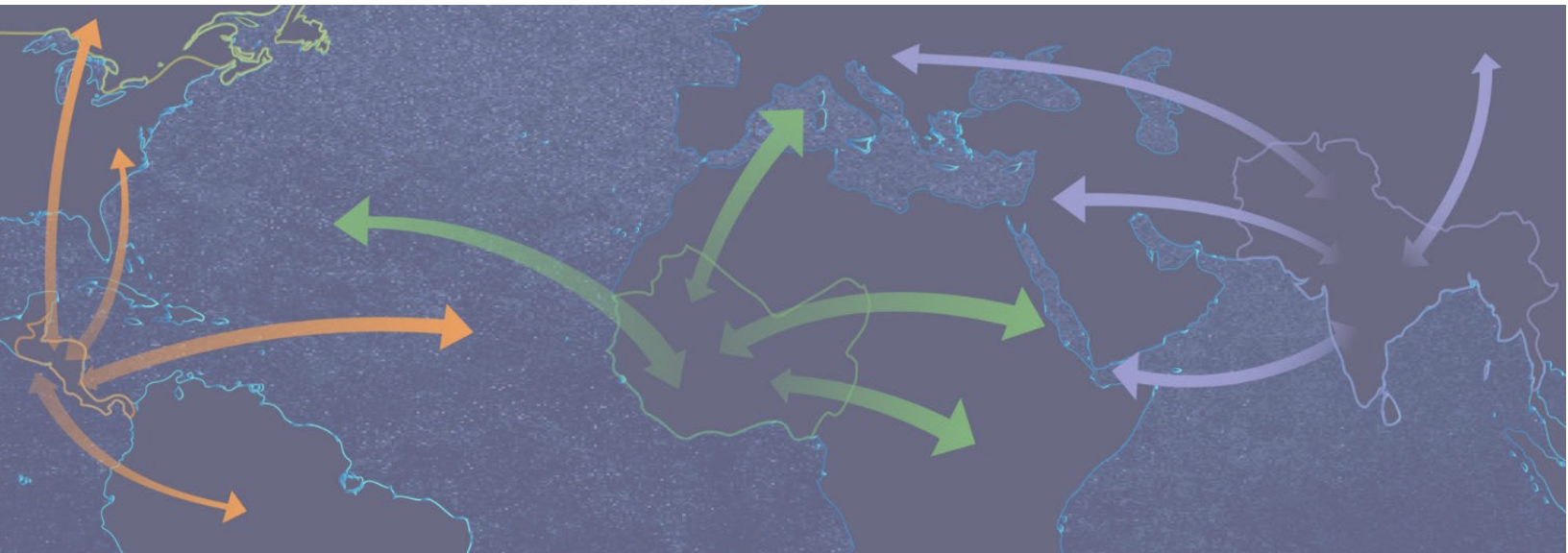


MEMO

Complex Migration Flows and Multiple Drivers in Comparative Perspective

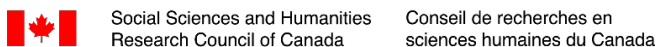


Background country report on Ghana within the migration system of West Africa

The MEMO research partnership is led by:



And is supported by:



The MEMO Research Project

MEMO is a **multidisciplinary project** to develop a socio-ecological system framework that integrates drivers (main contextual factors) and individual determinants of migration; its primary objectives are:

To map the links between internal, intra-regional and intercontinental migration along complex population dynamics and migration systems;

- To describe and interpret the interplay among migration drivers (environmental conditions, demographic and health factors, economic development dynamics, socio-political issues), accounting for cultural and emotional processes that can shape individual decisions to migrate;
- To provide evidence to inform policy and support an efficient and rights-based governance of international migration.

Differences and analogies of migration drivers and determinants are comparatively established across (and within) the following regional migration systems:

- **The Americas** – focusing on migration flows from the northern countries of Central America (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) to Mexico and further North to the USA and Canada.
- **West Africa** – focusing on Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Ivory Coast and their inter-related flows to each other, to neighbouring countries in West Africa and towards Europe and Canada.
- **South Asia** – focusing on Nepal and Bangladesh, internal and cross border flows within South Asia, as well as to Malaysia and Canada. The migration system and population dynamics are described and modelled to capture the plurality of (multi-directional) population flows.

MEMO will contribute innovative analytical tools to support a rights-based governance of migration and related drivers.

Research partner organizations



Background country report on Ghana within the migration system of West Africa

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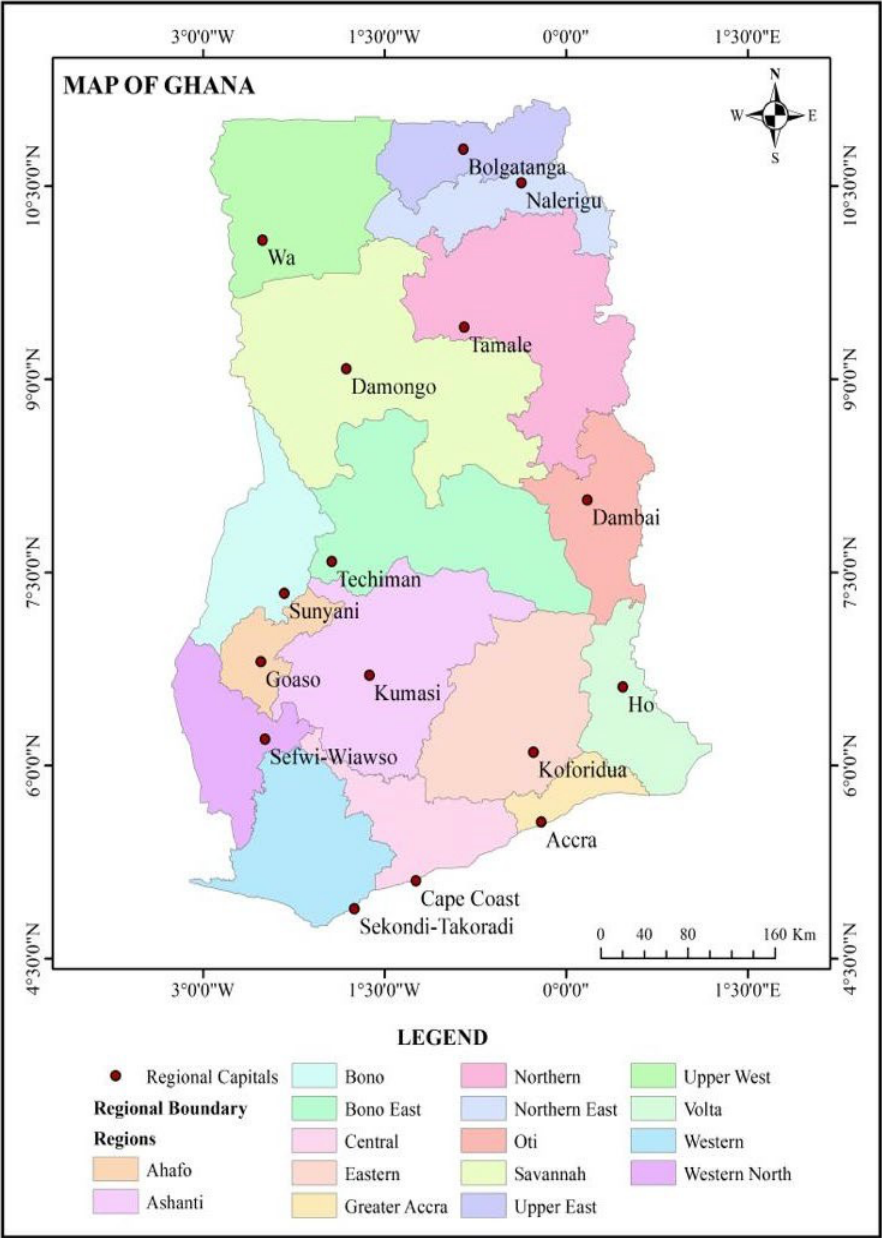
1.0 Introduction

Ghana, a former British Colony, is located along the coastal belt of West Africa and shares borders with Côte d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north and Togo to the east. The country is divided into sixteen administrative regions (Figure 1). Widely celebrated as a beacon of democracy, Ghana has witnessed the development of a relatively well-functioning multi-party democratic system, characterized by peaceful elections and smooth political transitions, following the return to democratic rule in 1992 (Akin and Ade, 2018; Gyimah-Boadi, 2009). Despite recent economic turmoil experienced in the country, which is a direct result of the global economic difficulties posed by COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions on movement, Ghana had previously enjoyed sustained economic growth and improvement in human development (Dzigbede and Pathak, 2020). In 2010, Ghana gained a middle-income status, and as member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the country has adopted and implemented the free movement protocol. The protocol provides visa-free opportunities allowing ECOWAS citizens to enter, reside, and establish business and economic interests in other member countries (Yeboah et al., 2021; Awumbila et al., 2018).

Ghana serves as an interesting case to research and analyze complex migration flows and related drivers. Migration dynamics in the country are complex, especially when considering that Ghana serves as a country of origin, transit, and destination for migration flows. While migration movements in Ghana are highly complex and dynamic, migration flows are overwhelmingly rooted in historical antecedents (Bump, 2006). Additionally, internal mobility during the pre-colonial era was a result of the need for shelter, favorable ecological conditions, as well as greater stability and peace during the tribal wars in the country (Hill, 1977). These movements were largely dominated by male adults, while women and children accompanied their families (Setrana and Kleist, 2022).

In the colonial era, the government undertook a system of urban biased development, where the coastal and southern belts, endowed with natural resources, were developed to promote an economic agenda of exports, with little or no significant effort to develop the resource-scarce northern territories (Songsore, 2011). In effect, the northern peripheral served as a 'labour reservoir' for the development and expansion of the capitalist export economy in southern Ghana (Van Hear, 1982). Thus, migration trends in the country during the colonial era were structured along a north-south divide, with many people moving from the resource-scarce and poor regions of the north to the attractive economies of the south. This trend of migration has continued in the period of Ghana's post-independence, with many individuals (men, women, youth, and even children) moving from northern parts of the country to the south in search of better employment and other opportunities.

Figure 1: Map of Ghana and administrative regions



In recent years, prevalent trends of migration have involved a growing number of young Ghanaian men and women seeking to embark on perilous journeys, or – what is popularly referred to – as the ‘boat migration’ to Europe and the Middle East. Additionally, young people are participating in internal rural-to-urban migration along the north-south path, often for economic reasons. There is also a growing exodus of labour migrants, including healthcare workers, to the countries of the Western Europe, and the trafficking of children in the fisheries-sector around the region of Lake Volta (Agyeman-Manu et al., 2023; Mbamba et al., 2022). Environmental changes also contribute to migration, with extreme weather

events, such as flooding and coastal erosion, resulting in the displacement of persons (Amo-Agyemang, 2022; Teye and Nikoi, 2022). Since the turn of the new millennium, Ghana has also attracted significant numbers of foreign nationals, seeking to participate and establish businesses in real estate, oil and gas, retail trade, agriculture, and, more importantly, in the large, and small-scale mining sectors. The gold rush, which began from 2005, is reported to have driven several thousands of Chinese migrants to Ghana to work in the small-scale gold mining sector (Botchwey et al., 2019).

2.0 Migration dynamics

2.1 Immigration trends and flows

Immigration, which in this case refers to the movement of persons from other countries to Ghana, dates to the “caravan era” in which market traders from Niger and Nigeria moved either permanently or seasonally/temporarily to Ghana (then Gold Coast). Colonial and post-colonial immigration in Ghana largely consisted of seasonal or temporal migrants seeking to take advantage of employment opportunities in the mining and agricultural sub-sectors. According to some scholars, these immigrants mostly migrated having left their families behind, but maintained strong ties with cultures and languages of origin (Awumbila et al 2011; Anarfi et al., 2000).

Following independence in 1957 and owing to its own relative wealth, Ghana became a haven for immigrants from and within West Africa, especially throughout the early parts of the 1960s (Schans et al., 2013). Political and economic factors mediated migration flows during that period. An example is the civil conflict in Nigeria, which led to massive emigration of Nigerians towards Ghana (Yeboah, 1986). The dynamism of mining and agricultural plantation estates offered employment opportunities and higher earning potentials, and this was a major incentive for large numbers of immigrants who moved to Ghana from neighbouring countries. The promotion of Pan-Africanism as part of Kwame Nkrumah’s foreign policy also served as a major driver of immigration to the country (International Organisation for Migration, 2020).

Statistics show that the size of the immigrant population in Ghana has been declining over time. In 1969, facilitated by anti-immigrant sentiments (i.e., the view that migrants are a threat to the economy), the government of Ghana enacted the Aliens Compliance Order, which led to the deportation of immigrants without legal residence permits. The implementation of the Aliens Compliance Order led to the deportation of between 155,000 and 213,000 migrants, many of whom originated from Nigeria, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger, Togo, and Mali (International Organisation for Migration, 2020). In 1960, the Population and Housing census estimated that the share of immigrants, as a percentage of population residing in Ghana, was 12% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). However, by 1969, this proportion had decreased substantially to 3%, as a direct result of the Aliens Compliance

enactment. Ghana experienced economic deterioration in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and this resulted in a further decline of immigrant population stock. However, in 2000, the immigrant population increased to 3.9% (International Organisation for Migration 2020). The marginal was mainly due to the ECOWAS free movement protocol, which provides visa free opportunities for ECOWAS nationals to travel in the sub-region (Awumbila et al., 2014)

Available data shows that most of the immigrant population in Ghana originates from neighbouring West Africa countries. For example, in 2000, more than half (58.9%) of immigrants residing in Ghana were from ECOWAS member countries, while 23% originated from other African countries outside of ECOWAS. According to the Ghana Immigration Service (2018), from 2000 to 2007, Europeans represented the largest group of non-African immigrants (15.3%) residing in Ghana, followed by North Americans (9.7%). In 2007, an estimated 8.5% of residence permits were issued to students (Ghana Immigration Service, 2018). Recent data from UN DESA shows that Ghana hosted a total of 466,780 immigrants' stock in 2019. This represents about 30% rise in the immigrant population recorded in 2010 (UNDESA, 2019).

Over the past decades, ECOWAS migrants continue to remain the major migrant populations in Ghana. For example, of the international migrant stock, ECOWAS nationals constituted 75.3% in 2017, and this increased to 83.6% in 2019. In the same year, the top three countries of origin of migrants in Ghana included Togo (101,677), Nigeria (79,023), and Côte d'Ivoire (72,728) (UN DESA 2019). This likely reflects the implementation of the ECOWAS free movement protocol which provides visa-free opportunities for ECOWAS citizens to reside in member countries for an initial period of 90-days (and is renewable on reasonable or acceptable grounds).

In terms of migration flows, data for Ghana is not available from UNDESA's data collection. The existing data on migration flows comes largely from administrative data gathered at border-crossing check points by the Ghana Immigration Service. The data indicates that inflows have increased steadily over the past few years, except for 2014-15 when the Ebola epidemic stemmed mobility flows. It is also possible that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted inflows to Ghana in 2021 and 2022 due to restricted movement and closure of national borders. However, prior to COVID-19, inflows increased from 932,579 in 2016 to 971,861 in 2017, and then in 2019 reached 956,372 (Ghana Immigration Service, 2016; 2018; IOM, 2020). In terms of flows, Nigerians represented the largest groups entering Ghana (after Ghanaians), followed by American and British nationals in 2018. The same observation can be made for inflows in 2017 except that Americans recorded the largest group followed by Nigerians and British nationals (Table 1). In sum, while this data offers valuable insights into the patterns of population inflows to Ghana over time, it fails to capture migrants who enter Ghana through unofficial channels or routes, as these categories of migrants are not captured in official statistics.

In terms of policy and national laws, four key aspects of policy drive contemporary immigration in Ghana. First, the Immigration Act of 2000 serves as the cardinal legislation that governs immigration in Ghana. The Act serves “to re-enact with amendments the law relating to immigration; to provide for the admission, residence, employment and removal of foreign nationals and to provide for related matters” (Immigration Act 2000, p.2). Second, the recently formulated National Labour Migration Policy (2016) provides approaches and strategies for governing immigration and protecting the rights of labour immigrants. Third, the ECOWAS free movement protocol provides ECOWAS nationals with visa-free

opportunities to move to Ghana and to access employment and other opportunities. Finally, the Refugee Law 1992 sets the context for framing refugees in the country (Kandilige et al. 2022).

Table 1: Inflows to Ghana by country of origin

Country of Origin	Inflows	Percentage of Total
Ghana	286,157	29.92
Nigeria	82,648	8.64
United States	78,144	8.17
United Kingdom	49,085	5.13
India	23,426	2.45
China	19,729	2.06
Côte d’Ivoire	17,825	1.86
Germany	17,755	1.86
South Africa	16,550	1.73
Burkina Faso	13,479	1.41
Liberia	13,445	1.41
Netherlands	12,722	1.33
France	12,253	1.28
Canada	12,134	1.27
Togo	9,728	1.02
Lebanon	6,848	0.72
Australia	4,922	0.51
Others	279,522	29.23
Total	956,372	100

Source: Ghana Immigration Service, 2019

Ghana has been a destination for immigrants mainly from West Africa but also the United States and the United Kingdom. As a signatory to the ECOWAS free movement protocol, Ghana has served and continues to serve as a popular destination for immigrants from the west African sub-region. Flows have increased over the years. However, the onset of COVID-19 pandemic had effects on immigration flows, mainly because of national borders’ closure. However, following the removal of the COVID-19 restrictions, immigration flows have begun to increase again.

2.2 Emigration trends and flows

The economic dynamism and attractiveness of Ghana as a haven for immigrants started declining in the mid-1960s, largely due to several episodes of political instability and economic difficulties, followed by high levels of unemployment and high poverty rates. This era saw the first massive international emigration of Ghanaians but also of foreign nationals who resided in Ghana at the time. This wave of emigration involved mainly Ghanaian professionals, such as administrators, lawyers, and teachers, who moved to other African countries, most notably Côte d'Ivoire or Nigeria (IOM, 2020). Ghanaians emigrated for educational pursuit, then returned to Ghana and, reportedly, decided to re-emigrate and look for employment opportunities in their destination countries (Anarfi, Ofosu-Mensah and Ababio, 2017). In 1979, The ECOWAS free movement protocol came into effect (four years after the establishment of ECOWAS), facilitating a second massive emigration of West African citizens including Ghanaians (Yeboah et al., 2021; Awumbila et al., 2018).

The third phase of emigration from Ghana was characterized by the increase in migration flows and in the number of destination countries, as well as the involvement of different categories of individuals, including, but not limited to, skilled professionals. In fact, in the early 1980s, growing numbers of unskilled persons emigrated from the coastal and southern belt of Ghana to the neighbouring West African countries. The high unemployment rate, poverty, and inflation which resulted directly from the implementation of stabilization and adjustment policies of the Bretton Woods institutions, coupled with the severe drought experienced in 1981 and 1982, led to substantial emigration flows from all sectors of the Ghanaian society. Popular destination areas included traditional African and English-speaking countries, but also new destinations such as South Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America and North Africa (Schans et al., 2013). Moreover, an estimated 1.2 million Ghanaian nationals were expelled from Nigeria between 1983 and 1985, and many returned to Ghana and shortly afterward migrated to other countries (Schans et al., 2013).

The emigration flows continued unabated throughout the 1990s, and by then a well-defined Ghanaian diaspora had been established in popular destination countries, such as Italy, Germany, United States of America, United Kingdom, and more recently the Netherlands. While unskilled migrants mostly migrated to either Italy or Germany, many skilled migrants tended to move to English-speaking nations. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, massive out-migration of Ghanaian health professionals, especially to the United Kingdom, United States and Canada, became a key concern for policy debate, in the light of limited domestic supply of health professionals (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

Statistics on the stock of Ghanaians living outside the country show an upward increase over time. For example, according to UN DESA (2019), the number of Ghanaians living outside of Ghana witnessed a sharp rise from 716,004 in 2010, to 970,625 in 2019. The difference between the male and female emigrants' stock was six percentage points, with male

emigrants accounting for 53% whereas their female counterparts represented 47%. Compared to other regions, Africa hosted the greatest share of Ghanaian emigrants for the years 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019, followed by Europe and North America. Unsurprisingly, Western Africa has remained the most preferred destination for Ghanaian migrants within the African continent. In 2019, the majority (96%) of Ghanaians in Africa resided in West Africa, partly as a result of the ECOWAS free movement protocol and the historical trend of high mobility of Ghanaians within the sub-region (Awumbila et al., 2018; UN DESA, 2019; Yeboah et al., 2021).

In 2000, Nigeria hosted the highest number of Ghanaian migrants, followed by Cote d'Ivoire, the United States, Burkina Faso, and Italy (Table 2).

Table 2 Ghanaian migrants, top 10 destination countries, 2000 and 2010

Rank	Destination Country	Migrant Stock (2000)	Destination Country (2010)	Migrant Stock (2010)
1	Nigeria	123,169	Nigeria	186,015
2	Cote d'Ivoire	75,072	Côte d'Ivoire	111,001
3	United States	68,432	United States	110,931
4	Burkina Faso	42,086	United Kingdom	96,795
5	Italy	34,481	Burkina Faso	50,217
6	Togo	28,291	Italy	49,931
7	Germany	22,996	Togo	39,247
8	Canada	16,586	Germany	34,153
9	Liberia	12,790	Canada	21,920
10	Netherlands	10,873	Liberia	15,785

Source: data from UN DESA 2020 elaborated by the authors.

Table 2 further shows that migrant stock in Nigeria increased from 123,169 to 186,015 representing a 66% rise between 2000 and 2010. Cote d'Ivoire ranked second with a migrant stock of 111,001, an increase from 75,072 in the year 2000. The United States (110,931), United Kingdom (96,795), and Burkina Faso (50,217) also hosted a significant proportion of the Ghanaian migrants in the year 2010.

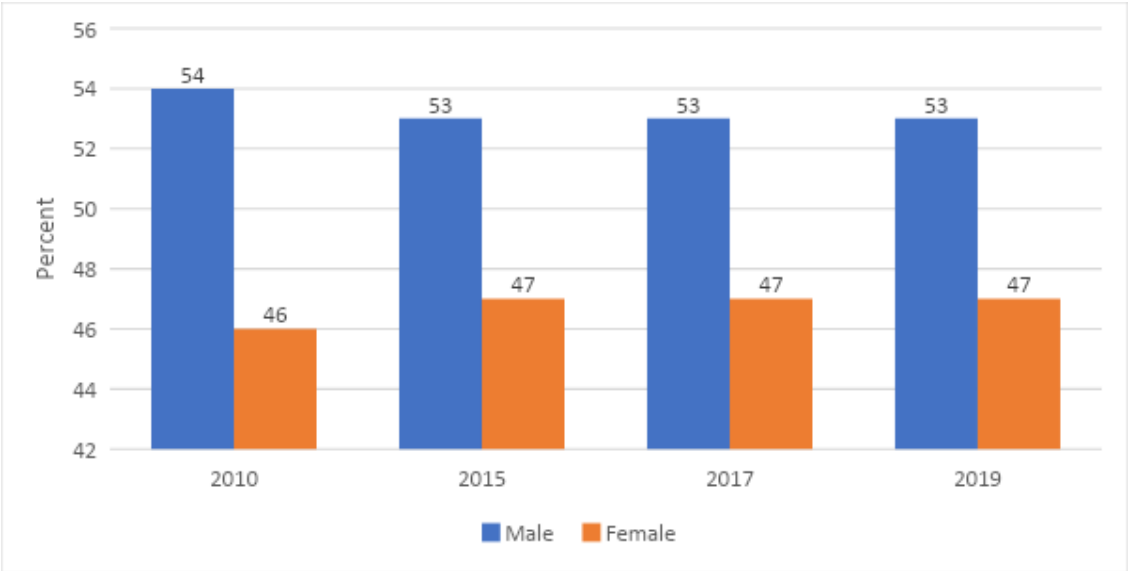
Table 3 shows that Nigeria was the first destination of Ghanaian emigrants in 2017, with a total migrant stock of 229,048. The United States overtook Cote d'Ivoire as the second top destination country for Ghanaian migrants in 2017. The Ghanaian migrant population in the United States increased from 110,931 in 2010 to 171,428 in 2017. The United Kingdom was ranked the third destination country, with a stock of 87,000 Ghanaians, a drop from the previous 96,795 recorded in 2010. Cote d'Ivoire was ranked as the fourth destination with a migrant population of 48,070, a decrease from its previous figure of 111,001 in 2010 (Table 3). This was likely due to the political crisis experienced in the country, which redirected migration flows away from Cote d'Ivoire.

Table 3: Ghanaian migrants, top 10 destination countries, 2017

Rank	Destination country	Migrant Stock
1	Nigeria	229,048
2	United States	171,428
3	United Kingdom	87,000
4	Cote d'Ivoire	48,070
5	Togo	47,997
6	Italy	47,287
7	Burkina Faso	33,242
8	Germany	33,000
9	Canada	24,718
10	Mali	19,505

In 2019, the top three destination countries for Ghanaian migrants include Nigeria, the United States, and the United Kingdom. An estimated 233,002, representing 24% of emigrants from Ghana, were living in Nigeria in 2019. In the same year, the Ghanaian migrant population in the United States was 173,952, accounting for 17.9%, and the United Kingdom was home to the largest Ghanaian migrant population in Europe, accounting for 140,920 (14.5%). The sex composition of Ghanaian emigrants over time shows that Ghanaian males slightly outnumber their female counterparts (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sex composition of Ghanaian migrants (stocks) in 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019



Source: UN DESA 2019

Three key elements are central to driving policy on emigration in Ghana in contemporary times. They include:

- i) **Ghana’s membership and signatory to the ECOWAS free movement protocol.** With Ghana a founding member of ECOWAS and a signatory to the free movement protocol, Ghanaian nationals enjoy visa free opportunity to travel to other ECOWAS member countries. This potentially explains the large proportion of Ghanaian migrants living in countries, such as Nigeria and Cote D’Ivoire.
- ii) **An emphasis on the protection and rights of Ghanaian migrants living abroad.** Although labour migration from Ghana to the Gulf states dates to the 1990s, the recently reported cases of abuse of the domestic workers’ rights in the Middle East led the Ghanaian government to place a ban on labour recruitment and to require that recruitment agencies obtain new licenses (see Atong et al., 2018; Kandilige et al., 2022). However, there are on-going bilateral arrangements between the government of Ghana and countries of the Middle East to lift the ban and streamline labour recruitment from Ghana to the Gulf states.
- iii) **Renewed commitments to implement policies and strategies to curb irregular migration to Europe.** The initiatives have taken the form of information campaigns about the dangers of irregular migration, and the local programs for job creation, the provision of skills and vocational training for youth. These initiatives are funded by international organizations. For example, the Ghanaian-Germany Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration support the promotion of job creation in Ghana to discourage young people from embarking on irregular migration to Europe (Kandilige et al., 2022).

3.0 Intra-regional migration dynamics

In Ghana, like most countries globally, internal migration has been a primordial human phenomenon and the most common form of human movement. This assertion is supported by official data from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2010) cited by Awumbila (2015) which emphasized that about 90 percent of Ghana's current migration occurs within the geographical boundaries of the country. This is also consistent with the evidence in a study by Ackah and Medvedev (2012) which showed that more than 43 percent of all households had at least one internal migrant from 2005 to 2006. Notwithstanding the copious number and the fact that internal migration is an inherent component of general migration discussions and narratives in Ghana, the term "migration" is most frequently linked with international migration. The considerable scholarly attention given to international migration could be attributed to the transboundary character and associated difficulties with international migration. It is interesting to note that, as a result of the enormous consideration afforded to international migration, most policymakers, and scholars, however, have failed to recognize that internal migration has, if not superior, similar social, cultural, economic as well as political effects on society and also offers similar implications for development (Ackah and Medvedev, 2012; Van der Geest, 2011). This assertion was corroborated in a study by Awumbila (2015) who reported that internal migration is an integral component of the processes of development and social transformation in any part of the world. She further emphasized that while international migration is frequently the emphasis in Africa, especially in Ghana, internal migration is significantly more important for development in regard to the number of individuals migrating and perhaps the quantity of remittances, which can improve migrants' wellbeing as well as transform their origin community. A study by Jedwab and Moradi (2012) suggested that, since the consolidation of British colonial power in 1896 and the simultaneous growth of the cocoa and mining sectors, internal migration in Ghana has been a significant phenomenon for socio-economic transformation. Also, as revealed by Beals and Menezes (1970), seasonal agricultural production in different regions encouraged temporary migration, which in turn promoted economic and social expansion, especially in the agriculture sector and most agrarian communities.

As indicated above, internal migration in Ghana dates back from the pre-colonial era, through to colonial rule and it still finds expression in the current dispensation. Although Berg (1965) suggested that there has been academic research on migration in Ghana since 1900, Ackah and Medvedev (2012) reported that attempts to understand the roots, triggers, patterns, and effects of internal migration in Ghana using empirical methods and discourses only began in the 1960s. Internal migration in Ghana can be classified into four categories: rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-urban, and return migration (urban to rural) (Ofuoku, 2012; Eze, 2016; Alarima, 2018). Among these various typologies, rural-urban migration is considered the most common form of internal migration – a claim in line with the official figures of the Ghana

Statistical Service, which indicated that roughly, 90 percent of migrants from Ghana remain in the country (as noted above) and that, among them, 70 percent migrate to urban centres (Ackah and Medvedev, 2012). Awumbila et al. (2014) not only confirmed this claim but further emphasized that rural dwellers use migration as an important adaptive and livelihood plan in reaction to diverse social events, structural change, and adjustment. As a result, it is common knowledge that rural-urban movement accounts for the majority of migration within Ghana.

In Ghana, inter-regional migration is a more significant type of migration than inter-district movement within regions (Castaldo et al., 2012). It is significant to mention that Ghana had 10 official administrative regions as of December 2018, however, six new regions have been formed from the Western, Northern, Volta, and Brong Ahafo regions, adding six (Oti, Savanna, North-East, Bono East, Ahafo, Western North) new regions to the previous 10 regions. A study by Molini et al. (2016) suggested that more than half of all internal migrants are drawn to the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions, where these migrants make up a considerable portion of the population of these two regions. In a study conducted two decades ago, Tutu (1995) also added that 88 percent of Ghana's internal migrants go to the southern regions, which comprise the Western, Western North, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Oti, Volta, and Ashanti regions, whereas just five percent of migrants move to the Northern Savanna zone which constitutes Upper East, Upper West, Savanna, North-East and Northern regions. The majority of the country's population, or 70 percent, resides in the same southern regions, among which internal migrants are a significant part of the population in these southern areas (Castaldo et al., 2012).

Table 4 below highlights the dynamic nature of population movement across different regions in Ghana, showcasing variations in in-migration and out-migration rates. The table reveals that the Greater Accra Region has attracted the highest influx of migrants surpassing all other regions. Subsequent regions include Western, Ahafo, and Western North. A comparison with the 2010 census data indicates shifts in the regions drawing populations through migration in the country. Although Greater Accra remains the foremost region in attracting migrants. The Western Region, which was the second most significant migrant destination in Ghana in 2010. Notably, all regions experienced decreased in-migration rates in the 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) compared to the 2010 PHC. In the northern part of the country, three regions attract populations at the lowest rates: Upper East, North-East, and Upper West. Conversely, excluding the Volta Region, which recorded the highest out-migration rate, Upper West and Upper East regions continue to exhibit some of the highest out-migration rates in the country. The Eastern Region remains a significant out-migrating region in Ghana, followed by Ahafo Region and Central Region. Regions with the lowest rates of out-migration are Greater Accra, Bono East, Ashanti and Northern.

Table 4: Migrant population in Ghanaian regions

Region	Population size	Population of in-migrants	Population of out-migrants
Western	1,930,712	561,513	216,882
Central	2,887,942	437,518	495,404
Greater Accra	4,255,507	1,492,378	386,377
Volta	2,058,801	120,595	555,484
Eastern	3,153,869	378,422	622,350
Ashanti	5,204,646	768,918	561,064
Western North	820,347	155,841	100,591
Ahafo	542,850	115,239	95,829
Bono	1,224,616	150,148	172,759
Bono East	1,128,294	189,427	120,839
Oti	772,279	76,049	110,969
Northern	2,475,846	91,134	269,712
Savannah	674,658	47,323	79,601
North-East	736,372	15,294	96,819
Upper East	1,587,191	32,378	324,340

Sources: GSS, 2021

4.0 Inter-continental migration dynamics

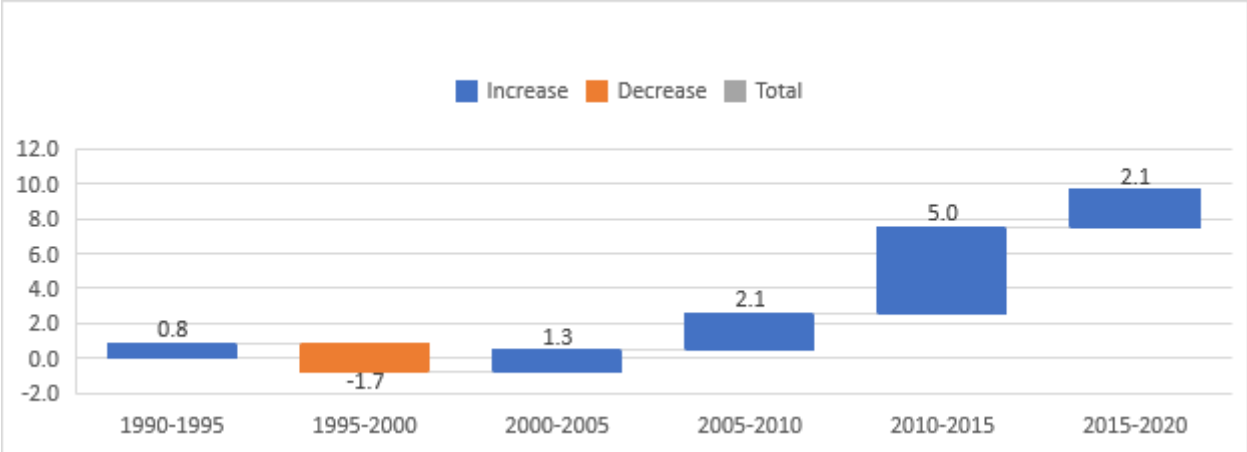
Media and popular sentiment regard Africa as a continent on the move. Within media and policy narratives, there is a widespread perception that African migration is directed towards Europe and often shaped by environmental stress, conflict, and poverty. Flahaux and De Haas (2016) argue that the fundamental issue with these perspectives is that they are not based on theoretically informed and sound empirical evidence. Rather, they are largely shaped by journalistic parodies, beliefs, and choosy observations. Nevertheless, a growing body of empirical research based on large-scale quantitative evidence, ethnographic accounts, and localized case studies on contemporary African migration have shown that much of the migration that takes place in Africa is largely not directed towards Europe, but instead towards other African countries (Bakewell & Jónsson, 2011; Berriane & De Haas, 2012; Lessault & Beauchemin, 2009; Lessault & Flahaux, 2013; Schielke & Graw, 2012; Whitehouse, 2012). These studies have shined a light on the diversity of African migration

and highlight that the bulk of African migration takes place within the continent. It is also evident that African migration is directed toward other continents including the Americas, the Gulf States and Europe (Flahaux and De Haas, 2016).

The stock of international migrants in Africa increased substantially from 15,051,677 to 25,389,464 between 2000 and 2020 (UNDESA, 2020; Mo Ibrahim Foundation and Africa-Europe Foundation, 2022). There is an increasing trend in the rate of change in the migrant stock, having increased from 1.3% to 5.0% between 2000 and 2015 (see figure 4).

Nevertheless, the rate of increase in the international migrant stock stalled in 2020 owing largely to the COVID-19 crisis and its inspired legislations of lockdown and travel restrictions imposed by governments nearly everywhere on the continent (and elsewhere).

Figure 4: Annual rate of change of the migrant stock in Africa, 1990-2020



Source: UN DESA 2020

It is estimated that nearly 80 percent of African people have no interest to move to countries outside of Africa (Mo Ibrahim Foundation and Africa-Europe Foundation, 2022). Existing research has shown that the overwhelming volume of both involuntary (e.g., refugees and internally displaced persons) and voluntary migration (e.g., farm labourers, traders, skilled workers) has been essentially intraregional (Teye et al., 2015; Adepoju, 2015). Recent statistics show that more than half (53%) of all migrants of African descent live within the continent, while less than a third move to Europe (26%) and the remaining 24% migrated to Oceania, North America and Asia (UNDESA, 2020). In some regional economic blocs, such as Southern Africa, Central Africa and West Africa, a far higher proportion (70%) of migrants move within the sub-region. Much of this movement encompasses cross-border trade and travel, and contributes to helping fill gaps in labour demand in critical sectors, economic stability, and socio-economic well-being of both origin and destination countries. Table 5 shows the top 10 destination countries for migration in Africa with key economic hubs including Nigeria, South Africa and Côte d’Ivoire being among the top destination countries.

Table 5: Top 10 African destinations for migrants by numbers of migrants

Country of Destination	Immigrant Population	Total Population	Percentage Immigrant population
South Africa	2,860,495	58,801,926	5
Côte d'Ivoire	2,564,857	26,811,790	10
Uganda	1, 720,313	44,404, 611	4
Sudan	1, 379, 147	44,440,486	3
Nigeria	1, 308,568	208, 327,404	1
Ethiopia	1,085,517	117,190,911	1
Kenya	1,050,147	51,985,780	2
Democratic Republic of Congo	952,871	92,853, 164	1
South Sudan	882, 252	10,606,227	8
Libya	826,537	6,653,942	12

Source: UN DESA 2019

In terms of drivers, existing evidence has shown that desires to pursue trade, agriculture, and engage in other socio-economic endeavours (e.g., crop production, fishing), which have been in existence for several decades, shape population flows on the continent (Setrana and Arhin-Sam, 2020). Desires to pursue further education and seek employment opportunities also shape migration patterns from Africa. Indeed, the dynamic of population movement in Africa has been that countries with relatively stable and robust economic outlooks have become centres of attraction to a greater share of African labour migrants. For example, of the 6.4 million international migrants that reside in Africa, South Africa hosted an estimated 2.9 million which represent 45.3% in mid-2020. The existence of a good business climate, as well as opportunities for employment in the informal economy in the South African context, serve as a force that pulls migrants from neighbouring countries including Malawi, Lesotho, Mozambique, and Eswatini. Generally, these migrant groups consist of low skilled and highly skilled workers who are yearning to take advantage of opportunities in the manufacturing, agriculture and service sectors (Yeboah, 2021; Owusu and Yeboah, 2018).

5.0 Decision-making for migration

Migration decision making has often been described as a complex process involving several considerations and is often shaped by a combination of multiple economic, social, cultural and environmental factors (Czaika et al., 2021; Kwankye et al., 2009). These factors are further reinforced by an individual's personal agency. In the context of migration, agency refers to the ability of migrants to make choices regarding the decision to move, 'reduce uncertainty about their migration environment and on returning home' (Schenk, 2020: p.637). In Ghana, the decision to move is fundamentally shaped by rural poverty dynamics, land degradation, agriculture and growth in administrative sectors. Yeboah's (2018) work with young people who move from northern to southern Ghana showed that the decision to embark on migration is often self-propelled though shaped and informed by structural constraints that include poverty and material hardship, conflict and abuse, as well as unequal power relations. Thus, while some young men and women demonstrate their willingness and agency to move, the final decision to embark on migration is an outcome of the poverty, material hardship and gender norms that place different expectations and responsibilities on young men and women (Yeboah, 2021; 2018).

Young migrants in Togo who encounter intergenerational conflict in villages actively weigh their options, no matter how limited, and choose to move away from home on reasoning that reflects their personal values without the knowledge of any peer, sibling, parent or elders (Romano, 2014). However, Kwankye's (2012) study revealed that among a sample of 451 young migrants who embark on internal migration in Ghana, two-thirds of the female migrants took personal decisions, while more than half of the male migrants made decisions that were initiated by adult relatives other than themselves. This highlights the influence of family members in determining the migration decision-making processes. Indeed, rural households in Ghana play an influential role in the decision-making process by, for example, allowing younger siblings to migrate to urban localities while older youth are compelled to stay behind to cultivate and till the land (Yeboah 2018).

The work of Tamanja (2016) highlights three main dimensions of the decision-making processes involving internal migration of young people in Ghana. These include unilateral, consultative and imposed drivers, and the actors involved are mainly the youth, households, and community members respectively. By a unilateral driver, Tamanja (2016) means that the decision to embark on migration is influenced largely by young people themselves without the involvement of any household member. At the consultation level, the decision to

migrate involves consultation with household members and other community members. At the level of imposition, the decision to migrate may not be the preference of young people, but rather the decision of household members. While Tamanja found that such situations are mostly rare, in some cases this may entail trafficking where young people are coerced to travel with adults that they do not know. The study further highlights a tripartite consultative decision-making process where the young person, family and community members are involved in the decision-making process. The involvement of community members may manifest through provision of information and advice about the opportunities that migration may offer to youngsters. Study participants regarded this approach as the most acceptable and preferable, since it allowed for the consent of parents, which is key to minimize, if not completely prevent, trafficking and abuse of youngsters in the migration process.

Setrana (2021) found the migration decision-making among the youth in Ghana is not a one-time incident. It involves careful considerations and negotiations that may span over several years. The decision to move is shaped first by obtaining information about migration processes (including information about recruitment agencies, jobs, migration route, charges of recruitment agencies, realities of the living situation in the destination, contacts in destination countries who may offer valuable help, and how to earn income in preparation for migration). While economic incentives (e.g., seeking better employment opportunities and income) were reported as the main driver for migration, the decision to move may be influenced by peers.

Some studies have highlighted the importance of social media in shaping migration decision-making in Ghana and West Africa (Setrana, 2021). Social media is regarded as a platform that connects prospective migrants to friends, and successful migrants who provide information about jobs, accommodation, living situations, and other relevant information at the destination, and this may shape the decision to migrate or not (Akpakpo and Bopkin, 2021). Setrana (2021) reports that young people's decisions to migrate both through regular and irregular means are often shaped by the information that they receive from their peers, and often through social media platforms. Thus, prior to migration, prospective migrants seek assurances and information from colleagues or family members through social media regarding employment, income, and general living conditions. As part of the integration process, migrants also rely on social media for opportunities and new networks. In effect, social media serves as an influential element in the migration decision-making process (Awumbila et al. 2017; Alencar 2018; Hidayati 2019).

However, it must be underscored that social media facilitates the exchange of information in ways not previously available, but it is not an independent factor on its own like economic incentives. Kirwin and Anderson (2018) have studied the decision-making process for migration among West African migrants (including Ghanaians) to Europe and found that it is not instinctive: that is, people are not making quick, rash decisions to migrate. Rather, it involves careful planning and engagement in diverse activities throughout the course of the journey to Europe. Many West African migrants nurture the decision to move for several

years and engage family and friends, as well as the selling of assets to raise the funds needed for the journey. According to the authors, for some migrants the decision to migrate from West Africa to Europe is a multi-stage process. Many migrants first decide to move to countries along the course of their destination to work, sometimes even for years, to accumulate capital needed before continuing the journey. While many predominantly rely on phone calls to obtain information about their potential destination countries, some also rely on social media (WhatsApp, Facebook) to obtain information on how to travel, and this plays a crucial role in the decision to move or not (Kirwin and Anderson, 2018). The long-term planning of migration decision and movement also hold true for cross-continental and inter-continental migration. For example, some studies have shown that Ghanaians who undertake migration from Ghana to Libya spend several months or years working, whether in the farm or non-farm, to mobilize the needed financial resources for their migration journey. In the process of movement, some move to neighbouring countries, such as Cote D'Ivoire or Burkina, before moving to their final destination (Mahama, 2022).

The Mixed Migration Centre (2021) has studied the drivers and decision-making of migration involving migrants moving from West-Central Africa to West-North Africa. The research concludes by noting that the decision-making process is multi-faceted, and therefore a holistic perspective is needed to better understand migration decision-making. Migration aspirations may entail different elements that shape decision-making processes. The desire to move may be an outcome of the willingness to seek change in one or more areas of people's circumstances. These factors may be exacerbated by social influences which can exert overt or covert pressure in their own right. The decision to embark on cross-border migration may be the result of people seeking change in their lives. The Mixed Migration Centre (2021) study found that the factors contributing to migration often interact with each other, and it may be an extremely difficult task to find one single, clear-cut explanation for migration. For example, among the respondents who reported that COVID-19 or environmental factors impacted their decision to migrate, most (69%) of the migrants and refugees who participated in the study reported that the decision to move was in response to multiple factors. They suggested that this decision was in response to the influence of someone or something. In the majority of cases, the actors who influenced the decision were close contacts such as friends, parents, and other family members. The study further noted that it is only in a small number of cases that smugglers influenced people's decisions to embark on migration, indicative of the fact that the role of smugglers in migration decision-making may be overly stated. This deserves further careful analysis recognizing that other studies have shed a light on the important role of smugglers, unscrupulous recruitment agencies, or individuals in shaping the migration decisions of people in West Africa and elsewhere. The Mixed Migration (2021) study further highlighted the important role of individual agency in shaping migration decision-making in West and Central Africa. The report notes that more than a third of the sample (34%) based its decision to migrate on personal choices such as age and family status.

Finally, some studies have also alluded to ecological factors as key driver of migration in Ghana and West Africa. For example, a recent study by Azumah and Ahmed (2023) which collected data from 500 farmers in rural Ghana found that the decision to migrate was informed by limited rainfall and drought conditions which affect farming livelihoods. This is consistent with the existing research that showed how climatic factors contribute to migration of rural farmers to cities (Teye and Nikoi, 2022; Santos and Mourato, 2022; Jarawura, 2013). Jarawura (2013) argues that climate change manifested in long periods of dry conditions is a major driver of labour migration from the North to the South of Ghana. In comparison to political, economic and ethnic factors, recent patterns of mobility in Ghana have shown that climate change is gradually becoming a key compelling factor that drives human mobility (Azumah and Ahmed (2023). In case of West Africa, Teye and Nikoi (2022) has shown that flooding in some parts of countries within the sub-region contribute to population displacement. They further note that while it may be challenging to disentangle climate drivers from social and economic forces, seasonal and permanent migration are increasingly becoming a livelihood diversification for people in West Africa to cope or deal with climate variability. Although population flows occur in response to climate change and variability, migration has not fully been integrated into policy strategies on climate change adaptation by governments in the sub-region (Teye and Nikoi, 2022)

Overall it is evident that migration decision making is complex and it is influenced by a number of factors spanning economic, social, cultural and environmental.

6.0 Discussion of findings of the literature review and setting a research agenda

Overall, the findings from the literature suggest that Ghana is a country that features pronounced and dynamic immigration and emigration trends. Migration in Ghana has a long history and dates to the precolonial era. The need to search for employment opportunities, as well as fertile land for agricultural purposes and trade, shapes Ghanaian migration patterns. However, colonial and post-colonial immigration in Ghana has largely consisted of seasonal or temporal migrants seeking to take advantage of employment opportunities in the mining and agricultural sub-sectors. As a popular destination for migrants, Ghana attracts migrants from all over the world. However, the bulk of migrants in Ghana is comprised of West African citizens mainly because of the ECOWAS free movement protocol. Additionally, emigrants from Ghana are likely largely directed towards other countries (especially Nigeria) in the West Africa sub-region. There are also migration flows to Europe and the Americas, and recent flows are directed toward the Gulf states. Internal and cross-border migration in Ghana involves skilled and unskilled migrants yearning to take advantage of opportunities in trade, agriculture and other activities. Such movements are mostly related to short-term cyclical mobility. International migration from Ghana also involves skilled professionals, low-skilled

workers, and individuals seeking to pursue education abroad. Ghana also records some forms of irregular migration from Ghana to Europe and elsewhere in the Gulf states.

Fundamentally, while the popular narrative has it that migration from West Africa is tilted toward Europe, findings from this review show that both historical and contemporary migration flows from and within West Africa have been essentially intra-regional. Migration within the sub-region involves labour migrants who move from the Sahel countries to the resource-rich and coastal communities of the south. The bulk of inter-continental migration in Africa is also directed toward another African country. Recent evidence reinforces historical patterns which suggest that circulation is still very prevalent in West Africa. Factors such as colonial legacy, proximity and culture (common language) shape destination preferences for intra-regional migration. While intra-regional migration is still the dominant form of migration within the sub-region, there are emerging changes to West African migration patterns. First, Libya, which used to be a preferred destination for West African migrants seeking to enter Europe through the Mediterranean, is no longer preferred. This is due mainly to political crisis and insecurity. The emerging pattern suggests that Gabon and Equatorial Guinea are now preferred destinations. While these countries are noted for their oil production, there is a need to explore this emerging migration pattern and analyze the drivers and experiences of different migrant populations moving to these new destination areas.

The review findings show that different factors drive migration. For migrant-sending areas in West Africa, precipitating drivers such as unemployment, low incomes, poverty, low prices for agricultural goods (Van Hear, 2012), poor health, and education are among others driving migration flows. Security threats in Mali and Nigeria by Boko Haram are typical examples of precipitating drivers of migration (UNHCR, 2020b). There are also mediating factors of migration that enhance or constrain population movement, including availability of social networks, access to transport, and improved communication and availability of other resources for migration. The earlier migration literature focused on the negative effects of migration intermediaries (Salt and Stein, 1997); however, the current literature focuses on their important roles to help potential migrants in their migration journeys (Deshingkar et al., 2019). It is clear from ongoing discussions that the drivers of migration are mainly economic, and their effects on migration are context specific. For example, Burkina Faso and Niger are experiencing climate-induced poverty, but are not among the top 10 countries that send migrants to Europe (IOM, 2020). Social change and facilitative factors are taking the place of poverty in driving migration out of Africa. In many West African countries, cultural values also play a significant role in international migration, as it is used as a measure of one's status and that of a family in the society.

The findings from the review highlight that migration decision-making processes are highly complex and involve several considerations. The decision to move is often shaped by both structural factors, including poverty, environmental shocks, and socio-cultural factors, but

also by an individual's personal agency. Migration decision-making is heavily influenced by digital technology (e.g., social media), influence of peers, and images and advice of successful migrants. However, the decision-making process is highly fluid, multi-faceted, and complex, and therefore a comprehensive approach is needed to better understand the decision-making process. The desire to see improvement in the social and economic circumstances contribute to shaping migration decision-making of individuals. It is also evident that family members play a role in migration decision-making, especially for young migrants.

The findings from this review provide useful insights, but also important gaps for a future research agenda. In terms of gaps in knowledge, there remains insufficient knowledge on migration decision-making processes and how gendered the decision-making process is. For example, it will be useful to analyze how gender mediates different mobility patterns, including in internal, cross-border and intraregional migration.

Second this background review has shown that there is limited research focused on the interplay of multiple factors and how they combine to shape or drive migration among different social groups (women, youth, men, children) of different ages. Research efforts are needed to unearth how different social groups experience migration, and what factors shape their migration decision-making, as well as the experiences of migration by different social group.

A review shows that research on the migrant recruitment industry in West Africa is growing. However, we still do not have a solid or comprehensive understanding of the regularities and irregularities that have characterized migrant recruitment processes. Research is needed to unearth the tactics, strategies, practices, and activities of different actors who are situated within the migration recruitment industry in West Africa. Research efforts are needed to map the different actors within the migration industry, and analyze their practices and engagement, as well as how they contribute to migration decision-making and experiences of migration by different social groups.

Finally, the review highlights that policy and practice in Europe and other wealthy countries promotes false narratives about the character of migration. Thus, we still lack sufficient knowledge on short-distance and cross-border migration flows, the drivers of such movements, their consequences, and the experiences of different social groups that may choose to engage in short-distance migration.

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