

Child Rural-Rural Migration

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Overview of paper

The paper reviews what we know and do not know about child migration.

It focuses on areas of relative neglect.

- rural to rural migration
- independent child migration
- migration to work in the agricultural sector.



Basis of review paper

Core papers

- Albertine de Lange's study of boys in Burkina Faso migrating to work on small to medium scale cotton farms (2006)
- Iman Hashim's work with children who had migrated from a village in the northeastern Ghana, either independently or with family members, towards the southern cocoa-growing regions (2005);
- Abu-Bakari Imorou's study of young people's migration out of northwest Benin to various destinations including the cotton fields in the northeast of the country (2008).

Additional papers

- Studies of children in cocoa, among others.

Perspective

- Child migration is often an accepted, even expected, part of children's lives in rural contexts.
- Children participate actively in decision-making around migration.
- Child rural-rural migration occurs and can only be understood within a variety of contexts:
 - Children's lives in rural areas (structures of opportunities and constraints).



Perspective

- Children in family (situation of family, inter-household negotiations, etc.)
- Social norms and expectations (e.g .children's roles, age-appropriate tasks and behaviours)
- Historical contexts
- Economic, political and social macro-contexts at national and global levels.



Outline of paper

- What makes migration an available, viable or preferred option for children in rural West Africa?
- Where do children migrate?
- How do children undertake the journey?
- What arrangements do they enter into?
- What conditions do they live and work in?
- What happens to child migrants in the long term?
- (Conclusions and implications for research)



What reasons to children give...

- To find work (ref: social organisation and practices around labour at home)
- To help in households and farms of other relatives
- Education
- Status. Also independence, self-reliance, broader outlook (ref: migration as socialisation)
- Compelled to, sometimes by neglect or abuse



Where do children migrate?

- Historical routes – following example of parents and grandparents, and also peers, drawing on cultural knowledge and social supports
- For children in agriculture, destinations are usually small farms.
- Note: destinations both within and across country borders.



How do children undertake the journey?

- Children use social supports in similar ways to adults.
- Children tended to travel with others, frequently other adults, relatives or prospective employers.
- Interesting case of the presence of ‘tuteurs’ on migration routes onto cotton farms in Benin
- Use of such ‘sponsors’ and other social contacts is often protective, but sometimes exploitative.

What arrangements do children enter into?

- Many children end up in households of relatives.
- The majority of children work, whether in the homes or the fields, whether fostered or non-fostered.
- For children in cocoa and cotton,
 - Short-term contracts
 - Long-term contracts

What are the conditions under which children live and work?

- Great variation!
- Generally, children were positive about their experiences BUT complained about overwork and non- or under-payment. (ref: contexts in which other child migrants and adults work).
- Also, dependence on adults – so a large element of luck in who your guardian or employer turns out to be.




In the long run...

- The studies do not give us adequate insights into which children return home and which do not, and what factors make it more likely that children will return home. We do have evidence that both children who have had negative and those who have had positive experiences do migrate again but we do not know how their motivations and choices and experiences might differ, for instance.
- And what is long term impact – are children who migrate from sending areas ultimately better off than those who did not?

Conclusions

and directions for further research

- More research that looks at child migration not as an anomaly or deviance, but in context of children's lives and possible futures in family and rural settings.
- More research into protective factors; what makes positive outcomes more likely
- Specifically
 - Variations in migration experiences for different ages
 - Understanding child participation in labour on farms in context of work and livelihoods on these farms for both adults and children, and in national and global economic contexts

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- Different types of arrangements – both the mechanisms and contents – and how they can be improved to provide more protection.
 - Long run impacts of migration on children.