like it, but because they do not find jobs to earn them decent places to live in. The order of the day for women is to plait their hair and chat while men spend their days playing draughts with no one putting bread on the table in most families:

When they returned to the presence of their women and children and everybody else, they stuck their hands inside torn pockets, until they felt their dry thighs, kicked little stones out of the way and erected themselves like walls again, but the women who knew all the ways of weeping and all there was to know was falling apart, would not be deceived, they gently rose from their hearths, beat the dust off their skirts, and planted themselves like rocks in front of their men and children and shacks. Only they did all appear almost tolerable.

(Pages 76-77).

Men in Paradise are in a desperate situation since they are facing challenges in securing employment opportunities. They try to occupy themselves with some socialising activities like playing draughts. Although they try to appear strong in the situation which they cannot change, at home, they face the reality by being welcomed by a miserable family, waiting for their fathers to provide food for them. Nothing strips a man off his manhood as his failure to provide for his family. The situation depicted by Bulawayo in the novel, is so tormenting psychologically and emotionally. Therefore, in this novel, Zimbabweans flee to all parts of the world. Unemployment is also responsible for the decisions taken by Zimbabweans, of leaving their country of origin. The situation itself sends people away, chasing chances to be employed. Unemployment in Zimbabwe, as addressed in the novel *We Need New Names*, and generally across all African nations, promotes African-Western migration at large.

Unemployment gives birth to poverty in the novel *We Need New Names*. Zimbabweans are put in desperate situations because of poverty and end up indulging in bad behaviours which, had things been normal, they would not consider themselves doing. Darling's mother ends up prostituting to make ends meet. She is unemployed and the husband is swallowed by joy in South Africa, which drives him crazy to the extent of forgetting that he has a family which needs to be fed, back home in Zimbabwe. Her boyfriend is also a low earner and cannot afford to pamper her with all the basics she needs to sustain her family. He is provided with sex and, in return, he offers small amounts of money. Because of poverty, Darling's mother is so desperate and needs that money, regardless of it being little. To her, it makes a difference which she can notice. The desperation triggered by poverty to Darling's mother, is the same despair driving most single mothers away from home, to provide for their children. Those who want an honest clean living, like Aunt Fostalina, decide to leave to put bread on the table for the family. Since unemployment drives Africans to search for greener pastures, one can take it from the perspective that the desperation it creates promotes African-Western migration.

Hunger and Starvation

Hunger refers to the emptiness of the stomach when one spends a while without eating. It involves the appetite that is caused by the process of emptying the stomach and needs to be satiated by the intake of food. Smathers (2023) defines starvation as lack of adequate nutrition for the body, over a long timeframe, usually weeks or months. From Smathers' definition, one can conclude that starvation can lead to death.

Hunger and starvation play a notable role in driving Africans from their areas of origin. The poor economic conditions raised by Bulawayo above, lead to the failure of parents to provide food for their families, which is a basic need. Darling (the protagonist), Bustard, Stina, Chipu and their friends rely on stealing guavas because of hunger, as their parents cannot afford to provide proper meals for them. They are always hungry. They know that what they are doing is wrong and the risks that may befall them if they are caught. But they are left with no option because of hunger. This is highlighted by the narrator as she says that "it's the fruit that gives us courage otherwise we wouldn't dare be here" (Page 17). Because of hunger, these kids are transformed into thieves and their primary task is roaming around Budapest, raiding guava trees. This is a survival strategy, regardless of their awareness of what they are doing being wrong. Budapest is a well-off location, unlike Paradise, a shanty place:

Budapest is big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat graveled yards or trimmed lawns and tall fences and the durawalls and the flowers and the big trees heavy with fruit that is waiting for us since nobody around here seems to know what to do with that.

(Page 4)

Because of hunger, the children of Paradise no longer have morals when it comes to scavenging for something to fill their tummies with. During their raids in Budapest, they come across an Englishwoman, eating something which they do not know:

Its flat, and the outer part is crusty. The top part is creamish and looks fluffy and soft and there are coin-like things on it, deep pink, the colour of the burnt wood. I also see sprinkles of red and green and yellow and finally, the brown bumps that look like pimples.

(Page 6)

The way Darling looks and describes what the English lady is eating, shows her attraction to the food and reveals her wish to be eating something like this which, unfortunately, she cannot get. Frustration mounts in these children as they watch the woman throwing away the left-over. Considering how hungry they are, to the extent of finding satisfaction from stolen fruit, and looking at someone throwing food away, Darling explains the situation in Paradise when she says: “We have never seen anyone throw food away” (Page 6). This means that they never have enough food at home. Seeing someone throwing food away while they are hungry is unbelievable. Hunger and starvation make these children uncomfortable at home, such that they decide to scavenge for food, which is typical of child abuse. Children have the right to food. Depriving them of food is violating this right. Since parents cannot afford to feed their children, because they do not have any sort of meaningful income, one can conclude that they are driven from Africa to Western communities in search of opportunities that can enable them to feed their children.

Still on the issue of hunger, when Darling migrates to America, she goes through harsh weather conditions which she considers more bearable, compared to hunger back home in Zimbabwe. She says:

I would not be standing around because something called snow was preventing me from going outside to live life ... But then we wouldn't be having enough food, which is why I will stand in America dealing with the snow. There is food to eat here, all types and types of food.

(Page155)

Darling would rather stand the chill of snow, which is depriving her of her freedom, if her tummy is full than hunger which is at home. To her, hunger can send anyone to do anything to get food. Children transform into thieves and mothers turn into prostitutes, all because of the need for food. This is the reason some Africans move to the Western world (by any means necessary) with the hope that they will get something to eat. Despite the weather and racism challenges that they are exposed to in the Western world, it's still okay for them, if there is food for them and their families. In a nutshell, hunger and starvation, in Africa, leave Africans with no choice except to move to the West, to look for opportunities that can give them access to food.

Hunger and starvation expose the kids from Paradise to exploitation and manipulation. They crave gifts from the West and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with the hope that they will get something to quench their hunger. They accept to participate in photo shooting, not because they want to, but for the reason of getting something in return. Darling reveals this as she says:

They just like taking pictures, these NGO people, like maybe we are their real friends and relatives, and they will look at the pictures and point us out by name to other friends and relatives once they get back to their homes. They don't care that we are embarrassed by our dirty torn clothing, that we would prefer they didn't do it ... we do not complain because we know that after the picture taking comes the giving of gifts.

(Page 52)

The way these kids are dressed, that is, in “dirty, torn clothes”, is an indication of starvation at its greatest levels, whereby their parents can neither provide clothes nor soap to wash the dirt off the torn

clothes. More so, due to hunger, Darling and company give in to snap shooting with the anticipation that they could get food or some goodies in return. They are taken advantage of. They only agree to have their photos taken because of their love of the goodies which they cannot get at home, but they do not like the activity because they are dirty. To them, photos should carry good memories of them. They do not even know what these photos are going to be used for. All they know is that, after their photos are taken, they will be given food and gifts.

By taking photos of these children, while they are dirty, NGOs are taking advantage of them. These photos earn a good reputation. They send them to Europe and America with the reflection of Africa, which is drowning in poverty, and use them to beg for donations from the Western world. However, most organisations use these donations for their affluence. Comparing the little gifts these children get in return and the money given to them (NGO), this is manipulation at its highest level. One can conclude that hunger leaves these kids with no choice, except to look for salvation from these NGOs, regardless of the exploitation and violation of their rights as human beings. Darling is one of the children who agree to snap shooting only for food but, deep inside, she does not get along well with the poverty portrayal of her photo, with dirty and torn clothes. Their parents' failure to provide food and clothes for them is exposing the kids to abuse. With the attempt to conquer hunger and starvation, parents, therefore, have a reason to leave Zimbabwe to the diaspora in their numbers, to look for means which will enable them to care for their children back home. Not only Zimbabwe, but Africa as a whole.

Darling refers to her own country as a *kaka* country. In Nguni languages, the word *kaka* is used to refer to human waste (faeces). It is something disgusting that nobody wants to be associated with. So, this metaphor of equating her own country with *kaka* means that the country is not very comfortable, and she and her friends do not want to be in it. This is due to the deteriorating living conditions, whereby the country is almost a 'house of hunger' with nothing moving as to the expectations of the civilians at all. This also refers to the way the government treats its people. For example, the demolition of sweated for properties because they do not meet the expected standards of proper accommodation. It would be much better if the government demolished the substandard properties and replaced them with proper accommodation. Instead, it only demolishes the properties and does not care where these families are to stay. The above words are an expression of Darling's anger towards her own country of birth as well as the government. Darling is a victim of all the tortures. There is nothing to emulate, given the way the narrator is leading her life.

Because of the current situation of unemployment, Darling's father migrates to South Africa in search of employment. He neglects the family and Darling's mother struggles to cater for the family alone. Darling's mother even ends up in prostitution because of poverty. One can therefore conclude that African countries are no longer comfortable homes for Africans. This is the reason Africans have a longing to be somewhere else, where they can live life to its fullest, and are content that they are also regarded as human beings.

As young as they are, Darling and her friends consider America as a 'country country' and Zimbabwe and other countries as 'just countries', when they play a country game. According to Goredema (2013:1), this is a game in which the kids draw circles, a smaller circle inside and a bigger one outside. The outward circle is divided into segments, according to the number of available players. Each player is allocated a segment to represent a country of his or her choice. He selects a country that he or she wants to represent and is given 50 points which are written in the player's segment. One player starts from the inner circle and declares war on any country. All the other players run as fast as possible away from the circle. The player who represents a country that is called out stops others. Upon the stop instruction, they freeze where they are. If the player gets to the nearest target in three bounds of steps, the target player loses ten points and then declares war on another country of choice. In this text, the countries chosen by these kids, reflect their emulation of the Western world:

Everybody wants to be in certain countries. Like everybody wants to be in the USA and Britain and Canada and Australia and Switzerland and France and Italy and Sweden and Germany and Russia and Greece and them. These 'are countries countries.' If you lose the fight, then you must settle for countries like Dubai, and South Africa and Botswana and Tanzania and them. They are not country-countries but life is better than here. Nobody wants to be rags of countries like Congo, like Somalia, like Iran, Sri Lanka, and not even this one we live in, a terrible place of hunger and things falling apart.

(Page 49)

From the above quotation, the countries of preference which are chosen by Darling and company, are all Western ones. Why? Because in those countries, living conditions are better. They have food and everything which they want for their survival. For this reason, to the kids, the Western countries seem genuine as they cater for their citizens. When they lose the fights and are left with limited options, then they go for more developed countries in Africa, the likes of South Africa, Botswana, and Tanzania. However, the narrator regards poor countries like Somalia, her own country Zimbabwe, Saudi Arabia, and Congo as "rags." This means that they are far from being genuine. This further implies that they are fake places where there is no food, and where human life is deteriorating. For this reason, already, it is injected in the minds of these kids that life is in the West. Anybody who wants to experience life at its fullest needs to be in a Western country. The children are venturing their thoughts into the game. Since Africans have it in their minds that they need to be in the Western communities to live a meaningful life, they, then, work towards leaving their countries of origin. African-Western migration seems to be the only solution that comes with the salvation of Africans from their poverty, hunger, starvation as well as their poor standards of living.

Lucifer Mandengu, in *Waiting for the Rain*, feels that migrating is the only solution to conquer his poverty background. Manyene Tribal Trust Lands, Lucifer's home, is so dilapidated because of colonialism, whereby blacks are resettled in reserves while the colonialists occupy better fertile land. Manyene Tribal Trust Lands is therefore underdeveloped since the residents of the place are impoverished and cannot develop their area. Lucifer's father used all the resources on his (Lucifer) education and is left with nothing else. Lucifer's poor background drives his longing to be somewhere, where things could be better for him. He does not want any association with this poverty background and wishes that he could have been born somewhere and of other parents, not his poor ones. He feels he does not belong there anymore. He feels he should look for a better place where he can experience better living conditions, unlike life at home in Manyene:

I am Lucifer Mandengu. I was born here against my will. I should have been born somewhere with some parents. I have never liked it here, and I never shall and if I leave this place, I am not going to come back here. It is the failures' junk heap.

(Page 162)

Lucifer despises both his family and place of origin because of poverty. He forgets that he contributed to the poverty of his parents as they used all the family resources to educate him. He regards all the people in Manyene as failures by saying: "It is the failures' junk heap." He believes in living in the Western community. He places his hopes overseas.

On the other hand, still from the perspective of hoping for salvation which comes from the West, Tongoona, his father, believes that when Lucifer migrates overseas, things are going to change for them as he will resume the responsibilities of taking care of them. This is noted in his parents' conversation when Tongoona tells his (Lucifer) mother (Raina): "Anyway, Ma 'Lucifer you need not worry. Lucifer told me that in another country, he would be very rich, richer than a teacher or a doctor here" (Page 8). This quotation brings out that Tongoona has hopes for Lucifer's departure to London. He is so confident that overseas is going to be a source that will deal with their poverty-stricken livelihood. What Lucifer has

promised his father about overseas shows that he believes that life is easy there. Already, before Lucifer's departure, both himself and his parents have placed their hopes overseas. They hope that the only solution to their poverty lies in the hands of the Western world. This applies to other Africans who place their hopes on Western countries as well. This is the reason some Africans flee from poverty in Africa to Western communities, who are considered the promised land of milk and honey.

Devaluing of African currencies

The issue of devaluation of local African currencies is addressed in the novel *We Need New Names*. The Zimbabwean local currency has devalued to such an extent that access to basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical facilities is impossible for ordinary civilians. Whilst ordinary civilians access the devalued Zimbabwean currency, when purchasing, businesspeople reject it in favour of the American US dollar, which is still strong.

Darling's father is sick with HIV/AIDS. Nowhere in the story is it mentioned about proper medical care rendered to him. Instead, poor little Darling is left to nurse him. This is all because of the deteriorating currency which deprives the sick of getting proper medical care. People like Mother of Bones, who do not have any means to access the US dollar, feel estranged in their home countries. The deteriorating economic conditions in Zimbabwe strip humanity from citizens. This is portrayed by Mother of Bones who laments: "And the American money which they are talking about ... just where do they think I can get it. Do they think I can just dig it, huh, do they think I will defecate it?" (Page 25). These hyperinflation conditions eroding the African currencies leave most Africans in desperate situations and with no options except of migrating, as this is noted in the words of Kipkemboi (2002:1) who says: "The impact of devaluation is brutal and immediate. The domestic prices of food staples, essential drugs, fuel, and public service increase overnight." He further explains that this is the situation in Kenya, whereby impressive achievements have witnessed a general decline because of the currency devaluation and all areas of development are affected. So, inflation hits most African countries and forces Africans to leave for the West, where they can work for a valuable currency that will enable them access to basic needs such as food, medication, proper accommodation as well as decent clothing.

Conclusion

This article discussed the economic hardships experienced in African nations, that are driving Africans to Western communities, as they are addressed in selected African novels. The economic challenges discussed in this discourse include unemployment, hunger and starvation, and the devaluation of African currencies. The novel *Desert Flower* brings it forward that high unemployment rate in Somalia leads to child abuse, as Waris takes a job as a construction worker at a very tender age, to take care of her mother. Unemployment forces her to migrate to the West for her to secure a job.

In the novels *We Need New Names* and *Waiting for the Rain*, unemployment in Zimbabwe gives birth to the desperation of citizens as they wallow in poverty and harsh living conditions. This leaves most citizens with no option except of trying to make ends meet in the Western world. Bulawayo addresses the exploitation of workers as a burning issue caused by harsh economic conditions. Poverty, hunger, and starvation are the order of the day in Africa and negatively affect all areas of life. For this reason, some Africans have reached the conclusion that, for one to make it in life, one must migrate to the Western world. Bulawayo even portrays the devaluation of African currencies. This denies ordinary Africans access to proper basic needs of life.

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