

CAN RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION CONTRIBUTE TO POVERTY REDUCTION?: EVIDENCE FROM GHANA

Mariama Awumbila, GEORGE OWUSU, Joseph Kofi Teye, Alhassan Anamzoya
Centre for Migration Studies
University of Ghana, Legon

Abstract

Recent evidence indicates increasing levels of poverty in urban areas in Ghana, partly attributed to net migration of poor migrants to cities. Evidence of the connection between urbanisation, rural-urban migration and poverty outcome is mixed. The study examines the livelihoods of poor migrants living and working in two urban informal settlements in Accra. The findings suggest that, despite living in a harsh environment with little social protection, the migrants perceived that their overall well-being had been enhanced by migrating to Accra. These findings call for a more nuanced understanding of the linkages between rural-urban migration, urbanisation and poverty.

1. Introduction

In line with observed trends in the rest of Africa, Ghana's population is becoming increasingly urbanized. The proportion of the population living in urban areas increased from 43.8 per cent in 2000 to 50.9 per cent in 2010, and is projected to increase to 63 per cent by 2025 (GSS 2012). There is enough evidence to suggest that rural-urban migration is a significant factor accounting for the rapid population growth in many urban centres (GSS 2005a; GSS 2005b), although natural increase in towns and re-classification of villages into towns also contribute to urbanisation in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa (Potts 2012). Recent population census reports suggest an 'exodus' from the poorer regions into Accra and other relatively well-developed regions of Ghana. For instance, while Accra – the 'most developed' and urbanised area in Ghana, attracted a net increase of 310 per 1000 inhabitants in the year 2000, the least developed Upper West and Upper East regions recorded a net loss of 332 and 219 per 1000 inhabitants respectively (GSS 2012).

However of significance, is the fact that migration and urbanisation trends are occurring at the same time as declining levels of poverty across the country. The proportion of the poor declined from 51.7% in 1992 to 39.5% in 1999, and 28.5% in 2006 (GSS 2007). Although, in broad terms, the poverty levels in urban Ghana are lower than in rural Ghana, recent evidence indicates increasing levels of poverty in urban areas (GSS 2007; Owusu and Yankson 2007). For instance, Accra, the national capital and hub of economic activities in Ghana, has attained the status as the least poor area in the country. However, after four rounds of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS), Accra more than doubled its standard poverty incidence (from 4.4 per cent in 1999 to 10.6 per cent in 2006) and tripled its extreme poverty incidence (from 1.3 per cent in 1999 to 4.4 per cent in 2006). This increase in urban poverty is partly attributed to net migration of poor migrants to the city (GSS 2007). Yet, this assertion that rural-urban migrants transfer poverty to cities is simplistic and needs to be further interrogated.

In response to the growing trend of rapid urbanisation, increasing poverty in urban Ghana, and the lack of evidence based research to guide policy formulation, this paper examines the impact of migration of poor people into urban slums in Accra on poverty outcomes, access to services, economic and social opportunities, as well as the barriers that they face in the urban areas. In so doing, it analyses the factors operating at the household, community and national levels, which mediate the relationship between migration and poverty in urban slums and how these differ by context. It highlights the strategies adopted to maximize their chances of getting out of the poverty and the associated policy implications.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study communities

The study focuses on Accra, drawing on two case studies of the predominantly poor migrant communities of Old Fadama and Nima. Nima, a poor neighbourhood of Accra which emerged in the 1940s, is a melting pot of ethnic groups and nationalities, especially from northern Ghana and the West Africa Sahelian countries of Mali, Niger and Burkina. Much of

the housing in Nima is improperly planned. Buildings are haphazardly built often without permits and often densely populated with 3 to 12 persons in a room (Songsore 2003). The housing structure is usually compound based, with an average of 80 persons per compound (Songsore 2003). The economic backgrounds of the inhabitants vary from high and middle income to low income earners. However, the low income earners are in the majority (Owusu et al. 2008).

On the other hand, Old Fadama is a more recent poor migrant community, which dates back to the mid-1990s and is home to many of the poor who make their living from the market. An enumeration undertaken in 2009 shows that the area has a total population of 79,684 (Housing the Masses 2010). It is one of the largest informal settlements in Accra (Afenah 2010). In the early 1980s, the community saw an increase in population when people fled the Kokomba-Nanumba ethnic conflict and many moved into this area. More people have moved to the area over the years and continue to do so due to rural urban drift and housing affordability, which makes Old Fadama very attractive to young adults in search of greener pastures, particularly young females from the northern regions of the country who come to work in Accra as head porters.. Sanitation conditions are poor and as a result of its low lying nature the area is prone to frequent flooding, which is further exacerbated by the absence of a proper drainage system.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Primary data collection techniques included a questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Such a triangulation of several methods was deemed appropriate in view of the strengths and weaknesses of individual methods (Castro *et al.* 2010; Creswell *et al.* 2003). Primary data was collected from migrants living in the two selected migrant communities in Accra. Methods included an exploratory study of the two communities, structured questionnaires administered to a sample of 239 migrants in total, 121 from Nima and 118 from Old Fadama, in-depth interviews with 45 migrants in the migrant communities, and 14 key informant interviews (such as traditional rulers, assembly members, police officers and health officials, policy makers). In addition, two focus group discussions were held in each of the two communities, one for men and one for women. The aim of this approach was to provide a platform for the migrants to discuss how migration has influenced their economic and social situations. For ethical reasons, all names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of migrants

Table 1 shows the distribution of the 239 survey respondents according to specific socio-demographic variables. About 56 per cent of respondents in Nima and 62 per cent of those in Old Fadama were males. The age distribution of respondents ranged from 16 years to 79 years, with a mean age of 31.2 years and a standard deviation of 10.5. While 70 per cent of respondents in Old Fadama were married, only 47 per cent of their counterparts in Nima were married. The average number of children per respondent was 2. About 40 per cent of

respondents in Nima and 15 per cent of those in Old Fadama had been living in Accra for 12 years or more. The level of education among the survey respondents was generally low. Only 6 per cent of those in Nima and 1 per cent of those in Old Fadama had tertiary education.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of migrants

Characteristics of Respondents		Nima	Old Fadama
Gender	Male	68 (56.2%)	73 (61.9%)
	Female	53 (43.8%)	45 (38.1%)
	Total	121 (100.0%)	118 (100.0)
Age	15-24	24 (19.8%)	36 (30.5%)
	25-34	44 (36.4%)	62 (52.5%)
	35-44	30 (24.8%)	19 (16.1%)
	45-54	14 (11.6%)	1 (0.8%)
	55-64	5 (4.1%)	0 (0.0%)
	65+	4 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)
	Total	121 (100.0%)	118 (100.0%)
Marital Status	Never married	56 (46.3%)	30 (25.4%)
	Married	57 (47.1%)	83 (70.3%)
	Co-Habitation	1 (0.8%)	3 (2.5%)
	Divorced/Widowed	10 (8.3%)	1 (0.8%)
	<i>Missing</i>	3 (2.5%)	1 (0.8%)
Total	121 (100.0%)	118 (100.0%)	
Number of Years of Residence in Accra	1 or less	5 (4.1%)	18 (15.3%)
	2-6	35 (28.9%)	45 (38.1%)
	7-11	31 (25.6%)	29 (24.6%)
	12-16	17 (14.0%)	16 (13.6%)
	17+	32 (26.4%)	2 (1.7%)
	<i>Missing</i>	1 (0.8%)	8 (6.8%)
	Total	121 (100.0%)	118 (100.0%)
Level of Education	No Education	30 (24.8%)	50 (42.4%)
	Primary	29 (24.0%)	21 (17.8%)
	Middle/JHS	31 (25.6%)	29 (24.6%)
	Voc/Tech/SHS/O'/A' Level	24 (19.8%)	14 (11.9%)
	Tertiary	7 (5.8%)	1 (0.8%)
	<i>Missing</i>	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.5%)
	Total	121 (100.0%)	118

Source: Field Survey, 2012

3.2 Region of origin and migration process

The majority of respondents (81 per cent of those in Old Fadama and 31 per cent of those in Nima) had migrated from the Northern Region of Ghana. In Nima, however, a significant

proportion of migrants had migrated from the Eastern (19 per cent) and Volta (17 per cent) regions. About 8 per cent of respondents in Nima and 9 per cent of those in Old Fadama had migrated from towns outside Ghana, notably Niger, Mali, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso.

The majority of the respondents (68.2 per cent) reported that they had migrated to Accra for employment opportunities. Other important reasons for migrating to Accra included education (8.8 per cent) and family related reasons (8.4 per cent), which include accompanying parents or spouses. When differentiated by gender (Table 2), women moved for marriage much more often than men (11.2 per cent versus 2.1 per cent respectively), while men moved for education much more than women (13.5 per cent versus 2 per cent respectively).

Table 2: Main reason for migrating to Accra differentiated by gender

Reason for Migrating to Accra	Gender of Respondent		Total
	Male	Female	
Education	19 (13.5%)	2 (2.0%)	21 (8.8%)
Family related	11 (7.8%)	9 (9.2%)	20 (8.4%)
To flee conflict	3 (2.1%)	2 (2.0%)	5 (2.1%)
Marriage	3 (2.1%)	11 (11.2%)	14 (5.9%)
Job related	97 (68.8%)	66 (67.3%)	163 (68.2%)
Others	8 (5.7%)	8 (8.2%)	16 (6.7%)
<i>Total</i>	<i>141 (100.0%)</i>	<i>98 (100.0%)</i>	<i>239 (100.0%)</i>

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Many of the respondents reported that they moved from rural areas to Accra because of the belief that it is the best place to raise money for the development of further business. In many cases, decisions to migrate to Accra were taken by the entire family at the place of origin. Parents, especially fathers, were highly influential in the decision to migrate, with about 77 per cent of respondents reporting that their fathers were involved in the decision-making process.

Our findings suggest that parents encouraged the migration of their sons and daughters in order to enhance the financial situation of the family at the place of origin. The remittances sent home by migrants can help minimise the effects of economic shocks on household welfare. On the other hand, there were a few cases where young migrants left home without informing any of their relatives. Such young people who ran away without informing their parents were mainly influenced by friends.

3.3 Migrants living environments and access to basic services

Most of the migrants were living in poor neighbourhoods and in poor housing structures. There are spatial variations in the quality of housing units, with about 75 per cent of migrants in Old Fadama living in shacks, against only 7 per cent of their counterparts in Nima living in shacks. The migrants acknowledged that their housing units are poor, but the

relatively higher rents and the requirement for several months' rent advance payments in better neighbourhoods prevent them from living in those neighbourhoods:

In Accra if you go to other suburbs apart from here [Fadama] to rent a room you have to pay a huge sum of money for even a single room – it will cost about GH 800-1000 to rent a room and here is the case where I was not even able to finance my trip to Accra. How then can I raise this huge sum of money to rent a room? At Agbogbloshie [Fadama] rooms are less costly, even you can get a space and what you need is to buy wood to put up the structure so that you can be sleeping in it (Aza, 27 March, 2013) .

The working environments were also very poor and generally unhygienic. Observation of the area, indicated that the activities of the migrants have contributed to the deplorable state of their living environments. This is especially the case in old Fadama where the e-waste dealers have heavily polluted a nearby stream.

Apart from living in unhygienic environments, the migrants generally do not have access to basic services as shown in Table 3. About 92 per cent of those in Old Fadama and 60 per cent of those in Nima do not have access to water within their residences. As a result, they buy water on a daily basis from neighbours or use water from wells. Again, 94 per cent of the migrants in Old Fadama and nearly 63 per cent of those in Nima do not have toilet facilities within their residences. Lack of bathing facilities is also a major challenge, especially for those in Old Fadama, where a very high proportion (88.6 per cent) do not have a bathhouse in their residences. Consequently, these people have to use a public bathhouse, where they pay 50p (\$.25) each time they have to bath. The majority of the respondents (88.3 per cent), however, have electricity supply in their homes.

Table 3: Availability of basic services

Availability Of Services		Nima	Old Fadama	Total
Water	Within residence	33 (28.0%)	9 (7.7%)	42 (17.9%)
	Within residence but not reliable	14 (11.9%)	0 (0.0%)	14 (6.0%)
	Not available in residence	71 (60.2%)	108 (92.3%)	179 (76.2%)
	<i>Total</i>	<i>118 (100.0%)</i>	<i>117 (100.0%)</i>	<i>235 (100.0%)</i>
Toilet	Within residence	42 (35.6%)	6 (5.1%)	48 (20.4%)
	Within residence but not reliable	2 (1.7%)	1 (9%)	3 (1.3%)
	Not available in residence	74 (62.7%)	110 (94.0%)	184 (78.3%)
	<i>Total</i>	<i>118 (100.0%)</i>	<i>117 (100.0%)</i>	<i>235 (100.0%)</i>
Bath House	Within residence	103 (90.4%)	12 (10.5%)	115 (50.4%)
	Within residence but not	4 (3.5%)	1 (0.9%)	5 (2.2%)

	reliable			
	Not available in residence	7(6.1%)	101 (88.6%)	108 (47.4%)
	<i>Total</i>	<i>114 (100.0%)</i>	<i>114 (100.0%)</i>	<i>228 (100.0%)</i>
Electricity	Within residence	107 (90.7%)	101 (86.3%)	208 (88.5%)
	Within residence but not reliable	2 (1.7%)	13 (11.1%)	15 (6.4%)
	Not available in residence	9 (7.6%)	3 (2.6%)	12 (5.1%)
	<i>Total</i>	<i>118(100.0%)</i>	<i>117 (100.0%)</i>	<i>235 (100.0%)</i>

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Not only are these facilities generally unavailable, but the migrants also end up paying more for these services than those in higher income neighbourhoods. For instance, the average cost of 1000 gallons of water in Ghana is 80 peswas (40 cents), but migrants pay 30 peswas (15 cents) per bucket, which is roughly 2 gallons. These poor migrants are also required to pay money each time they visit the toilet. Consequently, people without money tend to defecate in a nearby bush, thereby further contributing to the pollution of their living environment. City officials who were interviewed indicated that the poor environmental conditions in these slums, coupled with limited access to basic necessities, have created conditions for flooding and diseases such as typhoid fever and cholera, thus confirming the findings from other studies that many migrants move *towards* heightened environmental risk, not away from it – often as part of rural-urban migration (Foresight 2011). Additionally, the migrants in Old Fadama, in particular, are highly vulnerable to illegal government evictions, which are sometimes violent, thereby causing insecurity.

3.4 Migrant urban livelihoods and entrepreneurship

Despite living in deprivation, most of the migrants are involved in income generating activities, mostly (71.2 per cent) working in the informal sector. This was especially prevalent in Old Fadama, where nearly 84 per cent were working in the informal sector, as they usually lacked skills needed for formal sector employment. The slums were booming with various forms of entrepreneurial businesses. Entrepreneurship in the informal sector tends to be gendered. Women in both communities were mainly working as petty traders, food vendors, catering (chop bar) assistants, shop assistants, and hair dressers. In addition, a significant number of young women in Old Fadama were working as head porters (*Kayayei*) or plaiting hair. Men in both communities were working as artisans, labourers in the construction sector, the operation of motor bikes as taxis (*okada*), and other trades. A significant proportion of men in Old Fadama were also involved in the collection and sale of metal scraps (i.e. e-waste business).

Most of our respondents believed that they were earning adequate incomes. The e-waste business, which involves salvaging materials from discarded electronic and electrical equipment for sale to industries, appears to be one of the most profitable jobs in the slums, especially in Old Fadama. This economic activity is mainly undertaken by male migrants from the northern Ghana, Niger and Nigeria. There are chains of activity in the e-waste business, namely collection, recycling, repair, refurbishment, and trading of metals (Prakash *et al.* 2010) . Our study shows that this business is highly lucrative, despite its risky nature, with many earning much more than they did in their home villages. Our analysis also shows that their earnings were significantly higher than those of mid-level civil servants. In this hierarchical e-waste business, those people who earn the lowest amount of money are the scrap collectors, earning an average of 15 cedis (\$7.50) daily. This amount is higher than the salary of a lower level office clerk in the public service. E-waste refurbishers, who are considered of higher 'rank' than collectors, reported that they earn between 40 and 200 cedis (i.e. \$20 and \$100) daily. As shown by the case of Mashud (see Box 1), some of the scrap dealers can earn as high as 400 cedis (\$200) on a very good business day. When one compares these earnings with what they could have obtained from their rural areas, there is no question that migration has improved their earning capacity.

Box 2: Migrants in the e-waste business - the case of Mashud

Mashud is a 32 year old migrant from Nigeria. He has a wife and three children living in Nigeria. Mashud first migrated from his village to Lagos and then later to Ghana, having joined some friends who were returning to Ghana after visiting their families in Nigeria. He came to Ghana in 2010. Before leaving Nigeria, the friends told him about the e-waste business in Ghana. On arriving in Ghana, the friends gave him some informal training in this business. After working with them for a year, he saved enough money to buy his own container and some tools to start his own business. He is now an E-waste refurbisher who buys old computers and sells the wires and other parts to a Chinese company in Tema. Mashud reported that he earns an average daily salary of between 300 Ghana cedis (\$150) and 500 Ghana cedis (\$250). He told our interviewers that within the few years that he has worked in Ghana he has bought a taxi cab. He also bought a plot of land in Accra and hopes to start the construction of a house by the end of this year. He knows at least two migrant scrap dealers from Nigeria who have built their houses from the same business. Mashud also remits between 400 and 800 Ghana cedis to his wife and parents back in Nigeria every month. With these achievements, Mashud concluded that the e-waste business is the most lucrative job, though he also admits that this job is tedious.

Petty trading and small food enterprises, in both Old Fadama and Nima, were also an important source of income for a significant proportion of the migrants, especially the women. Although some of the traders were still struggling with their businesses, they still believed that they were earning higher incomes than what they could have obtained in their home regions. Even the *Kayayei*, or head porters, which is a labour intensive activity, reported much higher earnings in the city than in their areas of origin. Most of these migrants reported that they were doing their current jobs in the hope of raising adequate

capital to invest in technology and equipment to enter other less difficult and more profitable occupations. Many of those selling food on table tops, for instance, expressed the hope of establishing a big restaurant in the future. This ‘hope for better days’ is common among migrants. The motivation for doing such jobs is the relatively higher income they earn compared to what they could earn at home. While their jobs and livelihoods in Accra are not as ‘respectable’ as other higher income earning jobs in the urban economy, the little money they save from their livelihoods contributes to sustain their families back home.

3.5 Impact of Migration on Individual and Households

3.5.1 Asset accumulation

There is growing interest among researchers on the relationship between migration and asset accumulation, and its positive impact on poverty reduction. According to Osmani (2012), those who have been able to accumulate more and move up the asset ladder are found to have a higher likelihood of moving out of poverty. Recent studies indicate, among other things, that migrants’ well-being is closely linked to the asset profiles of their households, with respect to asset types, value and productivity. While the lack of income suggests that people struggle to get by, the lack of assets can prevent them from getting ahead (Fisher and Weber 2004). This is because, as Shapiro and Wolff (2001) note, assets provide a number of non-monetary benefits, like home ownership, allowing household members the opportunity to enjoy location-linked amenities such as better school, health facilities and other community services. Both the survey and the in-depth interviews that were conducted in Old Fadama and Nima indicate that respondents’ have an interest in asset accumulation, not only as a means of survival but also to enhance their social status and their economic well-being. Among the assets noted in the study are durable household items, savings, remittances, and human capital.

Durable Household Assets

With regard to durable household assets, the respondents mentioned household electronic items (refrigerators, televisions, videos, electric fans, stoves, etc.), land, and motor vehicles, when comparing items they owned before and after migration (see Table 4). The analysis indicates that (with the exception of bicycles, motorcycles, radios/recorders and land) a larger proportion of households owned these items at the place of destination than they did at the place of origin. It should be noted, however, that the relative differences in terms of asset holdings before and after migration are related to income and location-linked factors. For instance, access to electricity in the urban area compared to the rural area would obviously allow households in the urban to own a number of electrical items. Also, greater proportion of households living in rural areas (before migration) compared to urban areas (after migration) are likely to own land due to the obvious need for land in a predominant rural agricultural economy.

Table 4: Assets owned by migrants before and after migration (N=239)

Assets	Number owning asset before migration	Number owning assets after migration
--------	--------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Stove	21 (8.8%)	29 (12.1%)
Refrigerator	69 (28.9%)	104 (43.5%)
Fan	111 (46.4%)	186 (77.8%)
Radio/Recorder	170 (71.1)	154 (64.4%)
Iron	81 (33.9%)	140 (58.6%)
Bicycle	121 (50.6%)	59 (24.7%)
Motor Cycle	65 (27.2%)	40 (16.7%)
Cell (mobile Phone)	98 (41.0%)	209 (87.4%)
TV	110 (46.0%)	169 (70.7%)
DVD/VCD Player	58 (24.3%)	128 (53.6%)
Washing machine	0 (0.0%)	3 (1.3%)
Land	68 (28.5%)	29 (12.1%)
Car/Truck/Bus	2 (0.8%)	11 (4.6%)

Source: Field Survey, 2012

A further analysis of assets owned suggests that the type of assets acquired by migrants was influenced by the age of the migrant, gender, and the length of stay at the place of destination. In terms of gender, men were more likely to invest in electronic devices such as tape recorders and DVDs, while women were more likely to invest in household cooking utensils.

Household Savings

Fisher and Weber (2004) have argued that savings provide poor households with economic stability, as they allow them to endure under conditions of income shortfalls and smooth consumption. In addition, household savings can be used as business capital or possible investment in the education of children. Analyses of the household survey indicated that over 76 per cent of respondents in both communities had savings. There were no significant gender differentials in the proportion of respondents with savings (77 per cent of males and 75 per cent of females). However, the proportion was larger in Old Fadama, where 85 per cent had savings, versus nearly 67 per cent in Nima. Chi square test indicates that the difference here is significant ($\chi^2 = 11.701$, $P = 0.001 < 0.05$). The large proportion of respondents with savings in Old Fadama may be due to the constant threat of eviction by city authorities and the frequent outbreaks of fires in the community. Under these conditions, people need to save in order to have a buffer against these threats and to smooth consumption during periods of emergency.

Remittances

The positive association between migration and socio-economic improvement has largely been conceived through the concept of remittances. The general argument is that remittances can contribute to poverty reduction by providing migrant-sending households the resources to smoothen consumption and invest in productive ventures. According to Chiodi *et al.* (2010), this is one of the reasons that family members often combine resources to finance the migration of one of their members, who, later on, repays by remitting back to the household. Table 5 reveals that households in Nima and Old Fadama engage in both in-transfer (receiving) and out-transfer (sending) of remittances. However, the proportion of households who received remittances was only about 24 per cent, whilst the proportion

who sent out remittances was as high as almost 78 per cent. Disaggregated by gender, about 81.6 per cent of men and 78.1 per cent of women reported that they had sent remittances within the past year. Statistical tests suggested that there is no significant relationship between gender and sending out of remittances ($X^2 = 0.432$, $P = 0.511 > 0.05$).

Table 5: Proportion of households receiving and sending remittances in Nima and Old Fadama

Monies (non-loan) received from someone who does not live in HH (in-transfers)	Yes	57	23.8%
	No	178	74.5%
	Non- response	4	1.7%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>239</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Monies (non-loan) sent to someone who does not live in HH (out-transfers)	Yes	186	77.8%
	No	46	19.3%
	Non-Response	7	2.9%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>239</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

Source: Field survey, 2012

The high proportion of migrants sending remittances to their areas of origin is an indication that migrants often serve as insurers for their households. Studies indicate that remittances in Ghana can help minimise the effects of economic shocks on household welfare. The in-depth interviews revealed that even when the migrants themselves felt migration had not been very helpful in moving out of poverty, sending remittances home remained a top priority. Such remittances take several forms, including money for payment of school fees and educational items for family members, food items, clothes and footwear.

3.4.2 Migration and well-being

Tables 6 provide migrants' assessment of the current financial situation of their households with regards to basic necessities. Table 7 suggests that over 75 per cent of the migrants assessed their current financial situation as more than adequate or adequate. Interestingly, 56.9 per cent attributed the improvement in their livelihoods to finding new or better jobs in Accra, while 17.2 per cent attributed it to a new business that they had started in Accra. The proportion of migrants who assessed their households' current financial situation as more than adequate/adequate was, however, relatively lower for Old Fadama (65.2 per cent) than for Nima (75 per cent). The difference may be due to the relatively better public infrastructure and services in Nima compared to Old Fadama. These reasons may partly account for the differences observed between the two communities' assessment of the current financial situation of their households. There is no significant relationship between gender and assessment of the current financial situation ($X^2 = 1.011$, $P = 0.799 > 0.05$). About 76 per cent of men and 73 per cent of women reported that their current financial situation is adequate or more than adequate (Table 6).

Table 6: Migrants' assessment of their current financial situation by Location (%)

Current Financial situation	Nima	Old Fadama	Total
More than adequate	33.3	12.7	23.1
Adequate	51.7	52.5	52.1
Just adequate	10.0	17.8	13.9
Inadequate	5.0	16.9	10.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>238</i>

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Households' assessment of the overall quality of life after moving to Accra is revealed in Table 7. It indicates that an overwhelming proportion of households surveyed, nearly 88 per cent, assessed their overall household life as improved a lot/somewhat improved.

Table 7: Assessment of overall life of household after moving to Accra by location (%)

Responses	Nima	Old Fadama	Total
Improved a lot	50.9	48.2	49.6
Somewhat improved	40.5	36.0	38.3
Remained the same	3.4	6.1	4.8
Somewhat deteriorated	4.3	8.8	6.5
Deteriorated a lot	0.9	0.9	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>116</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>230</i>

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Table 7 also reveals that 7.4 per cent of households assessed the overall quality of life of their households as somewhat deteriorated/deteriorated a lot after moving to Accra. Largely due to the earlier points made on living conditions, a relatively higher proportion of households in Old Fadama (almost 10 per cent) assessed their overall life situation to have deteriorated, compared to just over 5 per cent in Nima. However, these spatial variations are not statistically significant ($X^2 = 3.017$, $P = 0.555 > 0.05$). Men were more likely than women to report that their financial situation has improved a lot after moving to Accra (47.9 per cent versus 29.2 per cent). The proportion that reported that financial situation has deteriorated or somewhat deteriorated after moving to Accra was higher among women than men (9.6 per cent versus 5.0 per cent). The chi square test, however, shows that these gender differences in the assessment of the financial situation are not very significant ($X^2 = 13.439$, $p = 0.09 > 0.05$). We also found no significant relationship between length of residence in Accra and assessment of overall well-being after migration.

The results thus indicate that the majority of migrants believed that the overall well-being of their households has improved after migrating to Accra. Understandably, not all migrants have migrated out of poverty, or believe they are on their way out of poverty. A few of our

respondents reported that life in Accra is too difficult for them. However, as indicated in the statement below, the majority of the migrants still believe that migration to Accra enables them to support many people at home:

Migration has been helpful to me based on the things that I told you I have gotten. And even though migration has not improved my education, through migration I have been able to continuously support the education of my brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews at home (Hamza, Old Fadama).

Like Hamza, many respondents indicated how much they are supporting family members and relatives back home through remittances, by upgrading their economic status, helping to pay the educational fees or medical bills of a family member, or changing the structural face of the house.

4. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Although rural-urban migration to Accra is not a new phenomenon, the recent increase in numbers, and the resulting pressure on resources such as employment and housing, has led to a largely negative policy position of government, municipal and metropolitan authorities on rural-urban migration and the development of slums in Ghana. Rural-urban migration is typically seen as creating pressure on urban infrastructure, environment and employment, and there is an underlying assumption that the phenomenon is linked to rising levels of urban poverty. Therefore, it is a widely held belief that rural-urban migration cannot lead to positive outcomes for migrants, their families, or their areas of origin or destination.

Our findings indicate that despite the neglect of informal settlements such as Nima and Old Fadama by city authorities and the state, in terms of infrastructure and services, migrants continue to flood these communities. Using their own ingenuity, they build houses and create jobs in the informal sector, in order to survive and live in Accra. A large proportion of the migrants households save money and send remittances (out-transfers). This way, they contribute to the development of the human capital of their households and families, particularly through investment in education. The study found that about 88 per cent of households surveyed assessed their overall household well-being to have improved since migrating to Accra. Thus although migration is not without its sacrifices, the majority of migrants – despite living in a harsh environment, with little social protection – perceived that their overall well-being had been enhanced by migration.

Yet, development policies, continue to regard rural-urban migration as negative, largely leading to an increase in urban poverty and therefore urge the need to reduce rural-urban migration (GoG/NDPC 2009: 13). As shown by our findings, these viewpoints are simplistic and can be problematic as they are often based on a very crude method of measuring poverty, via a head count of the poor, and fail to provide a holistic assessment of the dynamics behind the movement of poor people to urban areas, such as access to more remunerative opportunities and the beneficial impact that this is having on their families. Therefore, we urge the need for a more balanced and nuanced understanding of the inter-linkages between causes and impacts of rural-urban migration and its role in poverty reduction. Indeed, conclusions from the present study, and other studies such as Cavalcanti

(2005) and Ravallion *et al.* (2007), suggest that movement to cities (rural-urban migration) might be associated with reduction in overall poverty and improvements in general well-being.

These findings raise a number of issues related to the inter linkages between migration, urbanisation and poverty, which have policy implications. First, there is a need to promote rural and broad-based regional development in the long term, in order to reduce spatial inequalities. Such policy measures should include the promotion of small and medium-sized towns across Ghana as alternative centres to rural-urban migrants. The findings also call for upgrading of slums rather than attempts to clear them. Though existing national policy documents such as the National Urban Policy Framework, 2012 and Draft Migration Policy, recognise rural-urban migration and its impact on urbanisation as inevitable, policies at the city level continue to discourage rural dwellers from moving to Accra. Examples of policies that indirectly and directly control migration to the city include the 'decongestion exercise', which has been implemented in the last decades, and numerous attempts to provide female potters from northern Ghana with artisanal trade, with the explicit intent of resettling them back to their places of origin. However, these policies are bound to fail, unless spatial inequalities in development are addressed, because – as demonstrated in this study – rural-urban migrants hold the view that despite the harsh conditions of urban life their households are still better off under conditions of migration. Consequently, slum upgrading becomes an imperative condition requiring urgent attention by the state. Neglecting informal urban communities would not simply deter rural-urban migrants from settling in these areas, as the existing conditions give them no other choice but to settle there.

Related to slum upgrading is the issue of providing decent and affordable housing to the poor and low-income households. Many of the challenges faced by poor rural-urban migrants in Nima and Old Fadama are related to housing. Therefore, state is being encouraged to partner with the private sector in order to promote rental housing for the poor and low-income households. Already in place pilot housing projects for the poor, such the UN-Habitat housing upgrading project in Amui Djor, Ashaiman, suggest that it is possible to provide decent and affordable housing to low-income households. These pilot interventions could be up-scaled at city and national levels.

References

- Awumbila, M., Manuh, T., Quartey, P., Bosiakoh, T.A and Tagoe, C.A. (2011) *Migration and Mobility in Ghana: Trends, Issues and Emerging Research Gaps*. Woeli Publishing: Accra.
- Cavalcanti, C. R. (2005). Recent trends in growth and poverty reduction in Ghana. Paper presented at the *International Conference on Shared Growth in Africa* organised by ISSER/Cornell University/World Bank/DFID/USAID, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel, 21-22 July, 2005.
- Foresight (2011) *Migration and Global Environmental Change: Future Challenges and opportunities*. Final Project Report. The Government Office for Science, London.

- Ghana News Agency (GNA) (2012). A third of Greater Accra resident live in slums. General News, 30 January, 2012. Accra: Ghana News Agency.
- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2005a) Population Data Analysis Reports: Socio-economic and Demographic Trends Analysis. Accra: GSS.
- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)(2005b) Quarterly Digest of Statistics. Accra: GSS.
- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2007) *Patterns and Trends of Poverty in Ghana: 1991-2006 Report*. Accra: GSS.
- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2008) Ghana Living Standards Survey: Report on the Fifth Round (GLSS 5). Accra: GSS.
- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2012). *2010 Population and Housing Census. Summary Report of Final Results*. Accra: GSS.
- Housing the Masses (2010) *Community-led Enumeration of Old Fadama Community, Accra Ghana*, People Dialogue on Human Settlement, January, 2010
- Osmani, S.R. (2012) *Asset accumulation and poverty dynamics in rural Bangladesh: The Role of microcredit*. Working Paper 11, Dhaka: Institute of Microfinance (InM).
- Owusu, G., Agyei-Mensah, S. and Lund, R. (2008) 'Slums of hope and slums of despair: Mobility and livelihoods in Nima, Accra', *NorskGeografiskTidsskrift*, 62:180-190.
- Owusu, G. and Yankson, P. W. K. (2007) 'Poverty in Ghana is basically a rural phenomenon: Are we underestimating urban poverty?', *Ghana Journal Development Studies*. 4(1): 87-105.
- Potts, D. (2012) 'What do we know about urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa and does it matter?', *International Development Planning Review*, 34(1): vxxi
- Songsore, J. (2003) 'The urban housing crisis in Ghana: Capital, the state versus the people', *Ghana Social Science Journal*, 2(1): 1-31.