

Everybody has his/her luck: Irregular migration of young people from Ghana to Libya and beyond

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Abstract

Despite several negative media reports on the plight of irregular migrants, some young Ghanaians continue to seek greener pastures in Libya and beyond. This paper examines the motives, achievements and main reasons for return of these migrants who are resident in both the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities. Using the snowball sampling technique, 200 return migrants were interviewed in the study areas. They were mostly young males who had completed Junior High School (JHS), and the main motive for migration was economic. The target destinations were Spain, Italy, Germany and other European countries (85 per cent) with Libya as a transit country to these countries. Migration networks exist among current, return and potential migrants which facilitate and sustain irregular migration from the study areas. The main reasons for the return included harassment from security personnel, family re-union and ill-health. Strategies to address irregular migration in the study areas will need to consider skills training for young school leavers, especially those unable to proceed beyond Junior High School.

Keywords: Irregular migration, young people, luck, Ghana, Libya, Europe

Introduction

Within the past five decades, Ghana has experienced what could be described as a migration transition of which the first phase was characterized by net immigration in the early 1960s owing to the favourable economic conditions in the country during the early period of independence coupled with the then liberal immigration policies in the country which attracted immigrants from other West African countries, particularly from Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta), Mali, Benin (formerly Dahomey) and Cote d'ivoire (Anarfi et al., 2003). The second phase (the 1970s and 1980s) witnessed the emigration of Ghanaians, both skilled and unskilled, first to neighbouring ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) countries, notably Nigeria and Ivory Coast and subsequently to Europe or the United States (Twum-Baah, 2004). This period was marked by political instability and deterioration of economic conditions in the country. As an example, in 1983 Ghana experienced the worst form of drought and bushfires which culminated in widespread famine across the country. From the 1990s however, there was a change in direction of emigration from Ghana with some of them migrating to developed countries in Europe, North America and Australia. Others migrated to some north African countries particularly Libya (Adepoju, 2010)

While most of the migrants from Ghana to Europe, North America and Australia were legal or documented migrants, some of those who migrated to Libya were irregular migrants (Adepoju, 2010). One of the factors that motivated Ghanaians and other West African nationals to migrate to Libya was the Pan-African policy of the Libyan President

which welcomed sub-Saharan Africans (SSA) to work in Libya in the spirit of Pan-African solidarity (Boubakri, 2004; Pliez, 2002; Pliez, 2004). Consequently, Libya became a major destination for SSA migrants (including Ghanaians), particularly in the late 1990s when sub-Saharan migrants started to join the flow of Maghrebis who had already started crossing the Mediterranean illegally by boats to Italy and Spain. This movement was stimulated by the persistent demand for migrant labour in southern Europe, where salaries and living conditions were much better than in Libya. There existed also well-established networks of smugglers helping irregular migrants to cross the Mediterranean (Boubakri 2004; Hamood 2006).

Irregular migration is a concept that defies one simple and specific definition because it assumes several forms as the boundary between regular and irregular migration is not clear. For instance, most irregular migrants enter destination countries legally with the requisite travelling documents but subsequently overstay their visas, or engage in prohibited work such as drug peddling through which their status becomes irregular. Others may enter or reside in a country illegally but could acquire legal residency through obtaining work, marriage or regularization. There is also the case of overland migrants who may cross many countries, some of which may allow their entry while others may not, so that a migrant moves in and out of formal regularity and irregularity. Consequently, irregular migration has been defined as a type of migration that occurs outside of the rules and procedures guiding the orderly international movement of people. But for the purpose of this study, irregular migration has been defined simply as the process of crossing borders without the requisite travelling documents or violation of the conditions for entering another country (Jordan and Duvell, 2002). This definition includes all journeys made by

Ghanaians to North Africa or European countries which involved the crossing of borders illegally. Irregular migration has also been variously described as illegal, undocumented or clandestine but several researchers have now avoided the use of illegal migration due to the criminal connotation attached (Campbell, 2010). Thus, this paper also prefers the term ‘irregular’ migration to ‘illegal’ migration.

Data on irregular migrants are not readily available at the Ghana Immigration Service. The problem of having access to data on irregular migrants has already been noted by previous researchers studying irregular migration. This has been attributed to the difficulties involved in getting such migrants as well as the likelihood that such migrants may not provide accurate information to researchers due to mistrust (De Genova, 2002; Black, 2003; Campbell, 2010). However, verbal information from some residents in both the Nkoranza and Techiman Municipalities point to the fact that irregular migration is a common phenomenon among young school leavers or school drop-outs in the two Municipalities. In addition, some staff of the Ghana Immigration Service has indicated that the Brong Ahafo Region (i.e. the region where Nkoranza and Techiman Municipalities are located) is the main source region of irregular migration from Ghana to Libya and beyond. In spite of this general affirmation, there is paucity of literature on irregular migration from the Nkoranza and Techiman Municipalities. The need for systematic studies on irregular migration from the Nkoranza and Techiman Municipalities is long overdue.

The focus of this paper therefore is to examine the reasons for migrating, main sources of funds for migration, achievement of aims of migration and reasons for return of irregular migrants in the Nkoranza and Techiman Municipalities. The findings of the

study could guide policy decisions on migration from Ghana as well as inform policies on formal education and skills training among young school leavers. The paper is underpinned by the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant relationship between the main reason for migrating and the background characteristics (sex, age, level of education and marital status) of the return migrants.
2. The relationship between duration of stay at destination and background characteristics of the migrants is not significant at 0.05 significant level.
3. There is no significant relationship between duration of stay at destination and achievement of main aim of migrating.

Conceptual and theoretical perspectives

The word 'luck' has been explained in several different ways but this paper adopts one of them which means to gain success or something desirable by chance. Potential migrants may have some information about the difficulties involved in irregular migration but such people would still want to try whether they would succeed or not. In this case the success or otherwise of such movement will greatly depend on chance or mere luck.

Irregular migration from both the Techiman and Nkoranza districts in Ghana to Libya and beyond can be situated within the theoretical perspectives of the migration networks theory and the new economics of labour migration. The concept of networks was first used by Barnes (1954) and later by Bott (1959) to describe a set of social relationships for which there was no common boundary. In the 1990s, the old sociological notion of 'networks' began to be considered in formulating a new approach to explain migration. Massey et al.(1993) defines a migration network as a composite of

interpersonal relations in which migrants interact with their family, friends or compatriots who stayed behind in their places of origin. The links cover the exchange of information, financial assistance, assistance in finding a job and other forms of assistance. These interactions cushion the migrant by reducing the costs and inherent risks associated with migration (Taylor, 1999).

Migration networks can be seen as a form of social capital for irregular migrants insofar as the network facilitates the migration process from the origin in terms of information and financial assistance to travel, and the provision of initial support at destination in the form of food, accommodation or assistance in the search for employment. The concept of networks could inform discussions on factors that help to establish and perpetuate irregular migration channels. For instance, Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler (2003) observe that network connections constitute a social resource that people draw on to gain access to various kinds of financial capital, employment, high wages and the possibility of saving and sending remittances to their places of origin.

One of the criticisms against the network theory is that it is considered only as a facilitator and therefore structural changes that may affect the working of the networks such as amendments in immigration laws, intensive border patrols or political and economic changes, which could affect the network, have been ignored. Besides, while migration network may be seen as a dynamic social entity, it cannot go on forever (Arango, 2000).

The new economics of labour migration emphasizes the role of the migrant's household or family in the process leading to migration (Stark, 1991; Arango, 2000; De Haas, 2008). The main tenet of the new economics theory of migration is that migration

decisions are not made by isolated individual actors but within larger units of interrelated people, typically families. It is argued that households that are subjected to risk, capital market imperfections or relative deprivation, enter into implicit contractual arrangements with their members in which they fund the costs of migration and migrants subsequently provide remittances or savings in return. Some households in both the Techiman and Nkoranza districts could finance the cost of travel of some of their household members to Libya and beyond hoping that migrants would send remittances home. According to Stark and Taylor (1989), families act collectively not only to maximize expected income but also to minimize risks to income, acquire social status and overcome a variety of market failures, like capital and credit markets.

One major limitation of the new economics of labour migration is that it concerns itself only with the causes of migration at the sending side without considering mechanisms at the destination which may encourage or discourage migrants to adjust to their new environment (Arango, 2000; Lindley, 2007).

Data and methods

The main data for the study were obtained from return migrants in both the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities using a survey questionnaire and an in-depth interview (IDI) guide. The questionnaire comprised two main sections: the first section covered background characteristics of respondents while the second section dealt with mechanisms of migration which covered questions such as main reason for migration, decision-making process, main source of funding, remittances, achievement of main motive of migrating and main reason for return. The in-depth interview guide covered issues such as a description of the journey from home to final destination, experiences at

destination, coping strategies and assessment of socio-economic status after migration. The aim of the in-depth interviews was to provide some explanation to supplement the quantitative data. Using the snowball technique, a total of 200 return migrants were interviewed using questionnaires in four communities comprising Tuobodon (47 respondents), Nkoranza (60 respondents), Techiman (47 respondents) and Ofuman (46 respondents). Through the same procedure (snowball technique) a total of 37 in-depth interviews were conducted in Tuobodon (seven), Ofuman (nine), Techiman(11) and Nkoranza (10) among both male and female return migrants. In both cases (survey and IDI) the number of respondents interviewed in each community was based on the number of return migrants identified since the total number of return migrants was not known.

Study areas

The Techiman Municipality is situated in the Northern part of Brong Ahafo Region and is bounded in the northwest by the Wenchi district, the northeast by the Kintampo district, the southeast by the Nkoranza district and the south by Offinso district while the Nkoranza district which lies in the middle portion of the same region shares boundaries with Kintampo South and Pru district to the north, Atebubu-Amanten district to the north east and Techiman district to the west (Figure 1 and 2).

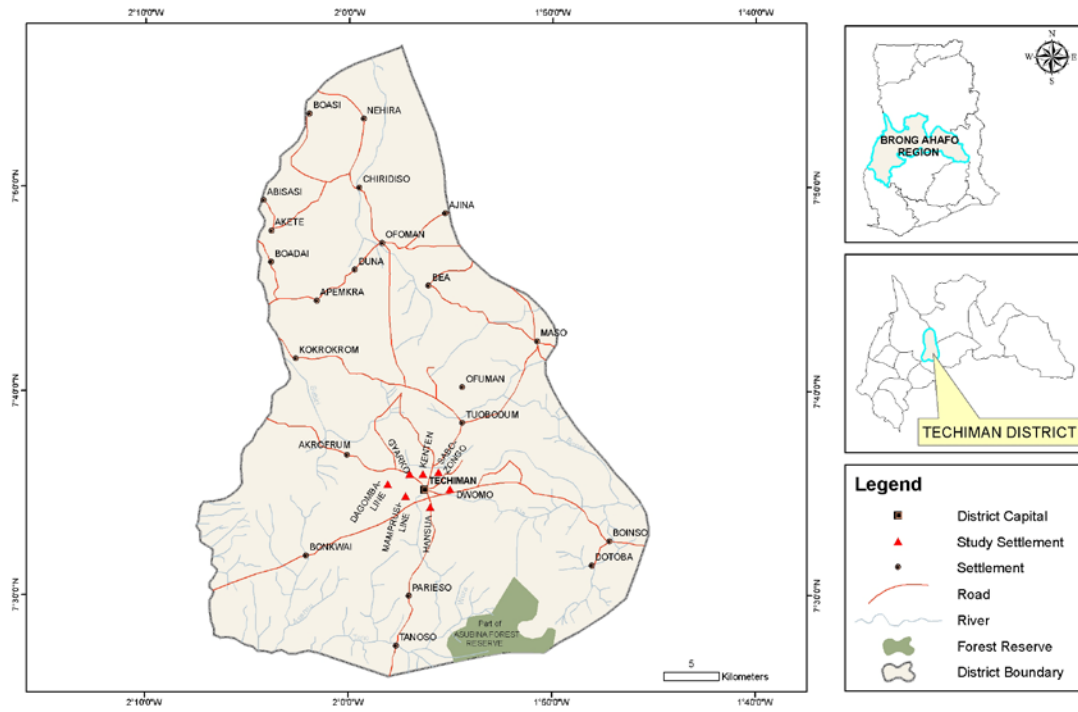


Figure 1: Map of Techiman Municipality showing the study sites

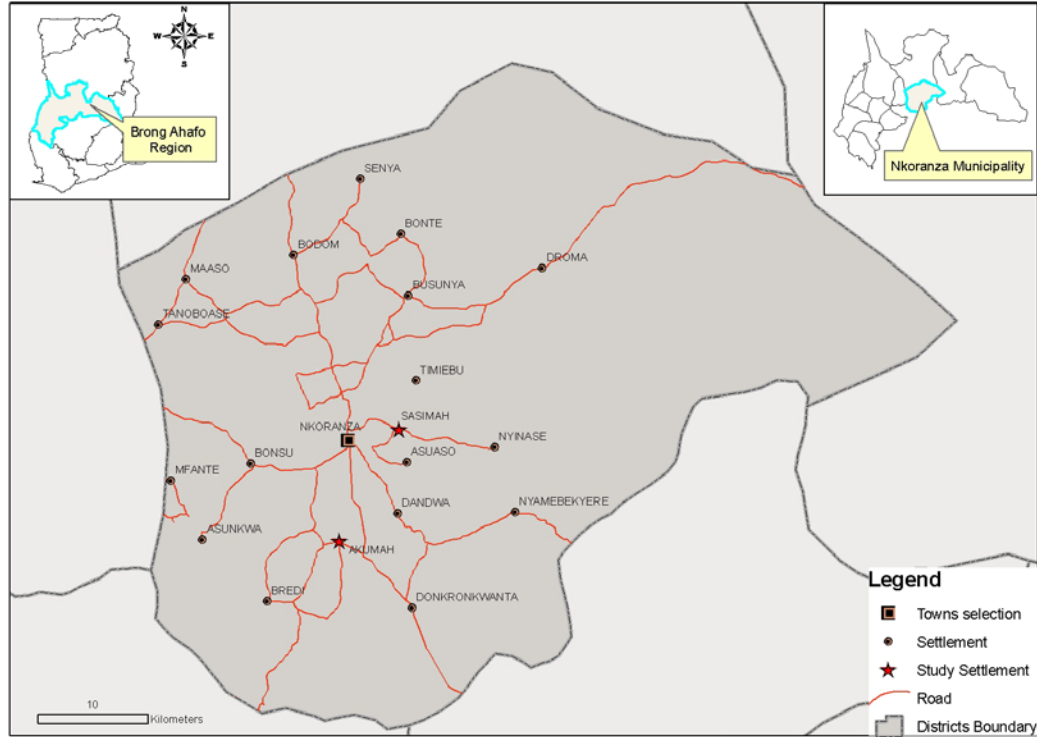


Figure 2: Map of Nkoranza district showing the study sites

Both districts experience wet semi-equatorial and tropical continental or savanna climates marked by moderate to heavy rainfall ranging between 1650mm and 1250mm. The average highest monthly temperature is about 30⁰C (80⁰F) and occurs mostly between March and April and the lowest of about 20⁰C (79⁰F) occurs in August. In both districts, the main rainy season is between March and June while the minor season is between September and November.

According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, the population of the Techiman Municipality was 174,600 with intercensal growth rate of 3.0 per cent while the population of the Nkoranza Municipality was 128, 960 (Ghana Statistical Services, 2002).

The main occupation in the Techiman Municipality is subsistence agriculture (57 per cent) followed by sales (14 per cent) while subsistence agriculture (71 per cent) and transport services (12 per cent) are the main occupation in the Nkoranza Municipality (Ghana Statistical Services, 2005). The proportions of non-working persons aged 15 years and older who reported non availability of work were 60 per cent and 92 per cent in the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities respectively (Ghana Statistical Services, 2005). Reported poverty status by households in the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities were 36 per cent and 58 per cent respectively (Ghana Statistical Services, 2005).

Educational institutions up to the Senior High School level, health facilities, potable water, sanitation facilities and roads constitute the social amenities in both Municipalities. Thus, besides agriculture (which some of the youth shun), there is limited

job opportunities in the two Municipalities, and this coupled with poverty could compel young people from the two Municipalities to seek for greener pastures elsewhere.

Results

Background characteristics of respondents

The background characteristics of the respondents covered sex, age, marital status, level of education and main occupation (Table 1). The rationale was to identify the socio-demographic characteristics of the people involved in irregular migration. The respondents were mostly males (98 per cent), young (59 per cent were below 25 years) and were not married (73 per cent). About two-thirds have had Middle or Junior High School education, 11 per cent have had no formal education or Primary School education while a little more than a quarter reported that they have had Senior Secondary School education. Thus, the respondents were mostly males, young, single, Junior High School (JHS) graduates and unemployed. The higher proportion of males than females involved in irregular migration could be attributed to the fact that males are generally more adventurous and prepared to take risks than females.

Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents

Background characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	195	97.5
Female	5	2.5
Age		
Less than 20	29	14.5
20-24	88	44.0
25-29	59	29.5
30+	24	12.0
Marital status		
Single	146	73.0
Married	45	22.5
Ever married	9	4.5
Highest level of education		
None	3	1.5
Primary	19	9.5
Middle/JHS	124	62.0
Secondary	54	27.0
Main occupation		
Unemployed	119	59.5
Farming	51	25.5
Student	1	0.5
Artisan	29	14.5
Total	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

Main reason for migration by background characteristics

The main reason for migration could vary by differences in background characteristics of migrants. From the results in Table 2, the main motive for migrating was economic (inadequate job opportunities and low incomes) as indicated by almost 99 per cent of the respondents. Nine out of ten males compared with less than one out of ten females migrated to Libya and beyond due to either inadequate job opportunities or low income at home. About 77 per cent of those aged between 20 and 29 reported that inadequate job opportunities at home was the main motive for migrating followed by low incomes (67 per cent). As expected, two-thirds of those who have had Junior High School (JHS)

education mentioned inadequate job opportunities as the main reason for migrating. These are likely to be those who have completed JHS but either did not qualify for Senior High School (SHS) or those who had qualified for SHS but could not continue their education for one reason or the other. The results from the chi-square statistic at 95 per cent confidence level showed significant relationship between age and main reason for migrating and also between marital status and main reason for migrating. This was expected because it confirms the general characteristics of migrants in the literature that they are mostly young and single (See Table 1). But the relationship between sex or level of education and main reason for migrating were not significant.

Although some of the respondents were engaged in farming and artisan work (masonry, carpentry, etc) before migration, information from the qualitative data also confirmed the fact that the main motive for migrating was economic, perhaps due to low incomes from farming and artisan work at the places of origin compared to high incomes or favourable conditions of work at the destination encourage some young people to migrate to Libya and beyond:

My main reason for migrating was to earn some money. When I got a job, my income per month was better than in Ghana. For example, my first month income was \$100 (26 year old male who had completed Senior Secondary School (SSS)).

My job before migration was not progressing as I wanted. I therefore thought it wise to go and try my luck in Libya and if possible continue to Europe. In Libya, I got a job in a hospitality industry as a house cleaning staff. The job was very rewarding. If I had a similar job in Ghana with the same conditions, I would not have gone to Libya.(24 year old male who had completed JHS).

Table 2: Main reason for migration by background characteristics

Background characteristics	Main reason for migration				Total	Sig. P<0.05
	Inadequate jobs	Low income at home	Adventure	Escape conflict		
Sex						
Male	96.8	98.6	100.0	100.0	97.5	0.727
Female	3.2	1.4	0.0	0.0	2.5	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
N	124	73	1	2	200	
Age						
Less than 20	17.7	9.6	0.0	0.0	14.5	27.271
20-24	53.3	27.4	100.0	50.0	44.0	
25-29	23.4	39.7	0.0	50.0	29.5	
30+	5.6	23.3	0.0	0.0	12.0	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
N	124	73	1	2	200	
Level of						
None	1.6	1.4	0.0	0.0	1.5	7.464
Primary	9.7	9.6	0.0	0.0	9.5	
Middle/JHS	66.9	52.1	100.0	100.0	62.0	
Secondary	21.8	37.0	0.0	0.0	27.0	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
N	124	73	1	2	200	
Marital status						
Single	87.1	49.3	100.0	50.0	73.0	34.905
Married	11.3	41.1	0.0	50.0	22.5	
Ever married	1.6	9.6	0.0	0.0	4.5	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
N	124	73	1	2	200	

Source: Fieldwork

Information and decision-making process by sex

Information obtained prior to migration could influence the choice of destination whether in regular or irregular migration. Respondents were quizzed on a number of questions regarding how the decision to migrate was arrived at. On whether or not respondents obtained some information about their intended destination prior to migrating, 98 per cent answered in the affirmative (Table 3). All the females (100 per cent) reported that they obtained information before migrating. That more females than males obtained

information before migration could be attributed to the fact that females naturally are less adventurous and therefore are not prepared to take risk like their male counterparts. The main source of information obtained was from return migrants (97 per cent) and this was the same for both females (100 per cent) and males (97 per cent). It is widely documented in migration studies that return migrants constitute an important source of information for potential migrants (Synnove, 1999; Adepoju, 2004; Geest, 2005; International Organization for Migration, 2008). The information obtained was mainly about job opportunities at destination (90 per cent) of which more females (100 per cent) than males (90 per cent) said they received. From the table, all those who received information indicated that they were influenced by the information received to migrate.

There was also some evidence from the qualitative data that some of the migrants obtained information from either current migrants at destination or return migrants as explained below:

I had a friend who was in Libya. I received a call from him one day and he asked me to come there. I went to Libya but my intention was to make money to continue to Europe (28 year old male who had completed JHS).

One of my former school mates returned from Libya and was about to go back again. I contacted him for information about job opportunities and incomes in Libya. Through the information I had from him, I told him that I wanted to go with him since he was already familiar with the route to Libya. He agreed and so we left Techiman together for Libya (25 year old male who had completed JHS).

Since some potential migrants have access to information and are also influenced by return migrants to migrate, it can be deduced that there is a form of migration networks

among current, return and potential migrants which promotes and sustains irregular migration from the study areas. Consequently, potential migrants could count themselves lucky by virtue of the existence of migration network at the places of origin which facilitates the migration process.

Table 3: Information and decision-making process by sex

Issue	Sex				Total	
	Male		Female		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
Information before migration						
Yes	191	97.6	5	100.0	196	98.0
No	4	2.1	0	0.0	4	2.0
Total	195	100.0	5	100.0	200	100.0
Source of information						
Return migrants	185	96.9	5	100.0	190	96.9
Friends	6	3.1	0	0.0	6	3.1
Total	191	100.0	5	100.0	196	100.0
Type of information received						
Availability of jobs	172	90.1	5	100.0	177	90.3
High wages/salaries	19	9.9	0	0.0	19	9.7
Total	191	100.0	5	100.0	196	100.0
Travelled based on information received						
Yes	191	100.0	5	100.0	196	100.0
No	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	191	100.0	5	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

Main source of funds for migration by sex

The desire to migrate entails the ability to fund the cost of the journey or having assurance of some financial support from elsewhere. From the results, 82 per cent of the respondents said they funded their trips through financial support from their parents/guardians and their own resources (Table 4). Four out of ten males compared with two out of ten females said their parents funded their trips abroad but the same

percentage of males (40 per cent) and females (40 per cent) reported that they funded their trips through their own resources. The funding of trips by parents or guardians could mean that these parents support the irregular migration of their children/wards to Libya and beyond.

Also, the qualitative data point to the fact that the trips were funded by parents/guardians alone or the potential migrant alone or by both. In some cases some of those who funded their own trips had to stay temporary at some destinations in order to work and earn some money to be able to continue their trips while others whose parents/guardian funded their trips reported that they had to request for extra money from parents/guardians at home to be able to get to their final destination. In both scenarios, the two migrants were fortunate or lucky as each one eventually got money to continue with the journey to Libya.

I was short of money in the course of the trip. When I finally got to Gatron, I spent about two months to work and raise funds to continue to Tripoli through Sabba. At Sabba too, I was short of money. Again, I had to stay at Sabba for one month and two weeks in order to work and earn some money. After raising some money, I left for Tripoli (27 year old male who had completed JHS)

I told my father that I want to join my friend at Libya. My father agreed and took a loan from his bankers the following day. It was GHc 250. Unfortunately for me, I had almost spent all my money when I arrived at Sabba. It was then a matter of life and death. I did an SOS call to my father. He responded and sent me money through a “connection man” in Kumasi. But before my money could come, my landlord gave me some amount to live on. He however took my passport so I cannot abscond (26 year old male who had completed SSS).

Table 4: Main source of funds for migration by sex

Main source	Sex				Total	
	Male		Female		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
Parents/guardian	82	42.1	1	20.0	83	41.5
Friends	10	5.1	1	20.0	11	5.5
Siblings	18	9.2	1	20.0	19	9.5
Own resources	77	39.5	2	40.0	79	39.5
Bank loan	5	2.6	0	0.0	5	2.5
Money lender	3	1.5	0	0.0	3	1.5
Total	195	100.0	5	100.0	200	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

Final destination by sex and level of education

The respondents were asked whether prior to migrating they targeted Libya as their final destination and if no which country was their final destination. The rationale was to find out whether Libya was their final destination or it was used as a transit country to other destinations. The results presented in Table 5 show that five out of ten respondents migrated to either Spain or Italy while a quarter reported that they migrated to other European countries. Less than 10 per cent of the respondents chose Libya as their final destination. This implies that Libya is used as a transit country to Spain or Italy or other European countries.

Table 5: Final destination by sex and level of education

Destination	Sex		Highest level of education				Total
	Male	Female	None	Primary	Middle/JHS	Secondary	
Libya	7.2	0.0	33.3	15.8	4.0	9.3	7.0
Italy	23.6	20.0	33.3	15.8	21.8	29.6	23.5
Spain	28.2	20.0	0.0	26.3	35.5	13.0	28.0
Germany	8.2	0.0	33.3	0.0	7.3	11.1	8.0
Austria	8.2	0.0	0.0	5.3	7.3	11.1	8.0
Other European countries	24.6	60.0	0.0	36.8	24.2	25.9	25.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	95	5	3	19	124	54	200

Source: Fieldwork

Achievement of main aim of migrating by sex, level of education and duration of stay at final destination

Since the main reason for migrating is economic (Table 2), the respondents were asked whether they had achieved their aims of migrating or not. From Table 6, nearly nine out of ten claimed that they had not achieved their aims of migrating, particularly among the males (98.0 per cent), those aged between 20 and 29 years (72 per cent) and those who have had Middle/JHS (64 per cent). On duration of stay and achievement of main aim of migrating, a quarter of those who reported that they had achieved their main aim of migrating compared with only nine per cent of those who had not achieved their main aim of migrating, stayed three years or more at the final destinations. This implies that one is more likely to achieve one's main aim of migrating if he/she stays longer at the final destination. This assertion seems to be confirmed by the chi-square statistic at 95 per cent confidence level which returned a p-value of 0.009, implying a significant relationship between duration of stay and achievement of main aim of migrating.

Table 6: Achievement of main aim of migrating by background characteristics and duration of stay at final destination

Issues	Achievement of main aim of migrating		Total	χ^2	Sig. P<0.05
	Yes	No			
Sex					
Male	96.3	97.7	97.5		
Female	3.7	2.3	2.5	0.186	0.520
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0		
Age					
<20	11.1	15.0	14.5		
20-24	33.3	45.7	44.0		
25-29	48.1	26.6	29.5	5.283	0.152
30+	7.4	12.7	12.0		
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0		
Level of education					
None	3.7	1.2	1.5		
Primary	14.8	8.7	9.5		
Middle/JHS	48.1	64.2	62.0	3.368	0.338
Secondary	33.3	26.0	27.0		
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0		
Duration of stay					
<1 year	0.0	13.9	12.0		
1-3	74.1	76.9	76.5	9.418	0.009
3+	25.9	9.2	11.5		
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0		
N	27	173	200		

Source: Fieldwork

Remittance home, highest amount, frequency and purpose by sex and level of education

Sending remittances home is a common characteristic of both internal and international migrants. Being able to remit home could be counted as part of achievements from migration. The study quizzed respondents to find out whether they remitted home, the highest amount ever sent, number of times remitted in a year and the purpose of remitting home. The results in Table 7 show that 56.0 per cent of the respondents remitted home while 44.0 per cent did not. More females (60.0 per cent) than males (56 per cent)

reported that they remitted home but in terms of educational level, those with no formal education were the highest proportion (100.0 per cent) followed by those who have had secondary school education (74 per cent).

On the average, the amount often remitted was less than one thousand dollars (56.0 per cent) but a third of the females compared with 13 per cent of males said they ever remitted as much as \$ 2, 500 or more. The amount of money remitted does not relate to one's educational level. A third of those with no formal education remitted the highest amount of \$ 2, 500 or more compared with about two out of ten of those with secondary school education.

More than half of the respondents indicated that they remitted home twice in a year. Females (67 per cent) and those with primary school education (60 per cent) constituted the highest proportion of those who remitted home twice in a year. A little over three-quarters said they remitted home for either investment or family upkeep, almost the same proportion of both males and females remitted home for the same purpose. Four out of ten of those with no formal education and also those with middle/JHS remitted home for investment and family upkeep respectively compared with the other levels.

Table 7: Remittance home, highest amount, frequency and purpose by sex and level of education

Issue	Sex		Highest level of education				Total
	Male	Female	None	Primary	Middle/JHS	Secondary	
Remitted home							
Yes	55.9	60.0	100.0	57.9	46.8	74.4	56.0
No	44.1	40.0	0.0	42.1	53.2	25.9	44.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	195	5	3	19	124	54	200
Highest amount							
<\$1000	56.4	33.3	33.3	55.6	65.3	44.4	55.7
1001-1500	10.6	0.0	0.0	11.1	8.2	13.9	10.3
1501-2000	11.7	33.3	33.3	11.1	12.2	11.1	12.4
2001-2500	8.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.2	11.1	8.2
2500+	12.8	33.3	33.3	22.2	6.1	19.4	13.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	94	3	3	9	49	36	97
Frequency							
Once	29.4	33.3	66.7	27.3	36.2	17.5	29.4
Twice	53.2	66.7	33.3	63.7	48.3	60.0	53.2
Thrice	17.4	0.0	0.0	9.1	15.5	22.5	17.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	109	3	3	11	58	40	112
Purpose							
Investment	37.2	37.5	42.9	37.5	37.6	36.3	37.3
Refurbish							
family house	5.3	12.5	0.0	4.2	6.0	5.5	5.5
Medical bills	10.5	0.0	0.0	12.5	9.8	38.5	10.2
Family upkeep	38.5	37.5	28.6	37.5	39.1	38.5	38.4
To buy land	8.5	12.5	28.6	8.3	7.5	8.8	8.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	247	8	7	24	133	91	255

Source: Fieldwork

Main reason for return by sex

Since the respondents were mostly return migrants, they were asked about the main reasons for their return to Ghana. From the results, the main reasons for return were political, social and economic (Table 8). About four out of ten reported that they returned

home due to regular harassments from security personnel at their final destination, nearly a third returned home for family re-union while 10 per cent said they came home in order to establish transport business. Almost the same proportion of females (31 per cent) and males (30 per cent) reported that they returned home for family re-union but a higher percentage of females (13 per cent) than males (three per cent) returned in order to further their education.

From the qualitative data, both males and females gave varied reasons for their return home. For example, a 23 year old female who had completed JHS narrated her ordeal in Libya where she was compelled by circumstances to engage in prostitution as a means of survival, which led to her return to Ghana. Naturally, she will consider herself as not being lucky since she did not get any job to do besides prostitution which was against her interest, and moreover, she return home as a result of ill-health.

When I got to Libya, I found out that the only job that migrant women engage in was commercial sex. I had no option than to also engage in commercial sex. I had to sleep with many men of different background. After a year's stay in Libya, I got a very protracted illness. I therefore decided to come back to Ghana (23 year old female who had completed JHS).

The story of a male migrant aged 27 years also indicate that he was compelled to return to Ghana because he was traumatized by an unfortunate scene where some Ghanaian migrants got drown when crossing the Mediterranean Sea through unapproved route. Being compelled to return home earlier than planned, such a person could count himself as not being lucky:

We set off in two boats which were overloaded using unapproved route to cross the Mediterranean Sea. In the midway of the journey, there was a severe storm in front of us and the first boat in the lead capsized. I was in the second boat and our captain managed to return otherwise

we would have suffered the same tragedy. Fifteen of the boys in the first boat come from the same town that I hail from in Ghana. I sent a message home to inform their relatives about their death. I was very shocked and after a month I returned to Ghana (27 year old male who had completed SSS).

Table 8: Main reason for return by sex

Main reason for return	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
To establish a provision store	3.6	0.0	3.5
To establish a poultry farm	4.8	0.0	4.6
To establish a transport business	9.6	12.5	9.6
To marry	1.0	0.0	1.0
For family re-union	28.9	31.3	29.0
For Christmas	1.4	0.0	1.4
Harassments from security personnel	37.9	31.3	37.7
Ill-health	10.0	12.5	10.1
To further their education	2.8	12.5	3.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	501	16	517

Source: Fieldwork

Note: Multiple responses were provided

Discussion and conclusions

The paper examined irregular migration of young people from both the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities to Libya and beyond. The objectives of the study were to examine the main motives, main source (s) of funds for migration, achievements of aims of migration and main reason for the return. The results showed that young people who had completed Junior High School (JHS) but were unemployed often migrate to Libya or beyond mainly for greener pastures. Being mostly JHS graduates (62 per cent), they are likely to be those who did not qualify for placements at the Senior High School (SHS) since about half of the JHS often failed in the Basic School Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E.). For example, the 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 B.E.C.E results showed that 55 per cent and 51 per cent respectively, of the candidates failed in their final examinations (Bonney and Attram, 2010). Since most of these graduates lack employable skills and do

not also have any academic or professional qualifications, they are more likely to indulge in all kinds of livelihood activities including irregular migration abroad.

The main motive for migrating was economic but both Techiman and Nkoranza are important agricultural and commercial areas which even attract migrants from the three northern regions to settle there for farming and/or trading. This implies that agriculture has not been made more attractive to young school leavers in these two Municipalities which perhaps explain why some of them tend to migrate abroad for greener pastures. The unattractiveness of agriculture to young school leaves could be due to a number of factors. First, the removal of subsidies from agricultural inputs and equipments by government as recommended by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), implies that one needs high capital to be able to engage in commercial agriculture as a business enterprise. The second problem is difficulties in getting access to land for commercial agriculture due to the unfavourable land tenure system, and lastly, the absence of ready market for agricultural produce could hamper the desire of young people to engage in agriculture as a source of livelihood and/or business venture.

The study revealed that households mostly funded the cost of travel abroad. This ties in with the perspective of the new economics of labour migration which stipulates that a household could encourage and fund the trip of a member to migrate abroad with the hope that he/she would send remittances home to address household socio-economic problems. Two main implications can be deduced from this point. First, limited household resources are used to fund irregular migration of which the probability of the returns to such investment is based on luck. For instance, the 15 young people who lost

their lives when crossing the Mediterranean Sea by boat constitute a double agony to their families in terms of the investments made on their trips and the permanent loss of human capital owing to their untimely deaths. Secondly, one key area proposed by government as part of its development agenda is human capital development as indicated in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS II, 2005). But as some households encourage young school leavers to migrate abroad for greener pastures instead of pursuing further education or skills training, the government's efforts at developing the human capital of the country could be negated. Furthermore, for those who returned because of ill-health, such people are not only unlucky but also they are likely to put financial burden on their families particularly if they do not have money to pay for their healthcare. In such situations, households' strategy of addressing their financial insecurities through migration becomes negated.

Irregular migration of young people from both the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities is based on migration networks. It was observed that prior to migration the migrants obtained information about job opportunities mostly from return migrants. The networks tend to facilitate and sustain future migrations as potential migrants often rely on current or return migrants for information and other relevant assistance. This is in tandem with the migration networks theory which is based on interpersonal links that facilitate the migration process. Once a migration networks exist, young people will continue to migrate abroad for greener pastures unless government and other stakeholders put sound policies in place to address the needs of young people in the country. Although a national youth policy framework has been passed by parliament, it is yet to be operationalised.

The preference of European countries to Libya as the final destination could be influenced by the perception of earning higher incomes in the former than the latter. But it must be noted that a migrants' chances of securing a high income job at destination depends on how competitive he/she is in the labour market (Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler, 2003). Academic and/or professional qualifications or the possession of some specialized skills is crucial for securing better jobs but since these young people do not have such qualifications or skills they are more likely to engage in menial jobs at the destinations where there is no guarantee of job security or adequate protection against risks or hazards. Perhaps this explains why some of them reported that they returned home in order to continue with their education.

About nine out of ten of the return migrants indicated that they did not achieve their main aim of migrating because they did not stay long (three years or less) at their last destinations owing to harassment from security personnel. This assertion was confirmed by the results from the chi-square test which showed a significant relationship between duration of stay at destination and achievement of main aims of migrating at the 0.05 significant level. Harassment of irregular migrants by security personnel in Europe and other countries has become frequent in recent times partly due to the growing global insecurity following the bombing of the U.S. pentagon and the world trade centre on September 11th , 2001. This has compelled some countries to tighten their immigration rules thereby making them less receptive to migrants.

Through irregular migration some young people in the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities have been able to obtain capital for investment while others have contributed to family up-keep at home. Undoubtedly, these ones could be described as

the lucky ones but in spite of the various difficulties involved in irregular migration, some young people continue to migrate irregularly because for such people everybody has his/her lack.

Policy recommendations

The JHS graduates need to be given the opportunity to re-write the B.E.C.E or provided with avenue for skills training that would make them employable locally. It is in this direction that, the National Youth employment programme which is geared towards providing jobs for young people is seen as a laudable idea although there are frequent political interferences, particularly when there is change of government. There is the need for a more stable and effective national youth programme that will provide skills training for young people in the country.

Since agriculture is the predominant occupation in both the Techiman and Nkoranza Municipalities, it is important to make agriculture more attractive through the provision of credits, equipments, storage facilities and ready market so that some young people could take up commercial agriculture as a business enterprise.

There is the need for the two Municipalities to occasionally organize educational programmes to sensitize parents and the youth on the risks involved in irregular migration. Although government has established a migration unit within the Ministry of Interior to co-ordinate national activities on migration, it appears the focus is more on regular migrants and diaspora issues than irregular migrants. Consequently, there is no any coherent migration policy framework in the country that addresses migration issues at the regional and district levels. The need for such a policy framework is long overdue.

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