

Experiences of Young Migrants Working in Urban Food Markets in Southern Ghana: Implications for Well-being and Social Policy

Joseph Kweku Assan¹

Abstract

Set in the context of welfare availability in fragile urban societies in developing countries, this paper seeks to examine the risks, vulnerability and inequality experienced by young internal migrants currently working in food markets in large cities Southern Ghana. The paper also examines the nature and impact of the migration process and the implications for both local and national development policy. Questionnaire surveys, interviews and focus group discussions were triangulated to elicit the views and experiences of young migrants from Akuapem North and Dangme West Districts in southern-Ghana presently working in urban food markets Accra and Tema. Individual migrants were the unit of analysis for the study. The study reveals that rural out-migration involves both genders with evidence of vulnerability in relation to the weak and fragile and low social service provision by the state. It also identifies the absence of welfare support for young migrants. Whilst the productive capacity of young migrants could be enhanced by low cost labour opportunities in the urban informal sector, this tends to perpetuate a cycle of social vulnerability, inequality and exploitation. The paper recommends the introduction of employment and welfare programmes in cities with very high concentration of young migrants. It also proposes skill development policy programmes in peripheral rural districts and peri-urban communities in southern Ghana.

Keywords: Ghana, human welfare, exploitation, inequality, youth migration, risky employment

¹PhD, Research Group on Global Development and Sustainability, Heller School of Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, 415 South Street, Waltham, MA 035, MA, 02454, USA.
Email: joeassan@brandeis.edu, Tel: +1-781-736-3989

1.0 Introduction

Rural out-migration has been a common part of the labour market and a livelihood strategy across much of the developing world.

Out-migration represents an important employment and livelihood strategy for peasant households seeking to improve their well-being, sources of income and to ensure that members of their household secure a better future (Stark, 1991; Bryceson, 2004). This paper seeks to examine whether current migration patterns of young rural peasants perpetuate and generates new forms of inequality or offers and opportunity for poverty reduction. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (2006) have revealed that rural dwellers currently represent 60 percent of the population of developing countries. The same source suggests that continued exodus will cause this share to drop to 44 percent by 2030. Such a development will clearly have repercussions on the welfare systems in urban locations as well as the production systems in rural societies.

The case of Ghana is interesting and rather important because according to GSS (2000) about 52 percent of the population in Ghana are in-migrants who are not presently located at their places of birth. A cross-locality disaggregation suggesting that the proportion in rural forest is slightly higher (60%) than the other urban and rural localities with rates of males and females being very similar. However, in regional terms, four in every ten of the population in the major southern regions: Greater Accra, Volta and Western regions are in-migrants, in contrast to those of the other regions of the country. Unfortunately, the GLSS round five (GSS, 2000) only reports the mobility of individuals from 15-60 years, thus, fails to report the migration patterns and rates for children below 15 years. It also fails to capture the mobility of individuals within the 15 -24 years group of the population as a separate category. This paper will therefore not able to provide national migration data or patterns of this sub-population. Nevertheless, an ILO study of Child Labour in Ghana however reports rising numbers of young people engaging in migration to urban centres from their natural rural communities in the south. The report suggests that a large number of voluntary young migrants (46%) migrated independently of their family, with the majority falling within the 5 – 17 years age category (ILO, 2006).

Unlike previous studies on internal migration in Ghana that largely looks at movement patterns from the poorer northern regions of the country to the south (see for example Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008), this paper focuses on internal rural out-migration of children and youths between the ages of 5-24 years from regions in southern Ghana to urban destination in southern Ghana, which has gained very little attention in the theoretical and policy discourses on migration and development in Ghana.

The study examines: a) the nature of the migration process; the challenges, b) risks and hazards (including issues of social welfare) encountered; c) the implications of contemporary children and youth migration for socio-economic inequality in urban locales. The study also points attention to the social strains of migration particularly for children and implications for urban welfare systems and inequality. The study employs data generated from individual interviews and focus groups discussions with young migrants and household members, from migrants' natal communities, in exploring its objectives.

The paper reports that young migrants including children in rural Ghana move under the guise of improvement of well being and employment, customs of child fostering and livelihood diversification(see Assan, 2008). The research also highlights severe implications for poor welfare and inhuman conditions experienced by young migrants. It posits that migration exposes these young people to potential opportunities as well as significant risks and exploitative networks which then create further inequality. The study alludes to the need for policy intervention towards the improvement of the welfare and social services for young independent migrants as a strategy towards minimising the forms of vulnerability and consequent inequality associated with such forms of mobility.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: Section 2 provides a review of concepts relating to the vulnerability and welfare challenges experienced by young migrants as discussed in the contemporary literature. Section 3 presents a brief introduction to the study context. Section 4 discusses the systematic fieldwork strategy employed during the data collection process. Section 5 discusses results generated by the study. Concluding arguments, theoretical implications and policy recommendations are found in Section 6.

2.0 The Experiences and welfare Challenges of Young Internal Migrants

Several theoretical approaches such as Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) have been widely accepted for explaining links between rural out-migration and urban employment and unemployment in less developed countries. Stark (1991) also shows how rural out-migration is linked to livelihood diversification which relates to aspects of the debates presented in this paper.

Nonetheless, some studies on migration in Africa including Zachariah and Conde and (1981) have called for the need for theories on migration that capture institutional and socio-cultural factors common to Africans and beyond those based solely on demography and economics. In his paper titled *“Grounding a theory of African migration using recent data on Ghana”*, Achanfo-Yeboah posits that migration in Africa and its outcome should be explained by existing economic, socio-cultural, political, psychological and demographic factors. According to the theory, changes in economic, socio-cultural, political, psychological and demographic factors tend to have immense effects on the nature and intensity of migration in Africa. It also argues that these factors conversely work together to determine and impact on migration flows and their consequent impacts. Using data sets on Ghana spanning over 20 years, Achanfo-Yeboah (1993) shows that Africans avail themselves of social and economic opportunities and there are inherent cultural, political and psychological factors which explains who, why, and where people move to. He argues that these variables work individually and severally to determine migration and that attempts to use economic factors (such as high urban wages, employment opportunities etc) alone is unlikely to be adequate as evidenced in earlier models of migration by Todaro (1969) and in the Harries-Todaro Model (1970).

Iversen (2002) further argues that whilst poverty offers a strong explanation of early autonomy amongst young migrants, household wealth and economic welfare more often than not serve to dictate the decision-making process regarding whether a household member migrates or not. She explained that wealthier households are more likely to be able to finance out-migration of their members. Assan (2008) offers a contrasting view, which suggests that members of poorer households are rather more likely to desire to move and their ability to do so would depend on the availability of support and networks. The latter view however applies to most would-be migrants.

The literature states that economic poverty is a major cause of migration amongst young people (Young, 2004; Assan and Hill, 2011). A severe lack of money in their rural communities, coupled with the desire to improve their chances for better life and to take advantage of the opportunities that the city is purported to offer vision of streets, stimulates some ambitious young migrants to move to urban destinations. In his study of young autonomous migrants, Iversen (2002) argues that young people migrate autonomously in search of work and better opportunities.

Nevertheless, out-migration of youth and children is also considered to contribute significantly to the inflow of financial and material resources into the rural economy (Assan, 2008, Assan et al, 2009). Working young migrants have the potential to send money back to their rural households (Punch, 2002; Bracking, 2003; Rogaly, 2003). van der Geest (2003) and Deshingkar and Anderson (2004) argue that in south Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, remittances from rural–urban migrants are overtaking income from agriculture in sheer size and importance, as persistent socio-economic and structural problems continue to depress rural wages and work availability thus creating diverse form of inequality. Several studies have rather focused on the role and importance of remittances from young migrants in the survival and well-being of their natal rural households (see Kothari, 2003).

Nonetheless, socio-cultural inequality equally shapes young people's migration today. This position is illustrated by Invernizzi (2005) who shows that young people's mobility and subsequent labour activities relate to the changing socio-cultural and socio-political and institutional issues within their environment and beyond. Chant and Jones (2005, p.190) reveal that virtually all the children sampled in their study on youths and livelihood in Ghana and The Gambia had participated in unpaid work such as domestic labour from about 6 or 7 years of age. They show that most children in their study felt a sense of moral duty, a cultural value and obligation to start working even though their efforts are seldom remunerated (see also Nieuwenhuys, 1994). Young people are consequently expanding their labour-seeking behaviour beyond their present abode.

In recognising that the decision to migrate may not be an autonomous one, Hashim (2007) examined the various negotiations surrounding the decision to migrate amongst young migrants mostly below 25 years in Ghana.

A very small minority (3 per cent) in Hashim's study had no choice in their movement, whereas most moved either at their own request, their parents' instigation or in response to a request from the host family. An age breakdown shows that young children seldom initiated their own migration whereas as they got older, they were more likely to seek welfare-maximising opportunities (Young, 2004; Hashim, 2007).

Young migrants seem to face a significant number of difficulties which creates forms of inequality. Autonomous movement results in heightened risks and vulnerability for the young people (Adenike, 1991; Punch, 2003).

Living and working away from home in an urban setting is often a new experience for young migrants, most of who have grown up in sheltered, relatively isolated communities (Punch, 2002). In their examination of children's migration in Southern Africa, van Blerk and Ansell (2006) shows that children feel as though their social identity has been disrupted through migration, which impinges on their state of belonging. The welfare challenges and the risks often experienced by young people within this category are often not discussed in the contemporary development literature. Young migrants are employed in gruelling jobs. They are used as casual workers, domestic assistants, hawkers of foodstuffs and second-hand clothing, house-girls, porters at lorry stations and markets and labourers in the manufacturing and mining industries (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Assan, 2008; Assan and Rosenfeld, 2012).

The paper therefore builds on current migration theories and policies by highlighting the challenges experienced by young out-migrants within the urban employment environment, which is dominated by the informal sector, where there are limited formal employment, lack of social services and weak welfare systems. This paper further brings to bear discussions on the welfare implications of such movements as well as some lessons for socio-economic equity and policy.

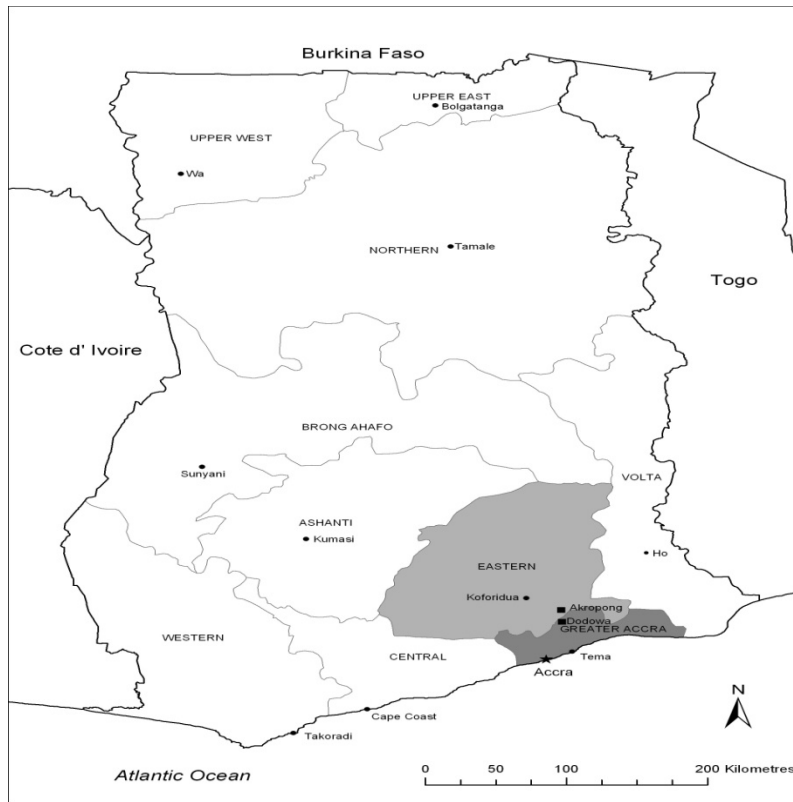
3.0 Local Context and Study Districts

Ghana is making strong progress in addressing issues of poverty, recording a dramatic drop in poverty rates from 52% in 1992 to 28.5 % in 2005 (World Bank, 2008). This has been achieved through the support of various government interventions and policies with the government currently implementing the second phase of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2006-2009.

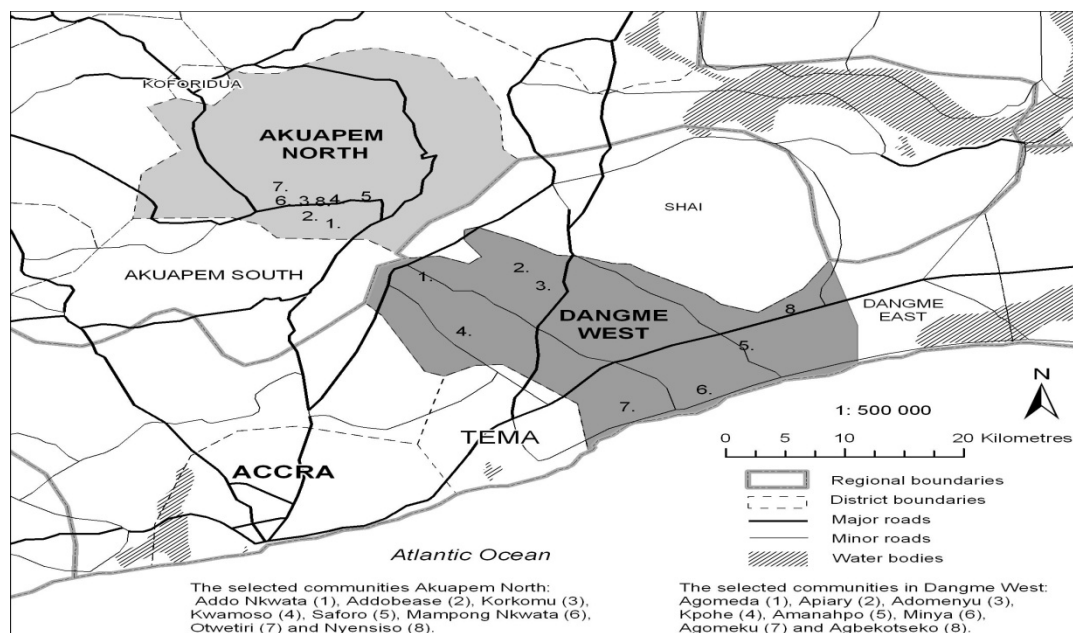
However, although national poverty levels are on a decline, regional variations prevail as poverty predominantly remain in the rural area, with the rural population below the national poverty line recorded at 39.2% in contrast to urban poverty at 10.8% in 2006 (UNSTATS, 2008). The impact of such migration flows on individual young migrants and the already stretched welfare systems and resources at their urban destinations requires further examination within the Ghanaian context as the country is considered to have done so well in achieving progressive economic growth and political stability within the last two decades.

The small farm households in Akuapem North and the Dangme West Districts in the South-eastern section of Ghana were recipients of agriculture labour about four decades ago (Hill, 1963). Akuapem North was a recipient of migrant labourers from other parts of the country during the cocoa boom in the 1950s and Ghana's era of State Farms, which ended with economic liberalisation in the 1990s. These districts were selected as sites for household data collection as they have presently become sources of out flows of young migrants (GSS, 2000). The householders in these districts are traditionally farmers. Dangme West is a beneficiary of the Government of Ghana-UNDP Poverty Reduction Programme aimed at providing rural employment. However, rural out-migration from these areas is on the rise. According to the Ghana Statistical Service Report (2000), the Akuapem North District's population density of about 225 persons per km² is above the national average of 63 persons per km². The population growth rate of Akuapem North between 1984 and 2000 was 1.8 per cent. On the other hand, the Dangme West District Profile (2000-2004) had a slightly lower population density of 55.3 persons per square kilometre with a population growth rate of 2.1 per cent per annum.

Figure 1: Regional Map of Ghana Showing Study Area



Source: Developed by author (2014)

Figure 2: Map of Study Districts and Sampled Communities

Source: Developed by author (2014)

In each of the study districts, 50 household heads were interviewed from 8 communities using an exploratory and evaluative multi-stage research strategy and the respective district economic baseline studies and district profiles (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005). The study further sampled and interviewed 170 young native migrants who are between 5 and 24 years from Akwapem North and Dangme West Districts but currently working at two famous market locations in Accra (administrative capital of Ghana) and Tema (the industrial capital of Ghana). The study used snowing-bawling methods in selecting its sample and eighty-five young migrants were subsequently interviewed using a semi-structured checklist at the *Tema Central Market* in Tema and the *Agbogbloshi Food Market* in Accra. Social workers were used as research assistants to ensure compliance of ethical protocols. These locations serve as a source of employment for young migrants from different parts of the country. Focus groups discussion in each of the sampled communities complemented the individual interviews in exploring the objectives of the study. The detailed interviews were used to examine the demographic characteristics, determinants and detailed individual experiences of the sample.

The focus group discussions helped to elicit further details on the patterns of migration, the dynamics and experiences of the young migrants and that of their households regarding the migration processes and their impacts. The study then proceeded to investigate the reasons for the out-migration by youths and juveniles, the risks associated with such movement, the consequences and the implications for their welfare from the perspective of both the migrants' productivity and the well-being of natal household members. Data collection was conducted over three months.

4.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings generated from the study are discussed in this section.

4.1 Characteristics and Types of Employment of Sampled Young out- Migrants

An interesting revelation from the survey is that there are more young migrants from Akuapem North than from Dangme West (Table 1). The majority (88.7 percent) of the sampled youth and juvenile migrants are aged between 15 and 24 years. It is interesting to note that the total number of female child migrants within the sample is greater than that of their male counterparts. This confirms the assertion that girls are more likely to be the 'victims' of child migration than boys (Anarfi, 1993). This could also be because girls might find work in and around the market more convenient than boys. These patterns also suggest that younger members of sampled households in Dangme West District tend to out-migrate at an early age, with the age decreasing progressively as indicated by GLSS (2000) and Baahs' (2001) study of poverty trends in Ghana.

Table1: Age and Gender of Youth and Juvenile Out-Migrants

Age in years	Gender of youths and juvenile migrant (%)						Grand Total	
	N= 85			N= 85				
	Akuapem North District			Dangme West District			N	%
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total		
<15	2.1	4.3	6.4	0	17.1	17.1	19	11.1
15 - 24	61.7	31.9	93.6	40.8	42.1	82.9	151	88.7
Total	63.8	36.2	100.0	40.8	59.2	100.0	170	100

Source: Author's fieldwork data (2012)

Focusing on the two market locations, the young migrants sampled by the study undertake mainly non-farm economic and income activities with the majority working as artisans, cart-drivers, shoe-shine boys and non-farm labourers (50.6 percent) followed by hawking in the market, trading and lorry driving assistants (36.6 percent). The low educational background of most young migrants are an impediment to their ability to obtain more lucrative jobs outside those related to casual and wage labour, which are considered less sustainable by the sample.

4.2 Mobility Dynamics and Employment Networks

It could be inferred from the interviews with the young migrants that many households encourage their younger members to migrate in order to escape the cycle of poverty, lack of income, growing illiteracy and the lack of opportunities to develop economic skills. According to respondents in both Accra and Tema markets, the most important condition for a successful outcome is the type of social networks (sponsorship or investment) the migrants receive. This could be in the form of information consistently received by the migrants from acquaintances already based in the respective urban destinations and financial support offered by close relatives and friends. Some of the migrants studied revealed that they have relatives, and friends who provided the needed networks and information on when and where to move to and how to find accommodation and jobs. Others relied on assistance rendered through school mates townsmen who told them on where to find jobs quickly or more lucrative jobs as well as which sectors offered more reliable form of employment. A 14-year-old male from Dangme West narrated his experience:

I came to the Tema market because my parents are very poor and a family friend promised to help me find a job in the market to save money to train as a carpenter. Some of the boys I push trucks with also migrated through people they know here.

Another important determinant to being able to make a successful move is one's ability to own and use a mobile phone or have a close relative that owns one. A 16-year old female migrant from Akuapem North explained:

“having a mobile phone is a unique asset in the rural area and also in the urban after migration in that the potential migrant is able to call the contact in the urban location regularly and mount pressure as well as negotiate the details of the impending move.

Another girl added:

“some migrants hardly visit their rural homes, so being able to call to follow-up on promises and plans regarding ones migration both facilitates and improves the chances of being able to migrate successfully”.

The study further revealed that some adults have made a profession of arranging the movement of young migrants out of rural areas and organising their settlement in their urban destinations (see also Assan and Hill, 2011). The sample referred to these individuals as ‘contact men’ and ‘human traders’. These include males working in and around the markets and female traders. The sample referred to the males as contact men and the females as traders. The traders deal with the females whilst the contact men deal with the males. The study however observed that contact men deal with both male and female migrants. A 19-year-old male migrant from Akuapem North working as a truck-pusher in the Agbogbloshi market in Accra explained:

These persons act as ‘contact men’ for the provision of the needs of the newcomers in the first days and/or weeks after their arrival, and this can make all the difference between failure and a decent chance of success.

Yaw, a 15-year-old male migrant from Akuapem North working as a truck-pusher and stall-cleaner agreed and added:

It is presently becoming very difficult for a young migrant to settle in the city without the influence of a contact man. The other migrants even insist that new entrants find a contact man to facilitate their settlement at a cost of course because life in Accra is hard.

The escalating pressure of demand has placed an enormous premium upon the availability and cost of accommodation, whether temporary or otherwise, in urban areas. The use of hotels and hostels is therefore not an option for most migrants from rural areas; hence, lynchpin persons provide a safe haven. A female migrant from Dangme West working as a potter in Tema explained:

Contact men typically cater for the immediate feeding needs of the newcomers in addition to providing their lodging, thus allowing migrants to hold on to their personal pocket money against other eventualities.

This gives the migrant a practical opportunity for getting established, bearing in mind the time, effort and expense saved searching for accommodation and employment. Mercy, a 16-year-old cleaner and ice-water seller said: 'Contact men typically promise to help provide safekeeping of pocket money and any valuables that newcomers bring with them but what they do with them is another issue'. Contact men often help migrants to find immediate and suitable employment.

Conversely, the interviews revealed that once in steady employment, paying for accommodation, food can be expensive, and the migrants have come to a longer-term arrangement with their contact men. The interviews in both Tema and Accra markets revealed that some contact men also demand sexual favours in addition to monetary payment for the help offered to young female migrants. The majority of the female migrants interviewed by the study mentioned having been sexually exploited by male contact men. A 16-year-old female migrant who sold ice water described her ordeal with a male contact man:

My contact man came and asked for the rent to the kiosk he arranged for me to spend the night. When I informed him that the owner says I can stay there free of charge, he demanded that I have sex with him; otherwise, he will encourage the owner of the kiosk to eject me. I was so confused and had nowhere to go so I had to give in to his demands.

The study also points to the fact that although the role of contact men can facilitate the movement of young migrants, their activities also encourage their exploitation. Interviews with two identified notorious contact men operating in Accra and Tema markets provided significant insight into their operation. Both argued that they pre-finance and arrange employment for young migrants in urban locations. The contact men explained that several migrants try to evade repayment of loans given to their families to finance their travel. However, most young migrants interviewed during the study denied these allegations. They also denied having sexual relationships with the migrants and branded their respondents as ungrateful, but agreed to help rural families whose members desire to emigrate. These contact men have no certification or knowledge of the legal implications of their operation or of the social welfare regulations governing the trafficking of minors.

Personal educational level is also mentioned as a critical determinant in successful migration. It determines the employment avenues that the migrant can explore and the income level that s/he can attract.

A 21-year-old male migrant working at the Agbogbloshi market in the Accra as a lorry-driver's assistant said:

Most migrants engage in daily waged activities which do not necessarily require formal qualifications, but in due course opportunities could open up for the migrant to apply for qualified positions which will then transform the individual's life for the better.

James a 19-year-old male youth migrant from Akuapem North disclosed:

The ability to communicate fluently in English for example will enhance the migrant's ability to interact in the market and so create employment opportunities because most employers prefer an employee to be proficient in English, but sadly, most of us are not very fluent in English in view of our poor educational background.

An eighteen-year-old female migrant from Dangme West said:

I have been trying to get a job as a shop assistant in a store that sells sugar in bags to the other hawkers in the market, but they declined my application because I would not write in English.

J.J., a 17-year-old male migrant from Akuapem North explained:

"Most of the young migrants leave home with Junior Secondary School education and can hardly read or write. We also tend to forget all we have studied since our wage labour activities do not require us to read or write".

This assertion underscores the importance of education and the long-term effect of illiteracy particularly in the context of juvenile and youth migration.

The gender of the migrant is also considered a survival indicator and source of inequality because some types of employments are gender-specific. Joyce, a 15-year-old potter in the Tema central market, mentioned during the interviews that 'many market traders and middlemen prefer employing girls. This is because girls are traditionally known to work as hawkers and potters in the market'.

Another 15-year-old female migrant, Akosua, added: 'Most people prefer to have a female shop assistant and similarly food traders employ girls and young women. On the other hand, most truck pushers are boys, as are loaders of goods'. A 17-year-old male truck-pusher said 'Selling ice water for example is not gender restricted neither is the selling of fruit and vegetables by the main roads. A 22-year-old female youth migrant from Dangme West presently working as a cleaner in the Tema market explained: 'Most of the migrants from my hometown who travel to Tema and Accra are females who often end up in compulsive prostitution. Some work as potters in the day and prostitutes at night'. Whilst the gender of the migrant can determine his or her income, it also determines the degree of employability. This is consistent with arguments by Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf (2008) who found that in the different markets of Accra, Ghana, males can negotiate their fees for various activities but female porters cannot.

Nevertheless, the ability to survive and endure harsh conditions and rough sleeping arrangements is said to be very important. A 14-year-old boy from Dangme West who sells apples in the Tema market mentioned that the young migrants need a high level of endurance and ability to survive the tough living conditions... Mary, a 16-year-old migrant from Dangme West added: 'Those of us who live in Ashiaman, (a shanty town in Tema) for example usually pay sleep rent for spending the night on the pavement outside the cinema house or in the market'. Addo, a 12-year-old migrant from Akuapem North complained: 'They take our money but put boys and girls to sleep together in the same crowded room ... and some boys rape the girls in the night'. The majority of migrants conceded that their sleep is not comfortable as they can only afford to sleep on cardboard and plastic bags and need to wear trousers to ward off sexual molesters and mosquitoes as discussed earlier. The demanding income activities they undertake also require much physical strength and will power to endure, making their well being all the more precarious.

4.3 The Informal Sector Employment and Livelihood Security

All the young migrants sampled by the study are employed in informal sector employment activities. They explained that it is practically impossible for them to gain employment in formal sector organisations. Reasons given to these patterns are due to several reasons. Some of the respondents indicated that their low educational backgrounds mean that they do not qualify for the few formal sector jobs that might become available.

In addition, others explained that they do not have the right contact in such high levels to allow them to penetrate this level of occupation. Again, the non-availability of formal sector employment was pointed as a major obstacle. This limitation means high level of competition to the extent that the few who may have the requisite qualification are still unable to get hold of formal and more secured forms of employment. In addition, a female migrant explained that most formal sector employers only take employees on daily casual basis, which makes it very insecure as they may work today and be unemployed the next day. It therefore becomes less worthwhile and unreliable. Some of the migrants explained that they are currently engaged in the different types of employment in order to raise enough money to enrol as artisans and learn a trade. Nevertheless, working in the informal sector is equally unreliable. None of the migrants interviewed in the study are part of any social security scheme where they could contribute to social security or pension scheme. In addition, they do not belong to any formal union so they do not have any official representation when they are unlawfully dismissed, unpaid or victimised. This puts them in an unequal footing compared to other urban employees. A 20-year male explained:

“we only join associations but we know that they are not able to defend us in court or when we are being cheated. Some association only speak to your employers when you report them but they are not able to negotiate salaries etc”.

The interviews also revealed the gruesome occupational hazards that the young migrants are confronted with. Two migrants cited examples of some of the hazardous experiences of young migrants. *“An 18-year-old female migrant was attacked whilst minding the store of her madam and she was beaten up and seriously injured and hospitalised but her employer only paid for her hospital bills and got rid of her!”*

Another girl who works in a provision shop in the market fell off the ladder and broke her arm and she could not work any longer but she did not receive any form of pay-off or compensation. Some of the boys who sell coconuts and the trucks-pushers cited personal examples of receiving cuts on their fingers or being run over by trucks. A 22-year-old female stated *“not being part of a formal labour union also makes it impossible to receive compensation when there are occupational accidents”*.

Other migrants reported being physically or sexually abused while doing their jobs. The abuse of young people by informal sector employers in many developing countries are often not considered a crime by the local authorities. A member of staff of the Department of Social Welfare informed the study that most of such cases are not reported, as a result, many employers easily abuse children physically and sexually. She reported that those children who are no longer able to endure such abuse begin to show signs of psychosocial and violent behaviours.

4.4 Social Risks and Welfare Challenges Experienced by Young Out-migrants

Beyond occupational hazards, the study revealed that young migrants are equally exposed to several social and welfare risk factors. Some of these challenges may eventually undermine or defeat the purpose of migrating. This section discusses some of the risk factors reported by the study sample. The majority of the migrants live in poor housing and sanitary conditions. Some of the respondents mentioned that they sleep in wooden sheds whilst others said they sleep in market stalls owned by their employers. Ajoa, a 24-year-old female migrant working as a hawker in the Tema market explained:

‘such sleeping arrangements expose them to mosquito bites and they become infected with malaria. Others sleep in overcrowded filthy rooms with poor ventilation, which exposes them to tuberculosis and typhoid fever’.

Migrants are also exposed to the possibility of acquiring sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. An important revelation made during the study is that some of the girls are raped due to the insecure nature of the rough sleeping arrangements. Akua, a 21 year-old female migrant from Akuapem North explained: ‘Both male and female migrants sometimes have several sexual partners and as a result get infected with sexually transmitted infections’.

The interviews and group discussions further revealed that sex-related offences and attacks occur frequently, particularly in and around the Agbogbloshi market in Accra. A 20-year-old female migrant who sells food in the Agbogbloshi market explained: 'There are gangs of men who attack girls in the evenings. They do not care of the girl's age as babies are even raped or sexually molested. Because such attacks are very common this area has been nicknamed Sodom and Gomorrah!'

The focus group interviews revealed that girls engaged in prostitution are in the high health risk group.

It was reported that some young women have returned to their respective villages with HIV/AIDS and died. In the course of the study, it was observed that two girls from Dangme West working in the Agbogbloshi market, who informed the study that they work as porters during the day and prostitutes at night, but who were not working at that time due to ill health, had returned home. Both had been infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. The living conditions of young migrants are more made worse by the present health care system, which does not provide structured support or education for individuals or victims from vulnerable backgrounds.

The use of drugs is said to be common amongst migrant waged labourers in Tema and Accra markets. Over a third of the sample in Tema and about half of the sample in Accra admitted taking Ecstasy, and strength-enhancing drugs. Interviews and group discussions with migrants in Accra and Tema also revealed that migrants who depend on drugs eventually become addicted. A 19-year-old male youth migrant from Dangme West who acknowledged using drugs explained:

"The workloads I undertake make me tired and I feel that the use of drugs will enhance my strength. Drugs used include marijuana, painkillers, ecstasy tablets and steroids, which are considerably affordable compared to higher-class drugs".

The study also revealed that nearly half of the male youth and juvenile migrants and a fifth of the females sampled by the study drink *akpeteshi*, a local gin containing over 70% volume alcohol. Although *akpeteshi* is relatively cheap, it can be lethal and is largely brewed illegally. Both genders in the sample acknowledged drinking alcohol, with some males referred to as *apio*-men (alcoholics) during the study. Others are addicted to smoking marijuana and attribute this to its ability to relieve their pain and help them to forget their tough living conditions.

The leader of the truck-pushers in Tema mentioned that the strenuous nature of their work makes some of the boys believe the myth that taking marijuana can make them strong.

The rising crime culture amongst young migrants in urban markets is reported to be reaching phenomenal proportions (Evans, 2002). Results from this study also confirm this pattern. Interviews conducted in the Tema market showed that migrants are forced to join gangs and become criminals. A 17-year-old male migrant working in the Tema market cited the example of his brother and explained during the interviews: 'My brother had to escape from Tema to Accra because he was forced to join a group of thugs who initially posed as supportive and empathetic mentors'.

He went on: 'Only a few people are able to escape from such gangs because of their threatening behaviour'. A 20-year-old female migrant from Akuapem North added that she was robbed of her monthly savings and raped by a gang in Agbobbloshi market. A 14-year-old female migrant mentioned that most migrant labourers tend to carry their daily wages on their person and sleep with this money in their pockets. The lack of security in such sleeping areas therefore makes young migrants vulnerable to theft and other vices. Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf (2008) made a similar observation in their study of female porters in Accra, Ghana.

Teenage pregnancy is another risk associated with youth and child migration. A 51-year old female household head in Dangme West explained: 'My daughter migrated to Accra to work as a trader's assistant in the market to earn income to fund her vocational education but became pregnant'. Another 54-year-old woman who could not stop lamenting over the plight of her daughter as she shared her disappointment explained:

"although I am happy to have a grandchild, the lack of any formal skill in a young person is very bad, especially when my daughter only managed to acquire junior secondary school education. I am poor because I lack education and I am afraid she will end up like me".

Findings from the study suggest that about a quarter of the females in the sample have had an unsafe abortion and a third knew a migrant who had had one. More than half of the sample was ignorant of contraception and about two-thirds indicated their inability to afford contraceptives due to the high cost.

The study provides empirical evidence of the absence of social welfare, social investment and social protection facilities and programs for young migrants, which subsequently exposes them to high risk and debilitating circumstances.

5.0 Conclusion and Policy Implications

Internal migration by young people from rural communities to urban destinations is underlined by the desire of the migrants and households to improve their well-being and obtain a prospective future with the long-term expectations of being able to support themselves and their households. These patterns of mobility are motivated by economic, socio-cultural and psychological factors within the current stagnant rural economy as posited by Achanfo-Yeaboah (1993).

The research noted some core benefits for both migrants and their natal households in Ghana as well as some evidence of emerging inequalities. Compared to the present rural unemployment and underemployment, out-migration offers young migrants opportunities to undertake low-waged and manual labour employment activities as theorised by Harris and Todaro (1970). It also allows migrants to support their families with needed financial resources through their remittances, which improves households' well-being and social status. Out-migration seems to unlock employment opportunities for unemployed rural youths from both study districts,

Nevertheless, the observed patterns of migration in southern Ghana often fails to offer sustainable skills required to equip young migrants with the ability to move up the employment and social ladder and seem to perpetuate a cycle of impoverishment as argued by Assan (2008). In addition, the study shows that some aspects of the observed movement expose most of the migrants to exploitation and risks, which exacerbates their well-being. There is also evidence of emerging street power relations. Again, whilst young migrants are offered a source of temporary low-cost labour pool for the urban informal economy, most young out-migrants seem to be discriminated against by virtue of some demographic factors.

In generalising the outcomes of this study to encompass patterns of independent long-term internal out-migration of young people in relation to development policy, the paper would rather keep the context on the Ghanaian and African migration processes and within the urban informal sector (market).

The study brings on board the welfare and well-being dimensions of internal migration, which is generally missing in most migration theories (Achan-Yebaoh 1993). It also goes beyond the arguments of Stark (1991) by showing low sustainability nature of the diversification undertaken by the sample. These assertions are consistent with some aspects of the findings of Adenike (1991) who reported survival outcomes of girls' migration in Nigeria and Anafi (1993) who identified health risks and sexual exploitation of female youths in the Cote d'Ivoire. van Blerk (2008) also indentified similar marginalisation of young migrants in Ethiopia. The paper also links its findings to current global processes and the recent implementation of neo-liberal policies (e.g. privatisation of public services divestiture of State Owned Enterprises), which has partly resulted in a shrinking and overstretched formal urban employment sector with weak social service sector in West Africa (Black, 2004).

Development policy needs to incorporate social welfare and social care programs, particularly for young autonomous migrants in the major towns and cities. A policy response through sustained welfare interventions by government and local development authorities is critical in addressing the emerging patterns of inequality associated with migration of young people. A pragmatic social investment approach should involve the private sector (NGOs, civil society groups, churches, religious organisations and civil society groups) in the provision of street and market level vocational schools and health centres to cater for the education and health needs of young migrants.

Such programmes can also ensure the provision for training and vocational skills, which could provide sustainability in terms of livelihood development and well-being as argued by Assan and Beyene (2013). Such a strategy would reduce the vulnerability of younger migrants in urban locations and ensure their security. There is also the need to enforce existing legislation on child protection to prevent the unlawful and forced movement of children and young people from rural communities in consonance with ILO/PEC (2001). Policy officials in Ghana should also consider the need to deploy young graduates from the different Schools of Social Work in the country as part of the National Service Scheme at locations in districts and regional capitals where young migrants reside or work. This strategy can provide social care, counselling, health promotion programmes and clinics to help shape the lives and well-being of vulnerable young migrants in cities and urban towns.

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