



Mesa Redonda: Saúde na Determinação da Emigração e das Respostas (Health in Determining Migration and Responses)

Por Carlos Brito

Health Care Access for Migrants in ECOWAS

The quest for a better life is one of the reasons that has led mankind to travel widely over the surface of the earth in pursuit of different livelihood options. Migration in West Africa is an age-old practice propelled by economic, security, social and political reasons.

The access to health care differ between displaced persons and long-term migration. This paper discusses access to health care of long-term migrants.

In West Africa, the long term migrations occur mostly within the region. Data indicate that 84% of migration movements in West Africa are to another country in the region, equivalent to seven times the migratory flows of West African countries to other parts of the world.

In line with the Protocol on the free movement of persons, residence and establishment, ECOWAS citizens who migrate within the Community have the same rights as their host country nationals to unimpeded access to health care. However, because of the different levels of development of health infrastructure, the Protocol is not implemented uniformly in the 15 ECOWAS Member States, thereby denying some migrants full rights of access to health care.

In ECOWAS Member States, the population access to health care in general and of migrants in particular is limited. The monitoring of access to health care by migrants is hindered by lack of data.

The ECOWAS is challenged to take a more proactive leadership and ensure that countries effectively implement actions to improve access to health care services.

Keywords: Migrants, migration, access to health care.