

Does International Migration Represent a Mechanism for Status Enhancement or Status Loss? A Study of International Return Migrants to Ghana

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Abstract

The issue of return migration has been ignored in many migration studies in Africa. Meanwhile, there has been recognition that migration, both internal and international represents an important mechanism for extricating out of poverty especially for many people from developing countries. To unravel some of these claims, data from a survey involving 120 return migrants in the Berekum Municipality, Ghana, were used to assess the socio-economic conditions of Ghanaian migrants. The study adopted a quantitative approach to research involving simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for the data collection was an interview schedule, made up of both open and closed-ended questions. The results have shown that most of the returnees saved large sums of money towards their return and a large percentage of them had access to formal financial credit obtained primarily through banks which prior to their departure was almost impossible. But it was found from the results that returnees who traveled to Germany had the highest financial status followed by those who traveled to Israel. Regarding the returnees' social capital formation, the results revealed that a higher percentage had acquired valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas and had become socially connected with improved social networks upon return. It was further discovered that most of the returnees were highly influential in decision-making in their localities compared to the period before departure. But returnees who had longest duration of stay overseas were found to have had the highest level of influence in decision-making compared to those who had shorter stays abroad. The study recommends that government through a multi-sectorial approach should evolve and implement comprehensive programmes such as post-arrival counseling and start-up support for returnees to ensure adequate utilization of their financial and social capital resources for national development.

Keywords: Return migrants, Socio-economic conditions, Berekum, Ghana

Introduction

Back in the 1970s, the conventional wisdom was that migration undermines the prospects for local economic development and yields a state of stagnation and dependency (Massey et al., 1998). Migration from poor countries was at the time seen as little but a development of underdevelopment (Frank, 1966). This pessimistic attitude has now been turned on its head. The last decade has seen a sudden and widespread reappraisal of the so-called 'migration-development nexus' (Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2003). Migration, both internal and international according to Black et al. (2003) can offer an important route out of poverty for many people from developing countries. It constitutes a virtuous interaction in which development is enhanced particularly in the sending country (Weinstein, 2001).

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The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM, 2005) argues that migrants make a valuable economic, political, social and cultural contribution to the societies they have left behind. The UN report in 2006 goes one step further, asserting that international migration constitutes an ideal means of promoting co-development, that is, the coordinated or concerted improvement of economic conditions in both areas of origin and areas of destination based on the complementarities between them. The contribution of migrants to the development of their origin country results from a combination of the resources they transfer upon their return and the returns obtained from those resources (OECD, 2008). Those resources can be of three kinds: first, migrants bring back with them the education and working experience they acquired abroad; second, they may come back with financial capital, in the form of savings accumulated during their stay abroad which they may repatriate in various degrees of liquidity. Finally, they have specific social capital obtained from their migration experience which could take the form of networks, foreign values, attitudes and ideas (Tiemoko, 2003; OECD, 2008).

One reason for this is that the optimistic view on migration fits well with current development discourse which Marc Duffield (2010) identifies as the liberal way of development. A key characteristic of the optimistic paradigm is that development should be based on individuals' and households' adaptive self-reliance (Marc Duffield, 2010). Studies regarding the interrelations between international migration and development (Castles & Delgado, 2008; De Haas, 2008; Nyberg-Sorensen et al. 2002) suggest that migration effects can be examined at three main levels namely the individual, the family, household, kin group or local community level, and the wider regional, district or national levels. The present study assesses the socio-economic implications of international migration and return at the individual migrant level using international return migrants to Ghana.

Even though studies abound on the subject of migration and development, especially, the contribution that return migrants can make to their origin countries (Black & Ammassari, 2001; Black, King & Tiemoko, 2003; Nyberg-Sorensen, Van Hear, Engberg-Pedersen, 2002; Tiemoko, 2003), it appears most of these studies failed to critically assess whether returnees actually have the required capital resources (in particular, financial and social capital resources) needed to make those development contributions anticipated. Yendaw et al. (2013) have systematically examined the socio-economic status of Ghanaian return migrants by looking at their human capital formation in the form of their educational achievements and work experience gained as well as the consumer durable goods accumulated while abroad. But this study further neglected issues of returnees' financial and social capital formation. Hence, a literature gap was found to exist concerning the development potential of return migrants through their financial and social capital resources such as cash transfers, access to financial credit, returnees' network scope, foreign values and ideas gained. To fill this literature void, the current study assessed the financial and social capital formation of returnees resident in the Berekum Municipality, Ghana. This was done by comparing the returnees' financial and social capital formation prior to their departure abroad with that of their current financial and social capital formation at return. The aim was to ascertain whether international migration and return to Ghana constitute an important strategy for enhancing migrants' financial and social capital conditions or otherwise.

Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

Migration is defined as the temporary, semi-permanent, or permanent change in the usual place of residence across a geographical boundary (Goldschieder, 1971; Weeks, 1999). Migration as a phenomenon has spacio-temporal dimensions which are often used to categorize migrants (Yendaw et al., 2013). In terms of time, for instance, migration could be seasonal or permanent; and spatially, it could be internal or international while internal migration is further categorized into four components namely, rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-rural and urban-urban.

International return migration, which is the focus of this study, refers to the act of a person returning to his or her country of nationality after having been international migrant in another country and who intends to stay in his/her own country for at least one year (United Nations Statistics Division, 1998; IOM, 2004).

Theories on return migration in the 1970s viewed the returnee as a migrant who returned home because of a failed migration exposure that did not yield the desired outcome (Cassarino, 2004). For instance, the neoclassical migration model viewed the return decisions of migrants as the outcome of a failed migration exposure which did not accomplish the expected gains. That is, in a neoclassical stance, return migration exclusively involves labour migrants who miscalculated the costs of migration due to imperfect information before departure and who did not reap the benefits of higher earnings. Return migration, therefore, occurs as a consequence of their failed experiences abroad or because their human capital was not rewarded enough as expected.

However, by the 1990s the focus regarding migrants' reasons for returning to their origin societies shifted greatly.

Return then was depicted as a successful experience abroad where the migrant accomplished the goals of higher income and the accumulation of savings while remitting part of their income to the household; acquisition of higher education, skills, and foreign work experience; as well as the accumulation of social capital in the form of networks, values and attitudes (Cassarino, 2004). From the perspective of the new economics model, international migration and return is viewed as a calculated strategy that aims to mitigate credit market imperfections at origin in which migration serves to accumulate sufficient savings to provide the capital, or at least the collateral required to obtain a credit for investment at home, in particular in business activities. Once they have achieved the target level of savings, migrants return to their home countries (Stark, 1991; Mesnard, 2004).

One of the most debated issues has been that of human capital gains for emigration countries through the return of migrants (Ammassari & Black, 2001; Hunger, 2004). The human capital model of socioeconomic attainment views migration as a form of investment whereby the individual initiates a geographical move with the expectation of drawing net cumulative gains over his or her working life (Wilson, 1985). Brain gain generally denotes expatriates returning from abroad with highly skilled technical or intellectual expertise, which creates a positive outcome because they often bring back skills and/or norms (Ardivino & Brown, 2008). Brain gain usually has a positive connotation in the migration literature because migrants can potentially bring back skills and/or norms and implement them in their home society. Gmelch (1980) has distinguished two perspectives from which this question may be measured or approached. On the one hand, the actual social and economic conditions of returnees can be examined, looking at returnees' financial situation in terms of their earnings and savings, their access to essential household utilities, their level of participation in social networks and associations as well as the values, attitudes and ideas returnees have learnt while abroad. On the other hand, the return migrants own perceptions can be measured based on their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction before and after the migration experience.

This study adapts the conceptual framework on return migration developed by Yendaw et al. (2013). The two key implications of return migration according to the conceptual framework on return migration relates to the human and social capitals accumulated abroad through education, training and gain on-the-job skills and the financial capital that is channeled into the home region through remittances and savings. Even though the various propositions advanced in the conceptual framework on return migration were found insightful and informative, issues regarding the socio-economic implications of return migrants at return were not adequately addressed in its level of analysis.

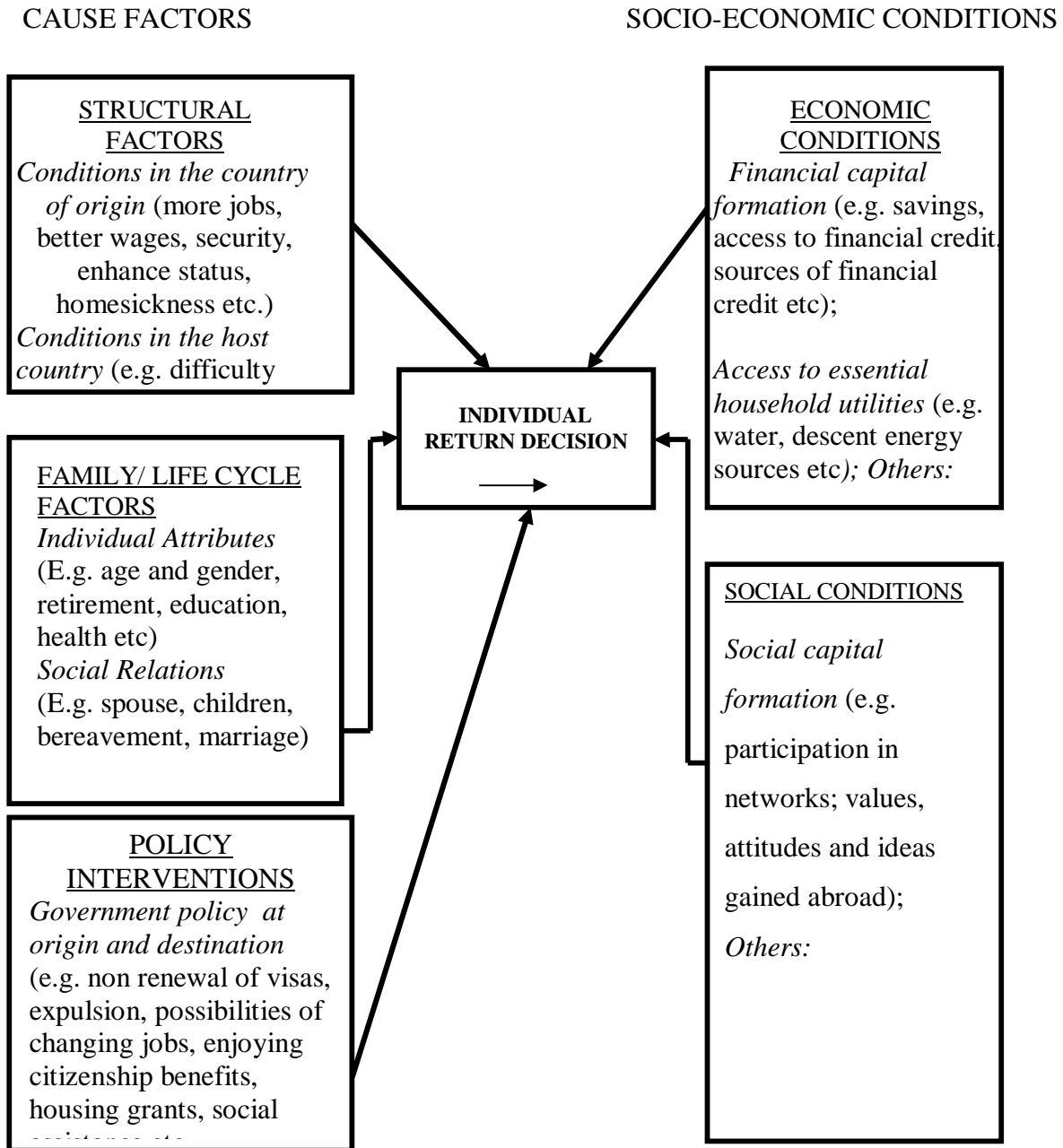


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on return migration

Source: Adapted from Yendaw et al. (2013)

More so, other variables involving the causes of return migration as discussed in the conceptual framework (Figure 1) were also considered unrelated to the current study objective and thus the need for the adaptation of the model. In that regard, some elements which the original conceptual framework did not include as part of its analysis were added and these included the return migrants' access to essential household utilities and financial credit at return as well as the social capital they have accumulated while overseas (Figure 1).

As depicted in Figure 1, the section labeled ‘socio-economic conditions’ explained most the variables which were required for this investigation and were broadly categorized into economic and social factors. Within the context of this study, household utilities deal with the returnees’ access to essential household facilities such as clean water and energy resources for cooking and drinking before departure and after return. Access to financial credit as shown in Figure 1, also looks at whether respondents after their return have easy access to loans from formal financial institutions such as banks. Social capital formation, on the other hand, consists of the returnees’ level of social connection and power as well as the acquisition of valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas while living and working abroad.

Study Setting

The Berekum Municipality is located in the Western part of the Brong-Ahafo Region in Ghana. It lies between latitude 7° 5' South and 8.00° North and longitudes 2° 25' East and 2° 50' West. The Municipality shares boundaries with the Wenchi Municipality and the Jaman Municipality to the Northeast and Northwest respectively, the Dormaa Municipality to the South and the Sunyani Municipality to the East (Figure 2).

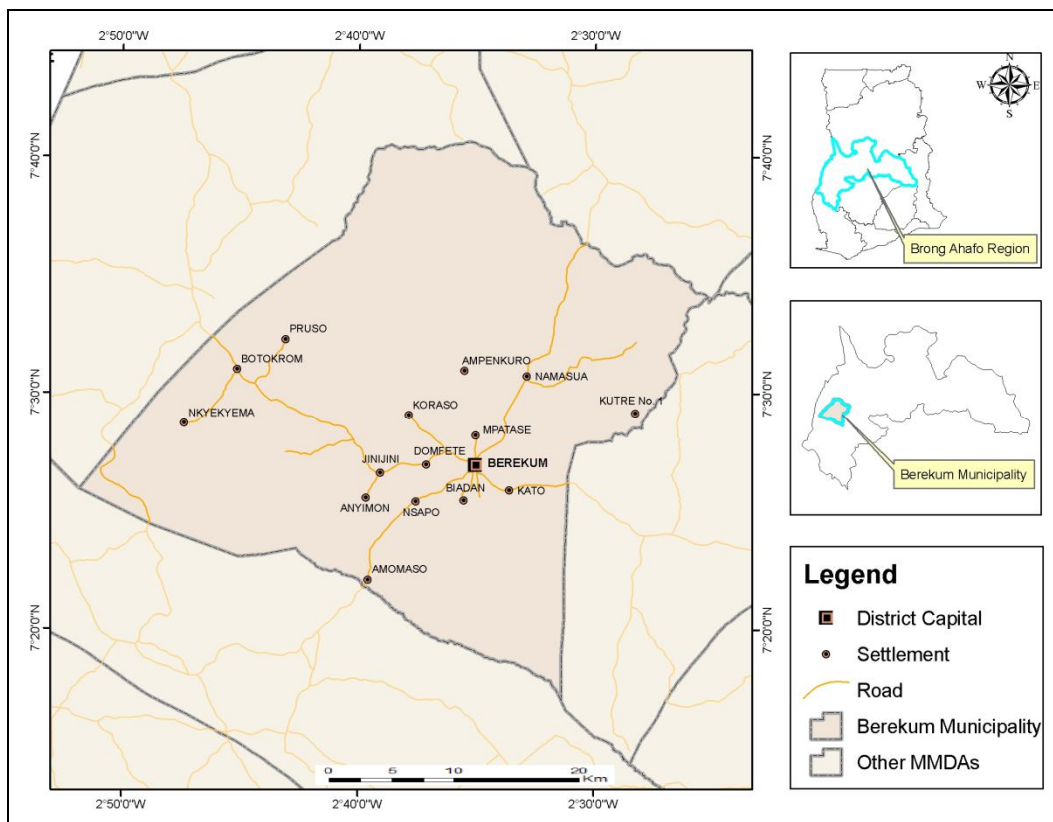


Figure 2: A Map of the Berekum Municipality

Source: GIS unit of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC

Berekum Municipality lies in the semi-equatorial climatic zone which has a mean annual rainfall of between 124cm and 175cm and means monthly temperatures ranging between 23°C and 33°C with the lowest around August and the highest being observed around March and April. Relative humidity is high averaging between 75 and 80 percent during the rainy seasons and 70 and 80 percent during the dry seasons of the year which is ideal for luxurious vegetative growth.

The soils are mostly forest ochrosols which are well-drained and therefore suitable for agricultural activities. The population of the Municipality for the periods 1984 and 2000 were 78,604 and 93,235 respectively.

This gives an annual growth rate of 3.3% between 1984 and 2000. According to the 2000 population and housing census, about 51.4 percent of the total population were females while 48.6 per cent were males, giving a sex ratio of 94.4% males to 100 females.

Financial institutions in the Municipality include Ghana Commercial Bank, Agricultural Development Bank, Societe Generale-Social Security Bank and other Rural Banks. There are 74 public and private Junior High schools, eight Senior High schools/Technical Schools, one Teacher Training College and one Nursing Training College. The Municipal health service comprises the Ministry of Health, Mission and Private Hospitals and the community sector. Statistics from a Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire in 2003 showed that the Berekum Municipality recorded the highest access to health facilities in the Brong Ahafo Region.

Given the favourable physical characteristics of the area such as rainfall, temperatures, humidity and soils, the dominant economic activity in the Berekum Municipality is agriculture (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). It employs about 57 percent of the working population. Aside agricultural activities, the people are engaged in non agricultural occupations such as trading, small and large scale businesses, service related occupations, artisan and a few are into construction and manufacturing. Berekum was selected for the study because it is noted nationwide for international migration and return (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 1999). International migration in the Municipality is generally considered as an integral part of livelihood and advancement strategies for most families (Anarfi et al. 1999; Berekum Municipal Assembly, 2007).

Data and Methods

The total number of returnees found in the study area as at the time of the data collection was 204. The sampling frame of 204 returnees was arrived at through a list compiled during a reconnaissance survey using the snowballing technique. Out of the 204 potential respondents identified, 120 were randomly selected for the study due to resource constraints. The unit of analysis for this study was the individual return migrant who were aged 18 years or above. The rationale for interviewing people aged 18 years and above was that in Ghana 18 years is the age of maturity and consent (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992). The instrument used to collect the data for the study was an interview schedule which covered the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, their financial capital formation, affordability of household facilities/utilities such as safe water and descent energy resources and their social capital formation looking at their level of participation in social networks and association, acquisition of valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas. The sampling procedure used for the study was simple random, specifically, the lottery method. The fieldwork took place between March and April 2011. The returnees were contacted at home or workplaces based on the names and addresses gathered during the reconnaissance survey.

The Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 17 was utilized to process and analyze the data. Specifically, both descriptive as well as inferential statistical techniques such as chi-square were employed for the analysis. The socio-economic status of the returnees was assessed by looking at their financial status as against their length of stay abroad. Length of stay abroad was the independent variable and financial status as the dependent variable. One main challenge encountered in the study was that there was no database on return migrants in the in the study area. To identify the return migrants therefore, the snowball approach was employed which involved walking from one point to the other within the Municipality.

Results

Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

The results (Table 1) indicate that the respondents were mostly males (83%), who were young (68 per cent were 20-39 years) and were married (50%). This was consistent with previous findings by Anarfi et al. (2003) who opined that most return migrants to Ghana were young and were in their active ages who could be useful for the socio-economic development of the nation. The fact that half of the respondents were married was expected in view of the observation that a large proportion (68%) of them were aged 20-39 years, the age at which it is considered ideal for people to marry (Anarfi et al., 2003). The analysis, however, appears to be at odds with Zlotnik (2003) and Twum-Baah (2005) observation that feminized migration is increasing in Africa as a result of higher levels of education for women and changing socio-cultural norms. The disparity in male- female ratio could, however, be explained by what Anarfi et al. (1999) had observed that as custom requires, most females prefer to stay behind while their male partners emigrate and remit home.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of return migrants

Background characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	99	82.5
Female	21	17.5
Age		
20-29	40	33.3
30-39	41	34.2
40-49	26	21.7
50+	13	10.8
Marital status		
Never married	44	35.8
Married	59	50.0
Separated	14	11.7
Widowed	3.0	2.5
Highest level of education		
Primary School	8.0	6.6
Junior High/Middle Sch.	36	30.0
Senior High/Tech./Voc.	50	41.7
Tertiary	26	21.7
Religious affiliation		
Traditional	4.0	3.3
Christianity	109	90.8
Islam	6.0	5.1
Others	1.0	0.8
Current occupation		
Public/civil servants	13	10.8
Trading	43	35.9
Artisan	28	23.3
Farming	14	11.7
Unemployed	16	13.3
Others	6.0	5.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

The results further showed that a higher proportion (42%) of the returnees had attained senior high/vocational/technical education, while about a quarter had tertiary level education. The respondents were mostly Christians (91%) which is in consonance with results from the 2000 Population and Housing Census report of Ghana which indicated that majority of Ghanaians were Christians (69%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). The results suggest that about six out of every ten return migrants were more likely to be traders or artisans.

Destination country and duration of stay by sex

Table 2 shows that the most preferred destination of the return migrants was Libya (24.2%) followed by Germany (19.2%). The results further reveal that the same number of respondents travelled to Italy (14.2%) and the UK (14.2%) but a higher number of males (25.6%) than females (9.1%) travel to Libya (Table 2). The fact that majority (24.2%) of the return migrants from the Berekum Municipality travelled to Libya might be the case where most young people from the Brong Ahafo region sojourn through the Sahara desert and the high sea under harrowing conditions with the sole aim of entering European destinations such as Italy and Spain through Libya. The above finding is also consistent with what Awumbila (2007) observed about the Brong Ahafo region one of the most affected localities in Ghana noted for irregular migration to Libya. However, the results have shown that female returnees were numerous than male

Table 2: Destination country and duration of stay by sex

Destination and duration	Sex		
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Destination country			
Cote d' I voire	5.0	7.7	4.8
Germany	18.2	20.7	19.2
Israel	5.9	5.5	9.2
Italy	14.2	9.3	14.2
Libya	25.6	9.1	24.2
Spain	11.1	4.8	5.0
UK	10	33.1	14.2
USA	10	9.8	9.2
Duration of stay			
5-9	71.7	90.5	75.0
10-15	17.2	4.8	15.0
15+	11.1	4.8	10.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

respondents who travelled to the UK (33.1%) and Germany (20.7%). Meanwhile, comparing the number of respondents who returned from European and American destinations to that of African destinations, the analysis (Table 2) indicates that cumulatively most emigrations from the Berekum Municipality are in favour of European and American destinations. This confirms what Twum-Baah (2005) has observed that recent political crisis and changes in the fortunes within the African sub-region have reduced the significance of intra-regional migration streams in favour of American and European destinations.

Some returnees did not stay long at their various destinations while others did. Table 2 indicates that about eight out of every ten return migrants (80%) mentioned that they stayed at their destination for between five and nine years while 25 per cent said they stayed for a period of ten years or more. A higher percentage of males (28.3%) compared with females (10%) stayed for 10 years or more (Table 2). The current observation might be due to the conjugal and reproductive roles of females where they are sometimes compelled to return home, for instance, to get married or join a spouse at home (Anarfi et al., 1999). Overall, the analysis indicates that male returnees had longer duration of stays abroad than females in the Municipality.

Socio-economic conditions of the respondents

Migration has been considered as one of the avenues for improving upon the socio-economic conditions of individuals and families in areas that are poorly endowed with resources (Anarfi et al., 1999; Black, King, & Tiemoko, 2003). To ascertain this claim, data were gathered regarding the returnees' financial situation by looking at their savings and amount saved towards their return, the returnees' access to formal financial credit and the sources of their credit; the returnees' access to essential household utilities such as potable water and descent energy resources as well as their social capital formation which includes their level participation in social networks and associations and the kinds of valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas the returnees have learnt while abroad.

Savings and amount saved towards return

It is believed that after years of hard work and savings, many migrants return with sizable amounts of capital (Gmelch, 1980; Black & Ammassari, 2001). To assess the respondents' financial status, they were asked to indicate whether they were able to save some money towards their return and if they did the amount saved. Table 3 showed that a higher proportion (83.2%) of the return migrants said they were able to save some money towards their return while 17% reported otherwise. save money. This finding supports what Appleyard (1962) and Gmelch (1980) have observed that migrants who live and work abroad are able to save money which they transfer to their home country upon return. With regards to those returnees who said they could

Table 3: Savings and amount saved towards return

Made savings	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	100	83.2
No	20	16.8
Total	120	100.0
Amount saved		
Less than 1000 Ghana cedis	7	5.8
1000-4900 Ghana cedis	22	18.3
5000-10000 Ghana cedis	20	16.6
Above 10000 Ghana cedis	71	59.2
Total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

not save money towards their return home could fall under a category of returnees which Cerase (1974) had described as failure returnees. According to Cerase (1974), such return migrants represent a class of migrants who miscalculated the cost and benefits of the migration project as a result of insufficient information before departure. Concerning the amount saved, the results showed that more than half (59.2%) of the returnees brought home above 10,000 Ghana cedis (Table 3).

Access to credit facilities and sources of credit prior to departure and after return

According to the new economics of labour migration model, international migration and return is a calculated strategy that aims to mitigate credit market imperfections at origin in which migration serves to accumulate sufficient savings to provide the capital, or at least the collateral required to obtain a credit for investment at home. To ascertain this assertion, the respondents were requested to indicate whether they had access to credit facilities before their departure and after their return and if they did their main sources of credit. Results from Table 4 revealed that about 75% of the returnees said they did not have access to credit facilities before departure abroad and the few respondents (25%) who reported having had access to credit facilities before departure said their main sources of credit was from family relations (50%) followed by 'susu' groups (30%).

Table 4: Access to credit facilities and sources of credit prior to departure and after return

Access to credit and sources	Before departure		After return	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Access to credit				
Yes	30	25	94	78.3
No	90	75	26	21.7
Total	120	100.0	120	100.0
Sources of financial credit				
Banks	3	10	82	63.6
Susu group	9	30	20	15.5
Family relations	15	50	13	10.1
Money lenders	-	-	3	2.3
Friends	2	6.7	9	7.0
Others	1	3.3	2	1.6
Total	30	100.0	129	100.0

***Frequency exceeds 120 because of multiple responses**

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

After their return, the data showed that closely about eight out of every ten return migrants (78.3%) reported that they have access to financial credit facilities whilst a few (21.7%) said otherwise. Concerning their main sources of credit after their return, the results revealed that more than a sixth (63.6%) of the returnees said they have access to financial credit from formal financial institutions (Banks) followed by 'susu' groups (15.5%). The above observations indicate a significant improvement in the respondents' financial conditions due to their migration abroad. The current evidence (Table 4) is in conformity with the basic tenets of the new economics of labour migration where international migration serves to mitigate credit market imperfections in origin countries at return.

Destination country of stay abroad by financial status of respondents

It has been observed that the destination country of stay by individual migrants has the propensity to influence his or her financial status at return (Bovenkerk, 1974; Dustman, 2001). To unravel this claim, a chi-square test for the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the destination country of returnees and their financial status indicated a significant relationship between the returnees destination country of stay and their financial status after return (Table 5). This implies that return migrants' financial status can be predicted or explained in terms of their destination country of stay abroad. This is also confirmed in Table 6 which showed that respondents who lived and worked in Germany had the highest financial status (90.6%) at return followed by those who traveled to Israel (89.9%).

Meanwhile, respondents who traveled to the USA and the UK had similar financial conditions representing 76.7% and 76.5 respectively. The results however showed that respondents who stayed and worked in Cote d'Ivoire had the lowest financial outcomes (53.6%). Generally, respondents who migrated to African destinations had the lowest financial status compared to those who migrated to European and American destinations. The current observation (Table 6) could be reflective of the overwhelming level of inequities inherent in global resource sharing and the level of economic development between developed and developing nations.

Table 5: Results of chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.156	6	0.013
Likelihood Ratio	34.437	6	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.962	1	0.000
No of Valid Cases	120		

Alpha level = ≤ 0.05

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Table 6: Destination country of stay abroad by financial status of respondents

Financial status	Destination country								Total (%)
	USA (%)	Germany (%)	Israel (%)	Italy (%)	Libya (%)	Spain (%)	UK (%)	Cote d'Ivoire (%)	
Improved	76.7	90.6	89.9	88.2	67.8	83.3	76.5	53.6	78.3
Diminished	23.3	9.4	10.1	11.8	32.2	16.7	23.5	46.4	21.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	6	23	11	17	29	6	17	11	120

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Social networks prior to their departure and after return

The actual social and economic status of returnees according to Gmelch (1980) can also be examined by looking at their level of participation in networks or associations. To ascertain this observation, respondents were asked to indicate whether prior to their departure abroad they belonged to social groups or associations or had some friends and neighbours whom they could rely on during crisis periods. Results from Table 7 revealed that more than 70% of the returnees did not have social networks to rely on during crisis periods before their migration with only a small proportion (21.4%) of them who said otherwise. After their return, the results showed that about 71% of the respondents said they had social groups or neighbours and friends to rely on during crisis moments (improved social networks) while only about a third (29.4%) reported that they did not have social networks to depend on during crisis periods (Table 7). The fact that majority of the returnees belonged to social networks for support in times of crisis after their return is consistent with what Franklin (2007) has observed that social networks foster social cohesion, provides individuals with a sense of belonging and offer opportunities.

Table 7: Social networks prior to departure and after return

Improved networks	Before departure		After return	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	25	21.4	84	70.6
No	94	78.6	35	29.4
Total	119	100.0	119	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Level of participation in decision-making by duration of stay abroad

Return migrants' level of participation in decision-making in their communities is further regarded as an aspect of social capital and a key indicator of returnees' social status (Gmelch, 1980). Respondents were asked to rate their current level of participation in decision-making in their communities compared to the period before departure. Results from Table 8 showed that about 82.5% of the respondents admitted that their current level of participation in decision-making compared to the period before departure has improved, 12.5% said their current level of participation has remained unchanged while 5.0% said otherwise. Out of those respondents who reported an improved level of participation in decision-making after their return, about 91.7% of them were those who had the longest duration of stay abroad (15 years and above) followed by those who spent between 10-14years (88.9%). The current revelation (Table 8) indicates a

Table 8: Level of participation in decision-making by duration of stay abroad

Level of participation	Duration of stay			Total
	5-9 (%)	10-14 (%)	15+ (%)	
Improved	80	88.9	91.7	82.5
Remained unchanged	13.3	11.1	8.3	12.5
Reduced	6.7	0.0	0.0	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	90	18	12	120

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

positive association between duration of stay abroad and level of influence at home. This might be attributed to the fact that respondents with longer duration of stays probably had ample time abroad sufficient enough to mobilize the necessary resources required for their return which might have contributed to raising their social status after their return. The above revelation finds credence in anthropological studies by King (2000) who observed how returnees to their Hong Kong villages threw lavish banquets and made generous donations to community projects as a way of legitimizing their new social position and level of influence resulting from high level of return readiness.

Assimilation of valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas

It has been observed in other studies that migrants while abroad are able to learn certain valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas which they transfer with them to their countries of origin (Franklin, 2007). As part of a measure of the returnees' social capital formation, they were further requested in the survey to indicate whether they had gained any valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas while abroad and if they did what were they. From the analysis in Table 9, it has been observed that closely about 90% of the respondents were convinced that they had gained some valuable foreign values attitudes and ideas while abroad.

Table 9: Assimilation of valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas while abroad

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Assimilation foreign values		
Yes	106	88.3
No	14	11.7
Total	120	100.0
Specific values, attitudes and ideas		
Work ethics	32	15.0
Trust worthiness	25	11.7
Ability to work with people from different background	32	15.0
Time consciousness	44	20.6
Language/communication skills	13	6.1
Hard work	38	17.8
Human rights standards	19	8.9
Health standards	4	1.9
Others	7	3.3
Total	214	100.0

***Frequency exceeds 120 because of multiple responses**

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

The respondents who admitted having gained valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas, about 21% said they have learnt time consciousness, 18% indicated they have learnt hard work, 15% gained valuable work ethics, 11.9% said they have learnt how to be trust worthy, 9% learnt human rights standards, 6.1% acquired communicative skills whilst 1.9% reported that they have gained valuable health standards. All the values, attitudes and ideas stated above are key intangible cherished human resources which are crucial for the socio-economic advancements of any given society. But the impact of these valuable resources (Table 9) can only be materialized if they are put to good use by the returnees and willingness of the Ghanaian social structure to allow such new values, attitudes and ideas to permeate.

Sources of water for drinking and laundry prior to departure and after return

Access to quality water resources is often regarded as capital intensive particularly in most developing nations. In that regard, an individual source of water for drinking, laundry and dishwashing is an indicator of his/her socio-economic status even though it is sometimes a function of state policy. According to Gmelch (1980), Black, King and Tiemoko (2003), returnees after years of hard work and savings abroad are able to afford essential household utilities (such as potable water resources) after their return. To validate this claim, the respondents in this study were requested to indicate their main sources of water for drinking, laundry and dishwashing prior to their departure and after their return (Table 10).

Table 10: Sources of water for drinking and laundry prior to departure and after return

Water for drinking and laundry	Before departure		After return	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Water for drinking				
Pipe borne inside	19	14.6	50	31.1
Pipe borne outside	46	35.7	7	4.3
Well water	7	5.5	30	2.5
Surface water	3	2.3	-	-
Spring/rain water	2	1.6	-	-
Bottled (mineral) water	-	-	36	22.4
Water sachets (pure water)	19	14.7	62	38.5
Tanker supply	2	1.7	-	-
Borehole	31	24.7	2	1.2
Sources of water for laundry				
Pipe borne inside	25	19.2	71	55.1
Pipe borne outside	39	30.2	17	13.2
Well water	40	31.1	30	23.3
Tanker supply	5	4.0	3	2.3
Borehole	15	11.7	7	5.4
Surface water (e.g. rivers)	5	3.9	1	0.8
Total	129	100.0	161	100.0

***Frequency exceeds 120 because of multiple responses**

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

The analysis in Table 10 showed that before their departure more than half (36%) of the returnees accessed water for drinking from pipe borne outside their homes followed by borehole water (25%). After their return their main sources of water for drinking changed significantly in favour of water sachets-pure water (38.5%) followed by pipe borne water inside their homes (31.1%). What was striking from the results was that prior to their departure abroad none of the respondents could afford bottled (mineral) water for drinking while after their return the results confirmed that closely about a quarter (22.4%) of the returnees could afford bottled/mineral water for drinking. The current finding (Table 10) clearly depicts an improvement in the socio-economic status of some returnees resulting from their migration abroad.

From the results in Table 10, it was further observed that, generally, a higher proportion of the returnees were able to afford safe water resources for laundry and dishwashing after their return. As shown in Table 10 before their departure, closely about a third (31.1%) of the returnees were using well water for laundry and dishwashing while after their return more than half (55.1%) of them were able to access pipe borne water inside their homes for laundry and dishwashing. The above observation in Table 10 is an indication of an improvement on the returnees' socio-economic conditions possibly resulting from their migration exposure.

Sources of energy for cooking prior to departure and after return

The type of energy resources that are used for cooking by individuals are said to be key determinants of a person's socio-economic status. In view of this, the respondents were requested to indicate the type of energy sources employed for cooking prior to their migration and after their return. Table 11 has shown that before departure a significant proportion (46%) of the returnees were using charcoal for cooking followed by firewood (33.1%). After their return, more than a sixth (62.1%) of the respondents was using gas as their main source of cooking food followed by charcoal (26%).

The present findings mimic an upward adjustment in the socio-economic status of the returnees and this might be due to their migration abroad.

Table 11: Sources of energy for cooking prior to departure and after return

Sources of energy	Before departure		After return	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Energy for cooking				
Charcoal	53	46.0	36	25.7
Firewood	43	33.1	3	2.1
Kerosene lamp	6	4.8	-	-
Sawdust	3	2.4	-	-
Gas	9	10.7	87	62.1
Electricity	4	2.2	14	10.0
Others	1	0.8	-	-
Total	119	100.0	140	100.0

*Frequency exceeds 120 because of multiple responses

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Assessment of general living conditions prior to departure and after return

The respondents were finally asked to compare their overall living conditions after their return with the period before migration. Table 12 indicates that more than 80% of the respondents said their living conditions have improved after their return, 13.2% said their living conditions have remained unchanged while a minority (6.0%) reported a diminished living conditions after their return. Overall, the present analysis of the general living conditions of the returnees depicts an improvement in their socio-economic status due to their migration abroad.

Table 12: Assessment of general living conditions prior to departure and after return

Living condition	Frequency	Percentage
Improved	98	81.5
Remained unchanged	15	13.2
Diminished	7	6.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Discussion and Conclusion

This study explores the socio-economic conditions of international return migrants to Ghana using Berekum Municipality as a case. The study has shown that about 83% of the returnees were males who were mostly young (20-39 years) and were married (50%) and more than a quarter (36%) were engaged in trading or business activities.

The analysis has established that a large proportion of the returnees were able to accumulate substantial amounts of financial capital resources towards their return. For instance, more than 80% of the return migrants were able to save some money for their return and closely about 60% said they brought home above 10, 000 Ghana cedis. This finding is in consonance with what Appleyard (1962), Rhoades (1980) and Gmelch (1980) had observed that migrants who live and work abroad are able to save money which they transfer to their home countries upon return.

The results further showed that most of the respondents (78.3%) after their return have access to formal financial credit facilities which were obtained primarily through banks (63.6%) which prior to their departure was almost impossible. This supports the new economics of labour migration literature that migration may serve to accumulate the necessary collateral required for accessing credit facilities at origin. In terms of their general financial situation, the results revealed that a higher percentage (85%) of the respondents reported that their financial conditions have improved tremendously after their return. But it was observed that return migrants who traveled to Germany had the highest financial status (90.6%) followed by those who traveled to Israel (89.9%). Results from a chi-square test of the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the destination country of stay abroad and financial status of returnees showed a significant relationship between destination country of stay and financial status of the returnees. This implies that an individual migrant country of stay has some influence on his/her financial standing at return. The economic implication of the improvement of the financial status of the returnees is that some of the return migrants are likely to expand their businesses or launch new ones and employ others from the Municipality thereby reducing the already high level of unemployment in the area (GSS, 2002). But this can only happen with adequate governmental start-up support together with the availability of prudent investment climate for all.

With regards to the returnees' social capital formation, the study has shown that most of the respondents have acquired valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas and have become socially connected with improved social networks at return. For instance, while more than 70% of the returnees did not have social networks to rely on during crisis periods prior to their migration, after their return, the data showed that about 71% belonged to social groups or had neighbours and friends to rely on in times of crisis (improved social networks). These findings were consistent with what Franklin (2007) had observed where social networks foster social cohesion, provides individual returnees with a sense of belonging and offer opportunities for survival. In addition to the above, it was further revealed that about 82.5% of the respondents admitted that their current level of participation in decision-making in their communities compared to the period before departure had improved.

But it was found that respondents with the longest duration of stay abroad (15 years and above) had the highest level of participation in decision-making in their communities representing about 91.7% which mimics a positive association between duration of stay abroad and level of influence at home. This might be attributed to the fact that respondents with longer duration of stays probably had ample time abroad sufficient enough to mobilize the necessary resources required for their return which might have contributed to raising their social standing in their communities after their return. Some of the returnees as revealed from the study (Table 9) have also learnt certain valuable foreign values, attitudes and ideas while abroad which could be useful for the socio-economic development of the nation. For instance, about 20.6% said they have learnt the value of time consciousness followed by those who said they have learnt the general principle of hard work (17.8%).

With respect to the respondents' access to essential household utilities and services, the study revealed that a large number of the return migrants upon return could afford essential household facilities and these included quality water for laundry, dishwashing and drinking and descent energy resources for cooking as discussed in the conceptual framework (Figure 1). For instance, as shown in Table 10, before departure closely about a third (31.1%) of the returnees were using well water for laundry and dishwashing while after their return more than half (55.1%) of them were able to access pipe borne water inside their homes to undertake laundry and dishwashing. It was also revealed from the results that prior to their departure while none of the respondents could afford bottled (mineral) water for drinking, after their return the results confirmed that closely about a quarter (22.4%) of the returnees could afford bottled/mineral water for drinking. On issues relating to the returnees' main sources of energy for cooking food, the results further showed that prior to their departure a significant proportion (46%) of them were using charcoal while after their return the study revealed that more than a sixth (62.1%) were using gas as their main source of energy cooking.

This improvement in the returnees' access to essential household utilities and or facilities could be primarily due to the improvement in their financial status where a higher number of them returned home with sizeable amounts of money.

In general, more than 80% of the returnees said their living conditions have improved after their return due to their migration abroad (Table 12). One negative effect of the improved socio-economic status of the returnees is that it has the propensity to create income differentials between return migrants and non-migrants households in the Municipality. Secondly, the improved socio-economic status of the returnees could serve as incentive for others (non-migrants) to also emigrate abroad thereby impeding the government's resolve to fight against the already high brain drain in the country. In conclusion, some of the returnees had acquired financial and social capital resources which are useful for their personal advancement and the socio-economic development of the country. International migration, therefore, as observed from the study can no longer be viewed absolutely as a drain on sending origin countries but as one of the survival mechanisms for most people in developing economies.

Policy Recommendations

The study has revealed a number of interesting results based upon which useful policies could be evolved. In line with the main findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are made: Among other things, the study has revealed that a higher proportion of the returnees were in their active ages (young). They are therefore in their most economically active ages during which the experience gained abroad could be put into useful purpose. It is therefore recommended that the country's economic development planners should factor return migrants into the scheme of things in Ghana's strive to achieve a higher middle-income status.

Furthermore, a special governmental effort should be made to attract successful Ghanaian nationals in the diaspora to return home. This is important because some of the returnees as revealed in the study have accumulated substantial amounts of financial and social capitals which represent a key potential for the socio-economic development of the nation. Provision of incentives such as access to credit facilities, job creation, tax reliefs, social assistance, and modernization of the country's investment climate are but a few that could be pursued to attract Ghanaians abroad to return home and invest.

Again, government and all stakeholders involved in migration management such as International Organization for Migration (IOM) should through a multi-sectorial approach develop and implement comprehensive programmes such as pre-return information and post-arrival information and counseling and start-up support for returnees to ensure successful reinsertion into the Ghanaian labour market economy and to facilitate an optimum utilization of their financial and social capital resources for the benefit of both returnees and society as a whole.

Moreover, future research regarding the socio-economic status of Ghanaian returnees should be replicated in other cities of the country in order to draw comparative analysis and generalization for the whole nation. Meanwhile, more detailed research could be carried out on each of the identified element that contributed to the improvement in the socio-economic conditions of returnees. This will help determine the relative importance of each of the capitals acquired.

Highlights

- The study assessed the socio-economic conditions of returnees to Ghana
- Most of the returnees were able to save sizeable amounts of money towards their return
- A large percentage of the returnees at return had access to formal financial credit
- Most of the return migrants at return had an improved social capital
- Returnees with longest duration of stay abroad had the highest improved social capital.

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