

Gender and Generation: Understanding the dynamics in migrant households

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Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium

Research Brief

As more women migrate within Ghana and to destinations abroad, there is an increasing attention to women's rights and the abuses and discrimination faced by women on the move. However, less attention has been paid to how migration impacts upon gender roles, relations and the development and wellbeing of households left behind.

Migration in Ghana is being enabled by new phenomena such as changing gender and generational norms and changing ideas about what a good life involves, which affect not only migrants but also those remaining in the home community. Our previous research in this area has demonstrated that, economic and environmental explanations of internal migration from northern to southern Ghana are insufficient on their own. Migration is prompted by, and prompts, deep seated social and cultural change.

Our research will build on work that has gone before to explore how migration affects the hierarchies and roles within households. It will look at the gendered ways in which remittances are sent and received and whether this differs if the migrant family member remains within Ghana or travels abroad. We will be able to learn more about how remittances are spent and invested and how this affects the life choices of the members of migrant households, for example in terms of educating their children. Information and communication technologies have such a large impact on migratory processes we will therefore look at how they are used to help people keep in touch, to send money and to support and perhaps alter social relations.

Our gender and generation work is linked to another area of research on income and remittances. This will help us to understand social changes leading to migration, the impacts of migration and remittances on the division of labour and resource allocation within the household, and how shifts in endowment and responsibilities shape decision-making processes.

Potential contribution of this research

We believe this research evidence will be useful to development policy makers and practitioners. It may give us new insights into how families benefit from migration, ways and how social protection policies might be organised as a result. It could help us to identify the positive and transformative aspects of migration on gender and development and support these processes. It will also provide insights about the relationship between the diaspora and those that stay at home and assist us in better harnessing the power of their considerable contribution to the wealth and wellbeing of the nation.

Because this is a comparative study across four countries (Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia and South Africa), it may offer evidence that can inform regional and international policies and practice. We believe that the research will also be useful for international NGOs working on migration, gender, generation and development issues in the region.

About Centre for Migration Studies

The Centre for Migration Studies is located at the University of Ghana to undertake research, teaching, training, capacity building, policy assessment, development and dissemination in the area of migration. The Centre for Migration Studies is the first such Centre in the West African sub-region and is seeking to be a regional leader in learning, teaching, research and capacity building through short-term training programmes in specific areas. Students at CMS enrol in Master of Arts, Master of Philosophy, PhD and Sandwich programmes in Migration Studies.

Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana

Principal Investigator – Professor Akosua Darkwah
Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana
Email – keseboa@ug.edu.gh

Co-Investigator
Professor Joseph Teye, Centre for Migration Studies,
University of Ghana
Email: jteye@ug.edu.gh

Co-Investigator
Dr. Dorte Thorsen, University of Sussex
Email – D.Thorsen@sussex.ac.uk

Co-Investigator
Dr. Doris Akyere Boateng, University of Ghana
Email – boatengabena@yahoo.com
Emmanuel Quarshie - Communications and Research Uptake Officer, Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana. For more information: equarshie55@gmail.com
<http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/>
<http://migratingoutofpovertyghana.com/>
<http://cms.ug.edu.gh/>

P. O. Box LG59, University of Ghana,
Legon, Accra, Ghana.

