

Odion M. Odaman

Migration and Rural Development: An Empirical Investigation of Migrants' Participation in Rural Community Development Projects in Nigeria

STUDIES on migration in developing countries tend to see the rural-urban drift as being greatly influenced by the level of rural development and the rural-urban differentials in economic opportunities such as non-agricultural employment and earnings. Better facilities for higher educational attainment and training in the urban area is also a factor conducive to rural out-migration among youths.

In virtually all rural areas of developing nations, including Nigeria, the level of basic infrastructure and essential socio-economic facilities are inadequate (Adedeji et al. 1973). In most rural areas, there is also a remarkable increase in the number of school leavers whose horizon and expectation have been broadened by their educational achievements. Coupled with a growing awareness of better opportunities in the urban areas, they have adopted the rural-urban migration strategy which has, however, reached an alarming level.

The evil effects of excessive urbanisation include overcrowding leading to slums and shanty towns; unemployment and underemployment; delinquency and housing problems. The rural area also loses its development potential through a depletion of the able-bodied and educated youths and the resultant depression in agricultural output and increase in dependency.

In all this, however, the positive input that migration has on rural development has not been given due attention. For example, Caldwell (1969) and Johnson and Whitelaw (1974) found in their studies in Ghana and Kenya respectively that there is a considerable transfer of cash from urban to rural areas by rural out-migrants. Makinwa (1981) in a study of Benin City discovered that the loss to rural areas from out-migration of youths was compensated by their cash remittances and the area-specific development projects they initiated. According to Elkan (1967) many in East Africa go to towns for self-improvement and in search of opportunities, financial or professional, that they intend to put to use on return to the rural communities. It is therefore conceivable that in the long run, the flow of wealth from the urban to the rural areas could combat the latter's poverty.

This study intends to examine the socio-economic characteristics of the migrants which are major determinants of social activities; community development projects in their rural

origin, mode of financing, level of participation as well as the migrants' contribution via remittances; and the constraints to project-oriented remittance.

Area of Study

The area in focus is Okpebho local government (area) of Bendel state. Bendel is one of the 19 states of the Federation. According to the 1963 census, the population of Okpebho was 133,013. By using 2.5 per cent growth rate for estimation, it is expected to have a total of 240,591 inhabitants in 1987.

The local government area is a conglomeration of 17 relatively rural as well as small and large urban settlements. Their size varies between 63,282 for Ekpoma town and 1,268 for Idoa village (1987 estimates). Okpebho has a land area of 1788.4 square kilometres and forms part of the dense population axis of the state.

Ekpoma (63,282) and Irrua (43,995), which constitute the core zones of this study, apart from being the local government headquarters and the second largest town, respectively, also make up approximately 47 per cent of the total population of the local government area. They are among the most rapidly growing, heterogeneous and have fewer indigenous people than in the rest of the area.

Agriculture is the main activity particularly among the non-migrants indigenous people but there are also large and small-scale industries. The Bendel State University, Bendel Feeds and Flour Mill, banks, ministries, health institutions, agricultural institutions, educational institutions, recreation centres and hotels, etc. are sources of employment. There are also many self-employed craftsmen and traders. The area has a significant proportion of migrant labour force.

Methodology

It was discovered from an earlier study 'Migration and Labour Force Participation in Okpebho Local Government Area, Bendel State' by this author that of the 1,600 migrants and non-migrants, chosen by systematic random sampling, three out of every five (migrants) had rural origin. Migrants also had better socio-economic characteristics than non-migrants. On this basis, a study focusing on migrants and their participation in rural development via remittances was considered desirable.

Ten zones were selected (on the basis of residence) through simple random sampling, six of them from Ekpoma and four from Irrua. Within each zone, the required number of streets were selected using the same technique. In each street, systematic random sampling was used to pick every fifth house. Within each selected house a household was chosen in which the head of the household was a migrant.

Data were gathered through personal interview. The questions included those on the socio-economic characteristics of the head of the household, migration records and socio-economic links with 'home'. At the end a total of 1,491 questionnaires were returned from the field.

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Survey Population

There is a greater number of males than females in the surveyed population concentrated in the 25-30 age group. Clearly, this is the result of the influx of youths who have acquired levels of education and types of training that do not fit the rural setting.

As regards marital status, those married are in the majority with the bulk found in the age group 25-39. The excess in this age bracket is explained by the influx of predominantly male migrants and those on transfer who move in with their wives.

As regards educational attainment, the bulk of migrants have secondary education, followed by primary, post-secondary, university and technical. Only 2.4 per cent of the respondents had no education. This educational distribution confirms the view that a person's level of education affects his decision to migrate as well as being a potent factor in labour force participation.

In occupational distribution the highest proportion are in professional, technical and related fields; followed by those in clerical, commercial and unclassified. Others are craftsmen, administrators, transport workers, and agricultural workers. The concentration of migrants in the professional and clerical categories reflects their attainment of educational levels favourable to employment. As regards the income distribution of the migrants, their median income lies between 2,500 and 4,999 naira. While the bulk earn below 2,500, only 0.5 per cent earn 10,000 naira or more per year.

TABLE 1 : SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANTS

<i>Characteristics</i>		<i>Migrants (%)</i>	
<i>Age-Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
	15-19	0.5	0.0
	20-24	9.9	5.6
	25-29	23.9	10.3
	30-34	15.0	7.0
	35-39	6.1	5.6
	40-44	5.1	4.7
	45-49	2.8	0.5
	50+	2.4	0.5
	Total	65.8	34.2
	Number	980	511
<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Married</i>
	15-24	12.3	3.8
	25-39	18.0	50.2
	40+	0.5	15.2
	Total	30.8	69.2
	Number	455	1022

Table 1 (contd. on page 194)

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<i>Characteristics</i>		Migrants (%)
Education	None	2.4
	Primary	27.8
	Secondary	39.7
	Post Secondary	12.0
	Technical	8.1
	University	10.0
	Total	100.0
	Number	1463
	Occupation	Professional, technical and related workers
	Administrative, managerial and related workers	6.6
	Clerical workers	21.6
	Agriculture	3.3
	Craftsmen	10.8
	Transport and communication	5.2
	Commerce	16.0
	Unclassified by occupation	11.3
	Total	100.0
	Number	1491
Income (in naira) per annum	Under 2,500	49.0
	2,500-4,999	38.6
	5,000-7,499	10.0
	7,500-9,999	1.9
	10,000+	0.5
	Total	100.0
	Number	1470

SOURCE: Field survey, April-May 1986.

Community Development Projects in Migrants' (Rural) Origin

Community development projects going on in the migrants' rural origin have been found to include school buildings, health centres, town hall, roads, water, post office, market, electricity and police post. These have been arranged in Table 2 in order of quantitative importance conforming to their responses.

TABLE 2 : DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MIGRANTS' ORIGIN BY THEIR RESPONSES

<i>Projects</i>	<i>Responses (%)</i>
School	28.3
Health centre	14.4
Town hall	20.0
Roads	16.1
Water	11.7
Post office	11.1
Market	11.1
Electricity	7.2
Police post	1.1
Total	121*
Number	1526

Total exceeds 100 per cent because of multiple responses,

(a) *Projects by Mode of Financing*

Development projects by mode of financing according to the responses of migrants are shown in Table 3. Communal efforts are dominant. This is followed by state government, local government, individuals and the federal government. So far, religious organisations have none. Obviously, rural development is still mostly a matter of self-help community projects.

TABLE 3(a): DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS BY MODE OF FINANCING BY MIGRANTS' RESPONSES
AT RURAL ORIGIN

<i>Project</i>	<i>Medium of Finance</i>					
	<i>Federal</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>L.G.A.</i>	<i>Religious Organisations</i>	<i>Communal Efforts</i>	<i>Individual</i>
School	-	35	-	-	300	22
Health centre	-	29	78	-	43	106
Town Hall	-	-	-	-	252	-
Roads	-	69	75	-	59	-
Water	-	20	-	-	125	-
Post Office	-	56	-	-	82	-
Market	-	-	141	-	-	-
Electricity	-	71	-	-	21	-
Police Post	7	-	-	-	-	76

TABLE 3(b) : PARTICIPATION BY MIGRANTS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
(IN THEIR ORIGIN)

<i>Participation</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	58.2
No	37.6
Not Stated	4.2
Total	100.0
Number	1491

It is clear from Table 3(b) that more than half of the migrants (respondents) participate in community development projects at origin. Only 37.6 per cent are not involved while 4.2 per cent could not state their involvement or otherwise.

(b) Development Projects Sponsored by Migrants

Among the development projects sponsored by migrants at their place of origin school building enjoys the highest involvement. This is followed by repair, maintenance and construction of feeder roads, water projects, health centre, post office, electricity and police post projects (see table 4).

TABLE 4 : DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SPONSORED BY MIGRANTS BY PERCENTAGE
DISTRIBUTION (OF MIGRANTS)

<i>Projects</i>	<i>Migrants (%)</i>
School	31.5
Town Hall	24.2
Road	18.5
Water	12.1
Health Centre	8.1
Post Office	7.3
Electricity	2.4
Police Post	0.8
Market	0.0
Total	104.9*
Number	868

*Total exceeds 100 percent because of multiple responses

(c) Migrants' Contribution to Development Projects at Place of Origin

Migrants' contribution to these projects is mainly in cash. This is done either individually or collectively remitted through the 'Association d'originaires'. The bulk contributes between 21 and 50 naira, per annum (Table 5). Median remittance is 25.71 naira.

TABLE 5 : MIGRANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS (N) PER ANNUM TO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AT HOME

<i>Contribution (in naira)</i>	<i>Migrants (%)</i>
1-10	11.3
11-20	12.9
21-50	40.3
51-100	26.6
101-150	4.0
151+	1.6
Not stated	3.2
Total	100.0
Number	868

(d) *Constraining Factors on Migrants' Contribution to Development Projects at Home*

TABLE 6 : WHAT ARE YOUR CONSTRAINTS IN REMITTING HOME?

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Migrants (%)</i>
Inflation, high cost of rents and deductions from wages and salaries	30.0
Inadequate income, poor sales and irregular pay	27.7
Large (immediate) family and dependents "with me"	22.5
Fear of safe delivery	16.9
None/no constraints	8.9
No response	2.8
Total	106.0*
Number	1491

*Total exceeds 100 per cent because of multiple response.

Conclusion and *Policy* Implications

Most behavioural models of migration in developing countries see rural out-migration as a strategy followed by rural households to combat rural poverty. This theory has gained support in this study.

Community development projects which include provision of electricity, water, building of schools, town halls, health centres, maintenance of roads, etc. have in the light of this study had a high participation of rural out migrants. Because of this developing nations, especially Nigeria have their spot light on rural development at present.

Nigeria's 19 State Chief Executives and other government bureaucrats met for two days in Lagos in mid-October 1986 to discuss rural development. The result was that rural development was seen in terms of opening up feeder roads, hospitals and schools, provision of electricity to create employment opportunities in the rural setting as well as adequate water supply and irrigation projects to improve farming.

The participants suggested mobilisation of the people and the opening up of new directorates for rural development in the states and local government divisions. If government policies must include mobilisation of the people part of these efforts should be directed to the migrants. First, the directorates must ensure that their programmes include monitoring of migrants' unions with a view to encouraging them. Secondly, by organising seminars, it should help these unions to formulate development policies and programmes of action by training their leaders and officials. Finally, government should bring down soaring inflation on rents and prices of goods, provide efficient postal and courier systems for effective delivery of remittances to recipients, ensure regular payment of wages and salaries and minimise deductions on workers' pay.

The removal of these constraints and the implementation of these policies form a major package for encouraging migrants' contribution to compensate for the ever limited public expenditure on rural development.

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