



# RMMRU

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### Migration Impacts within the West African Sub-Region

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## ***Abstract***

Countries in West Africa have had a history of internal and cross-border migration over a long time. Over the years, migration has been associated with more negative impacts with emphasis on brain-drain rather than skill development. The negative lenses with which migration has been looked at have led to national policies towards reducing out-migration of locally trained professionals as it is seen as constituting a loss to the countries of origin. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the impact of migration on different aspects of development with respect to the migrant, place of origin and persons left behind by the migrant within the West African sub-Region. The paper provides a historical overview of migration trends and patterns in West Africa and discusses migration impacts within the economic, political, social and cultural contexts. Overall, the paper argues that migration is a necessary strategy out of poverty for most families and should be seen in that light rather than looking at it from a purely negative perspective of constituting a brain drain to the socio-economic development of countries in West Africa.

## ***Introduction***

West Africa has witnessed free movement of persons, goods and services for a very long time. These movements are both within and between countries especially those which share common borders. Colonial administration imposed artificial boundaries on territories they scrambled for and eventually occupied. This development suddenly divided families and communities which hitherto saw and acknowledged themselves as one now belonging to different countries geographically. Notwithstanding this imposition of artificial boundaries, people and communities still see themselves as one. According to Adepaju (2005), contemporary migration in West Africa has been shaped by the way development and the types of economic activities have been undertaken within the sub-region, the result of which has been international migration.

Throughout the sub-region, volumes of migration within and between countries have alternated between periods of economic boom and recession irrespective of whether one looks at internal or international migration. Countries that at one time experienced out-migration due to weakening economies attracted more migrants during periods of economic boom or increased economic activities. Thus, countries that at one time attracted more migrants due to its economic strength in offering economic opportunities to migrants experienced out-migration during economic recession. At the same time, internal political and social conflicts have also led to massive movement of people across international borders in the sub-region.

Migration impacts have been seen largely as negative by governments and some researchers. For example, Nyongato and Dovlo (2005) point to high rates of out-migration of health workers from the public sector that threaten to undermine efforts towards the attainment of important objectives set by the Ghana Health Service (GHS) regarding high quality and accessible health service delivery in Ghana. This is based on the huge amounts of investment the nation makes in training doctors and nurses with scarce resources. In all countries in West Africa, this has been one major concern. Nyongato and Dovlo (2005) have further reported that about 1,200 Ghanaian physicians were working in the USA, 300 were in the UK with about 150 in South Africa and 50 in Canada, following the on-going political crisis in Libya, the Government of Ghana has reported evacuating more than 16,000. Emigration to Europe is significant for Nigeria. Ghana attracted a larger pool of workers from surrounding countries for cocoa production. In Ghana, efforts have been made to improve conditions of service of these health professionals as a way of reducing the rate at which the country experiences emigration of health professionals to the disadvantage of the nation that trained them.

It should be noted also that it is not only trained professionals who migrate in West Africa. Throughout the history of most countries in the sub-region, people have moved over short or long distances and these have been differentiated between males and females as well as between different geographical areas. There have been rural to rural as well as rural to urban migration within countries of the sub-region in addition to migration from one country to another depending on differences in the perceived socio-economic opportunities in each of the countries in the sub-region.

In most cases, migration has been seen as having a lot of negative effects on many developing countries including those in West Africa. This way of reasoning, however, tends to mask the contributions migrants make towards the development of the place of origin, destination, the migrant and family members left behind. Recent developments in the migration literature suggest that there are many areas migration has made major contributions which have been either overlooked or clearly ignored. According to the Migration Development Centre (2009), migration will have its full developmental impact when policies are geared towards the reduction of barriers to migration at all levels especially for the poorest.

In the light of the foregoing, this paper has the overall objective of making an attempt to bring to the fore the impacts of migration on the different sectors of the West African Region in order to highlight the research gaps and needs within the sub-region. It also provides an overview of the trend and patterns of migration within the region in addition to assessing how migration has affected the economic, political, social and cultural sectors of countries of the West African sub-region. The paper is descriptive and uses data from available literature.

The paper is conceptualised on the basis that migration is a livelihood strategy (Migration Development Centre, 2009). It is, therefore, a strategy used by many people to get out of poverty. Interestingly, the capability of the poor to migrate is limited because they often lack the resources to embark on migration in the first place. Migration also depends on the characteristics of who migrates, where he/she is moving from and where he/she is migrating to. This is because migrants are selected based on their characteristics including education, skills and knowledge acquisition, access to resources and information about available opportunities in destination areas, social networks, etc. Thus, depending on the selectivity of migrants and the choices they make regarding destination in addition to the resources available to them when they migrate and the networks they are able to build, the outcome could be positive or negative.

Furthermore, within the West African sub-region, migration is facilitated more by the ECOWAS protocol that enables nationals from countries in West Africa to move to any country in the sub-region without visa and to stay up to a maximum of 90 days. Many people have taken advantage of this protocol to undertake short-term migration within the region and have eventually become long-term to permanent migrants in countries other than those of their birth. This has increased migration flows in the region.

## ***Overview of Migration Trends in West Africa***

### ***Internal Migration***

Throughout West Africa, internal migration has been an integral part of the lives of the people. Within each country, people have changed their places of residence in response to the need for land resources initially for farming activities. This is largely due to agriculture being the main stay of the economies of all the countries in West Africa. Rural-rural migration in search of agricultural land initially characterised migration within West African countries

when cash crop production was introduced in the region. People initially migrated to areas that were endowed with resources for cash crop farming activities. To date, migrants continue to look for agricultural frontier areas within countries where they can undertake their farming activities.

In Ghana for example, the pattern of internal migration in 1998/99 was recorded to be urban-to-rural which accounted for 16.6 percent of the population, whilst rural-to-rural and urban-to-urban migrants represented 14.4 percent and 10.9 percent of the population respectively (Boakye-Yiadom and McKay, 2006). According to the GSS (2000), these proportions have since increased to 35 percent urban-rural, rural-rural 32 percent and urban-urban 23 percent according to the fifth edition of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS). The GLSS Five also reported that rural areas received 66 percent of all internal migrants (GSS, 2008). In spite of this, migrants who troop to the urban areas are those that attract the most attention due to their visibility and the challenges they pose to housing and other socio-economic conditions in the urban setting.

Mining has also been another source of attraction for migrant labour in countries of the West African Region. Migrants, especially the males have moved to become residents in mining communities which present them with economic opportunities for their enhanced livelihood. A typical example is Obuasi in Ghana which is home to several persons who do not originate from this important mining town. Similarly, diamond extraction in Liberia has been an important source of migrant labour from different parts of the country. The cosmopolitan nature of Jos in Central Nigeria, which has been at the heart of the recent ethnic and religious clashes, could be traced to the era of tin mining in the city.

There has also been occasional internal displacement of people resulting from some internal ethnic conflicts some of which are linked to chieftaincy disputes and civil conflicts. Some of these internal conflicts have been witnessed in Ghana leading to the relocation of affected people from the northern regions to cities and towns in the south. Among these migrants are children who migrate on their own independent of their parents and other relations. In Ghana, such north-south migration of children has been documented (See Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009). Several of these migrant children work as porters and street vendors in the cities and towns across West Africa.

The United Nations (2003) reports that 70% of Liberia's population was displaced both internally and outside Liberia in the heat of the political conflict broke out in 1989. Some of the displaced persons left to settle as refugees in Guinea and La Cote d'Ivoire and later to Mali, Ghana and Burkina Faso. According to the same United Nations report, about 750,000 people were internally displaced and another 500,000 had to flee to settle in Burkina Faso where most of them were nationals of.

In Ghana, children from some deprived communities have been reported to be trafficked to assist fishermen particularly on the Volta Lake in places like Yeji (Africa News, 2004), the risks they are subjected to on the lake notwithstanding. Some of the child migrants are, therefore, drawn into child labour which exposes them to risks. Some anecdotal reports indicate that some poor families even trade their children to be trafficked into child labour and collect meagre cash amounts due to poverty which makes it difficult for these parents to take care of their children.

Overall, internal migration in West Africa has originated mainly from impoverished regions to perceived economically endowed and developed regions. In Ghana, internal migration has historically followed a north-south flow with the north seen as poor and the south perceived as offering economic opportunities to many a migrant. In recent times, independent child migration particularly from the northern impoverished regions to the urban and agricultural producing areas in the south has been quite common. Migrants are, therefore, mostly attracted to farming areas such as the cocoa producing regions and

commercial areas in the cities such as Accra and Kumasi (See Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009). From the study by Anarfi and Kwankye (2009), these children could be as young as less than 10 years but majority of them fall between 15-17 years. In the general population, migration in West Africa has been selective of people in their economically active ages usually between 15 and 39 years irrespective of their sex.

Internal migrants are found in all economic activities in countries of West Africa depending on where their skills and expertise are attracted. The unskilled migrants are, however, largely found on streets of major cities in the sub-Region doing street vending and head portering mainly in the major market centres and lorry stations. On the other hand, the skilled ones are found in professional jobs wherever they are attracted. In Ghana for example, there are no restrictions to where migrants should find jobs. The situation is not different in other West African countries including Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal.

### ***Short-term Contract***

Short-term contract in the context of migration is not a common phenomenon in West Africa. There are, however, anecdotal reports on recruitment agencies that work to recruit migrant labour for organisations outside the West African sub-region. There have also been some bi-lateral discussions between some governments in West Africa to supply selected skilled labour abroad. Libya for example is reported to have negotiated with Ghana's Ministry for Employment and Social Welfare to supply teachers to Libya between 2006 and 2008. A similar arrangement was also reported about Italy's interest in Ghana supplying Italy with about 1,000 Ghanaian migrants to work in Italy every year. These arrangements, however, were not sustained.

Again, in the days of Idi Amin, then President of Uganda, Ghanaian teachers were contracted to work in Uganda as part of a bilateral agreement between the two countries. This arrangement was short lived. A similar arrangement was made between Ghana and the Apartheid government of South Africa not long before it collapsed. Most of the Ghanaian teachers who benefited from the arrangement stayed behind when the old regime collapsed and many have naturalised.

Another example of contract migration can be cited with respect to some bi-lateral arrangements between Ghana and the State of Qatar by which it was possible for a little over 100 Ghanaians to be contracted by some companies in Qatar to work as emigrants from Ghana between 2005 and 2006. One of the companies was identified as Messrs AI Jaber Company, said to be a major user of Ghanaian migrant workers in Qatar. There were media reports regarding the conditions under which these immigrants were subjected to in Qatar that made government intervene to ensure that the Ghanaian nationals working in Qatar were treated according to their contract terms (See Daily Guide, December 13, 2006). It is possible that some of these contract labour movements are common but they usually become known only when things appear to go wrong for the immigrants.

### ***Cross-border Migration***

West Africa has witnessed cross-border migration on a large scale. This is facilitated by the imposition of artificial boundaries that separate one country from another. Meanwhile, these boundaries have cut across clans and families with parts on either side of many of the borders separating the countries. These movements, however, do not qualify as migration and are largely seen as commuting that goes on daily. These movements are strengthened by the ECOWAS Protocol that enables nationals of ECOWAS countries to enter and stay in other member states up to 90 days without visa. As they cross these borders virtually on daily basis, some of the commuters are likely to settle in countries other than their countries of origin

and, therefore, eventually become migrants. Almost all the borders particularly Ghana-Togo, Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria-Benin, Ghana-Burkina Faso, Senegal-The Gambia, etc continue to witness volumes of movements within the framework of the ECOWAS Protocol.

### ***Intra-regional Migration***

Migration between countries of West Africa has been quite common. This type of migration has gone through different phases beginning from the early trading activities between countries in the sub-region and beyond. As Boahen (1966) narrates, the trans-Saharan caravan routes were among the earliest evidence of major interaction between West and North Africa for trading and exchange of scholars. These early trading contacts facilitated the movement of traders from states including Sansanne Mango, Zanfara, Hombori, Timbuktu, Kano and Dagbon, who brought ivory, kola nuts, cattle, sheep, hides of wild animals and clothes to Salaga market for sale (Wolfson, 1958). Migration, therefore, pre-dated the attainment of political independence for most of the countries in the region.

After independence, spatial mobility increased with some of the countries taking the lead as major migrant receiving countries. Ghana, being the first country to gain independence and at a time when the country enjoyed a strong economy that was driven by cocoa production that demanded much migrant labour, benefited from high rates of in-migration from many countries in the sub-region. These included migrants from Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast and Mali. Following the massive in-flow of migrants into Ghana, the 1960 population census recorded as high as 12.3% of foreign-born population in Ghana (see 1960 population census report). At that time, Ghana was considered a major country of attraction for many migrants first, due to its economic advantage relative to other West African states and the role its first president was seen to be playing in Pan-Africanism (See Mabojunje, 1972). Ghana then enjoyed economic prosperity and, therefore, became a first choice as destination for many potential migrants in the sub-region (Anarfi, 1982). Initially, migration within West Africa was dominated by males (See Amin, 1972) with females largely involved in short distance and temporary movements.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, migration destination choices focused on Nigeria as the most migrant attractive country in the West African sub-region. This was during the oil boom with many people seeing it as a big opportunity for economic activities. Hitherto, Ghana, in line with the implementation of the Aliens Compliance Order, had expelled several non-Ghanaians from Ghana in 1970 and these were made up largely of Nigerians. In 1982, Nigeria implemented a policy to "sack" all illegal migrants from the country, resulting in large numbers of migrants to either return home or seek refuge in other countries in Europe and North America. The migrants who were forced to return to their countries of origin were made up of both professional/skilled and unskilled labour. The educated and skilled migrated outside the sub-region while the unskilled moved within West Africa, with ECOWAS 90-day visa-free policy of 1979 providing more impetus for migration in the region.

According to Adepoju (2005), the main traditional countries of immigration in West Africa have been La Cote d'Ivoire (until the inception of the political crises) and Ghana with Nigeria in the 1970s and early 1980s respectively due to Nigeria's competitive local working conditions spurned on by the oil boom at the time. Political and economic stability have both worked together to account for the attractiveness of countries to migrants at different points in time. Ghana's relatively stable political and economic conditions have endeared it to immigrants from both within and outside West Africa. La Cote d'Ivoire which in the 1960s and 1970s enjoyed a very stable political and economic environment also attracted large numbers of migrant population. However, following the political crises that have spanned over a decade, La Cote d'Ivoire's attractiveness to immigrant labour declined to the extent that it even created refugee population in neighbouring countries especially Ghana.



Migration in Senegal is reportedly dominated by males relative to females. According to the Development Research Centre (2009), there are nearly 500,000 Senegalese migrants. These migrants would represent 4 percent of the total population and includes those who are unemployed before migration as well as those in marginal occupations.

It is also to be noted that political crises particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and La Cote d'Ivoire have contributed to forced migration of people from these crises-prone countries to become refugees in countries that are seen to be relatively peaceful. As already indicated, about 750,000 people were internally displaced and another 500,000 had to flee to settle in Burkina Faso where most of them were nationals of (United Nations, 2003).

Another dimension of migration within the West African sub-region is the trafficking of women and children within countries and across borders some as far as to Europe. UNICEF for example is reported to have estimated that up to 200,000 children are trafficked annually in West and Central Africa while in East Africa, women abducted from conflict areas are forced to work in the sex trade (Ratha and Shaw, 2007).

Linked to child trafficking, the West African sub-region has witnessed independent child migration usually from the savannah regions to belts regions and urban areas either as internal or cross-border migrants in neighbouring countries. This is also fast becoming a major strategy out of poverty for many children from deprived regions in many countries in West Africa. In Ghana, the migration of children has in recent times gained much research interest (see Anarfi and Kwankye (eds), 2009). The migration of children from Burkina Faso to Ghana and La Cote d'Ivoire has also been studied (Hashim, 2005).

### ***Diaspora***

Initially, long-distance from West Africa was dominated by males (See Amin, 1972) with females largely involved in short distance and temporary movements. With time, however, long distance and long-term migration are no longer the preserve of males but females alike. A few students also began moving out of their countries of birth to destination countries outside Africa shortly after independence especially to countries in Europe which had links with countries of origin as a result of colonial ties. Some of the students returned home but others stayed back after acquiring further knowledge and skills and contributed to the development of the destination countries in the north (See Anarfi et al., 2000).

The West African sub-region has also experienced much emigration out of the region to countries in other regions within and outside the African continent. Twum-Baah (2005) reports that 60% of Ghanaian trained doctors were practising outside Ghana while another 26% of Ghanaian graduates were working outside the country particularly in Europe and North America. More specifically, Nyonator and Dovlo (2005) have reported that about 1,200 Ghanaian physicians were working in the USA, 300 were in the UK with about 150 in South Africa and 50 in Canada. Nigerians are also found almost everywhere within and outside the African continent. The exodus of trained medical professionals to countries outside the continent has characterised the migration not only in West Africa but also in other regions in Africa. Twum-Baah (2005) for example, has reported a 2003 Ghana Registered Nurses' Association survey as estimating over 3,000 nurses trained in Ghana to have emigrated from Ghana with more than 1,200 emigrating in 2003 alone.

There are still others who use approved and unapproved routes including trekking across the Sahara Desert to Libya often with the intention of entering Europe. Following the recent and on-going political crisis in Libya, the Government of Ghana has reported evacuating more than 16,000 Ghanaians that were resident and working in Libya (Daily Graphic, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011). There were also other nationals from other countries in West Africa who like the Ghanaians had to be evacuated by their respective governments.



The Republic of South Africa is also fast becoming an attractive diaspora for emigrants from not only West Africa but the whole of Africa. This is due the relatively higher standards of living that the South African economy is perceived to offer. Documentation on the size of West African nationals in South Africa is, however, quite rare.

## **Migration Impacts**

From the presentation so far, it is quite clear that migration in West Africa involves both internal and external, voluntary and forced with dynamics which have not been uniform and consistent with respect to source and destination countries either within or outside the sub-region. It is also important to state once again that the dynamics of migration in West Africa have alternated with the state of political and economic stability/prosperity of the countries within the region. Thus, during periods of political and economic stability that usually is accompanied by economic prosperity, countries have attracted more migrants relative to when there is economic recession. The impacts of migration within the region, therefore, have varied and depended largely on the type of migration that takes place, the category of persons involved and the choice of destination areas that play out at any point in time.

### ***Internal migration***

Internal migration has had some positive as well as negative impacts on the lives of people in West Africa. Cash crop farming and mining have benefited greatly from migrant labour force. These two economic activities have contributed immensely towards foreign exchange generation for the countries in the sub-region that are endowed for cocoa and mining activities. In Ghana, cocoa was introduced to the country by a Ghanaian migrant who returned from the Island of Fernando Po. Today, cocoa is the main cash crop foreign exchange earner not only for Ghana but La Cote d'Ivoire.

At the same time, internal migrants continue to maintain their links with their families left behind. Migrants in urban areas frequently return home for visits and to attend festivals and funerals. Through these visits, migrants support on-going projects at their areas of origin. Besides, they send home remittances both in cash and in kind. Yet, these contributions are not documented as focus is usually given to migrant contributions in terms of remittances from the diaspora to the neglect of what happens internally.

Quartey's study (nd) found that female migrant porters earn an average daily income of GH¢33.52 (\$22.35) compared to the national minimum wage of about GH¢19.00 (\$12.67). Young females who, but for migration may provide family labour with not wages paid, now are able to earn some minimum incomes through migration and by so doing manage to acquire certain household items usually when they are about to enter into marriage and are able to send home remittances to their family members.

In Ghana, it has been found that children and spouses are the highest recipient of remittances from internal migration. Greater proportion (26% and 20%) of the remittances received by spouses and parents were respectively channelled into education and some of the money also went into agricultural activities (GSS, 1995). Unlike remittances from abroad, in Ghana remittances from internal migrants tend to be directed to the poorest. For example, although remittances from rural areas were found to be only five percent of total remittances, it reaches 40 percent of the poorest of the population (Addison, E.K.Y. 2005. 2005).

Almost two thirds of household heads surveyed in Ghana confirmed that they received goods and cash from absent migrants with almost four in five of the remittances going directly to the household with the remaining fifth sent to individuals. This shows that migrant remittances in Ghana impact more on households compared to individuals. It was also found out that about 60% and 35% of household heads identified remittances as the main impact of emigration from Ghana and contributor to poverty reduction (GSS, 1995).

It is also further known anecdotally that women become heads of households as the males migrate. In this situation, remittances to the households left behind are more likely to be received by women whether as heads of household or as care takers for children of migrants left behind.

Internal migration has, however, created slum conditions in the cities and towns in countries in West Africa. Internal migrants who migrate from conflict situations in rural areas settle in cities and towns with no resources to be able to afford decent accommodation. They are usually found in urban slums where poverty is high and sanitation conditions continue to deteriorate. Increasingly, therefore, it appears that poverty is being transferred from the rural areas to urban centres where slum conditions are becoming a characteristic feature of West African cities and towns.

The study of north-south migrants in Ghana has indicated that some of the migrants returned home with sicknesses. Some were also found to have engaged in commercial sex activities and others had been coerced to having sex hence, exposing them to the risk of sexually transmitted infections (Anarfi et.al, 2009). It has been seen that female migration is circular in nature and for example the migrant Nzema women in Ghana frequently come home to renew their links with their families. This practice puts the women themselves, their lovers, sexual partners and husbands at risk at both ends of the migratory movement. This is evidenced by the very high incidence of HIV at Eikwe Hospital in Ellembelle. A study conducted in the Krobo area in the Eastern Region of Ghana also found a positive association between migration and the spread of HIV (Oppong et al., 2006).

### ***Short-term Contract***

Short-term contract is not common in West Africa and as such the impacts of this type of migration are yet to be assessed.

### ***Cross-border Migration***

Cross-border migration within the ECOWAS 90-day visa-free protocol has led to some criminal elements who have taken advantage of the ECOWAS facility to carry out their criminal activities across national borders where they team up with some nationals of the destination countries in the region to cause mischief especially in the area of armed robbery. In Ghana, almost all armed robbery groups that have been busted by state security have had some non-nationals from some other West African countries involved and working with their Ghanaian counterparts.

Trafficking in human beings often goes unrecorded in several parts of the world, including West Africa. UNICEF, however, estimates that up to 200,000 children are trafficked annually in the region (Ratha and Shaw, 2007). This practice and its association with child labour undermine the education, health and development of children as an important human resource for the future development of countries in the West African sub-region.

Cross-border migration has often become a source of concern during political elections in some countries in the West African sub-region. A special case in point is that between Ghana and Togo. It appears that any time there are national political elections in either Ghana or Togo, there are accusations of either the ruling government party or the opposition recruiting voters across the borders to vote for one party or the another. Such accusations and counter accusations led to the unannounced closure of the Ghana side of the Ghana-Togo border during the 2004 Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana. Such developments could lead to hostile relations between countries who share common borders in the region, a situation which could have dire consequences for the sub-region.

## *Intra-regional Migration*

Migration in West Africa has been underscored by the migrant's desire to move out of poverty and to enhance his/her living conditions. This explains why within the region, volumes and streams of migration have been informed by changes in the economic prosperity or recession a particular country finds itself at any given time. With this motive behind most migration, its economic impacts have largely been in the agricultural and mining sectors, household consumption through remittances, skill and technological development and acquisition, economic investments as well as brain loss especially to the sending countries.

The impact of migrants has been felt largely in the agriculture and mining sectors. The cocoa industry in Ghana and La Cote d'Ivoire has thrived on the shoulders of migrant labour (See Nyame and Grant, 2007). In fact, the introduction of cocoa to Ghana is traced to Tetteh Quarshie who migrated to the Island of Fernandopo in South America and returned with some cocoa seeds that today have grown the cocoa industry. Furthermore, cocoa cultivation has depended mainly on labour intensive activities that have been provided since its introduction by migrant labour supply from environmentally impoverished sections of the West African sub-region. Migrants from northern Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali and other Sahelian countries in West Africa provided the initial labour supply for the cocoa industry in Ghana and La Cote d'Ivoire. This situation has not changed today. Similarly, the mining industry has benefited immensely from migrant labour (Nyame and Grant, 2007). Meanwhile, mining has for a long time been a major foreign exchange earner for Ghana for example after cocoa.

Furthermore, the impact of the Fulani, Hausa and Yoruba in commerce in the whole of West Africa is quite evident. Today, Hausa is spoken in several countries in West Africa which hitherto had no Hausa-speaking people. This has been due to the influence of the migration of the Hausa across the sub-region. Fulani herdsmen are also found everywhere and are engaged in livestock rearing in many countries in West Africa. Their livestock have helped in the protein intake of people in West Africa. However, their activities have created conflicts with local farmers whose crops are repeatedly grazed by the animals of these Fulani herdsmen.

Migration has also impacted on the lifestyles of the population. Some of these are considered negative. These include armed robbery activities and gangsterism that are increasingly becoming a norm in many West African countries. This has affected the social psyche of people regarding the construction of houses i.e., using a lot of burglar proofing materials as fortification against armed robbery activities. This has increased the cost of housing and affected the communal lifestyles where everyone was welcome into homes without screening. Individualism as a lifestyle is, therefore, fast becoming the norm rather than the exception due to the increasing insecurity resulting from these negative lifestyles.

It is also important to note that migration has impacted on the pattern and dynamics of morbidity. The spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) has been linked to migration in the literature. For example, it is reported that regions that are associated with seasonal and long-term mobility have higher HIV infection rates particularly along transport routes and in border regions and communities (Ratha and Shaw, 2007). In Ghana, the first HIV cases in the country were reported in 1986 and were from persons who had lived as migrants abroad.

The socio-cultural aspect of life in the region has again been impacted upon by forced migration in particular that has made people to migrate to live as refugees in countries other than those of their birth. Marriages have been broken as a result and re-marriages have taken place between refugees and nationals of the host countries. Following the outbreak of the

Liberian civil war and the resultant creation of Liberian refugee settlements in Ghana (e.g., Buduburam), anecdotal reports indicate marriages between Ghanaian nationals and some of the refugees out of which children have been born with dual nationalities. The end result of these relationships is acculturation which could be either positive or negative, depending on how it is looked at. The social and cultural impacts of migration have, therefore, been a mixture of positives and negatives as far as development is concerned.

### ***Diaspora***

Household consumption has been affected positively through migrant remittances both internally and externally. In West Africa, migrants whether internal or international, scarcely sever their relations with their households and extended family members. The bond between migrants and family members left behind is even stranger when the migrant is the beneficiary of family resources that were mobilised to sponsor his/her migration in the first place. For such migrants in particular, it is as if they owe the family behind a responsibility to pay back what they have benefitted from them in the past.

Migrants have also contributed to the housing industry. However, the exact proportion of migrant remittances that goes into housing construction vis-à-vis household consumption is not available for West Africa but anecdotal reports suggest that most of the housing units that are fast springing up in the cities of most African countries are funded either directly by migrants or through their remittances. In Accra, for example, there are huge housing structures belonging to Ghanaian emigrants that are mostly unoccupied except when the migrants return home on visits for a few days.

Globally, remittances from migrants have received documentation as having contributed a great deal towards the development of poor nations. Addo (2010) reports that remittances that went to developing countries alone in 2009 (i.e., about \$220 billion) was four times more than the total volume of foreign aid such countries received that year (See Addison, 2005). These remittances are sent directly to the beneficiary households and are used mainly to support the domestic consumption budget and in the areas of children's education, housing and health needs particularly of the aged. Thus, in many rural households in West Africa, there have not been visible increases in viable economic activities and yet, poverty indicators have seen some declines which may be attributed to remittances received from migrants outside their countries of origin.

A nationally representative household survey funded by the Global Development Network (GDN) and the Institute for Public Policy Research (Ippr) and implemented by the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) in 2008 (Yeboah et. al., 2009), indicated that most remittances received was used for household consumption. From the table presented below, almost two in three of household heads surveyed confirmed that they received goods and cash from absent migrants with almost four in five of the remittances going directly to the household with the remaining fifth sent to individuals. This shows that migrant remittances in Ghana impact more on households compared to individuals.

**Receipt of Goods & Cash Remittances from Absent Migrant & who it is sent to**

Receipt of Goods & Cash			Who it is sent to		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Yes	500	63.4	Specific Member	168	21.3
No	264	33.4	Household	621	78.7
Not Applicable	25	3.2			
Total	789	100.0		789	100.0

*Source: Yeboah et al. 2009. Development on the Move: Measuring and Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts of Migration on Ghana. Report for Grant Funded by Global Development Network and Institute for Public Policy Research.*

There is no specific study on the extent to which migration has stimulated demand for and consumption of locally made products. What is clear, however, is that in rural areas, although the economic activities the people have been engaged in have not changed much, poverty appears to be on the low side, a situation that is explained by the rural households' dependence on migrant remittances from within and outside countries in the sub-region.

The household heads that were interviewed in the GDN/Ippr study in Ghana acknowledged the positive impacts of emigration from Ghana. From the following table, about 60% of the household heads identified remittances as the main impact of emigration from Ghana. It is followed by the view that emigration reduces poverty (35%). Migrant remittances are, therefore, important ingredients towards poverty reduction at the household level considering the important role they play in household consumption. It is also to be noted that about 22% of the heads of household were of the opinion that emigration contributes towards the acquisition of skills for the migrants especially when they return. From the study only 10% of the heads of household indicated that migration leads to skills loss to sending countries.

Table 2: Household Heads Views on the Impact of Emigration from Ghana on the Economy  
(multiple responses)

View	Percent
Reduces Unemployment	5.7
Skills Return	21.7
Remittances	58.2
Reduces Poverty	34.8
Business Capital	20.3
Foreign Exchange	4.0
Family Disruptions	8.4
Loss of Skills	10.4
Emigrants don't support Ghana	4.6
Depends on Behaviour Abroad	1.9
No Effect	7.3
Other	3.3
Total %	100.0
Total number	7,231

*Source: Yeboah et al. 2009. Development on the Move: Measuring and Assessing the Economic and Social Impacts of Migration on Ghana. Report for Grant Funded by Global Development Network and Institute for Public Policy Research.*

The introduction and growth of money transfer institutions and agencies notably, "Western Union" have been in response to the increased demand by migrants for avenues through which they can send home remittances that would attract little or no taxes on the part of the recipient. Some other informal channels such as using other migrants occasionally visiting home have also been used to transfer home remittances. At the national level, migrant remittances have been acknowledged by governments. In West Africa, studies on remittances have largely focused on in-flows from the diaspora rather than from within individual countries. There is, therefore, no information to make a useful comparison between remittances from international migrants and their counterparts within countries in the region.

Migration has also led to skills development for many migrants especially those who moved for the main purpose of pursuing further education. Those who eventually return contribute in the area of investment through joint partnerships with networks established in destination countries. Many migrants have also come together to form development and social welfare groups/associations with an objective of mobilising resources to assist in the development of their communities of origin. In Ghana, such groupings are formed mainly as home-based associations in the destination countries. These constitute effective networks for migrants to

provide support to themselves while abroad in addition to supporting development projects in the home economy.

The case study of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana show that migration provide an economic development opportunities for the sending countries through the development, transfer and use of financial, social and human capital. It was found that over 55 percent and 32 percent of Ghanaian and Ivorians returnees respectively have established their small business. Among the elite 15.3 and 33.0 percent of the Ivorians and Ghanaians are self-employed and nearly all of them are employers. Most of the self-employed returnees have registered their business (68.9 percent in Côte d'Ivoire and 63 percent in Ghana). Tiemoko (nd) In Kumasi areas, Kabbi *et al.* (2004) noted that migrants and their families invested in farms when they were reluctant to start a non-agricultural business). The study by Black et al. (2003) showed that almost 70% of all surveyed less-skilled returnees from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire reported to have studied abroad. For elite returnees, this number was close to 90%.

The impact of migration is also seen in the networks it builds between themselves and people in the countries of origin. In a study on transnational influences on the economy of Accra, Smith (2007) reports that migration impacts on non-migrants through their links with migrants abroad through which they are able to establish businesses based on which they are able to have a livelihood. He cites a case of a second-hand car dealer who narrated that he was not selling enough cars not because of lack of demand but because in his view, his "network was not good". This second-hand car dealer believed that his business would do well if he could link up with migrants in Belgium, Germany or Netherlands which are favourable countries where such cars could be sourced (Smith, 2007:143). This clearly shows that depending on the kind of networks one is able to build with migrants abroad, businesses at the origin could do well and would impact positively on income levels of nationals who may not necessarily be involved in migration.

These positive economic impacts notwithstanding, there are quite a number of negative impacts of migration. The loss of skilled health professionals from West Africa to South Africa, Europe and North America has constituted a big drain on the resources of source countries in the sub-region. Although some of them return with improved skills, technology and resources to assist in the health delivery system with some of them establishing specialised health facilities, in the short term, it is a big drain especially when countries are not adequately resourced to train more nurses and doctors they would need at any given point in time. This has constituted a big loss of needed manpower to support the economies of many West African countries.

Furthermore, West Africa contributes to a huge stock of irregular and undocumented migrants across the Sahara Desert using unapproved routes and seas, the result of which in many cases is loss of lives otherwise would have been useful to support the economic development of their countries. For example, Ratha and Shaw (2007) report that West African migrants travel to Cape Verde, The Gambia and Guinea to obtain false documents en route to Europe. These are obvious irregular migrants who use unapproved routes to Europe.

Migrants have been involved in the political administration of countries in the West Africa sub-region. In Ghana, for example, migrants especially those in Europe and North America were instrumental in the passage of the Representation of People's Amendment Law (ROPAL) which was an amendment of the law guiding presidential and parliamentary elections in the country. They also constitute themselves into so-called overseas' branches of major political parties and by so doing make financial, material and ideological contributions towards the organisation of the parties whether in government or in opposition. All these have gone far in the political administration of some of the countries.

Throughout the sub-region, there are returnees who are serving in various capacities including ministerial and parliamentary positions in the governance set-up in their countries.

In La Cote d'Ivoire, the internationally recognised winner of the recent presidential elections in that country (Alassane Ouattara) was one time a migrant working with the World Bank. So was the President of Liberia (President Johnson Sirleaf). The new ideas and skills they acquire during their sojourn abroad assist these returnees in shaping the governance system back home upon their return and appointment or election into political positions. Several examples abound in Ghana presently and in the past.

Migrants have also been a big source of resource mobilisation by governments and that is why most West Africa presidents take time to always interact with their nationals outside their countries any time they pay visits abroad. Similarly, the chieftaincy institution has thrived on organised migrant communities abroad. Some traditional rulers in the region have taken advantage of some of these migrant associations to mobilise resources to finance developmental projects in their areas of traditional jurisdiction. In Ghana, one can mention the Asantehene's Educational Endowment Fund and the Okyehene's Aforestation Project both of which have had support from migrant associations abroad.

The socialisation and educational needs of children of migrant parents are usually taken care of by grandparents and other relatives left behind. In recent times, there has been a development in Ghana where children born to migrants in the diaspora are sent back to Ghana, at times unaccompanied, to be educated and socialized in Ghana by relatives and care-takers. This development impacts differently on different children depending on who the care-taker is and the amount of resources sent home as remittances for the upkeep of the children. It is difficult to state to what extent children of migrants resident in the country of origin fare relative to their counterparts born to non-migrant parents.

Through migration, new ideas are learnt, innovative practices are adopted and these impinge on the norms and mores which have formed the bedrock upon which people have been socialised. Through these new ideas and practices that migrants acquire during their period of domicile outside their countries or communities of origin, their attitude to work even changes and makes them better human resources when they do return and re-integrate into the home economy.

Tourism has received a boost from migration. Particularly stable political economies such as Ghana and Senegal have attracted immigrant population some of which is directed to the tourist industry. This has motivated these countries to take steps to develop their tourist sites to attract revenue from immigrants who pay visits as tourists. In Ghana, the Pan African Festival (PANAFEST) organised annually brings several tourists/visitors from outside Ghana and Africa. This has not only contributed towards revenue generation for the country's tourist industry but has lifted the cultural heritage of the chieftaincy institution which is also celebrated as part of the organisation of PANAFEST every year. In Ghana, the realisation of the importance of engaging nationals outside the country for development led to the creation of a new Ministry called Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations in the mid-2000s. Although the name has since been changed, it nonetheless, showed the importance the government at the time attached to the contribution of Ghanaian emigrants abroad to Ghana's development. Again, it was based on this same reasoning that led to the organisation of the "Home Coming Summit" in 2001 by the then government with the objective of mobilising Ghanaian nationals abroad for development at home.

Belief in the dead is quite engrained in almost all ethnic and social groups within the West African sub-region. Funerals are observed in fanfare as a way of revering the dead. Elaborate arrangements, therefore, usually precede the organisation of funerals. However, migrants particularly abroad have had much influence on funerals within the sub-region such that funerals are fast becoming more elaborate, expensive and time-consuming in many ethnic and social groups in the countries of West Africa. Among the Akan ethnic group for example, it is often not uncommon to keep the dead several months in the morgue pending the arrival of migrant family members abroad await the transfer of money towards the organisation of



the funeral. There appears to be some competition among people to out-do each other in the financing and organisation of funerals with implications for bereaved families.

### ***Conclusions and Research Gaps***

Migration in West Africa has generally been affected by the ECOWAS protocol of free movement of people across national borders that permit individuals of members states of the Community up to 90 days residence without visa. The trend of migration also shows changes that have identified some countries as destination within the sub-region at one time and source at another time depending on the dynamics of socio-economic development in different countries in the region. Political and civil conflicts have also informed the movement of some nationals to become refugees in other countries. There has again been migration of both skilled and unskilled migration from countries in the sub-region to destination countries in other regions in Africa as well as Europe and North America.

The migration processes in the West African sub-region has created situations where the economic, political and socio-cultural development of countries and individuals in the region has been affected. There are both positive and negative impacts on the source countries and communities, the migrants and family members left behind. What is clear, however, is that migration within West Africa has largely been a coping strategy out of poverty. Policies on migration should, therefore, be considered based on this understanding such that the focus will shift from the attitude of governments in erecting barriers against migration to that of information provision that would ensure that migration, whether within countries or between countries is both smooth and beneficial to the migrant, the place of origin and destination as well as family members left behind. The paper has also revealed major research gaps and needs which require research and policy attention.

#### ***Internal Migration***

There is a big research gap in the contribution of internal migrants with regard to remittances in the sub-region. To date, research in this area has been affected by the skewed research attention that diaspora remittances have attracted relative to internal migration.

#### ***Contract Migration***

There is again a major research gap and need for a comprehensive research on contract migrant labour recruitment in the sub-region. Although anecdotally, some recruitment agents have been reported to operate to recruit nurses and other artisans abroad, no study appears to exist on their activities. Furthermore, contract migration is not well-documented in West Africa to be able to provide the breakdown of persons involved by gender. Overall, however, it is quite obvious that males would outnumber females but the ratio of males to females is difficult to indicate at this stage. This requires research interest.

#### ***Cross-border Migration***

It is also important to focus research attention on cross-border migration of children in West Africa to examine the dimensions and impacts particularly on the migrants within the context of migration being a strategy out of poverty. Another dimension of children migration that ought to be researched is the role of parents in the process of decision making and the benefits that children derive from such arrangements.

#### ***Intra-regional Migration***

Many West African countries are experiencing rapid urbanisation that is largely fuelled by influx of migrants from poor regions into cities and towns with perceived economic opportunities with higher incomes. Often, the sending areas are prone to local conflicts. In the

cities, access to decent accommodation and, therefore, settle in slums with all the poverty that is associated with these areas. Meanwhile, the motive for migration is to move out of poverty and at times from conflicts and yet, it appears that this kind of migration ends up “importing” poverty into these slums. There is the need, therefore, to consider a study into migration and possible poverty transfer to cities and towns in countries in West Africa and elsewhere.

Many countries in West Africa are receiving reasonable numbers of immigrant population from within and outside the sub-region. The research gap, however, is that no documentation exists on what these immigrants do and the impact they exert on the economies of the destination countries in West Africa. For example, in West Africa, no specific information is there to make a definitive statement regarding the proportion of workers in the hospitality industry that is foreign-born. There is the need to focus research attention on this area.

### *Diaspora*

There is need for a comprehensive country-specific research on the impacts of migration on the different sectors of the countries that are either classified as net in-migration or out-migration countries. This is because the paper relied largely on anecdotal evidence and what the literature has documented. Again, the much spoken about brain drain that is associated with migration appears to be valid mainly in the short-term because in the long-term, the returns of migration with regard to knowledge acquisition, technological advancement and contributions through remittances could be so immense as to negate any initial negative effects that migration may trigger.

There is also the need to do further research in examining the political impacts of migration by having a database of returnees who have been involved in the political administration of countries in West Africa in order to make reliable conclusions regarding migration’s role in the politics of the sub-region. Furthermore, it is quite difficult to quantify migration’s impact especially on the social and cultural lives of people in the sub-region. There is the need to consider a research methodology that could bring these impacts to the fore.

It is also important to focus research attention on the participation of the poor in migration and the benefits they are likely to derive from remittances. This is based on the notion that the participation of poor people in migration is often limited as they are less likely to mobilise resources to embark on migration in the first place. Furthermore, a comparative study of skilled and unskilled migrants with respect to remittances is another fertile research area that would be of relevance in many countries in West Africa. This stems from the fact that while migrants with professional skills are more likely to earn higher incomes in the destination areas and, therefore, are perceived to be able to send home more remittances, the unskilled may also be determined to demonstrate their ability to contribute to the family’s welfare and yet, there is a yawning research gap in this area.

Again, considering the huge documentation on the importance of remittances for the development of many sending countries, there is the need to examine how overseas remittances could be incorporated into national planning processes of sending countries. This will provide recommendations regarding how sending countries could evolve policies to facilitate a better accountability of the remittances that flow into their economies and how to factor them into development planning activities to the benefit of the poor. Efforts in this direction could also benefit from a study of the impact of remittances within countries (from internal migrants) since there has been an undue emphasis on overseas remittances in spite of what internal migrants send to their families left behind.

Finally, little is known about migration as an industry that impacts on business enterprises including insurance and money transfer institutions/agencies, etc. A study in this area will

provide us with a much bigger picture of migration impacts outside what we know about the benefits to households left behind.

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