



## ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS OF RETURN MIGRATION TO ORIGIN COMMUNITIES IN THE WA WEST DISTRICT, GHANA

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### **Abstract**

*This paper investigated the economic motivations for the return migration of agricultural labour migrants from southern Ghana to the Wa West District in the Upper West Region. Using a mixed methods research approach which combined structured interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, a total of 300 returnees were interviewed through a multi-stage, purposive, snowball and convenient sampling techniques. The study established that the return of migrants to their rural origin communities was motivated by the quest to establish business ventures from savings accrued in destination areas, the desire to engage in farming. The acquisition of skills such as mechanics, photographers, seamstresses and tailors which were considered useful for economic survival in origin communities also motivated return migrations. This research has re-enforced the dominance of the economic factors in the return migration discourse. It has also re-echoed the benefits of return migration to origin communities while contributing to the debate on the role of return migration to the development of places of origin.*

**Keywords:** *Returnees, Economic, Motivations, Origin, Upper West Region*

### **Introduction**

Northern Ghana is broadly used to refer to the geographical land mass stretching upwards from the Lower Black Volta River, which together with its tributaries the White and Red Voltas and the Oti and Daka rivers separates the south of Ghana from the north (Benneh, 1972; Plange, 1979). The development of the northern sector of Ghana has been neglected since the colonial era. The colonial government's policy for then Northern Territories was forced labour recruitment at the expense of the socio-economic development of the north. Hence, the marked underdevelopment of the northern sector compared to the rest of the country (Abane, 2008; Ghana Statistical Service, 2010; Tanle, 2010). In addition to actively promoting labour migration, colonial governments prevented investments and adopted a "protective" attitude towards the population, which further exacerbated the underdevelopment and poverty situation in the north

(Gariba, 2008). This trend of underdevelopment has continued from colonial to independence and post independence periods with the northern sector of the country being among some of the poorest regions in Ghana. This explains why the northern sector lags behind other regions in terms of development, particularly, in terms of infrastructure, education and health. The high poverty rates in parts of northern Ghana within the last decade further demonstrate the poverty situation (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010; Participatory Development Associates, 2011) (Ref. Table1).

**Table 1: Incidence of poverty in selected regions of northern Ghana**

Region	2016/2017	2012/2013	2005/2006
Upper West	70.9	70.7	89.1
Upper East	54.8	44.4	72.9
Northern	61.1	50.4	55.7
<b>All Ghana</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>31.9</b>

*Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2018*

This state of underdevelopment of the northern sector has partly resulted in the out-migration of both skilled and unskilled personnel of various categories to the southern sector of the country (Gariba, 2008; Imoro, 2011; Songsore, 2003; Tanle, 2010; Van der Geest, 2008). The causes of these out-migrations include the use of the north as a labour reserve by the colonial government to feed the mines in the southern parts of the country, the colonial administration's failure to invest in the north (Abane, 2008; Songsore, 2003). Other causes of the out-migrations include poor rainfall, shortage of fertile lands for agriculture, and inadequate socio-economic opportunities (Songsore, 2003; Gariba, 2008; Van der Geest, 2008; Tanle, 2010; Imoro, 2011; Tanle, 2014).

However, over the past few decades there has been a growing phenomenon of return migration from southern to northern Ghana but research on these returnees has been at best scanty. Most researches have focused on the reasons and re-integration challenges of return migration without emphasis on economic motivations for return migration (Adu-Okoree, 2012; Kwankye, 2012; Yendaw et al., 2017). This paper therefore fills this research gap by examining the economic motivations influencing return migrations to the Wa West District.

### **Economic Reasons for Return Migration: A Literature Review**

Several economic reasons may explain a return migration phenomenon. For instance, the economic benefits of return migration include the financial capital accruing to migrants, the entrepreneurial abilities of returnees and the setup of businesses by returnees (Ammassari & Black, 2000; Return

Migration to the Maghreb (MIREM), 2008). Entrepreneurial abilities can result in employment creation and generation in origin communities of migrants. This explains why Démurger and Xu (2011) revealed that experiences gained during migration helped returnees to obtain self employment through their entrepreneurial activities in the areas of origin. Gubert and Nordman (2011) and Black and Castaldo (2008) have found that Ghanaian return migrants from Cote D'voire invested in small scale businesses upon their return to Ghana. These migrants have the potential to create jobs (Agunias, 2006). Consequently, Farrell, Kairyte, Nienaber, McDonagh, and Mahon (2014) illustrated that return migrants who have accumulated sufficient funding upon return have the capacity to establish to businesses.

Other studies on return migration have focused on the flow of cash from urban to rural economies which has helped to raise standards of living in rural areas and also transformed rural subsistence economies into market economies through the provision of goods and service for sale (Caldwell, 1968; Van der Geest, 2005). Additionally, returnees initiated savings, technology and skills (welding, masonry, mechanics) as well as established income generating activities (fast food outlets) in origin communities (Claver, 2013; Dziva & Kusena, 2013).

In Upper West region return migrants from Wenchi and Techiman Districts in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana have indicated that through remittances, they were able to invest in housing, food security and household income at their origin villages (Tanle, 2007; Van der Geest, 2005). Similarly, Claver (2013) acknowledged that return migration was beneficial as it brought in remittances which were used to pay school fees, entertainment, buying bicycles and building houses in Nandom in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Additionally, savings accrued during migration periods were also used to invest in modern agriculture to increase yield. Indeed, recent studies have shown that the internal return migrations also have a positive impact on the development of areas of origin. (Wang & Fan, 2006; Démurger & Xu, 2011). Further, addressing the economic benefits of return migration, the

International Organization for Migration (2013) indicated that return migrants accrued to themselves skills and transfer of technology upon return.

### ***Theoretical Perspective***

Several micro and macro theories inform migration studies. These theories include neo-classical theory, network theory of migration, the historical structural perspectives, world systems theory, the push and pull theory, among others. One of these theories that emphasizes the role of economic factors in return migration is the new economics of labour theory. Some key proponents of this theory included Oded Stark (1980) Bloom (1985), Stark and Levhari (1982), Tylor (1999) and De Haans (2008).

This theory bridges the gap in the neo-classical theory without losing the economic motive as a major factor in analysing migration. The theory postulates that migration is a household decision and not an individual decision. Therefore, individuals who out-migrate are sent out advertently and inadvertently by their household members so that these migrants can remit and support families in times of difficulty particularly financial difficulty (Stark & Levhari, 1982). This is seen as a risk aversion strategy by households to continue to survive in the most stressful of times. (Stark & Bloom, 1985).

The theory views return migration as a fulfilment of given objectives by the migrant's household. Therefore, a successful return migration means that the migrant has remitted household members and has been able to acquire the needed investment capital or skills deemed as necessary by the household for their progress or successful survival. Where the migrant is unable to achieve this objective and return to origin community it would be interpreted as failed migration (Tylor, 1999). The household plays a key

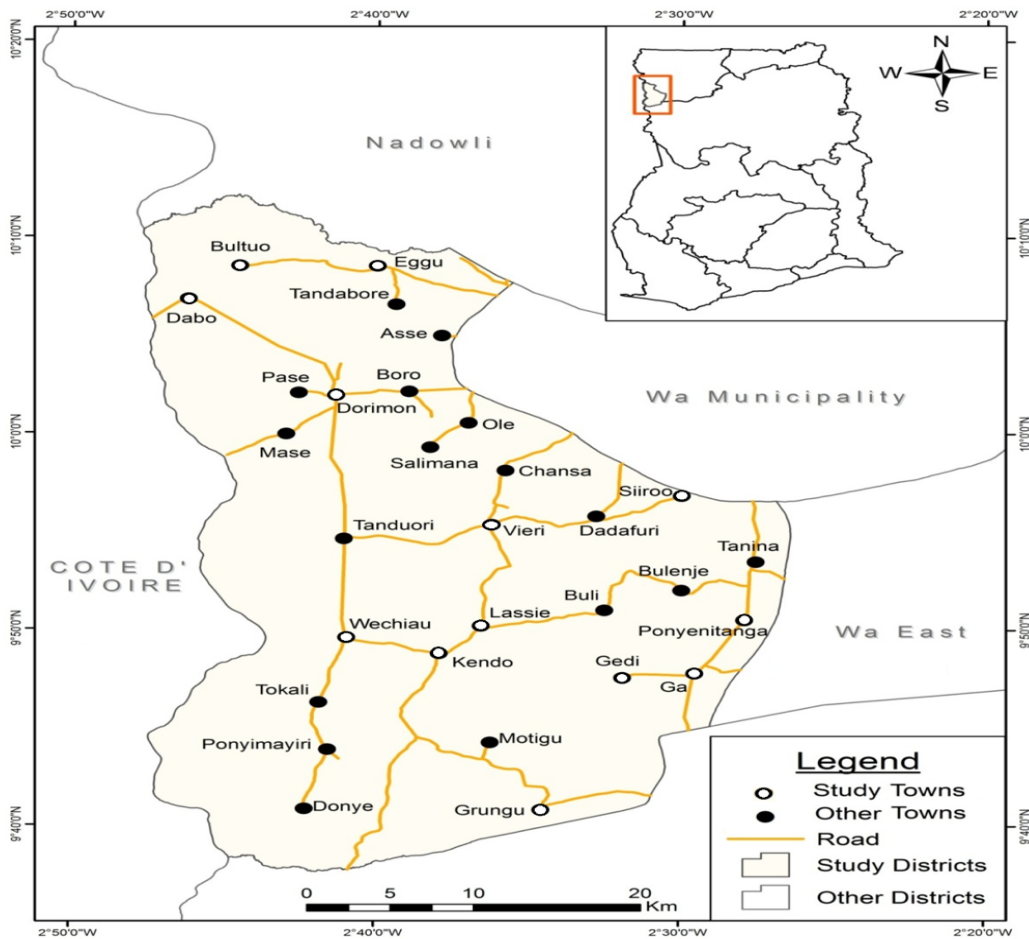
role in the decision making process of migrants and whether a migrant may be successful or not.

Return migration, then becomes a logical outcome of a calculated strategy defined at the level of the migrant's household and resulting from the successful achievement of goals or targets. Migrants go to a destination area for a limited period of time, therefore until they succeed in providing their households with the liquidity and income they expect to earn they do not return. Return migration becomes an outcome of a successful experience of a migrant in a destination area.

### **Research Methods**

#### ***Location, size and physical characteristics of the study area***

The Wa West District is among the 28 newly created districts in Ghana in 2004 and one of the nine districts of the Upper West Region. It comprises five Area Councils, namely: Dorimon, Ga, Gurungu, Vieri and Wechiau (District Capital) with approximately 193 communities. The Wa West District is located in the north western part of the Upper West Region. It stretches from longitudes 40°N to 245°N and from latitudes 9°W to 32°W, as shown in Figure 1 below. The district shares boundaries with Sawla-Tuna-Kalba District to the south now West Gonja District in the Northern Region, Wa Municipality to the east, Nadowli District to the north and to the west with Ivory Coast. It constitutes about 10 percent of the region's total land area, which is estimated at 1856 square kilometres (Wa West District Assembly, 2013). According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2012), the total population of the District stands at 81,348 comprising 40,227 (49.5 percent) males and 41,121 (50.5 percent) females. The preponderance of females over males mirrors the general demographic trend in the country where there are more females than males (Wa West District Assembly, 2013; Ghana Statistical Service, 2012) (Ref. Figure 1).



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 Source: GIS, Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC, 2014

### Methods and Instruments

The study adopted a mixed methods research approach which combined both qualitative and quantitative data in order to understand and explain the economic motivations of return migration to the Upper West Region. The quantitative data was obtained from 300 returnees using structured interviews, purposive, snowball and convenient sampling techniques. The qualitative data was obtained from 20 returnees who responded to in-depth interviews with the aid of an in-depth interview guide, while five focus groups discussions were conducted at different locations in the study area. Participants for the focus group discussions were made up of non-migrants. The selection of non-migrants for the focus group discussions was meant to corroborate views expressed by returnees in the in-depth and structured interviews. These methods were used because of the unique nature of the population

and the fact that these returnees were spread across the various communities making it difficult to easily locate them, hence the most appropriate sampling techniques to locate these returnees were the non-probability sampling techniques.

To get identified communities for data collection, a reconnaissance survey was carried out to ascertain the distribution, spread and concentration of these returnees in the region. Through the reconnaissance, survey communities were identified based on the presence and concentration of return migrants. This was done by seeking information about the presence and concentration of these returnees from key informants who were mostly chiefs, opinion leaders and assemblymen of various communities. In all 27 communities were identified for data collection using purposive and convenient techniques.

### ***Sample size and sampling techniques***

The sample size for return migrants was arrived at using both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The selection of returnees in the district was done using the multi-phase sampling procedure. Applying this technique, first the Area Councils in the district were used to target returnees. Secondly, an identification visit by the researcher to communities within the district revealed the concentration and availability of returnees in some communities as compared to others. In 27 communities visited 900 returnees were counted and out of this number 300 returnees were interviewed. The sample of 300 respondents from an assumed population of 900 was based on Krejcie and Morgan's formula for sample size determination and representativeness (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970).

In the selection of respondents, first, a snowball sampling technique was employed, where one returnee identified suggested other known returnees whom they knew lived within the community and these returnees were easily contacted (Boateng, 2012; Walter, 2010). One major disadvantage with this method was that it was unrepresentative of the population. The aim of using it in this research was to have a quick access to return migrants. A convenient sampling was also employed where the researcher took advantage of village market day to interview respondents. This method was easy and inexpensive and helped to reduce the time that was spent collecting data (Babbie, 2007; Babbie, 2010). Furthermore, through purposive sampling other returnees (20 returnees) were identified and used as key informants for the in-depth interviews. The non-migrant population was also purposively selected. The reason for using purposive sampling was to get respondents who had knowledge about returnees and could provide accurate information on the subject matter (Walter, 2010).

### ***Data Collection***

On the average, in-depth interviews and structured interviews lasted for 30 minutes with focus group discussions lasting for an hour. Interview environments were well moderated even though some interview sessions were emotional as some

respondents shared their experiences with interviewers. There were cases where interviews were challenging as respondents avoided certain questions and questioned the veracity of interviewers. The use of the face to face approach allowed for common language to be used given that the literacy status of respondents can be described as low. While interviews and focus group discussions were recorded with the aid of a recorder, structured interviews were answered in the schedule. The data collected was carried out by five research assistants who were all first degree holders from the University of Cape Coast and University for Development Studies.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Behaviour could be difficult to understand and in dealing with humans, care, attention, and trust must be sought. Ethical principles that would guarantee a trustworthy and reliable data were adhered to. The dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants were of primary consideration. Respondents were informed about the aim, purpose and use of the research results. This made respondents to feel free to express their candid opinions as much as possible. Consent of respondents was adhered to as an ethical issue. The informed consent allowed respondents to decide whether or not to participate in the study. The privacy of respondents was also duly respected. The cultural context within which this research was conducted demanded that privacy be given maximum premium. Meanwhile, information was treated with anonymity without assigning names or identities. This further implied that confidentiality was key to this research. Information or data was confidential without any attempt to divulge respondents' information to another respondent or to the general public. What was key in this research was non coercion on the part of the researcher for respondents to provide information. Voluntary participation in the research was guaranteed. This right to exercise choice was present throughout the entire research process.

## Data analysis and analytical techniques

The qualitative data was analysed using the thematic approach. Firstly, the data from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were all transcribed into English as narrated by interviewees and participants respectively. Secondly, these transcripts were cleaned by checking for consistency and accuracy of responses. After cleaning, themes were identified with the study objective in mind. Key words were used as pointers to the main objective of the research. Thirdly, these key words were used to identify themes or words or phrases or indicate ideas in the transcripts. For each transcript, these key words were used as markers to indicate responses and answers. This was then followed by the discussion of the research results. In the discussions, relevant data were used to buttress the research objective and, in most instances, direct quotations from these transcripts were used to support explanations and relevant literature drawn upon to confirm or disconfirm patterns of explanations. (Emily et al., 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2012). The structured interview instruments were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 where responses were entered and analysis generated. Tables, frequencies, percentages were generated, analysed, and interpreted.

## Results and Discussions

### Characteristics of Returnees to the Wa West District

The paper analysed the demographic characteristics of returnees in the Wa West District. This was aimed at understanding who these returnees were and how this influenced the economic motivations that compelled their return migrations. Firstly, the sex of returnees was important as it helped to identify whether males or females dominated return migration and why. Males and females may have different reasons for their return migrations and to be able to isolate these differences it was necessary to understand the sex distribution of return migrants. The research results indicated that there were more males (67.7%) than females (32.3%). This was not surprising since most of the female returnees were unwilling to respond to interviews. Furthermore,

females were not considered heads of households and therefore did not take major decisions and so men were mostly contacted to respond to the issues concerning migration (Tanle, 2010).

Besides the domination of males over females, returnees' ages also showed negative selectivity. This implied that it was the old aged that returned as compared to the young (20-49 years) ages. This is contrary to Wang's and Fan's (2006) finding of positive age selectivity of returnees in their research in China. The age distribution of returnees is displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2: Age distribution of respondents**

Age category (years)	Frequency	Percent
20-29	11	3.7
30-39	20	6.7
40-49	34	11.3
50-59	105	35.0
60-69	77	25.6
70-79	53	17.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Fieldwork, 2014*

Table 2 shows that the majority (60.6 %) of the returnees fell within two age categories of 50-59 and 60-69 years. This implies that returnees were relatively old. Most returnees were above the active working age groups. This could have consequences for return communities since these returnees would not be physically strong enough to contribute to the development of their communities, especially where physical energy is required.

The young and active age groups 20-29, 30-39 and 40-49 years together constituted 21.7 percent of the total sample. This confirms the general notion in the literature that it is usually the young and active working age groups who out-migrate while the old age groups return. De Vreyer, Gubert, Roubaud, (2010) and Falkingham, Chepngeno-Langat and Evandrou (2011) have all attested that return migrants are older, aged between 70-79 years old. Given the ages of returnees it was not surprising that the majority (82.0%) of them were married at the time of this research. Marital status (Ref. Table 3)

can influence return decisions of spouses, since such return migration decisions are not made alone but in consultations with spouses and other family members (Zai, 2011). Thirty-two (32) percent of respondents confirmed their return migrations were influenced by their marital status. Other extended family members such as uncles and aunts constituting about 8 percent of the sample also influenced returnee's decisions. The narration of a 35-year-old returnee also adds to the evidence that migrants' decisions were not taken alone.

*I was down south (Ahweekrom) with my two wives and five children for over five years. I decided to return because the children were many and our accommodation was too small and it was difficult for all of us to sleep in one room, the job at a certain time was also not profitable and I spend the little I get on food and treating my children when they fell sick. But I managed to build a house at home so I decided to return and my wives supported the idea so we all came back home over three years ago (35-year-old male returnee)*

**Table 3: Marital Status of returnees (same as respondents)**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	246	82
Never Married	24	8
Separated	6	2.0
Divorced	4	1.3
Widowed	16	5.4
Informal consensual Union	4	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Some returnees (Ref. Table 3) were never married (8.0%) while 10 percent were either separated, divorced, widowed or in an informal consensual union. Any of these marital statuses can influence return migration. Divorce can be a factor that orchestrates return migration as some return migrations could be due to divorce or separation (Bijwaard & Doeselaar, 2012). For some migrants, the main motive for out-migration is to join spouses in the destination areas. Therefore, in an event of a divorce it can orchestrate a return migration since the motivation for staying in the destination area is defeated by virtue of divorce. Similarly, widowhood can cause return migration. The issue of marital status as revealed in this study has confirmed and followed the general pattern that most returnees were usually married at the time of return. Most of the returnees also had children at the time of this study.

Approximately, 55.3% of returnees had five children and above and 36 % had between one and five children. The high number of dependents could influence their return migration due to high economic burden, inadequate accommodation and inability to cater for children's education and health needs in their destination areas. Given the ages, sex distribution and number of children of returnees, their level of education was also captured as displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4: Level of education of respondents**

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
No education	239	79.3
Primary/JHS/SHS	35	11.7
Vocational/Technical	9	3.0
Post-secondary	4	1.3
Tertiary	13	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

The results displayed in Table 4 mirror the demographic characteristics of the district where majority of the population are illiterates and engaged in agricultural works (Ghana Statistical Services, 2010). In the 2010 population census, the Wa West has the highest proportion of 70.6% of the population

aged 15 years and older that are not literate in English (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). The fact that returnees had no formal education also forecast the kinds of occupations they could engage in at both destination and origin communities. In their destination areas they were mostly engaged in farming, and casual labour. About 80% of return migrants were engaged in farming, particularly cash crop farming and farming in plantations. Other return migrants were casual labourers (9.0%), traders (5.3%), civil servants (3.3%) and miners (2.7%). Generally, the occupations of returnees at their destination areas were premised on the availability of jobs at the destination areas (Ref. Table 5).

**Table 5: Main occupations of returnees at last destination**

Main Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Farming	239	79.7
Causal Labourer	27	9.0
Mining	8	2.7
Trading	16	5.3
Civil service	10	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### ***Economic Motivations of Return Migration to the Upper West Region***

The main thrust of this research was to discuss the economic reasons driving return migrations to the Upper West Region (Wa West District). The results from this study indicate that the economic related reasons that influenced return migrations included: perceived low cost of living at origin communities, setting up business ventures at origin communities, engaging in agriculture and entrepreneurial opportunities at home.

**Table 6: Economic motivations for return migration**

Economic motivation	Frequency	Percentage
Set up business ventures at origin communities	235	78.3
Perceived low cost of living	103	34.33
Engage in agriculture	82	27.33
Entrepreneurial opportunities at home	76	25.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Fieldwork, 2014*

N= 300; Total number of responses is more than total number of respondents due to multiple responses

One economic reason that motivated migrants return to their origin communities was that they perceived cost of living to be low as compared to their destination areas in southern Ghana. Approximately 34% of respondents noted that the cost of living at their destination areas was higher compared to their origin communities. Migrants faced difficulties providing for themselves and their families in their destination areas. Migrants economic status was compounded by the unavailability of alternative jobs compelling women (spouses) to sell plantain leaves

to feed their families which epitomizes the harsh economic conditions that migrants went through in their destination areas. This situation places extra burden on migrants and their dependents. On the other hand, at home (origin community), migrants enjoy a communal living arrangement where individuals can support each other in the extended family system. Therefore, in times of difficulties, family members can pull together their resources to rescue other members in need. Other family responsibilities and community engagements were



seen as the responsibilities of all members and therefore demand collective efforts. This helps to minimise the cost per individual in carrying out family duties. Tang and Hao (2018) as well as

failure to find a well-paid job in the destination area and the lower cost of living at home than in the destination area. The issue of cost of living was re-echoed in a focus group discussion conducted by the author.

*These returnees normally out-migrated to the southern parts of the country purposely to improve their socio-economic conditions but they get there only to realise that things down south there are difficult. Some complain they have no accommodation, and they cannot acquire the food they need. So eventually they see that back home is better than staying down south and this compels some of them to return home, particularly when they have many children it becomes difficult to provide for them, hence forcing them to return home (Focus Group Discussion conducted at Gurungu).*

Another economic motive that induced return migration to the Upper West Region was entrepreneurial opportunities at home communities. Some migrants returned to their origin communities because they envisaged available entrepreneurial opportunities at home communities as reported by 25.3% of the migrants. Some returnees explained that there was the potential to engage in businesses in origin communities. Hence return migrations were induced by the opportunity to establish businesses at their home communities. Additionally, other returnees acquired skills such as masonry, carpentry and welding which were considered important for

Demurger and Xu (2011) have assigned family reasons to why migrants return to their places of origin in rural China and some of these reasons include

economic survival in origin communities. The motivations for most out-migrations by these migrants were to acquire some investment potential so they could improve their livelihoods in their home communities. Therefore, migrants who have met this objective at destination areas returned home to establish businesses.

Approximately, 78.3% of returnees agreed that the desire to establish businesses was the reason for their return migration. Business ventures established by returnees upon return included: operating corn mills (grist mill) or provisions shops. Other returnees acquired skills as mechanics, photographers, petty traders, seamstresses, hair dressers and tailors. These business ventures and skills can have some positive effects on families and communities at destination areas (Ammassari & Black, 2000; Return migration to the Maghreb (MIREM), 2008; Dziva & Kusena, 2013). Families send out migrants with a positive outlook and just as stated in the new economics of labour migration theory, migration is a household strategy to diversify incomes and risks. Therefore, the return of migrants with economic capacities impact positively on households, as migrants can support families in times of difficulties. Evidence to support this assertion can be found in the narrations of some returnees as well as the focus group discussions conducted. A 38-year-old male returnee had this to say:

*When I went down south (Techiman), I was a casual labourer for some time and when I got money I enrolled as an apprentice mechanic where I learned how to repair motor bikes for three years and when I completed I returned home. I had planned that when I finish learning the trade I will return (38-year-*

*old returnee from Dorimon community)*

Another returnee who operated a photography studio explained how and why he also out-migrated and returned to his community. In the words of this 42-year-old photographer:

*I went to Kumasi and worked as a casual labourer for ten years. Then I realised I needed to come back home with something. So I got money, bought a camera and printing materials. I then learned the job for some time and decided to return home (42-year-old male returnee from Dorimon community).*

Return migrants have established business ventures and this resonates with Dziva and Kusena's (2013) study of Zimbabwean youth return migration from South Africa to their rural communities in Zimbabwe. The study found that returnees used their savings, technology and skills acquired from destination areas to impact their rural communities as well as establish income generating activities. This justifies MIREM's (2008) assertion that return migration can bring to home communities immense benefits. The skills that were put to use by returnees in Dziva and Kusena's (2013) study also directly and indirectly offered a source of employment to people in origin communities. This is similar to what was found in this research where 12% of returnees were of the view that their return migrations had created employment in their communities. Other researches had found similar situations, for instance, Gubert and Nordman (2011), and Black and Castaldo (2008) concluded in their researches that return migrations can contribute to employment creation in origin communities.

Apart from the various income generating opportunities that motivated return migrations, one other economic factor that influenced return migrations to the Upper West Region was returnees' desire to engage in agriculture (27.3%). Agriculture is one of the critical sectors in the Upper West Region and employs the majority of the economically active population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Returnees indicated that the desire to engage in farming was a crucial factor responsible for their return migration. This revelation was not surprising as these returnees were also engaged in agriculture in their destination areas, particularly in cocoa and other cash crop farming activities. The contribution of return migration to agriculture is adequately documented in the literature. For instance, Oxfeld and Long (2004) have noted that agricultural productivity has increased as some returnee farmers used animal traction and tractor services to complement the traditional hoe and cutlass farming in Ethiopia. This technology has gone a long way to improve rural livelihoods. Also Dziva and Kusena (2013) as well as Chen and Wang (2019) indicated that return migration contributed to rural labour intensive agriculture production. Narrations by returnees in this research further explain their involvement in agriculture.

*I can say that since I came I have been beneficial to my family and the community. Since I came I have been able to farm and for this year I have harvested ten bags of maize, three bags of rice and some millet. For the millet I cannot tell number of bags because we normally put it in silos. In addition, I rear some goats and I also have some poultry. As you can observe, I bought this motorbike from my farming activities and I have a tricycle which runs on commercial basis (40-year-old male returnee).*

*I migrated to Enchi in the Western Region and worked for one year as a casual labourer in a cocoa farm. In the process I got money and bought a cocoa farm but later I sold it and brought the savings home to invest in farming and since then I get something substantial to feed my family and to sell. This year alone, I cultivated four hectares which yielded a lot. I have four bags of maize, and three bags of cowpeas. I am not alone. Most of the young men here that is what they do. They migrate to the south during the off season in the north here and when they get money they come here to invest in their farms (43-year-old Male returnee).*

This discussion fits into the new economics of labour theoretical perspective as the results of this research indicate that the motivations for return migrations were economic, that is, to establish business ventures, engage in agricultural productivity and low cost of living in origin communities. The theoretical perspective alludes to the fact that return migration is a family decision and not an individual decision and therefore returnees are to fulfill the objective for which they have been sent out there by families and this objective includes bringing back economic rewards or benefits. This research has produced evidence to the effect that returnees were beneficial to their families through increased household agricultural productivity, improved standard of living through incomes from business ventures. Therefore, results as presented thus far confirm the new economics of labour migration theory which sees migration and return as a logical outcome of a calculated strategy defined at the level of the

migrant's household and resulting from the successful achievement of goals or targets. The theory views return migration as an outcome of a successful experience in a destination area during which migrants meet their goals of migration in the destination area, while remitting part of their incomes to the household.

### **Conclusions**

From the discussions it can be concluded that return migration in the Upper West Region was basically dominated by economic reasons. These included establishment of businesses, engaging in agriculture and entrepreneurial opportunities. Consequently, migration and return migration is just a way by which people seek to improve their economic conditions. Therefore, the primacy of economic reasons influencing return migration in the Upper West region is the quest by people to improve their economic wellbeing. Through migration to specific destinations in Southern Ghana, to acquire the necessary investment capital, knowledge and skills relevant for economic survival. This revelation justifies the claim that all migrations are the quest by human beings to improve their socio-economic circumstances. In conclusion this research has re-enforced the dominance of the economic factors in the return migration discourse. It has also re-echoed the benefits of return migration to origin communities while contributing to the debate on the role of return migration to the development of places of origin.

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