Africa 80 (4), 2010 DOI: 10.3366/E0001972010000781

LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF MIGRATION FROM NORTH-WEST GHANA

Kees van der Geest

Sebastian is a 44-year-old farmer and cobbler from Nandom-Goziire in north-west Ghana. He was born in southern Ghana where his father worked as a road construction labourer and toilet cleaner. When Sebastian was eight years old, the family returned to the north and Sebastian went to school there. After he dropped out of school at the age of fifteen, he worked with his father on the farm and learnt the trade of cobbling in the dry season. After a few years, he decided to migrate to southern Ghana 'to look for money' to buy better tools and to invest in a workshop for his cobbling business. He worked as a farm labourer for one year and then started his own farm. According to Sebastian, the Brong Ahafo Region was a good destination region. 'That place is very nice for farming. If you work hard, you can get plenty money.' During the dry season in the north, Sebastian's younger brother used to come to help him on the farm. After four years, his brother told him he wanted to settle in the south more permanently. Sebastian had earned quite a lot of money from his crop sales, but his health was troubling him and he decided to return to the north to farm for his parents. His brother took over the farm in the south. Sebastian had made enough savings to buy a bicycle, a sewing machine and other tools and materials for cobbling. Apart from these tangible assets, he had also acquired an important skill during his years in the south. 'I didn't learn any new farming techniques that were of much use to me at home, but I learned how to think big, how to farm with money.'

Five of Sebastian's brothers and his two sisters are presently living in southern Ghana. They all go home on a regular basis, about once a year, and all support the household in different ways. They send money home and they have financed the construction of some 'zinc rooms' (roofed with corrugated zinc) in the house. Some years ago, they helped Sebastian to buy two bullocks and a plough. 'Whenever my brothers send money to the house, I make sure I spend it wisely. I want them to be happy when they visit the house and see what I have done with their money. That's why they continue to support me.'

Simon[1] is a 64-year-old farmer from Nandom-Ko in north-west Ghana. Before Simon married, at the age of twenty-two, he went on seasonal labour migration to the Brong Ahafo Region twice. Soon after

KEES VAN DER GEEST is a PhD candidate and junior lecturer in the Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam. His publications include *We Are Managing! Climate change and livelihood vulnerability in Northwest Ghana* (Leiden: Afrika-Studie Centrum, 2004) and several articles dealing with migration, environment and development linkages in Ghana.

[1] I have changed the original name and the village of residence to protect the privacy of this respondent.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

his marriage, he left for southern Ghana again but he failed to return when the farming season started at home. He stayed away for seven years without making any visits to, or providing any financial support for, his wife and the daughter he had never seen. It was not easy to reconstruct the events that led to Simon's refusal or inability to come home. During our fourth interview, he revealed that he had decided not to return because he was angry with his three brothers who were all working in the goldmines in southern Ghana. He was the only son who stayed at home to help his father on the farm. The brothers used to support the family, but suddenly they stopped sending money. When Simon visited them in the goldmines and witnessed their lifestyles and their refusal to support him, he became angry and frustrated. 'I was suffering at home, while they were enjoying life in the south, so I also refused to go home for the farming season.' Simon started to work as a farm labourer in the Brong Ahafo Region. 'I was just struggling to earn my daily bread. In the second year I wanted to go home, but I couldn't even earn enough money for the lorry fare back. I was trapped. And it became more and more difficult to return because I felt ashamed to return empty-handed.'

After Simon had lived in the south for seven years, his father traced his whereabouts and helped him to return to the north, to his wife and daughter. Simon returned virtually empty-handed and without having invested in zinc rooms at home – a common yardstick of migration success. His migration adventure did not bring about any sustainable improvement in his livelihood. After his return to Nandom, Simon had few other options than to take up his former life as a small-scale hoe farmer.

In the course of the twentieth century, migration has played an increasingly important role in the lives and livelihoods of the Dagara people in north-west Ghana. Every year, a large proportion of the adult male population travel hundreds of kilometres to southern Ghana (see Figure 1) to work as seasonal farm labourers. In their home villages there are few employment opportunities during the dry season (November to May) while in the same period labour demands peak for some crops in southern Ghana. Apart from this seasonal migration, 26.9 per cent of the people born in the Upper West Region (UWR) have settled in southern Ghana more permanently as farmers, informal sector workers, charcoal burners, civil servants or traders (Ghana Statistical Service 2002).[2] Some of them will stay in southern Ghana and some will eventually return home. These three types of migration – seasonal labour migration, long-term migration and return migration – have important implications for the lives and livelihoods of the migrants as well as for the people who stay behind. As the migration history of Sebastian illustrates, migration can greatly contribute to livelihood security in the migrants' source area. On the other hand, Simon's case shows that migration can also have very negative effects.

[2] See van der Geest (2008) for more detailed migration patterns and trends, based on census data from 1911, 1921, 1931, 1948, 1960, 1970, 1984 and 2000.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

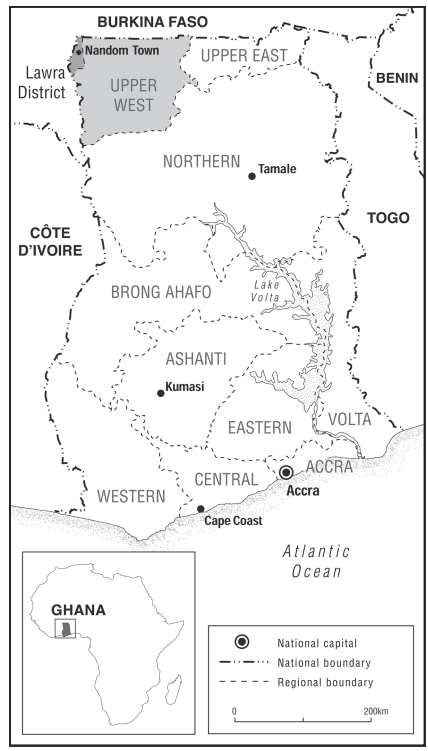


FIGURE 1 Regional map of Ghana

In the past thirty to forty years an abundance of research has been conducted, particularly by economists, geographers and sociologists, on the consequences of migration for development in the source areas of migrants.[3] These studies show a wide variety of outcomes, depending on location, time, methodology, theoretical perspective, type of migration and definition of development. However, a common feature of this scholarly work is that almost invariably migration–development linkages have been analysed using Western academic parameters. In this article, by contrast, I examine the impact of out-migration through the eyes of people who are directly involved, namely the home community. This includes returned migrants, like Sebastian and Simon, and relatives of current migrants. Their perception of the impacts of migration has largely been ignored in conventional contributions to the migration–development debate.

Contrary to many economists, sociologists and geographers who study migration, most anthropologists base their findings on the experiences and views of migrants or their relatives at home. This

[3] For good literature reviews, see Kearney 1986; Appleyard 1989; Skeldon 1997; Nyberg-Sorensen *et al.* 2002; and de Haas 2003.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

has greatly enriched our understanding of decision making in different cultural contexts. However, the focus in anthropological studies of migration has mostly been on cultural change, social organization, integration, adaptation, ethnicity and identity (Brettell 2000). The consequences of migration for economic development have received much less attention from anthropologists. Hence the aim of this article is to contribute to the ongoing debate on migration–development linkages with a somewhat more anthropological approach than most contributions in this field.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned above, migration–development linkages have been studied extensively during recent decades. Initially, scholarship in this area was heavily coloured by political ideology and adherence to grand theories like neo-classical equilibrium and modernization theory, on the one hand, and structuralist and Dependencia theory on the other. This resulted in two opposite camps: migration optimists and migration pessimists (de Haas 2006). The former emphasized the merits of migration as a catalyst of development, while the latter stressed that out-migration from peripheral regions perpetuated underdevelopment in these areas. In the past two decades scholars have increasingly bridged this political-ideological divide and have tried to find out *under which circumstances* out-migration has beneficial and adverse effects. Positive contributions to economic development are usually found when investments of migrant savings and remittances in the area of origin are viable, not too risky, and unhindered by too much bureaucracy. Remittances are more likely to be used for consumption and survival purposes when the conditions for investment in productive activities are less favourable (Taylor 1999: 11; de Haas 2001; Black and Castaldo 2009). Within one region, however, the impact of migration can vary greatly between households, as the case studies of Sebastian and Simon illustrate.

Many empirical studies of migration and development linkages focused on whether remittances were used for 'conspicuous consumption' or productive investments. Since the 1990s, insights from the New Economics of Labour Migration (Stark 1991; Taylor 1999) and the popularity of sustainable livelihood frameworks (Carney 1998; Scoones 1998) have caused a shift in thinking about the role of migration in rural people's lives. New Economics of Labour Migration scholars recognized that the relationship between migration and development is far too complex to be covered by simple consumption–investment dichotomies. In rural livelihood frameworks, remittances joined agriculture and local non-farm activities as one of the three main sources of livelihood. Migration and remittances are increasingly seen as essential components of people's economic life. Moreover, in the poorest out-migration regions, the dichotomy between conspicuous consumption and productive investment may not be relevant because

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

most people in these areas cannot afford luxury consumption and the conditions for productive investment are not favourable. In such regions, the lion's share of migrant savings and remittances is needed for food and other basic needs – or, in other words, for survival.

From a Malthusian point of view, migration from densely populated rural areas is a way of reducing the pressure on the available natural resources, especially farmland (Bilsborrow 1987 and 1992). Dietz *et al.* (2004) have shown that a very substantial migration flow indeed takes place in West Africa from the poorly endowed interior savannah to the forest belt and more urbanized coastal areas. Population growth optimists would argue that rural out-migration perpetuates unsustainable farm practices as it removes the incentives for investment in agricultural intensification (Tiffen 1995; Dietz *et al.* 2009). Seasonal migration and remittances from migrant relatives can also be seen as a way to diversify livelihoods, to supplement the farm produce in risk-prone and poorly endowed agro-ecological zones (de Haan 1999; Stark 1991). Furthermore, migration can be a means of overcoming capital constraints for investments in economic activities at home (de Haas 2001). Negative economic impacts of migration for the sending areas, emphasized by Dependencia scholars, include the loss of labour and increased dependency ratios (Shresta 1988).

In the 1970s and 1980s, most research on migration and development in Ghana was undertaken by Dependencia scholars with a structural-historical perspective. The peripheral, migrant-sending areas, mainly in northern Ghana, were seen as 'labour reservoirs' for the development of the economic core of Ghana: the southern regions. The consequences of migration for the areas of origin were found to be predominantly negative (Nabila 1972; Plange 1979; Shepherd 1981; Sutton 1989; van Hear 1982). Although Dependencia theory has not lost all its relevance for explaining underdevelopment in northern Ghana, since the 1990s migration in Ghana has been increasingly studied on the basis of an actor-oriented approach and population mobility has been regarded more and more as a prerequisite for development (Abdulai 1996; Addo and Kwegyir 1990; Braimoh 2004; Cour 2001; Eades 1993; Gyasi and Ayivor 1992; Twumasi-Ankrah 1995).

A SHORT HISTORY OF MIGRATION FROM NORTH-WEST GHANA

The inhabitants of the present Upper West Region were already quite mobile in pre-colonial times, but they migrated over shorter distances. They moved in search of fertile land and bountiful hunting grounds, and also to escape from slave raiders (Goody 1967; Lentz 2006). Apart from short-distance migration, there was also a substantial involuntary migration flow to the south consisting of captured slaves who were sold to traders and sent to Ashanti, the Gold Coast and the Americas (Der 1998).

In 1901 the present northern Ghana was colonized by the British, and in the first decade of the twentieth century colonial officers came

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to the north-west to recruit labourers for the mines and for road construction in the south. The working conditions were poor and mortality in the mines was high, but the first groups of labour migrants returned with possessions and stories that enticed others to follow in their footsteps. Within a few decades of the first recruitment campaigns, labour migration to the south had become a very common source of livelihood and even a rite of passage for young men in the area (Lentz 2006).

In the first decades of the twentieth century, migration was almost exclusively an option for young adult men. However, during the second half of the twentieth century there was a progressive feminization of the north–south migration flow (Abdul-Korah 2006). Three other – but related – trends in the Dagara migration system are worth mentioning. First, migration has become increasingly permanent. The first groups of male migrants moved alone or with friends and worked in the south on relatively short contracts. Although short-term migration is still very common, many migrants now settle in the south with their nuclear families, and their children also grow up there. Second, an occupational shift has taken place among the migrants. In the first half of the twentieth century, most Dagara in the south were unskilled labourers. The present generation of migrants also includes professionals, but nowadays the most common occupation of Dagara migrants is farming. Closely tied to this occupational shift is a change in destination region. Initially, most Dagara migrated to urban settlements in the Ashanti Region and the Western Region. Nowadays, rural areas in the Brong Ahafo Region are the prime destination area. Unlike northern Ghana, the Brong Ahafo Region has two rainy seasons and, unlike most other parts of southern Ghana, access to land for farming there can be gained relatively easily and cheaply. To sum up it could be argued that, after a sixty- to seventy-year intermezzo of predominantly rural–urban wage labour migration, the Dagara have increasingly returned to their pre-colonial system of migration in search of fertile land. The difference is that their action radius has expanded to southern Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, I try to find the middle ground between qualitative and quantitative methods by analysing the answers given by 204 respondents to six open questions about the consequences of migration. The open questions were part of a larger questionnaire dealing with migration and livelihood issues. The research involved a random sample of household heads in eight villages in the vicinity of Nandom Town in the Lawra District of north-west Ghana. Nearly all respondents were subsistence farmers with low levels of formal education.[4] A disadvantage of interviewing household heads was that

[4] Sixty-one per cent of the respondents had never been to school; 39 per cent had only attended primary school; 20 per cent had attended secondary school and one respondent (0.5

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

it introduced a male bias and an age bias to the analysis, given that the respondents were predominantly men (89 per cent) and their average age (51) was far higher than the average of the population in the research area (29). Although wives and other household members were often present during the interviews, the picture would probably have been different had we talked to them separately.

The questionnaire survey was carried out by a team of four enumerators who were young men, all four university graduates and born and bred in the research area. They had the same ethnic background as the respondents (Dagara) and spoke the same language. The quotes in this article are translations by the enumerators and the answers to the open questions that I used in my analysis are summaries in English by the same enumerators.

In the first two open questions we asked the respondents to express their opinion about the consequences of seasonal labour migration and long-term migration. Two follow-up questions asked whether – and why – the village would have been 'better' now if no such migration had taken place. In connection with long-term migration, we also asked whether and why (or why not) returned migrants in the research area were considered 'better off' than non-migrants and people who had only gone on seasonal migration. In a sixth question, we asked the respondents to indicate the items on which, according to them, the money that enters their village through migration was mainly spent. This was the only question with predetermined categories.

For the analysis of the data I used software designed for qualitative data analysis (Kwalitan) to identify clusters of responses about the consequences of migration. After identifying the clusters, I returned to the raw data and assigned codes to the answers. In one answer, the respondent could refer to different consequences of migration. To determine the relative importance of each cluster of responses, I counted the number of respondents that referred to each cluster. In this way I could differentiate between collective perceptions and more individual opinions or less obvious consequences of migration. I occasionally link the findings on migration perception to more quantitative data that result from the same questionnaire survey in the Lawra District.

The distinction between seasonal migration and long-term migration that I used in the questionnaire is based on local concepts that became apparent during a pilot study that I carried out before embarking on the structural data gathering. Group discussions and informal interviews revealed two types of migration to southern Ghana. The first type involved mostly young men who work as farm labourers in the south during the dry season. They return when the cropping season starts in the north. The second type of migration to southern Ghana involved non-seasonal and longer stays with occasional visits to the relatives

per cent) had enjoyed tertiary education. On average, the respondents had been to school for two and a half years.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

at home. Long-term migrants usually have a fixed place of residence and most of them migrate with their nuclear households. A third type of human mobility discussed in this article is return migration. This involves people who have returned to their home areas after having lived outside the area for longer periods, mostly in southern Ghana. Someone who returns from a seasonal stay in the south is not considered a return migrant here.

Although people in north-west Ghana clearly distinguish between seasonal and more permanent migration, in practice the concepts can overlap – for instance, when a seasonal migrant fails to return after the dry season. The possible overlap between the two types of migration can be problematic in more positivistic research approaches, but it is of no influence for the purpose of this article. The difference between the two concepts was clear to the people we interviewed and, as we will see below, they have different opinions about the consequences of these two types of migration.

MIGRATION PROPENSITIES

It is important to realize that the 'home community' whose perception of migration is discussed in this article largely consists of people who have their own migration history. The vast majority (83.3 per cent) of the 204 interviewed household heads had travelled to southern Ghana as seasonal labourers. Moreover, many respondents (41.2 per cent) were returned migrants who had lived in southern Ghana non-seasonally. (In addition, four respondents – 1.9 per cent – had lived in destinations within northern Ghana.) Their average length of stay in the south was nine years. The fact that the 'home community' consists of many people who have their own migration history has important implications for the interpretation of the findings. Their perceptions of the consequences of migration are not only based on their interactions with migrant relatives, but also on their own migration experiences. A summary of survey findings relating to migration propensities and remittance behaviour of household members and migrant relatives is included below. These findings underline the pervasiveness of migration from the research area and facilitate a better interpretation of the core findings about perceptions of the consequences of migration.

Seasonal labour migration

In exactly 50 per cent of the 204 households surveyed, at least one person had gone on seasonal migration in the twelve months prior to the questionnaire interview. In 28.4 per cent of the households, the number of seasonal migrants was between two and five. Seasonal migration was most common in the middle income group.[5] The poorest

[5] In the poorest 67 households, 34 members went on seasonal migration in the previous twelve months. The figure for the middle group of 66 households was 67. For the group of

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

households had relatively few members in the productive age and the wealthier households had more profitable local non-farm activities in the dry season. Seasonal labour migration is an activity engaged in mostly by men. In the age group of 20 to 59, 41.4 per cent of the male household members had worked in southern Ghana in the previous dry season. They mostly migrated to the Brong Ahafo Region (59 per cent) and most of them worked as farm labourers (77.6 per cent). Among the women in the same age group, migration propensities were much lower: 3.7 per cent. On average, seasonal migrants returned with €37 of savings and in addition most of them brought home goods that are cheaper in southern Ghana, especially clothes, bicycles, maize, farm tools, furniture and corrugated zinc for roofing. On average, the cash savings of seasonal migrants represent about 15.5 per cent of the total cash income[6] of their households.

Migrant relatives

The survey data on migrant relatives confirms that the population of the research area is extremely mobile. When we asked the 204 respondents about the residence of their brothers, it turned out that 41.9 per cent were living in southern Ghana. An additional 9 per cent of the brothers had migrated to a destination within northern Ghana. The out-migration propensities of the respondents' sisters were substantially lower than those of the brothers: 19.5 per cent were living in southern Ghana and 11 per cent had migrated within northern Ghana. The proportion of sons (24.7 per cent) and daughters (19.6 per cent) living in southern Ghana was also substantial, despite the fact that many were children who were still living with their parents. Seven households had first-line relatives living in other African countries and none had immediate relatives who had migrated out of Africa.

Almost every household head in the sample (91.2 per cent) had at least one sibling or child who had migrated out of the area. On average, they had 3.5 migrant siblings or children, of whom 2.5 were living in southern Ghana. The majority of these migrants (61.3 per cent) had at some point supported the respondent's household with remittances, either in cash or in kind. In the twelve months prior to the questionnaire interview, 68 per cent had visited the family house and 42.2 per cent had contributed money, goods or foodstuffs with an average total value of €10 per migrant (this figure excludes remittances to people outside the respondents' households). In the previous twelve months, 90.2 per cent of the households in the sample had received some support from migrant relatives, with an average total value of €38. The average sum of *cash* remittances was €18, which amounted to 5.5 per cent of the total household cash income. These amounts seem relatively

67 wealthiest households, the figure was 42. The distribution of wealth groups is based on cash income plus the estimated value of subsistence production.

[6] The total cash income was calculated as the sum of crop sales, livestock sales, seasonal migrants' savings, remittances and the revenues from local non-farm activities.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

small[7] but, as we will see below, these contributions play an important role in people's evaluation of the consequences of migration.

PERCEPTIONS OF SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRATION

In the eyes of farmers in the villages around Nandom Town, seasonal labour migration contributes greatly to livelihood security. Only 7 per cent of the household heads whose opinion we asked mentioned any negative consequences of seasonal migration and only 8 per cent thought that the village would have been 'better' if people had not been going to southern Ghana in the dry season. The positive as well as the negative consequences of seasonal labour migration, as perceived by the respondents, can be subdivided into (1) direct attributes of seasonal labour migration; and (2) descriptions of what the situation would have been like without seasonal labour migration.

Positive perceptions of seasonal labour migration

> 'Seasonal migration enables us to get money and food to supplement the little that we produce here' (male, 35, slm, rm).[8] 'Seasonal migrants bring back money to assist in farming, to renovate the house, to buy bicycles and to share with their parents' (male, 60, slm). 'Seasonal migrants are able to cater for their personal and household needs; moreover, they come to farm for us' (female, 57, nm). 'Without seasonal migration, there would be no money and this would cause quarrels and theft' (male, 47, slm, rm).

The survey revealed that food security has a very central position in the respondents' perception of seasonal labour migration. They mentioned food-related consequences 175 times (see figures between parentheses below for a breakdown). Seasonal migration contributes to food security in five different ways: first, seasonal labour migrants bring home food from southern Ghana (30); second, they bring home money to buy food (48); third, they contribute their labour to domestic food production (9), while their seasonal absence reduces the pressure on the food stock because they do not eat at home (11);[9] fourth, without seasonal migrant income, the lack of money for daily cash needs would compel people to sell food after the harvest and go hungry in the lean season (6); and fifth, seasonal migration is an important coping strategy for gaining access to food in drought years (3). This leads

[7] In a study by Mazzucato *et al.* (2008), based on the 1998/9 Ghana Living Standard Survey, households in the Upper West Region received the lowest amount of remittances while the region has the highest domestic out-migration rate (Ghana Statistical Service 2002). In southern Ghana, households received much more in remittances from abroad.

[8] In the quotes, 'slm' refers to seasonal labour migrant (past or present); 'rm' means returned long-term migrant; and 'nm' refers to a person who has never engaged in seasonal or more permanent migration. The number in the quotes represents the age of the respondent.

[9] In the Sahel, this is a well-documented phenomenon. In northern Nigeria, for example, seasonal migration is referred to as *cin rani* which literally means 'to eat away the dry season' (Swindell 1984; Rain 1999).

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

people to hypothesize that without seasonal migration there would be food shortage and hunger (45). These responses indicate that many farmers in the research area perceive their environment as one in which food and livelihood security cannot be attained by farming alone, and in which seasonal migration is a necessary way to supplement what is produced at home (23).

The money that seasonal migrants earn is not only used to buy food but also to purchase durable goods (mentioned 76 times), to invest in housing (45) and productive activities (33), and to pay hospital bills (15) and school fees (13). Four respondents also mentioned that seasonal migrants use their savings for bride wealth payments. The purchase of durable goods mostly concerned basic items like clothes, bicycles, furniture and cassette-players. Investments in farming (27) were mentioned more frequently than investments in non-farm activities (6). Agricultural investments concerned labour parties, simple farm tools like hoe blades, and the purchase of livestock. Although investment in non-farm activities was mentioned only six times, the indirect positive impact of seasonal labour migration on non-farm activities may be quite significant. As one interviewee indicated, 'Without seasonal migration, there would be no money in the system and local businesses would collapse' (male, 75, slm).

In their responses, some farmers did not specify what exactly the seasonal migrant income is used for. More generally, they mentioned personal needs (25) and household needs (67). The fact that household needs were mentioned more often than personal needs confirms one of the principal insights of the New Economics of Labour Migration (Stark 1991): migration should not be looked at as an individual, profit-maximizing affair, but as a household decision aimed at spreading risk by diversifying income sources. However, the answers could have been influenced by views of what was socially desirable. As we have seen above, many respondents were seasonal migrants themselves. By mentioning the use of migrant income for household needs rather than personal needs, they underlined their personal sacrifice and contribution to the household's welfare.

The tangible assets that seasonal migrants invest in are important for the long-term sustainability of livelihoods in the research area, but non-tangible assets, like knowledge, skills and new ideas could be equally important. Indeed, ten respondents mentioned that seasonal migration contributes to the development of the village because migrants return home with new ideas and knowledge that can generate innovations.

Some of the interviewees predict that without seasonal labour migration, there would be unemployment (42), idleness (21), a lack of money to meet daily cash needs (32) and massive poverty (46), which in turn would result in stealing (55), quarrels, violence (30) and 'social vices' like teenage pregnancy and rape (7).[10] The household heads

[10] Conversely, migration – or the absence of the husband – can also cause social problems. See Lobnibe (2005) for an interesting anthropological account of adultery involving the wife of a migrant with her 'classificatory brother'.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the research area feel that the option to go on seasonal migration prevents the young men from looking for unlawful ways of meeting their increased cash needs.

The analysis of positive perceptions of seasonal migration revealed that people particularly appreciate its contribution to food security. For many people in the research area seasonal migration is a central element in their overall survival strategy. However, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs, seasonal migrant earnings are also used for accumulation: to buy durable goods, to invest in housing and to invest in economic activities. Respondents who mentioned only accumulation clusters were significantly wealthier than those who only referred to seasonal migration as a means of supplementing food supplies.[11] For the poorer sections of the population, seasonal migration is mainly a survival strategy. They have to use part of the income from seasonal migration to buy food. Better-off farm households can meet their food needs with the produce from their own fields. They are more likely to use seasonal migrant savings for investments and non-food consumption.

Negative perceptions of seasonal labour migration

> 'Seasonal migration makes people become weak early and some come home empty-handed' (male, 22, slm). 'Without seasonal migration, there would not have been strange diseases like HIV/AIDS that are killing us now' (female, 52, rm).

Only a few respondents held negative opinions about seasonal labour migration, but their reasoning revealed a wide range of aspects of seasonal migration that are perceived to be detrimental to the social and economic development of the research area. First, there are negative health implications. The physically demanding nature of agricultural labour and poor accommodation in the rural destination areas cause some seasonal labour migrants to become weak, get ill or even die in southern Ghana (mentioned 7 times). Another negative health aspect is the spread of HIV/AIDS that is associated with seasonal migration (6). Many unmarried young men have their first sexual experience in southern Ghana, away from parental control and with some money in their pocket to seduce a girl. Married seasonal migrants who stay away from home for several months may have sexual encounters in the south and, if they are infected, they are likely to infect their wives when they return.

Besides the negative health implications, the respondents mentioned several negative aspects of seasonal migration in the social and

[11] The households of respondents who only mentioned accumulation clusters (N = 45) had an annual cash income of €59.38 *per capita* and an annual income including subsistence production of €100.73 *per capita*. The households of respondents who only mentioned food security (N = 51) had an annual cash income of €35.70 *per capita* and an annual income including subsistence production of €72.59 *per capita*.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

economic domain. Some lamented that seasonal migrants often come home empty-handed (3) and there were also complaints that migrants return from the south with bad habits, like alcohol abuse and a tendency to be adulterous (3). Three respondents thought that migrants could contribute more to the development of their village if they would stay at home to engage in local economic activities like livestock rearing, fishing, horticulture and non-farm activities in the dry season. Some respondents also thought that, in the absence of seasonal migration, the government would be 'compelled to create jobs' (2).

One of the negative consequences of migration that is often brought up in the migration and development literature is that it causes labour shortages for certain activities at home. Only two respondents out of 204 mentioned this negative aspect in relation to seasonal migration. A last negative effect of seasonal labour migration, mentioned by one respondent, is that it leads to more permanent migration and, as we will see below, the local perceptions of the consequences of long-term migration are less positive.

PERCEPTIONS OF LONG-TERM MIGRATION

While the vast majority of the farmers we interviewed were positive about the consequences of seasonal labour migration, their perception of long-term migration was more ambivalent. More than half (54 per cent) of the respondents had a negative opinion about this type of migration. However, when we asked whether the village would have been 'better' if these migrants had remained at home, only a small minority (9 per cent) answered affirmatively. In the next two sections I discuss the farmers' perceptions of the pros and cons of rural out-migration.

Positive perceptions of long-term migration

> 'If all of us were still here, there would be hunger and great poverty because the land is infertile' (male, 44, slm). 'There would be shortage of land and the remittances from migrant relatives would be greatly missed' (male, 64, slm, rm).

Most farmers who hold positive opinions about out-migration do so because out-migration reduces the pressure on land (mentioned 87 times) or because migrants support their relatives at home with remittances in cash and kind (74). They believe that without migration there would be food shortages (71), more poverty (35) and unemployment (23). This in turn would lead to quarrels and violence (40) and theft and robbery (34).

People's perception of what the area would look like in the absence of out-migration is very Malthusian. Just like Thomas Malthus in the late eighteenth century, they feel that their land is unable to sustain many more people than those already living on it. Moreover, there is a striking resemblance between their perception of the hypothetical

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

consequences of population growth and Malthus's (1798) prediction of poverty, famine, misery and vice.

On a more positive note, the respondents also feel that migration has enabled the expansion of 'modern' house construction (41), for which a lot more money is needed than for traditional houses. Some migrants build a new house when they return but, as we saw in the case of Sebastian's relatives, it is more common for migrants to upgrade the family house with zinc rooms while they are still living in southern Ghana. A few respondents mentioned that the money that migrants remit to their relatives at home is used to invest in productive activities (10), like farming and trading, or used to pay school fees and hospital bills (3). Another advantage of having migrant relatives is that they can provide food and livelihood security in difficult times, for example if the crops fail because of a drought (10). A last positive consequence of migration that was mentioned is that the interaction with other cultures generates innovation, knowledge and new ideas that are needed for development (18).

Even more so than in the case of seasonal migration, food security is paramount in the respondents' perception of the consequences of more permanent forms of migration. The food shortage that would allegedly evolve in the absence of migration is attributed not so much to the volume of money and foodstuffs that migrants send to their relatives at home, but to a scarcity of fertile land. Farmers feel that if their migrant relatives had not migrated out of the area, there would not have been enough farmland for all to attain food security. Hence, out-migration of part of the population is seen as a necessary way to protect the livelihoods and food security of the farmers who remain at home. Conventional research into migration–development linkages, which typically focus on the conspicuous consumption versus productive investment dichotomy, seems to miss the point in the case of migration from north-west Ghana. The importance of food security in the perception of migration indicates that human mobility is part of a larger livelihood strategy that – given the economic and environmental conditions – is aimed primarily at food security and survival. Accumulation, investment and non-essential consumption only become important once bellies have been filled.

As we will see below, migration is not always a successful strategy for improving livelihood security. It also has negative impacts, both socially and economically. Many people in the research area doubt whether the benefits outweigh the costs.

Negative perceptions of long-term migration

> 'It is only when they fall sick, that they know how to find their home' (male, 54, slm). 'The parents of migrants are left to their fate and their children don't even know their home town' (female, 39, rm). 'Most migrants only roam about in southern Ghana; they cannot even cater for themselves and much less for their families at home' (male, 31, slm).

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dagara farmers who have a positive opinion about out-migration frequently mentioned the support that migrants provide to their relatives at home. People who have a negative opinion about migration tend to emphasize the lack of support from migrant relatives (mentioned 66 times). Not surprisingly, the households of respondents with a negative opinion about long-term migration received is less remittances (€30 on average) in the preceding year than those who had a positive opinion about migration (€46).[12] Migrants are expected to start sending remittances in cash or in kind as soon as the initial difficult period of getting settled in southern Ghana is over, and they are expected to visit their home village on a regular basis. Many people in the research area are disappointed and feel abandoned if their migrant relatives fail to support them and if they do not come home for several years (27). Especially on the occasion of a funeral – the most important social event among the Dagara – migrants are expected to attend and contribute (7).

Some attribute the lack of support to 'bad lifestyles', especially alcoholism (3), or selfishness (1) on the part of the migrants. Others think, or have discovered first-hand, that life as a northerner in southern Ghana is equally difficult. Simon's migration history, which I summarized in the introduction, is a good example, since he was not even able to save enough money to pay for the return trip to the north. As we will see below in the analysis of perceptions on return migration, it seems that a significant proportion of the migrants are not very successful in southern Ghana. During their stay in the south, they struggle to make ends meet and they are hardly able to afford to send any money to their relatives at home (5). Many respondents complained that most of these migrants finally come home empty-handed, disillusioned and weak. Upon return, they become a burden to their relatives at home (17). More successful migrants who initially supported their relatives at home may become reluctant to continue sending remittances when they feel that their lives are now concentrated in the south. For some respondents, the loss of Dagara identity (11) and the fact that some migrants build houses and start businesses in their destination areas (7) rather than in their home towns was an important negative consequence of migration.

A considerable number of respondents (15) believe that the area would have been more developed if nobody had migrated and if the population had been larger. Instead of emphasizing pressure on natural resources, like those who favour out-migration, they think that migrants can contribute more to the development of the area by staying put. However, they did not reason in a Boserupian way, saying that more population pressure would lead to agricultural intensification (Boserup 1965). Instead, they thought that migrants could contribute to the development of the area by dedicating themselves to

[12] These figures include the monetary remittances and the value of foodstuffs and consumer goods that the household heads had received from migrant relatives. Thirteen per cent of the respondents that held a negative opinion about migration did not receive any remittances at all. For respondents with a positive opinion about migration this figure was 7 per cent.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

non-agricultural economic activities like carpentry, masonry and trading. Some argued that the area would have been more developed with a larger population because, especially after the decentralization of the 1990s, the distribution of many government services depends on the number of inhabitants (3).

Migration is a selective phenomenon: people usually migrate during the productive period of their lives. The cost of bringing up children and caring for the elderly falls on the home region. In other words, migration leads to higher dependency ratios in the area of origin. It may therefore be surprising that only one respondent mentioned 'loss of labour' as a negative consequence of out-migration. In the case of the Dagara in Lawra District, people who migrate for longer periods usually do so with their wives and children. Consequently, long-term migration does alter population *size*, but its influence on population *composition* and dependency ratios is limited to old-age dependency. As we saw in the migration history of Sebastian, parents are usually left in the care of a non-migrant brother. However, a lot of respondents (28) complained that the elderly are neglected and not properly cared for because of out-migration.[13]

A last negative aspect of long-term migration, mentioned by eleven respondents, is that *migrants' funerals are brought home*, in other words, many of them do not return. One could wonder what is worse: coming back to be a burden to one's relatives or never coming back at all. Probably these respondents especially lamented the fact that many of the more successful migrants, who could potentially contribute their savings and knowledge to development in the area, preferred to stay in the south. In the next section, I focus on the situation of the migrants who *did* return.

PERCEPTIONS OF RETURN MIGRATION

> 'Most returnees come home with nothing and have to depend on those at home' (male, 33, slm). 'Only returnees who have been in formal employment and get a pension are better off' (male, 68, slm). 'Only those who build houses and invest prior to return are better off' (male, 75, slm). 'Only those who plan carefully and are able to manage their resources well are better off' (male, 57, slm, rm).

To explore local perceptions of return migration, we asked the respondents whether and why, in their opinion, returnees were usually 'better off' than people who had never migrated to southern Ghana or people who had only migrated on a seasonal basis. No specific wealth criteria were given. The respondents used their own criteria for wealth and poverty, some of which became clearly apparent in the answers to the open question.

[13] This is partly confirmed in a southern Ghanaian case study about care for the elderly. Migrants are not around to look after their parents, but they often organize reasonably good care from a distance (van der Geest 2002).

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Many migration studies report that returnees are wealthier than non-migrants and that migration increases inequality (Barham and Boucher 1998; de Haas 2001; Lipton 1980). This is especially the case when there are large wage differentials between the areas of origin and destination. In the case of Nandom, return migration does not seem to cause inequality. In the eyes of 74 per cent of the respondents, returnees are usually not wealthier than non-migrants. In the sample of farmers we interviewed, 43.1 per cent were returned migrants themselves and 25 per cent had stayed outside the Nandom area for five years or more. In this last category of respondents an even higher percentage (80) thought that returned migrants were not wealthier than non-migrants. According to 50 respondents, most migrants return empty-handed and 14 added that many of them only return when they are sick, old and weak. Following Cerase's (1974) typology of returnees, according to these respondents, most belong to the category of *migration failure*. So it seems that Simon's sad migration history is not an exception. When he returned from the south, he had few other options than to work the land just the way he did before he left.

Due to better economic and agro-ecological conditions in southern Ghana, migration usually involves a significant improvement in income and food security, but long-term benefit from migration after return requires careful planning and resource management, as eleven respondents also indicated. It seems that only a minority of the return migrants succeed in doing that.

Long-term migrants face numerous problems when they return. In their responses, interviewees expressed some bitterness about the behaviour of these returnees. Migrants who prepare properly for their return to northern Ghana and Dagara society by building a house and by investing in animal traction or non-farm activities are well-respected citizens. However, in the view of most farmers we interviewed they are the exception rather than the rule. As mentioned above, most migrants return without any significant possessions (50) and they often have to depend on their relatives at home for food (54) and shelter (20). Frustration about their migration failure and forced return sometimes causes severe behavioural problems (11). Some respondents said that those migrants that return with some possessions or money in the pocket become just as poor as the others because they spend their money carelessly (8). In the south they were used to having more cash at hand and when they return to the north, they find it difficult to adjust to a new situation of poverty (7).

Most of the reasons that respondents mentioned to explain why return migrants are not better off have to do with poor management on the part of the migrants. Some respondents, however, mentioned an advantage that non-migrants have *vis-à-vis* return migrants: access to fertile land (7). This depends on the situation in which migrants return. In many cases, they come home when their father or only resident brother dies. In such instances, access to land is not a major problem. In other situations, when the returned migrant has brothers who farm in the village, he is likely to have restricted access to the more fertile

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

portions of the family land. This is also dependent on the migrant's remittance behaviour. If he has always supported his relatives, they are less likely to deny him access to fertile land. Another difficulty for return migrants is that, despite the low external input character of the farming system (van der Geest 2004), they initially lack some basic resources to cultivate, like tools, seeds and manure. For farmers in the research area, livestock is an important asset that provides livelihood security and access to money for consumption or investments. It may take some years before returned migrants are able to build up a herd size that equals the livestock of non-migrants (19).

A minority of the respondents (26 per cent) thought that return migrants were usually wealthier than non-migrants. In their perception, most migrants build a modern house before they return (mentioned 28 times) and they usually return with possessions that are beyond the reach of most non-migrants (12). More generally, twelve respondents thought that migrants prepare their return very well by investing (unspecified) in the home area. Seven respondents stated that migrants invest in non-farm activities, such as grinding mills and trade. Another reason for return migrants to be better off, as mentioned by six respondents, is that many of them receive pension payments, especially those who have worked in the mines and as civil servants in the south.

According to this minority of respondents the effect of these well-planned returns is that return migrants usually have more money (8), are able to cater for their household needs and even support others who are in need (6), and have no problem paying school fees and hospital bills (2). None of the respondents stated that return migrants have an advantage because of the skills they acquired during their time in southern Ghana. In the eyes of some respondents migration rather involves a loss of skills that are necessary for survival in northern Ghana (10). Their long absence makes it difficult for migrants to reintegrate into Dagara society in a satisfactory way as they are no longer used to the harsh conditions that prevail in the north of Ghana (26).

The view of most respondents – that returned migrants are not wealthier than non-migrants – is confirmed by my survey data on income sources, expenditure and properties. The aggregated living standards of the two groups were very similar. The total household income of returned migrants was a bit lower than that of non-migrants, but their *per capita* income was slightly higher because they had smaller households.

In the next section I briefly look at how, according to the interviewees, the money flowing into the region through migration is mostly used.

USE OF SAVINGS AND REMITTANCES

One of the positive consequences of migration is that it generates savings and remittances. In the open questions about seasonal migration and long-term migration, some respondents had mentioned

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

TABLE 1 Uses of migrant savings and remittances (N = 188)

Migration money used to:	*Times mentioned*	%
Buy food	146	78
Pay hospital bills	80	43
Invest in farming	74	39
Invest in housing	73	39
Meet daily cash needs	63	34
Pay school fees	39	21
Invest in non-farm activities	35	19
Buy consumer goods	32	17
Other	15	8

specific purposes for which migrants' money is used. After the open questions, we asked the respondents how most of the money that is brought in by seasonal migrants and long-term migrants is spent. This was not an open question as there were eight predetermined categories (see Table 1). Each respondent was able to mention three categories of remittance use.

As one might expect after reading the earlier sections, the majority of the respondents mentioned purchase of food. Interestingly, a lot more people mentioned hospital bills than school fees. Although the people in my survey sample spent slightly more on education (€16 per household per year) than on healthcare (€14), it may be easier for them to pay school fees with their own resources because they know in advance *when* and *how much* they have to pay. At the time of the fieldwork for this research this was not the case for healthcare expenditure. When people in the research area were unable to pay a hospital bill, many of them would call on a migrant relative for assistance. In that sense, migration could be seen as an insurance strategy. Recently, the government's National Health Insurance Scheme, for which people pay a fixed annual amount, was introduced quite successfully into the research area. Informal discussions during my last field trip in March 2009 revealed that migrants often pay the fees for their relatives at home, but this needs further investigation.

Another interesting outcome was that many respondents mentioned investments in farming whereas, in the open questions, people referred to investments in housing much more often. It should be noted that most farm 'investments' concern labour parties and not, for example, machinery or fertilizer. During a labour party, the farm owner invites fellow farmers to come and work on his land in exchange for food and *pito* (sorghum beer). In many cases, therefore, farm investments actually concern food purchases. The fact that few people mentioned the purchase of consumer goods can partly be explained by the fact that migrants prefer to buy consumer goods in southern Ghana where prices of manufactured goods are lower. Fifteen respondents mentioned uses of migrant money that were not covered by one of the predetermined

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

categories. These concerned funeral celebrations and bride wealth payments.

In the migration and development literature it is often lamented that remittances are spent on 'conspicuous consumption' rather than on productive investments that would contribute to economic development, livelihood security and poverty reduction. In the case of Dagara migration, it seems that neither conspicuous consumption nor productive investments are the most common uses of migration money. Poor agricultural conditions and general poverty mean that most of the migration money is used to buy food. Few people can afford luxury goods and investments in productive activities.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have analysed the home community's perception of the consequences of migration from north-west Ghana. The case studies of Sebastian and Simon, presented in the introduction, exemplified the wide variety of migration histories and interactions with migrant relatives. People's perceptions of the consequences of migration are based, to a large extent, on their own experiences. Therefore it is not surprising that the 204 respondents had many different opinions about the impact of migration. Despite these divergent views, some clear patterns could be identified.

The analysis shows that it is important to distinguish between different types of mobility. While the respondents were overwhelmingly positive about seasonal labour migration, they were much more critical about long-term migration and most of them thought that returned migrants were not wealthier than non-migrants. The positive evaluation of seasonal migration can be understood as follows: seasonal migrants contribute their labour at home in the farming season; their departure reduces the pressure on available food stocks; and they come home with food and money that supplement home production. Many respondents considered long-term migration to be less beneficial. They lamented the lack of support from migrant relatives. Some migrants are barely able to make ends meet in the south and others have lost interest in their home community. Despite their ambivalent opinion about the remittance behaviour of migrants, most respondents do regard out-migration as a necessity. They argue in a Malthusian way that without migration there would be scarcity of fertile land for farming and this would lead to hunger and conflicts.

Besides the *differences* between seasonal and long-term migration, there are also similarities. First, many respondents think that the absence of seasonal as well as more permanent migration would worsen the food situation and create more poverty, which in turn would lead to disputes and theft. Second, both forms of migration have contributed to the expansion of 'modern' zinc houses. Third, travelling to southern Ghana – whether seasonally or more permanently – exposes people to new ideas, which can have a positive effect on development. Fourth,

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for both seasonal and long-term migration a similar (low) proportion of the respondents mentioned that remittances were invested in farming and non-farm activities.

Two negative impacts of migration for source areas, emphasized by Dependencia scholars, concern loss of labour and increased dependency ratios. Only two respondents mentioned 'loss of labour' as a consequence of seasonal migration in the open question. The dry season is generally seen as a slack period in which few productive activities take place. The impact of more permanent migration on dependency ratios turned out to be limited to old-age dependency because nowadays long-term migrants usually settle in southern Ghana with their wives and children. The respondents did indicate that migrants' ageing parents are sometimes 'left to their fate'.

The method used for this article – open questions in a survey that was administered among 204 rural households – has resulted in an analysis that does not have the depth of much anthropological, qualitative research because each respondent could only express a few very concise opinions about the consequences of different types of migration. However, the advantage of interviewing a large group of people was that I could determine whether the answer of each respondent involved a collective perception or an individual opinion. In most qualitative research, when a limited number of people are interviewed, an exceptional opinion can easily be understood and presented as a common view. An advantage of the methodology *vis-à-vis* more quantitative work by economists, sociologists and geographers is that it yielded a very holistic view of the consequences of migration seen through the eyes of the people whom it really concerns.

A significant limitation of this study was the male bias in the analysis. Nine out of ten household heads were men and I expect the opinion of women, especially about the male-dominated seasonal migration, to differ from that of men. Most women would have agreed with the positive contribution of seasonal migration to food security, but I believe that they would also have emphasized more negative social aspects and they would have complained more about labour shortages for certain dry season activities. Besides the male bias, the fact that four out of five respondents had engaged in seasonal migration may also have influenced the positive perception of this type of migration. Negative statements about the impact of seasonal migration on development would amount to blaming oneself for poverty and underdevelopment in the area. Indeed, respondents who had never gone to southern Ghana for seasonal labour were three times more likely (18 versus 6 per cent) to have negative opinions about seasonal migration than people with a seasonal migration history.

Despite its limitations, this study clearly shows that people in north-west Ghana view migration as an essential part of their diverse livelihood. The majority argue that poverty levels and food shortages would be more severe without migration. I want to be careful not to draw too optimistic a conclusion from these findings. The key importance of food security in the perception of migration confirms the

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

view of Dependencia scholars that migration from peripheral regions keeps the sending areas in a state of underdevelopment. In their seminal study of migration in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Cordell *et al.* (1996) concluded that migration 'is geared to survival rather than accumulation and development' and that it has contributed to 'structural underdevelopment and massive poverty' in the source areas of migrants. My findings on local perceptions of migration in north-west Ghana confirm the importance of migration as a survival strategy, but the people whose perceptions I have studied do not go so far as to conclude that migration has *caused* poverty and underdevelopment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Dutch Council for Scientific Research (NWO) funded the fieldwork for this article (September 2003 to December 2004). I would like to thank Augustine Yelfaanibe, Alexis Dorle, Cosmas Terkemuure and Dominic Maabesog for the help with the data gathering and I am very grateful to Mr Kontana Nurudong and Mr Cyril Yabepone for giving me a home in Ghana. This article benefited greatly from comments by Ton Dietz, Kees Burger, Valentina Mazzucato, Sjaak van der Geest, Hein de Haas, Ronald Skeldon and two anonymous referees.

REFERENCES

Abdulai, A. (1996) 'Internal migration and agricultural development in Ghana', *Scandinavian Journal of Development Alternatives and Area Studies* 15 (3–4): 61–74.

Abdul-Korah, G. B. (2006) 'Where is not home? Dagaaba migrants in the Brong Ahafo Region, 1980 to present', *African Affairs* 106 (422): 71–94.

Addo, N. O. and A. E. Kwegyir (1990) 'Short-term circular migration in the context of socio-economic development in rural Ghana: the case of rice farmers in some selected rural communities in the north-eastern Volta Region', Working Paper 173, International Labour Office, Geneva.

Appleyard, R. (1989) 'Migration and development: myths and reality', *International Migration Review* 23 (3): 486–99.

Barham, B. and S. Boucher (1998) 'Migration, remittances and inequality: estimating the net effects of migration on income distribution in Bluefields, Nicaragua', *Journal of Development Economics* 55 (2): 307–31.

Bilsborrow, R. E. (1987) 'Population pressures and agricultural development in developing countries: a conceptual framework and recent evidence', *World Development* 15 (2): 183–203.

—— (1992) 'Population growth, internal migration and environmental degradation in rural areas of developing countries', *European Journal of Population* 8: 125–48.

Black, R. and A. Castaldo (2009) 'Return migration and entrepreneurship in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire: the role of capital transfers', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 100 (1): 44–58.

Boserup, E. (1965) *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: the economics of agrarian change under population pressure*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Braimoh, A. K. (2004) 'Seasonal migration and land-use in Ghana', *Land Degradation and Development* 15: 37–47.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Brettell, C. (2000) 'Theorizing migration in anthropology: the social construction of networks, identities, communities and globalscapes' in C. Brettell and J. F. Hollifield (eds), *Migration Theory: talking across disciplines*. New York NY and London: Routledge.

Carney, D. (1998) 'Implementing the sustainable rural livelihoods approach', in D. Carney (ed.), *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: what contribution can we make?* London: Department for International Development.

Cerase, F. P. (1974) 'Expectations and reality: a case study of return migration from the United States to southern Italy', *International Migration Review* 8 (2): 245–63.

Cordell, D. D., J. W. Gregory and V. Piché (1996) *Hoe and Wage: a social history of a circular migration system in West Africa*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.

Cour, J. M. (2001) 'The Sahel in West Africa: countries in transition to a full market economy', *Global Environmental Change* 11: 31–47.

de Haan, A. (1999) 'Livelihoods and poverty: the role of migration – a critical review of the migration literature', *Journal of Development Studies* 36 (2): 1–47.

de Haas, H. (2001) 'Migration, development and agricultural change in the south-Moroccan Todgha Valley', *The Arab World Geographer* 4 (4): 302–20.

—— (2003) 'Migration and Development in Southern Morocco: the disparate socio-economic impacts of out-migration on the Todgha Oasis Valley'. PhD thesis, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen.

—— (2006) 'Migration, remittances and regional development in southern Morocco', *Geoforum* 37 (4): 565–80.

Der, B. G. (1998) *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*. Accra: Woeling Publishing Services.

Dietz, A. J., J. W. Gunning, A. K. Bos and A. Zuiderwijk (2009) 'Optimistic determinism or explaining a miracle' in K. Burger and F. Zaal (eds), *Explaining a Miracle: transitions to sustainable land management in the tropics*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Dietz, T., R. Ruben and A. Verhagen (eds) (2004) *The Impact of Climate Change on Drylands with a Focus on West Africa*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Eades, J. S. (1993) *Strangers and Traders: Yoruba migrants, markets and the state in northern Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ghana Statistical Service (2002) *2000 Population and Housing Census: Summary Report of Final Results*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.

Goody, J. (1967) *The Social Organisation of the LoWiili* (second edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gyasi, E. A. and J. S. Ayivor (1992) 'Rural–rural migration in Ghana: the case of Lipke seasonal migrant rice farmers', *Malaysian Journal of Tropical Geography* 23 (1): 13–21.

Kearney, M. (1986) 'From the invisible hand to visible feet: anthropological studies of migration and development', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15: 331–61.

Lentz, C. (2006) *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lipton, M. (1980) 'Migration from rural areas of poor countries: the impact on rural productivity and income distribution', *World Development* 8 (1): 1–24.

Lobnibe, I. (2005) 'Forbidden fruit in the compound: a case study of migration, spousal separation and group-wife adultery in northwest Ghana', *Africa* 75 (4): 559–81.

Malthus, T. R. (1798) *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. London: J. Johnson.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Mazzucato, V., B. van den Boom and N. N. N. Nsowah-Nuamah (2008) 'Remittances in Ghana: origin, destination and issues of measurement'. *International Migration* 46 (1): 103–22.
Nabila, J. S. (1972) 'Rural depopulation in northern Ghana with special reference to the migration of the Frafra people', paper presented at the West African Regional Seminar on Population Studies, Accra, 30 November–4 December.
Nyberg-Sorensen, N., N. van Hear and P. Engberg-Pedersen (2002) 'The migration–development nexus, evidence and policy options: state of the art overview', *International Migration* 40 (5): 3–47.
Plange, N. (1979) 'Underdevelopment in northern Ghana: natural causes or colonial capitalism? *Review of African Political Economy* 6 (15–16): 4–14.
Rain, D. (1999) *Eaters of the Dry Season: circular labour migration in the West African Sahel*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.
Scoones, I. (1998) 'Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis', *Working Paper* 72, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.
Shepherd, A. (1981) 'Agrarian change in northern Ghana: public investment, capitalist farming and famine' in J. Heyer, P. Roberts and G. Williams (eds), *Rural Development in Tropical Africa*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Shresta, N. R. (1988) 'A structural perspective on labour migration in underdeveloped countries', *Progress in Human Geography* 12 (2): 179–207.
Skeldon, R. (1997) *Migration and Development: a global perspective*. Edinburgh: Longman.
Stark, O. (1991) *The Migration of Labor*. Oxford: Backwell.
Sutton, I. (1989) 'Colonial agricultural policy: the non-development of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22 (4): 637–69.
Swindell, K. (1984) 'Farmers, traders and labourers: dry season migration from north-west Nigeria, 1900–33', *Africa* 54 (1): 3–19.
Taylor, E. (1999) 'The new economics of labour migration and the role of remittances in the migration process', *International Migration* 37 (1): 63–88.
Tiffen, M. (1995) 'Population density, economic growth and societies in transition: Boserup reconsidered in a Kenyan case-study', *Development and Change* 26: 31–66.
Twumasi-Ankrah, K. (1995) 'Rural–urban migration and socioeconomic development in Ghana: some discussions', *Journal of Social Development in Africa* 10 (2): 13–22.
van der Geest, K. (2004). "*We Are Managing!" Climate change and livelihood vulnerability in northwest Ghana*. Leiden: Afrika-Studie Centrum.
—— (2008) 'North–south migration in Ghana: what role for the environment?' Paper presented at the International Conference on Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability, Bonn, 9–11 October.
van der Geest, S. (2002) 'Respect and reciprocity: care for elderly people in rural Ghana', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 17 (1): 3–31.
van Hear, N. (1982) 'Child labour and the development of capitalist agriculture in Ghana', *Development and Change* 13: 499–514.

ABSTRACT

The Upper West Region in northern Ghana is a major source area of migrants who travel to southern Ghana seasonally or for longer periods. This has important implications for the lives and livelihoods of the migrants themselves and their relatives at home. Almost invariably the impact of out-migration on

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sending areas has been studied using 'Western' academic parameters. Little is known about how the people themselves value the profound changes that migration causes in their societies. In this article, findings are presented from interviews with 204 rural household heads who were asked to express their opinion about the consequences of seasonal, long-term and return migration. A quantitative approach to qualitative data was adopted to differentiate between collective perceptions and individual opinions. It was found that almost all respondents were positive about the consequences of seasonal labour migration. They applauded its contribution to food security and considered it one of the few ways of gaining access to money and goods. The respondents were much more ambivalent about the consequences of long-term migration and return migration. On the positive side, they emphasized that out-migration reduced the pressure on farmland, and that some migrants attain higher living standards, both for themselves and for their relatives at home. On the negative side, many long-term migrants are not able to improve their livelihoods or lose their interest in the home community. The lack of support of some migrants is greatly lamented, especially if they later return empty-handed and become a burden on their relatives at home. The methodology used in this study yielded a holistic view of the consequences of migration on the source area as seen through the eyes of the home community.

RÉSUMÉ

L'Upper West Region du Nord du Ghana est une source majeure de migrants qui se rendent dans le Sud du Ghana de manière saisonnière ou plus longtemps. Les implications sont importantes pour la vie et la subsistance des migrants eux-mêmes, mais également celles des familles restées au pays. Presque invariablement, les études sur l'impact de la migration externe sur les régions d'émigration utilisent des paramètres académiques « occidentaux ». On sait peu de choses sur l'appréciation que portent les personnes elles-mêmes sur les profonds changements qu'entraîne cette migration sur leur société. Cet article présente les résultats d'entretiens menés auprès de 204 chefs de familles rurales interrogés sur les conséquences de la migration (saisonnière, de longue durée et de retour). Une approche quantitative des données qualitatives a permis de distinguer les perceptions collectives des opinions individuelles. La quasi-totalité des personnes interrogées avaient une opinion positive des conséquences de la migration des travailleurs saisonniers. Elles saluaient sa contribution à la sécurité alimentaire et la considéraient comme l'un des rares moyens d'accéder à l'argent et aux biens. Les réponses étaient bien plus contrastées sur les conséquences de la migration de longue durée et de la migration de retour. Côté positif, les personnes interrogées soulignaient le fait que la migration externe a réduit la pression sur les terres arables et permis à certains migrants d'atteindre un niveau de vie plus élevé, tant pour eux-mêmes que pour leurs familles. Côté négatif, de nombreux migrants de longue durée ne parviennent pas à améliorer leur subsistance ou finissent par se désintéresser de leur communauté d'origine. Les personnes interrogées déplorent fortement le manque de soutien de certains migrants, notamment lorsqu'ils reviennent les mains vides et deviennent une charge pour leur famille. La méthodologie utilisée dans cette étude a fourni une perspective holistique des conséquences de la migration sur la région source, telle que la voit la communauté.

https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0404 Published online by Cambridge University Press