



## Women and Girls on the Move: Determinants of Female Internal Migration in Northern Ghana- Insights from East Mamprusi District, Ghana

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### **Abstract**

Internal female migration is shaping Ghana's development discourse as an increasing number of women and young girls engage in rural-urban migration either independently or by family decision due to widespread poverty, limited arable land and high female unemployment. Limited literature exists on determining factors of female internal rural-urban migration. This paper fills the gap by examining determinants of female rural-urban migration in the East Mamprusi District of the North East Region. Primary data were collected from individuals, heads of households, women's groups, key informants, and focus group discussions, among others, through a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions. The study found the existence of pull and push factors as being responsible for female internal migration, including the collective household decision to send the female to the cities as one of the many livelihood diversification strategies for the rural poor households. Other factors responsible for female out-migration included lack of land rights for women, as customary land tenure and rights tended to favour male over the female counterpart, low farm output leading to extreme poverty among rural women, the desire of young spinsters to prepare themselves financially and materially towards marriage by purchasing clothes/items, cooking utensils and low levels of skills and education among rural women. The study recommends a change in gender norms and culture that inhibits women from accessing land resources to ward off gender discrimination and the incorporation of affirmative action policies which give women freedom of choice without hindrances.

**Keywords:** *Internal Migration; Female; Determinants; Feminization; District; Ghana*

### **Introduction**

The composition of the world's population is shaped by mortality, morbidity, and migration (United Nations, 2024). Daily, people move, and the movement is either influenced by independent decision, family or forced one, depending on the prevailing social, economic, political, and cultural conditions in the origin. People move out of their areas of domicile for a varied number of reasons, including work (job), study, relaxation, and reunion with their families. The structure and demographic

composition of towns, villages, cities and even nations have changed due to migration. According to [1] (Chant & Radcliffe, 1992), millions of internal migrants left their hometowns for other places within the same country, and the most prevalent form is rural to urban. They add that the seemingly ready employment and wage differential between the rural labour and the downtown in most Sub-Saharan African countries is a contributory factor. The new normal in the migration history has do with the fact that, internal female migration is fast shaping up Ghana's development discourse, as the rate of urbanization in 1995 has reached 6% in many African countries, including Ghana (Accra), Nigeria (Lagos), and Kenya (Nairobi) among others [2] [3] (Dao, 2002, Ghana Statistical Service, 1998). What it means is that rural-urban migration has tripled in recent years due to improved transport, health, education, communications, and general urban infrastructure expansion. Rural-urban migration is a common phenomenon in developing countries, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, among others. According to [4] (Bahns, 2005) almost half of the world population lives and works in Cities and urban areas; therefore, urban population is estimated to increase by around 1 million annually. He contends that the majority of the migrants hail from rural areas or the countryside. Empirical migration studies have it that Ghana's migration literature has traditionally been male-biased, in that men were the only ones engaged in long-distance migration as opposed to their female counterparts who participated in short-distance and seasonal migration; this lends credence to the male being the ones studied [5] (Curran et al. 2006). However, in recent years, women and young girls have migrated from the underdeveloped regions of the north to the more developed and well-resourced south as a way of escaping from excruciating rural poverty. Many unmarried migrant workers save money for their dowry towards the preparation for marriage and to remit home to uplift the economic well-being of the left-behind family, but are vulnerable in the urban destinations [6] (Yaa Ankomaa Agyei, Emmanuel Kumi, Thomas Yeboah, 2015). The current trend is in sharp contrast with migration trends of the 1880s, where females engaged in short-distance migration. Women and children migrated mainly to accompany the spouse (i.e., Husband) whenever the head of the household migrated for reasons best suited for the family [7] (Yeboah, 2008).

The East Mamprusi District witnessed a phenomenal increase in the number of female laborers, outmigration since the 1980s, when Ghana saw an unprecedented drought in its history, leading to severe hunger, disease, starvation, illiteracy and unbalanced development between the rural and the urban. Mass drift among the youth, particularly women, was recorded. Between 1990 and 2000, the ratio of male and female internal out-migration saw a rise from 45% to 64% respectively [8] (Awumbila, 2014). In terms of region of origin, [6] (Agyei, Kumi, & Yeboah, 2015) found that about 51.1% and 17.8 % of respondents migrated from the Northern and Upper West regions respectively, of these, a large number of the female labour migrants who are living and working in Accra markets were of the Mamprusi ethnic extraction from North-East Region of Ghana, specifically East and West Mamprusi districts, where the study was done.

Given the above, there exists a paucity of research on the factors influencing female rural-urban migration, as increasing volumes of literature on migration focus on the consequences on migrants in urban areas. The study attempts to fill the gap by explicitly analyzing factors affecting female internal (rural-urban) migration in the East Mamprusi district in Northern Ghana.

### ***Significance of the Study***

In the context of rural development and poverty reduction, migration is considered one of the numerous livelihood opportunities for people of rural background to improve their living conditions through exploration of perceived opportunities in urban areas. Rural-urban migration has both negative and positive impacts on the migrant and the families since young people find jobs and can remit to their families to enhance their lives. However, the independent decision is associated with costs and

consequences. In light of the above, the study provided useful insights on the many factors influencing female internal migration behaviour, including migration decisions at the household/community level and the different channels the migrants go through before arriving. Thus, it serves as a useful document for policy making and implementation in northern Ghana, especially the East Mamprusi district.

### ***Research Objectives***

The primary objective of the study was to identify factors influencing female migration behavior

### **Specific Objectives**

- I. Explore the push factors that account for female internal migration in the East Mamprusi District
- II. Determine the pull factors in the urban destination that attract female migration from the East Mamprusi District

### **Research Questions**

- I. What are the push factors in the rural areas that account for female internal migration in the East Mamprusi District?
- II. What are the incentives in the urban centres that attract female migration from East Mamprusi District?

### ***Theoretical Framework***

Several theories have been developed to explain the importance of migration on poverty reduction from the economic perspective [9,10,11,12] Harris & Todaro, 1970; Jorgenson, 1961; Lewis, 1954; Stark & Taylor, 1991). However, [13] (Revenstein, 1885) Push and Pull factors are very relevant in this study. He contends that forces which induce people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residences are economic (job opportunity), political (peace and security), cultural (career development and freedom), and environmental (abundant natural resources), among others. He further posits that Push factors are conditions that can drive people away from their homes; they are forceful and relate to the country or community from which a person migrates, some of which include inadequate job opportunities, prolonged drought and famine, ethnic and civil wars, to mention but a few [13] (Revenstein, 1885).

### **Theories of Migration: The Push and Pull Theories**

Everett Spurgeon Lee, a sociology professor at the University of Georgia, is recognized for developing the Push and Pull Theory, often known as the “Lee Theory”. When migrating, according to Lee (1966), variables connected with the place of origin (push factors) and those connected with the place of destination (pull factors), as well as intervening impediments, must be considered.

Everett Lee has separated the elements that influence the decision to migrate and the migration process into four categories: (1) Concerns associated with the origin area; (2) Factors associated with the destination area; (3) Intervening impediments; and (4) Personal factors.

This theory is relevant to this study because the study’s objectives seek to explore the push factors that account for female internal migration in the East Mamprusi District and to determine the pull factors in the urban destination that attract female migration from East Mamprusi District

## Literature Review

### Meaning of Migration

Migration is a phenomenon which generally involves the movement of people from one place to another. The nature of the movement is a varied one, and can take several forms, including forced or voluntary, seasonal or permanent. It involves internal and international, which means movement of people within (internal) and outside the shores of the country (international). The internal migration takes the form of rural-urban migration, which is associated with most developing countries, especially the global south, with Ghana inclusive. The UN [14] (1970) defined migration as a move away from one area to another (or a move of some specified minimum distance) that was made during a given migration interval, and that involves a change of residence. Moreover, National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) (2008) defined migration as “a household member whose last Usual Place of Residence (UPR) any time in the past was different from the present place of enumeration, was considered a migrant member in a household.”

A migrant is also defined as a person who has changed their usual place of residence from one migration-defining area to another (or who moved some specified minimum distance) at least once during the migration interval” [14] (UN, 1970). The main focus of this study is the internal voluntary migration, particularly rural-urban migration. Though there is no universal definition for female rural-urban migration, in the context of this study, the working definition is considered: those migrant females who have been residing in the city for at least six (6) months are considered *short-term /seasonal migrants*. Migrants who have been living in the cities for a period beyond six (6) months and up to a year or two and above are *long-term/permanent migrants*. The following further illustrates the vivid description of migration terms in the context of the study;

### Types and Forms of Migration

Generally, [15] (Chhikara & Kodan, 2012). identified two forms of migration. First is International Migration, and the second is Internal Migration. They posit that international migration is one that occurs when people migrate outside the shores of the national boundary of a country, whereas, when migration takes place within the national boundary of a country, it is called internal migration. Further, the internal migration is classified into two types (i.e., Migration Streams and Distance Categories). Further, migration streams and distance categories of migration include the other types of migrations: Emigration and Immigration. Emigration in this regard refers to international migration, the phenomenon of leaving one’s native country or a departure of an individual or group from a country, while Immigration is the movement of people from one nation-state to another country other than their country of origin. Immigration implies a long-term permanent residence (and often leads to citizenship) for the migrants. However, tourists and short-term visitors are not considered immigrants.

The study focuses on internal migration. Therefore, migration literature recognized four distinct types of internal movement. It includes: rural-urban, urban-urban, rural-rural, and urban-rural migration. Most prominent in this perspective of migration of internal migration, which is relevant in this study, is rural-urban migration [16 17] (IOM, 2003; Sander, 2003). However, in recent times, migration scholars no longer pay lip service to the other migration streams and thus consider them as vital as other forms of migration [18 19] (Dao, 2002; Anh, 2003). It is important to note, the categories of migration as mentioned are visible in almost every facet of national life and are present in every given country, and can and most of the time are observable within the same vicinity or locality. In most cases, these types of migration patterns are the preserve of men until recently, when women joined the bandwagon. Thus, women are increasingly becoming active participants in migration [20] (IOM, 2005).

Also, migration can be either *voluntary* or *forced*. Voluntary migration is associated with the choice of a person or group who decides to migrate based on independent or household decision; he/she does so without being chased by issues in the place of origin, while forced migration involves a perception of compulsion against the will or choice of a concerned individual or group. Individuals forced to move are usually compelled by political factors such as persecutions, famines, wars, whereas voluntary migration is generally for economic reasons [21] (Rubenstein and Bacon: 1990). For instance, in 1947, a group of Muslims were forced to migrate from India to Pakistan due to persecution and political unrest in their origin. An example of voluntary international migration in the history of humankind is the large-scale exodus of Europeans during the last one-and-a-half centuries. About 50 to 60 million migrants were estimated to have emigrated from Europe [22] (Garnier: 1978).

Table 1: Types of Internal Migration

Migration Streams	Distance Categories
Rural to Rural	Intra-State
Rural to Rural	Intra-District
Urban to Urban	Intra-District
Urban-Rural	Inter-State

Source: Chhikara & Kodan, 2012. [23]

### Rural-Urban Migration

Migration from rural to urban areas cumulatively accounted for more than half of all urban growth in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s and contributed to 25% of urban sprawl in the 1980s and 1990s [23] (Brockerhoff, 1995). In Brazil alone, it is estimated that more than 20 million people drifted to the cities between the 1950s and 1970s. Comparatively, India had a whopping 20.5 million rural folk move from rural origins to urban centres, representing 30% of India's national urban growth in 1990 [24] (India Census, 2001).

In Sub Saharan Africa, there is a little change from the production and export of raw materials to processing or manufacturing with manufacturing hubs in the cities, resulting in both temporary and permanent of rural surplus labour force of both men and women, from rural origins to urban areas in search of wage employment opportunities [25] (Deshingkar & Grimm, 2005). More of the agricultural labor drift involves long-distance travel to the urban areas where the manufacturing industries are located and where most probably white collar jobs are found [26] (Zhao, 2003), further to that, Zhao (2003) indicates that, some migrants, especially the very poor who lack financial muscle to migrate direct to the urban centers due to the costs that comes with transportation and accommodation and thus moves to smaller nearby towns and engage in petty trading as prelude to continuing to the final urban destination. The South-East and East Asia have seen an increase in urbanization and expansion of manufacturing of goods and services from the raw materials produced, particularly for export, which has led to an upsurge in seasonal, long-term and permanent migration [27] (Yang, 2004). Contrary to South-East, East Asia and lately Africa, women now migrate the most from rural to urban areas to work in the service sector [28] (Hugo, 2003).

### Effects of Rural-Urban Migration

The departure of rural people moving to urban areas has been a common phenomenon in Asia and Africa. The trend has a negative and positive effect on both the rural origin and the downtown

destinations. [29] Mini (2000) found that a mass movement of rural people to urban centers has a deteriorating impact on the rural economy, which has brought a decline in agricultural-related activities, leading to an increasing level of poverty and food insecurity. Further, the decline in rural productivity was attributable to the departure of the youth who constitute the majority of the labor force in the rural areas, leaving the old behind. A cursory look at the findings of [30] (Brauvan, 2004)<sup>l</sup> people are rational in thinkers and are attracted to places perceived to be prosperous from areas of hardships and poverty prone, migrants are more concerned with the economic principle of cost and benefit analysis and therefore migrates to places they hope to reap financial benefits of their sweats and fewer thoughts about potential problems in the destination.

### Overview of Internal Migration in Ghana

Spontaneous spatial movement and mobility have been a common phenomenon in the Global context across the human race. People have the right and freedom of movement to and from, provided it doesn't infringe the laws and the rights of others. In the African and, for that matter, the Ghanaian context, migration existed before the colonial era and into the post-colonial period. Ghana is among the nations in the Sahara region at the forefront of the demographic transition, leading to significant population changes. Therefore, fertility, mortality, and morbidity rates have seen a drastic decline in the last 30 years and beyond. United Nations projections indicate that the capital city of Accra and other cities across the country may reach replacement-level fertility within the next ten years (United Nations, 2003). Empirical studies on population and development suggest that Ghana has witnessed demographic change internally, though death rates, fertility rates are in decline. Contrarily, population growth rates are still high due to the movement of nomadic traders across the length and breadth of West Africa. [32] (Tabutin and Schoumaker 2004). This lends credence to Ghana's population growth because the mass exodus of other nationals, especially businessmen and women, provides a potential window to demographic change, which directly and indirectly affects urbanization in Ghana. According to Adepoju and Anarfi et al. 2003, migration routes have increasingly contributed to rural-urban migration, as most cities, such as Accra and Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tamale, Koforidua, have become a loadstone for not only traders but also enthusiastic young migrants seeking work and educational opportunities [33] (Adepoju and Anarfi et al. 2003).

This migration flows across the length and breadth of the then Gold Coast, now Ghana, has primarily been influenced by a variety of reasons, ranging from economic forces, natural disasters, family reunion (Marriage), social persecutions such as wars and conflicts, among others. [34] (Kwankye *et al.*, 2009) indicates that the rationale for the exodus of the Ghanaian people responding to migration was partly due to the uneven spatial distribution of natural resources in the country and the resulting regional variations in socioeconomic development. Kwankye et al (2009) indicate that Ghana can be divided into five spatial zones of population distribution, which match the natural resources in the country in the following ways:

- Little population concentration in the northeast and northwest of Ghana.”
- A sparsely populated middle belt covering large parts of the Northern region and parts of the Brong Ahafo and Upper regions;
- A densely populated forest zone covering the Ashanti and Greater Accra regions
- Moderate to densely populated coastal region in parts Central region
- Densely populated urban centres are scattered all over the country, especially in the regional capitals of the country.

Therefore, the Northern regions of the country, which include the Northern Region, Savannah, North East, the Upper East and Upper West regions, which have historically constituted the most significant share of Ghana's land and constitute a sparsely populated area, but are sadly disadvantaged

regarding natural resource-based off the country. The country also inherited an unbalanced development from the colonial administration since political independence in 1957. Also, after post-colonial administration, subsequent governments have deliberately tailored social and infrastructural development towards the forest and coastal zones for the cultivation and extraction cash crops, minerals and timber for export and further facilitated by the creation of transport links, ports, and harbors on the along coast, this makes the southern zone a center of attraction for the surplus migrant labor from the North and rural settings to urban centers, resulting in rapid urbanization [34] (Kwankye, et al, 2009). To this end, Northern Ghana and the regions were virtually left behind, culminating in spatial differences between the North on the one hand and the South on the other hand, with the South relatively developed and the largely undeveloped North. This phenomenon triggers and catalyzes the migration flow of economically active people looking for jobs in all sectors of the economy to move from the North to the South.

### **Origin-Destination Classification of Migration**

Empirical evidence for Ghana's migration suggests that rural-rural, rural-urban and urban-rural are significant forms of population drift that dominate the migration flow. For instance, between 1991 and 1992, approximately 17.1% formed the rural-rural migrants, 15.5% represented urban-rural migrants, 12.4% were urban-urban and 4.9% rural-urban [35] (Yiadom and McKay, 2007). Rural-rural migration is a common phenomenon among males and predominantly in Kazakhstan, while urban-rural migration is also male-dominated and most visibly in Burundi, Kenya, Mali and Nigeria [36] (United Nations Population Division, 2008).

### **Determinants/Factors Influencing Female Internal Migration in Ghana**

#### **Employment and Economic Activities in Origin and Destination**

The male/female social assigned roles with regard to economic activities in rural areas are virtually leading to confirmation that the surge of female drift from rural to urban is due to the limited/non-existent and low enumeration of jobs for women in the rural areas. [36] Elizaga, (1970) indicates that 58% of the economically active female population wished to work in places of origin before going to the city, and that only 21% were male, he further asserts that, between 20-30 percent of the economically active population would have remained inactive in the place of origin if they had not migrated. A semblance of this occurred in Lima, Peru, during the period 1956-1965, where 75 percent of women were inactive in their places of origin, only 45 per cent of men were in a similar situation. Female migration is not a new phenomenon; it has seen an increase since the 1990s and is more prominent in the West African sub-region [33] (Adepoju, 2003)[33]. There are, however, a variety of reasons influencing the decision for one to migrate from one geographical area to another, be it male or female.

#### **Social Networks and Relatives in the Cities**

A substantial proportion of the females in most cities, especially Accra, is noted to have followed their siblings to the city, which also shows, to some extent, an involvement of some family and relatives who have already migrated to the cities in the decision to migrate [34] (Kwankye, 2009).

#### **Education and Skill Acquisition**

The significant reason females undertake migration to the cities is mainly to learn a trade, skill or acquire some form of basic knowledge which is non-existent in the rural areas, but findings reveal that the females in Accra were more interested in finding jobs at the expense of skill acquisition, which hitherto was the main reason for migrating. Levels of educational attainment serve as a recipe for migration, particularly those who attained beyond the vocational, Senior High School (SHS), Colleges and Universities have the highest probability to migrate to urban areas compared with those with no formal or

less educational attainment. This is because rural areas do not have adequate job opportunities to absorb them and also have no proper educational infrastructure for those wishing to pursue further studies to the pinnacle.

### **Domestic Services**

Reflecting on domestic service, [37] Elizaga (1971) estimates that 57 percent of the economically active female migrant population in the city of Santiago found local job services on their arrival, of this number, 20 percent later changed to other jobs to which their skills can be applied. In actual sense, [38] (Orlansky and Duprosky, 1978) domestic services workers are classified as a labor reserve; in most cases their penetration in the informal employment grants them the opportunity to get access to some form of formal education and training aimed at acquiring some kind of skills such as typing, tailoring, hairdressing, and sewing and many more.

### **Employment and Empowerment**

New work opportunities, often as maids in the cities, and the presence of development projects and their discourse on female equality were among the most common [39] (Jonas, 2013)<sup>[39]</sup>. [36] United Nations Population Division (2008) has it that migrants in urban centers do not necessarily originate mainly in rural areas alone and that the urban poor cannot be equated to the rural population. It posits that its migration is an avenue that offers opportunities for women who are poor and lack access to community resources; this provides them access to jobs outside their places of residence and assists in diverse ways in enhancing and getting them. Reasons for migrating away from rural agricultural areas to urban service sectors are not far-fetched. Aside, the search for jobs, the desire for schooling, preparing towards marriage, low farm yield, enjoying better social infrastructure, and generally to escape from extreme poverty with the burning desire to contribute financially to family income are among other factors [40, 41] (Caldwell, 1969; Tutu, 1995). [42] Litchfield and Waddington (2003) have employed multivariate analyses (using census or survey data) to investigate issues relating to migration determinants and the welfare impact of migratory movements.

### **Age of Migrants**

As regards age, [35] (Yiadom and McKay, 2007) suggests that young adults between the ages of 19 to 25 years who are in their prime age have the highest tendency to migrate than the elderly. Therefore, the rural adult residence is less likely to migrate compared to the young ones clamouring for opportunities to better their living conditions. [43] (Montgomery et al, 2003) Young people are more prone to migration, and rural-urban migrants are usually within the ages of 15 to 29, confirming the findings of [34] (Yiadom and McKay, 2007). Furthermore, fertility rates are lower in urban than in rural areas by one child per woman, partly due to limited recreation in rural areas.

## ***Research Methodology***

### **Study Location**

The study was done in the East Mamprusi District, located in the north-eastern part of the Northern Region, with the capital at Gambaga. Gambaga is a historic town located next to the seat of the Nayiri, the king of Mamprugu, and also the first headquarters of the Northern Territories, now comprising the Northern, Savannah, and North East Regions. To the north, it shares boundaries with the Talensi and Nabdam Districts, Bawku West and Garu-Tempene Districts, all in the Upper East Region and to the east is the Bunkpurugu-Yunyoo District. It is bordered in the west by the West Mamprusi District and to the south by the Gusheigu and Karaga Districts; it covers a land mass of 1,706.8 square kilometers,

representing about 2.2 percent of the total land mass of the region. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, is 121,009, representing 4.9 percent of the region's total population. Males constitute 49 percent, and female's 51 percent; females represent the majority of the people. The district has a rural population of 81,850, representing 67.6 percent. Regarding household size and population composition, the total number of households in 2010 was 13,895. The average household size in the district is 8.6 persons per household (PHC, 2010)<sup>[137]</sup>. The proportion of literate males is higher (39.0 %) than that of females (27.5%). About 46.7 percent could speak and write both English and Ghanaian languages. Of the population aged three years and above (37,685) in the district, 57.7 percent have never attended school, 34.4 percent are currently attending, and 7.9 percent have attended in the past [44] (GSS, 2010).

### **Sampling**

Snowball sampling is a well-known nonprobability method of survey sample selection, which is commonly used to locate hidden populations; this method relies on referrals from initially sampled respondents to other persons believed to have the characteristic of interest [45] (Timothy, 2005). The technique was appropriate to this study, given the fact that not all households have female migrants in the study area. Initially, one member was identified by the Village Chairman/Assembly member; this is because he knew households with a migrant background.

Seven (7) communities within the East Mamprusi district were identified and chosen because of the prevalence of female migrants in those communities. The researcher engaged a total of 193 respondents from 70 migrant-sending households and 30 return migrants. Also, four (4) women's focus group discussions were held in four different locations. Officials and non-state actors relevant to the study were interviewed as key informants due to their knowledge and role regarding women's empowerment and rural development policy making and implementation before saturation was reached.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

The research relied on both primary and secondary data. The primary data collection involved the use of a semi-structured interview guide made of open-ended questions, through face-to-face in-depth interviews with respondents. This allows the research to probe respondents who openly express their opinions on the matter under investigation without fear. Also, two (2) focus group discussions were held with migrants sending households as well as return migrants. Each group was represented by 13 members, comprising males and females, to ascertain their views and opinions on the subject under study.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data from the in-depth interviews, tape recordings, and field notes were transcribed and analysed with the help of the computer program QSR NVivo 10 software [48] (QRS, 2012). Content and thematic analysis were employed as well. Regarding content analysis, audio recordings and field notes were transcribed verbatim by grouping, comparing and examining the responses, which include narratives (stories and cases) relative to the topic under study. For thematic analysis, data were categorized into key themes by using flat notes to interpret responses to present logical findings.

### **Results and Discussions**

Findings show that the decision to embark on migration, according to findings, is not solely an individual or independent choice but a collective household and family responsibility, though there exist a few cases of independent migrants. This confirmed the results of [49] (Taylor, 1999) who posit that the migration behavior of individual migrants is dependent on the broader socioeconomic context of the

household as the primary decision-making unit rather than the individual or group concerned, in that the household sees migration as a form of livelihood risk aversion.

### **Age and Gender of Respondents**

Analysis of Age and Gender of respondents shows that the youngest age category of respondents was between 15-25 years (that is, 5.7%), whilst 31.4% of respondents were between 35-40 years. Therefore, it is clear from the analysis that the majority of the respondents were in the active working class. Concerning gender, which is vital to this study, 58.6% were males, and 41.4% were females. Households are predominantly male-headed; the proportion of female-headed households in the entire district is 3.1 percent, indicating more males than females, considering the fact that the majority of respondents are males.

### **Educational Status and Position in Household**

Since knowledge is an essential aspect of human life, the study attaches much relevance to the educational status of respondents, since it is a necessary component in knowing the factors responsible for female migration behaviour. Analysis from respondents indicates majority 70% were illiterates, which means they had not attended formal education and could not read and write in the English language. 7.1% had primary education, 15.7% had completed Junior High School, 2.9% High School, while 1.4% had Vocational/Technical training. Regarding tertiary education, 2.9% obtained a University degree. Also, of the number interviewed, the majority, 68.6% were household heads, 22.8% husbands or a wife, 4.3% and 1.4% were sons and daughters respectively and 2.9% other household members.

### **Number of Female Migrant Households**

An investigation of 70 migrant- sending households shows 230 migrants living in the cities, an indication of a 1 to 6 out-migration situation in their households. Of these, 71.4% were identified as permanent (migrants who moved out their rural geographical area of origin for a period beyond six (6) months to a year and more and continue to live in the urban destinations or region) and 28.6% seasonal labor migrants (rural family members who migrate to urban destination or locations for a specific period of six (6) months or less, usually after farm harvest and goes back to rural areas either for a short term visit to the left-behind family or to engage in productive activities such as farming). It is important to note that, of the 230 female labour migrants, 30% are married, 55% unmarried (single), while 15% are single mothers. In view of the above, female migration was prevalent in the study area, and permanent migration taking the larger share. Regarding the age of migrants, results indicate that the majority (70%) and 20% migrants were between the ages of 15-25 and 25-35, respectively, while 10% were 35 years and above, indicating the youthful nature of the migrant labor.

The findings conform with [50] (Yaa, Emmanuel, Thomas, 2015) who found that most female labor migrants from the northern Savanna enclave are in their youthful age (12–35 years).

### **Factors Influencing Female Out-migration**

#### **Alternative Livelihood and Poverty Reduction**

Diversification of non-farm activities as a form of household income generation is one of the important livelihood strategies for rural households, especially those in Sub-Saharan African countries [51] (Barret et al. 2001) [51]315-331. The rationale for individuals and households to undertake migration as a means of livelihood diversification strategy in the study area is largely anchored on two important considerations: (1) necessity and (2) choice [52] (Ellis 2000). A survey of 70 households indicates that female out-migration is one of the many livelihood diversification strategies for rural landless women and

young girls who see mobility to the urban areas to engage in informal service sector jobs as the surest way of earning a living.

Findings suggest that economic hardships leading to excruciating poverty among rural households, coupled with relative deprivation of women from land and other community resources, are among the compelling reasons for women's migration. Aside, jobs in high-productivity activities in urban areas demand highly skilled which are limited among the rural labor, yet low-income rural households still sponsor the migration of their folk due to information asymmetry [53] (Mitra 2004). Therefore, migration has become more or less ingrained or 'culture of rural people, considering the rising number of females migrating day in and day out, and making the phenomenon a community value and behavior which creates a strong desire for young girls growing up to follow suit.

Box 1 presents interviewees' responses to perceived cause and effect of migration from the perspective of the stayed behind and returned migrants, which are grouped into social and economic and cultural.

### **Box 1: Experiences of Migration**

"Life has been difficult that my parents couldn't pay my school fees and learning materials to continue my education at the Junior High level, though I had a strong desire to be in school, many times I was asked by school authorities to pay exams fees or be sacked from school, and each time I told my father and mother they will promise to pay but never honored, so it got to a point I realized they had no money and I reluctantly dropped out. But one day a migrant friend visited home for a funeral and saw me doing nothing, and then I took permission from my parents' and went together to the city. I lived and worked in the city for one (1) year till I got some capital, which I brought home to start this grocery shop (business) in the community". (**Joyce, 21-year-old return migrant at Nagboo village**)

"Can you imagine our economic situation deteriorated to the point where we could not afford even two square meals per day? Sometimes I had to manage to borrow foodstuffs from my neighbor to able to feed our four children. This happened when wildfire gutted our farm and burned all my crops. One day my wife decided to migrate to work in the city in order to assist with remittances, she left the children in my care, but was lucky my mother, though elderly but helps in childcare whilst I do labor work for income". (**Haruna, 43-year-old farmer at Nalerigu**).

"I am a single mother, my daughter who is 20 years old, graduated from Gambaga Girls High School in 2015, she couldn't pass in all subjects to enable her continue to the college, and so I decided to re-take the West African Examination, but money for registration was hard to come by, so she finally decided to join her friends to work in the city to save towards that". (**Akua, female household head, Lingbunsi**).

"We woke up one morning and to our utmost surprised our daughter could not be found, we made efforts looking for her only to discover she migrated to Accra, we manage and contacted by phone through her friend, since then we have been pleading with her to return to the village but all fallen on deaf ears. She is 18 years; however, she keeps saying she wants to make money to buy clothes, cooking utensils and other materials needed for her marriage (**Ayambila, male household head at Gambaga**).

From the narratives, various factors led to out-migration, including poverty, failure of agriculture, the desire for children to support parents and fund the cost of their education and preparation towards marriage by young female adults were issues prominent in the study area.

## **Customary Land Tenure, Women's Access to Land and Community Resources**

Land title holding and ownership in rural areas are not only an important avenue for women's employment, but a significant avenue that can trigger women's out-migration. The agricultural sector offers employment opportunities for both males and females in rural areas, as it accounts for about 80% of rural livelihoods. For this reason, land holding, ownership and other natural resources for both sexes become paramount if rural development and revitalisation are to be realized. The share of land and community resources among males and females should be equitably distributed. However, tradition and culture tended to favor males over females in land ownership in the East Mamprusi district. In Ghana, under the customary land tenure system arrangement, over 80 percent of public lands and resources are held, controlled by men due to defined traditional and cultural norms [54] (Rünger, 2005). In northern Ghana, where the study is carried out, the practice of patriarchy emboldened men and granted them full ownership of land and other resources, leaving women landless and powerless. Cultural norms inhibit women from land entitlement and, to some extent, outright denial of property inheritance from deceased parents; the male holds the key to land title on behalf of the households and families. [55] (Aryeetey, 2002) notes; *women's access and control over productive resources, including land, are typically determined by male-centred kinship institutions and authority structures, which tend to restrict women's land rights as compared to men.* [56] (Omari 1988) adds that in societies embedded with a traditional customary system of patriarchy, land ownership is preserved for sons and not daughters, a situation that inhibits women's land access. Though women can be given access to parcels of land upon request and in most cases, rent for use, but to the scarcity of land, males are usually reluctant to lease out. In addition, property inheritance according to tradition and customs is preserved for males. In the study of factors affecting internal migration in Northern Tanzania, [57] Tacoli (2002) found that women and young girls migrated from rural origin to towns and cities to take up paid jobs in the informal service sector since they rarely inherit farmland and farming activities become the preserve of men. Therefore, the unbalanced nature of resource access is a major push factor for female out-migration. According to [58] UNPD (2009) and [59] De Haan (2012) migration is acknowledged as one of the many livelihood diversification strategies employing poor and non-poor households which makes labor movement central to maximizing the earnings of the household economy while mitigating the possible losses through diversification, or a risk-coping mechanism where people move between regions and borders to cope with entitlement failures such as landlessness and other bias circumstances as the case is under discussion. In effect, the findings are in tandem with [60] De Haan (2008), who found migration as a deliberate attempt to enhance household income and thus, improving rural survival strategies which are mostly dependent on the vagaries of climatic situations.

In an attempt to address the issue of gender discrimination in terms of resource inheritance, the Government of Ghana enacted the Intestate Succession Law in 1985 to grant courts the right to share the properties of a deceased with his wife and children without discrimination based on gender. However, the law remains a mirage due to a lack of political will on the part of law enforcement agencies to put it into practice. To add salt to injury, the Intestate Succession Law does not cover issues of family land; for this reason, wives and female children of a deceased man cannot inherit [52] (Rünger, 2005). The land appropriated to a male family member reverts to the family after he dies for reallocation. From narratives and testimonies (see Box 2), which provide evidence on the matter under study:

**Box 2: Experiences on Push factors of migration**

“True, the culture doesn’t permit women to own land and inherit properties from deceased parents, I was told by my grandparent (now late) that men are the ones mandatory to take care of or provide the family’s needs, not women, the needs include; food, shelter, health, education, clothing, protection from harm and all that, you can mention them. For this reason, women are seen as child bearers, and their roles are limited to home care, they spend from the man’s pocket and all that, this is why the culture, bars them from owning land and other valuable family properties” (**Tia, male household head in Kolinva village**)

“I have two daughters, the first born is 23 years and the second 18 years, and both have migrated to the city to find jobs. Luckily, they found jobs few days on their arrival and working as maid servants. The reason is the fact that the father has 4 acres (23 mu) arable land, but it isn’t fertile enough, aside, we the female have no access to land to engage in crop production, which is our main livelihood activity in this village, this was the reason we could not stop them from migrating to the city” (**Mami, housewife at Kolguna village**).

“Shea-nut picking helps us make an income to support our spouses and children, but the rule here is that one cannot pick the nuts in another family’s or household land, but some of our husbands and brothers don not own large parcel of land, meaning we make less money due to limited land. Some of us just returned from city to perform funerals, and other social functions and will go after the ceremonies. This is because there are no income-generating activity for us and we do not also access to land” (**FGD, women discussion**).

From the above, women are constrained from land and other community resources, which are the bedrock of livelihood, especially for rural people, where agricultural-related activities are the mainstay of the economy.

**Migrant Networks and Costs of Migration**

The influence of migrant’s networks in the cities contributes significantly to out-migration. The more migrants from the same geographical area, the more likely their colleagues are motivated to join, especially whenever they visit home to participate in community social and cultural activities such as marriage ceremonies, funerals and friends, and festivals, among others, the propensity for other young women, especially girls, to be influenced to migrate is high. The study found that when migrants visit home, they become the envy of the town folk, considering the manner and kind of clothes, put on, gifts from cities, and body neatness, which is the order of urban life. Generally, the status of her household has seen a drastic improvement compared with some of those who stayed behind.

*“Honestly, when I met a colleague who just returned to the village last week from the city (Accra) to witness a wedding ceremony, I felt my time is being wasted in the village, because we were together here in the village, but the same cannot be said today as she has changed completely due to the money she made in the city, but my life has even deteriorated. I say so because of the kind of clothes she wears and how civilised she has become within a short period. I am tempted to follow her to the city when she is going back”* (**Memuna, respondent at Sakogu village**).

*“This morning at 9:00 am, my 17-year-old daughter ran to me and said she wanted to follow her friend to the city to look for a job. According to her, the friend promised to take care of her lorry fare (transport costs) and accommodation. My daughter’s friend is a migrant worker; she dropped out of school. But my daughter is in Junior High School. I have always discouraged her from migrating because education will provide a better future. The father and I are determined*

*not to allow her to go. Most of them are influenced one way or the other by their peers to migrate” (Housewife, Jawani village)*

Having said that, the district social welfare officer who doubles as a girl child officer added some impetus to the role of migration networks as an influencing factor for female migration in the district. He posits;

*Records showed that most young girls aged 18 to 25 follow the footsteps of their cohorts who have migrated to the city; their peers provide transport and accommodation in the city. Last week, we managed and stop two young girls of school-going age from migrating to Tamale. They were arrested at the police barrier and brought to the Ghana Education Service (GES) Director for counselling. Upon interrogation, it revealed that a 32-year-old migrant worker convinced the girl’s parents to allow go with her to Kumasi” (Alice, G.E.S gender officer).*

Migration networks lower the costs and risks associated with migration. From the perspective of social capital [61] (Granovetter, 1985), network connections provide access to hidden resources. Therefore, information about employment opportunities, shelter, and other pull factors is easily reached through networks; this is consistent with the findings. [62] Lucas (1997) observed the vital role of networks in migration decisions, and for Ghana, this factor appears to be crucial; therefore, peers without networks or friends/social ties have lower motivation to migrate, as factors such as transportation cost, accommodation, and difficulty in job search make potential migrants averse to moving. This is because the establishment of networks often results in the reduction of migration costs [41] (Tutu, 1995).

### **Skills and Level of Education**

The study found that highly schooled, skilled and unskilled females recorded have all been involved in out-migration. Skilled, experienced labor migrants have less access to job opportunities in the rural areas, for the rural area is more agrarian and requires less of their skills. Therefore, such a category of women is employed in the service sector within the urban enclaves. Also, considering the busy nature of their schedules, they intend to employ uneducated women as nannies to care for their kids to have space for their jobs, and young girls as house helpers. [63] ; [64] (Connell et al. 1976; Banerjee 1986) observed that highly educated women and young girls have a preference to migrate to the cities and towns in the pursuit of education and better job opportunities, which are non-existent in their rural origin. Interestingly, these categories of highly skilled and educated working mothers prefer to hire the services of nannies and young girls from their kinship or roots from the villages and communities of their origin. The finding is also consistent with [65] (Peberdy and Dinat, 2005) who found that working women need other low-skilled working women, preferably young girls from the rural areas, to replace them in taking up family responsibilities of household chores. Domestic work provides jobs for women of rural origin with limited or no formal education and skills. A section of the respondents had these to share;

*“My daughter graduated from the university and got a job as a banker. She works with Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) Yeji branch in the Brong Ahafo Region, and she lives there and pays a visit once in 6 or 10 months. She sends money for our upkeep every month” (Mr. Fuseini, Household head, Nalerigu)*

*“I was invited to the city by my mother’s sister (Aunt), to help with childcare and general housework for almost a year; she took good care of me and even paid my admission fees to continue to continue schooling at Nalerigu Midwifery and Health college” (Hawa, Return migrant).*

*“I got married and followed my husband to the city, he used to teach in our village teacher in our village until he was transferred to Tamale (city). Fortunately, he found me a job and life is better*

than before. My mother told me my father was admitted to the Nalerigu Clinic, so I came over to care for him” (Joana, Return migrant).

“To be very frank, the village has fewer job opportunities for professionals and women, those working in the service area are teachers and nurses. Our village has produced some professionals, both male and female, but most of them have migrated to the city and are working there, for me the lack of job opportunity, is one reason we have the youth migrating to the towns especially the women and young girls. The government should establish a small-scale industry on Shea nut processing, because we have an abundance of” (Assemblyman, Jawani village).

“Out-migration of young girls is of concern to the government. As a development practitioner, I feel very worried about the situation. Our outfit is doing everything possible to reduce the rate of out-migration. But one issue we are unable to put a stop to is the phenomenon of migration among young girls who are voluntarily given out to their relatives in the cities by their parents; this is worrying because the trend affects their education. We have several reported cases of some of them being abandoned midway by the so-called relatives in the cities, leaving the vulnerable” (Majeed, Social welfare officer).

The discussion above showed the significant role education and skilled labor play in rural-urban labor, out-migration, as far as the study area is concerned.

### The State of Agriculture

Push factors such as limited earnings in non-farm activities, lack of small-scale manufacturing industries with attendant unemployment, are typical origin conditions leading to out-migration. Agriculture is the backbone of most developing countries and is practised in rural areas. Declining agriculture significantly affected the lives of rural left-behind people whose livelihood depends on it. They’re reporting a decline in farm output over the years due to inaccessible agricultural extension agents, limited arable land for cultivation, soil erosion and lack of farm input subsidies from the government, among others. A return migrant has to say;

“I went to Accra and worked as a migrant worker because my husband and I could no longer afford to fend for the family, crop and livestock income was insufficient to look after our children’s education, health and even food” (Memuna, returned migrant, Kulgona).

When people are unable to sustain their life through agriculture, where such is affected by environmental, cultural and economic conditions, they would prefer to migrate to urban areas and engage in non-farm activities [66]; [67] (Dereje, 2002; Kinfe, 2003).

### The Desire to Purchase Items in Preparation Towards Marriage

When young girls are married, they take up the cooking responsibility from their husbands’ mothers in the matrimonial homes, the reason for which they have to organise cooking utensils needed to take up the role after marriage. In the past, when most parents were economically endowed, young adolescent girls at the age of marriage were supported financially and materially to organize themselves for marriage. What I found was that most parents are no longer in a good position to support their daughters financially and materially for marriage. In a focus group discussion with returned migrants, I asked them the reason they had to migrate to the city before they could afford to get married and whether their dreams were met. The group leader had this to say;

“In this community, a young girl readying for marriage had to buy new clothes/items and cooking utensils to be used in her husband’s home, without them, one will be a laughing stock among your

*friends, some will even call you a lazy girl. This is one of the many reasons why we go to the city to fend for ourselves, save money and buy them” (Returned migrant leader, FGM).*

Young girls in this position, without support from their parents, are prone to migration compared to those with relatively wealthy homes that are able to provide the needed materials. It is important to point out that young migrant girls are favoured by the suitors to get married over girls who stay behind. Suitors preferred migrants because they had the economic power to purchase materials/items to aid the marriage process, compared to those left behind. As indicated in this section, most of the unmarried women and young girls migrate mainly to save money to acquire the underlisted materials. A male respondent has this to say;

*“In this community, most young men have a strong preference for women who can support them financially and materially after marriage, considering that those who migrate to the cities as migrant workers do exactly so” (Yamusah, Nalerigu).*

The Yamusah’s argument was re-echoed by unmarried women without migration history, she says.

*“Yes, I need to get married and settle down. I am 24 years old, but most of the young men place value on women migrant workers; they argue that those are economically and materially better than some of us, but that’s not always the case. Some of us help our parents in domestic work and petty trading. For instance, I am operating a grocery shop; therefore, my parents will prepare me well should a man come looking for my hand in marriage; I am not worried at all (Safia-non-female migrant, Gambaga).*

From the narratives, it is clear that the rush for unmarried women to migrate to the city as migrant workers is partly borne out of the desire to acquire items and partly economic independence from the male before and after marriage.

## **Conclusions**

The study concludes that female migration trajectories as part of household livelihood and coping strategies of rural landless, unskilled surplus labor and that the Push/Pull factors of movement, as posited by the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM), remain two useful migration theories in this study. The Push and pull factors are forces which induce people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residences; there can be economic, political, cultural, and environmental based.

The conditions that can drive people away from their homes resonate with factors influencing female migration behavior in the East Mamprusi District. The NELM theory, therefore, links migration and development by connecting the phenomenon of migrants and the left behind population, taking into consideration the causes and consequences of movement from the sending countries/communities of origin; it views the movement as a household strategy to minimise family income risks and to overcome capital constraints on family production activities

The average land size of 4 acres (24.3 mu) per household of 6 six people, coupled with limited government farm input subsidies, contributed to a decline in crop and livestock output, leading to a rise in poverty among rural folks. The rate of impoverishment among rural inhabitants, particularly women, makes it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to meet the essential family needs such as food, clothing, shelter, children’s education, health care, utility bills, among others. Interestingly, women are worse off due to existing traditions and norms which deprived women of land rights, putting women in a disadvantaged position to engage in farm work.

Finally, the desire to save money to purchase materials in preparation for marriage for unmarried young girls, child and general family upkeep for married women.

## **Policy Recommendations**

The study provides useful insights on factors influencing female migration and what needs to be done to limit female rural-urban migration in rural Ghana and the East Mamprusi district in particular. Few among them include:

1. In the context of declining agricultural livelihoods, which is the main causative factor influencing female migration, women should be given access to community resources such as land, as this holds the key to rural women's economic empowerment.
2. The current circumstance of women's land resource deprivation has led to a growing number of women migrating for landless. Therefore, the government should, as a matter of urgency, put in place policy and program interventions aimed at creating a lot more livelihoods, diverse, productive resources that will generate highly rewarding employment opportunities to women in northern Ghana, which should include the creation of small and medium industries such as Sheanut processing
3. The main policy goal should be to change the gender norms and culture that inhibit women from accessing land and other community resources, which only tend in men's favor at the expense of women, who incidentally are the majority in the study area. This should incorporate affirmative action policies which give women freedom of choice without hindrances.
4. To address the issue of gender discrimination in terms land access and resource inheritance, the Government of Ghana should in collaboration with the law courts and other law enforcement agencies, put into practice the Intestate Succession Law of 1985 which grants the right to share properties of a deceased to his wife and male children without any form discrimination based on gender. The Intestate Succession Law should be reviewed to include female landholding rights to family land, such that wives and female children of a deceased man can inherit after his demise. The current trend of land appropriation and inheritance to only male family members is an affront to women's empowerment and rural development.
5. Government should consider the recommendation of Naila Kabeer, a gender activist who calls for what is termed as "social floor" to be institutionalised, as it guarantees equal access to the basic needs and for the survival of all classes of people, irrespective of gender, race, religion and culture. She adds that "social floor" would offer an escape route to poor and vulnerable women, the needed leverage to challenge the status quo.

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