

Patterns in Child Migration in Ghana

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Abstract

The phenomenon of migration in Ghana is not new. However, the involvement of children and especially, those migrating independent of their parents, is a recent phenomenon. Tracing the trajectories of the journeys children make in Ghana, reveals a north south pattern, similar to that of adults. Although migration of children to and within urban settlements in other regions has been observed to be significant, Accra (the national capital) and Kumasi (second largest city) remain preferred destinations of child migrants. This study involves interviews with 35 migrant children from the north east to the south of Ghana, over a period of three months. It identified cyclical, chain, step-wise and “leapfrog” migration as patterns of child migration in Ghana. Leapfrog migration emerged as a novel type of migration, where children leaped from an origin over an intermediate to a final destination. Although this new finding is exciting, it involved a small number of children. Therefore, more data is required for its validation. The study recommends recognition by local, regional and national policy and decision makers of the underpinning motivations for such journeys is crucial in order to minimise the associated risks, while optimising the advantages of the phenomenon in the country.

Keywords: patterns, child, leapfrog, chain, stepwise, migration

Introduction

There are various patterns in migration, often underpinned by the motivations for such movements. Nonetheless, the pattern of migration in Ghana has generally been from the north to south (Agyei and Oforu-Mensah, 2009; Hashim, 2007) and involves various categories of migrants. Although the phenomenon has been dominated by adults, it has in recent times, included children who migrate independent of their parents or accompanying adults. Many of these movements are toward urban centres with expanding opportunities for the many rural population seeking livelihood options. Consequently, although migration of children to and within urban settlements in other regions has been observed to be significant (Beauchamin, 1999), Accra and Kumasi remain preferred destinations of child migrants in Ghana. However, understanding the processes involved in the movement has remained a challenge although such understanding is necessary if the right measures are to be taken to enhance the benefits of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the processes are complex, involving multiple actors, interest and challenges. As conditions in the course of migration and destinations are complex and evolving (Ansell, 2000), children have to be flexible in order to adapt to the changing circumstances; both in the wider environment and in their private lives (Punch, 2007). This study therefore seeks an understanding of this complex phenomenon of child migration by exploring the patterns that emerge from the migration trajectories of children from Bongo district in the north-east of Ghana to Accra (the national capital). This will contribute to the attainment of the goal of the National Migration Policy (NMP) of seeking to promote the benefits and minimize the costs associated with risky and unsafe migratory journeys and enhance the potentials of migration to contribute to the socio- economic development of Ghana (MoI, 2014). This study therefore, seeks an understanding of the patterns that emerge from trajectories of child migrants and to suggest possible ways of ameliorating their adverse effects on the individual children and the wider society.

Literature and theoretical context

Generally, migration is a dynamic process that involves a variety and complex mix of movements within and between locations. In a broader context, mobility is an attractive concept that brings together multiple forms of human movements and circulation within a single analytical framework. It encourages governments to develop concepts and categorise movement of goods, people and capital through cities, within neighbourhoods, and across political boundaries (Cresswell, 2006). It also enables the understanding and evaluation of movement of people in space in terms of freedom and progress or deviance and danger as well as impediments to mobility prevailing across geographical scales (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016). Children as well as adults move for various reasons between locations in space. These movements are generally flexible, with children and young people moving back and forth between their home communities and destinations (Punch, 2007; Hashim and Thorsen, 2011). Therefore, many child migrants do not just settle in one location, but may move (seasonally or yearly)

depending on opportunities available to them, or difficulties that arise. These movements are underpinned by various motivations (Hashim, 2007; Hashim and Thorsen, 2011; and Tamanja, 2012) and appear to present distinct patterns worth considering. Although it is difficult to generalise the patterns that emerge from migration journeys, there are nonetheless, several broad categorisations in attempting to explain such movements into internal-international, seasonal-permanent, regular-irregular, among others. However, theories of population movement in most developing countries focus on rural-to-urban migration as it is the dominant flow involving people (Lynch, 2005) and also the focus of this study. Consequently, in his summary on the topic “people”, in his book on rural-urban interaction in the developing world, Lynch (2005: 96) categorises movements of people between rural and urban areas into step-wise, circulatory, cyclical and multi-locational household migration.

Step-wise migration

This refers to the pattern whereby migrants move through intermediate destinations and then to a final destination. It is a spatial relocation by individuals or families, through steps or stages, from an origin to an intended destination. According to Conway (1980) it is a process by which individuals or families embark on a migration path which gradually takes them, by way of intermediate steps, from a traditional-rural environment to a modern urban environment. In this process, prospective migrants create in their minds a hierarchy of destinations, ranked according to multiple criteria, and that the goal of stepwise migrants is to climb as high up this hierarchy as possible, until they eventually reach their preferred destination. Although Conway’s study was on international migration, it is also applicable to internal migration and can be employed as a way of accumulating capital and mapping out multistage migration trajectories to preferred destinations (Paul, 2011) by reducing the risk of their decisions by sort of inching away from home. Lynch (2005) on his part categorises this movement as from a village to a town and then later on, to a city (village – town – city). The rural resident may go to a nearby city, and from there to a larger city, and perhaps eventually to a huge megalopolis (Weeks, 2008). This can be followed over any time period, and does not necessarily have to follow a particular pattern. The intermediate destinations serve as stair cases for the migrant to step on and climb to the destination. This is often occasioned when migrants for some reasons, are unable to mobilise the required resources and protocols to move direct from the origin to the destination.

Chain migration

Similar to step-wise migration is chain migration, a process whereby migrants follow their predecessors, and are assisted by them to establish in an urban destination (Lynch, 2005). It reduces the risk and cost of distance because it involves migrants in an established flow from a common origin to a predetermined destination, where earlier migrants have already scoped out the situation and laid the groundwork for new arrivals (Weeks, 2008). The early movers serve as links in a chain and invite their compatriots; giving them information on job availability, accommodating them and sometimes helping with transport and other ancillary cost and services that leverage their stay at the destinations.

Circulatory migration

Circulatory migration refers to repeated movements between an origin and a destination, involving more than one migration and return. It involves sharing of work, family and other aspects of migrants between two or more locations (Hugo, 2013). This form of migration enables the areas of destination to meet their labour challenges in a flexible and timely manner, by allowing the destinations to address their labour challenges that are seasonal or short term in nature. It has economic and social benefits for migrants and for both receiving and sending areas and is practiced mostly by young, low-skilled men without dependents for whom the only other option is frequently disadvantageous job offers in their places of origin (Zimmermann, 2014). Nevertheless, it also offers considerable potential for skilled migrants as well. Migrants therefore, migrate from a rural origin to an urban destination and then to a rural destination or back to the rural origin. Lynch (2005) represents this pattern as village to city and to village migration (village – city – village).

Cyclical migration

This form of migration is similar to circulatory migration but is in response to seasonality and conditions precipitating such seasons. According to Lynch (2005), it is associated with seasonal variation in labour demand. Therefore, people who live in areas where the seasonal conditions do not require their labour at a given period will migrate to places where their labour is required and return to their places of origin when the season changes and their labour is needed back at home.

These categorisations are not exhaustive, considering the varying motivations for child migration. Children are flexible in their migration decisions and journeys and often adapt to changing circumstances in the course of their journeys as migration in general, especially labour migration, is complex and not static, but constantly evolving (Ansell, 2000). Nevertheless, Lynch's (2005) classifications represent a good proportion and are helpful in understanding the typology of child migration in Ghana and other rural settings.

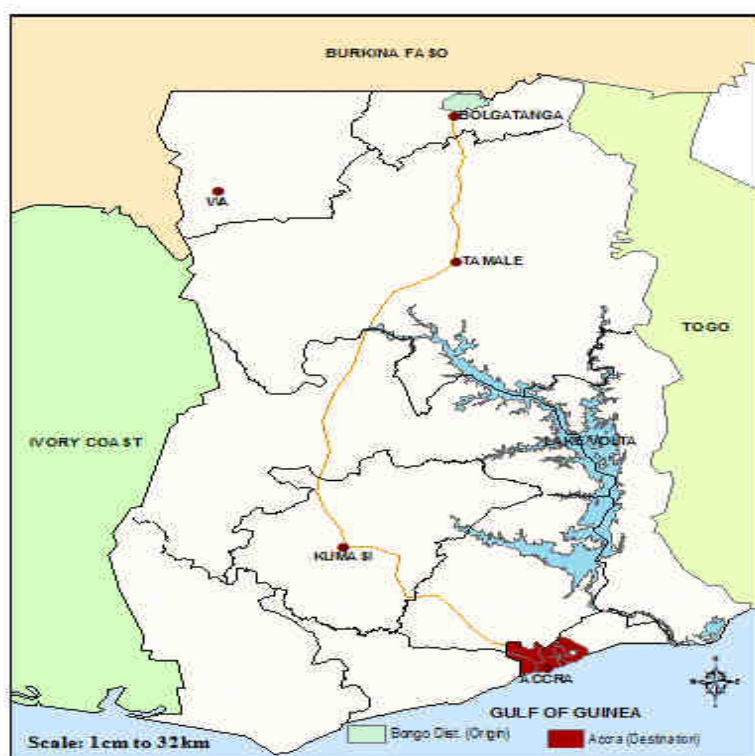
Patterns of child migration in Ghana

Generally, migration has often been seen as an escape from the clutches of poverty (Tyner, 2009; Netting, 1993) and for migrants who lack sufficient capital and other resources, a disconnect can exist between their destination preference and their destination choices (Paul, 2011). The pattern of migration in Ghana has generally been from the north to the south (Agyei and Ofosu-Mensah, 2009; Hashim, 2007) involving various categories of actors and including children in recent times (Hashim and Thorsen, 2011; Tamanja, 2012; Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013). This pattern has existed for many decades and often attributed to a British colonial policy, which sought to use northern Ghana as a labor reserve for the south (Opare, 2003; Kwankye, Anarfi, Tagoe & Castaldo, 2009). Accordingly, labor was recruited from the north to work on cocoa farms and in the mines in the south. Consequently, northern Ghana received very little investment in basic social infrastructure, manufacturing and education facilities (Songsore, 2011). Although deliberate policies such as free education and other policies have been instituted by successive governments to bridge the gap, northern Ghana still functions as a reservoir of unskilled labor with the highest poverty rate in the country (GSS, 2013). The main economic activity in the north is subsistence rain fed agriculture. However, unfavourable climatic conditions and inadequate irrigation facilities results in long periods of idling and non-productivity. The result has been for adults, youth and in recent times, children (in and out of school) to migrate to the south as an alternative livelihood option. According to Opare (2003), some parents encourage their children to migrate to work in order to support their families that are left behind. However, the migration of children, independent of their parents exposes such children to various kinds of risks (Kwankye, et al, 2009) with implications for conventions, policies and laws on children's rights in Ghana.

Locational context of the study

This study was conducted in two administrative districts in Ghana: Accra in the coastal ecological zone and Bongo district in the northern savanna zone. Accra is a popular destination for most migrants in Ghana (Anarfi et. al, 2003; GSS, 2013), while Bongo district is the origin of many migrants (BONDA, 2010, 2012; Mohammed and Apusigah, 2005; Tamanja, 2012). In order to get a comprehensive picture of the patterns that emerge from the trajectories of child migrants, interviews were conducted with migrant children in Accra and in villages in Bongo district (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Map of Ghana showing origin and destination of child migrants



Source: Adapted from Tamanja, 2016

The population of Bongo district, is estimated at 84,545 (47.4% males and 52.2% females) inhabitants, with a growth rate of 2.8% and mostly (42.7%) youthful. It is one of the deprived districts in north east of Ghana, covering a land area of 459.5 km². About 40% of the land surface is occupied by rocks (BONDA, 2010), reducing the land available for subsistent and rain-fed farming activities. This presents a major challenge for subsistence compound farming and household poverty, with implications for household poverty and migration since agriculture is the main economic activity for most of the inhabitants (Tamanja, 2014).

Furthermore, the people are organized socially in patrilineal and extended family systems (Hart, 1971), with many members living in common compounds and in different household units. This enjoins them to engage in communal social activities and farming, and to help one another in times of difficulties (Hashim and Thorsen, 2011). However, with urbanization, these social ties are weakening and composition of families are gradually becoming nuclear and independent of once another.

Education in the district is befuddled by numerous challenges, including inadequate teachers, furniture, teaching and learning materials, resulting in poor academic performance in schools. The poor performance and other conditions constitute a disincentive for children to attend school, as schooling is perceived as waste of time. Consequently, migration among school-aged children is common in the district. Although there are no official statistics on the phenomenon, it involves adults and children, some of whom attend school but migrate during vacation to work and return when schools reopen (BONDA, 2010; Tamanja, 2012 & 2014).

On the other hand, Accra (see figure 1) is the national capital of Ghana with a land size of 200 km² and a population of 1,848,614 (48% males and 52% females) in 2010, constituting 7.5% of the country's total population (GSS, 2013). The metropolis has the highest density of about 9,243 persons per square kilometre as against the national density of 103.4. This high density has implications for livelihoods, as dependence on the land (as is the case with many rural areas) cannot sustain the population. It is therefore not surprising that commerce and general work constitute the major occupations within the metropolis (GSS, 2013).

The concentration of population, commercial and industrial activities in the metropolis places mounting pressure on the limited infrastructure and services including housing, transport, water supply, sanitation and waste disposal. While the city of Accra continues to grow rapidly, its boundaries are not clearly demarcated, a situation which poses problems for planning and management of the city and results in the formation of slums which accommodate migrants from the hinterlands. The commercial activities and centres offer ready employment for migrants, especially children from the northern part of the country who ply their trade in these centres. Although, children in Ghana are not supposed to travel unaccompanied and the Children's Act of 1998 prohibits children under 13 years old from doing any work for pay or profit, many of these children in Accra do 'any work for pay' such as head porters, servers in food and drinking joints (popularly called chop bars), and as house helps. Accra therefore serves as a magnet that attracts children from Bongo district and other areas within the Northern Savannah regions who migrate with the hope of achieving their life goals.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to research, employing three months of in-depth interviews with child migrants at their destinations in Accra and in Bongo district in the north east of Ghana. It was conducted in 2012 during field data collection of my PhD research on child migration and educational progression in Ghana. The choice of the qualitative design was appropriate because it enabled the exploration of the processes and patterns of child migration. Since the phenomenon of child migration is complex, I explored the interconnectivity and relationships through narrations from the children to elicit sensitive data as they provided accounts (in the form of stories) about themselves and events that affect them in their lives and surroundings (Bryman, 2012: 582). The children who participated in this study were purposefully selected through snowballing, whereby the researcher made initial contacts with an individual or a group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then used such initial contacts to further establish and expand to other members of the study population (Bryman, 2012). The choice of purposive and snowball techniques was strategic as it helped to select child migrants with the requisite experiences for the study. It also operates on the principle that the best information can be obtained through focusing on a relatively small number of instances, deliberately selected on the basis of relevance and knowledge on an issue under investigation (Denscombe, 2010). Furthermore, the number of children selected to participate in this study was influenced by the number required for the attainment of theoretical sample saturation (Guest et al, 2006). Consequently, although a sample of between six and twelve (6 - 12) is considered appropriate for qualitative research, this study interviewed 35 migrant children as a way to reduce the chances of discovery failure (DePaulo, 2000) by ensuring that as many divergent experiences, as it was possible, was captured from the sample.

On the other hand, a questionnaire was developed and administered to junior high school pupils in Bongo district, who migrated during school holidays, to indicate their places of destination. This was intended to trace their trajectories and to also triangulate the narratives given during in-depth interviews. In all, 490 basic school children participated in the questionnaire survey.

A period of three months of field interviews was conducted in English language (pidgin) and Twi (local language) with the selected children at their convenience and instances. The interviews were conducted at the places of abode and work of the children, to help deepen the contextual understanding of the issue of child migration. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and later translated into English language for analysis.

Finally, children were selected for the study at their convenience and verbal consent. Children identified as satisfying the selection criteria but who found their participation as inconvenient to them were not compelled to participate in the study. Issues of informed consent, access, acceptance, confidentiality and anonymity are important in conducting good research. According to Robson (1993) the investigator is required to explain all other aspects of the research or intervention about which the participants require. As most of the children were not familiar with academic research, written consent was not sought as they did not find it convenient appending their signatures to documents. Instead, ethical clearance was obtained by explaining the research aims and individual exercises on an on-going basis to the children and securing their verbal consent (Berlan, 2005) before the interviews were conducted.

Findings and discussion

The trajectories of migrant journeys do not necessarily follow predetermined patterns, but by the motivations and process resulting in such journeys, involving a variety and complex mix of movements. Nonetheless, adult migration has generally been categorized as north-south, with Accra and Kumasi serving as major destinations (Awumbila, 2007; Songsore, 2011; GSS, 2013). In this study, the patterns that emerged are similar to those of

adult migration, with a general north-south pattern, and with Accra and Kumasi as preferred destinations (see figure 2).

Figure 2 Origin and destinations of child migrants



Source: Tamanja (2014)

As shown in figure 2, although children migrated to many settlements southwards of the origin district (Bongo), Accra and Kumasi were dominant recipient destinations. This general pattern confirms that of the Population and Housing Census organized in 2010, which revealed that Accra is the most preferred destination of migrants in Ghana (GSS, 2013). Similarly, Beachamin (1999), Hashim and Thorsen (2011), and Tamanja (2012 and 2014) all describe the general pattern of migration in Ghana as north-south. Nevertheless, other destinations such as Tamale, Kintampo, Techiman, Sunyani, Koforidua and Tarkwa were also important destinations among the children.

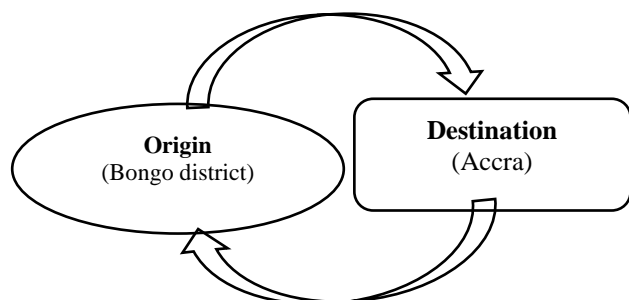
However, some of the children migrated to Bawku, which is to the east of Bongo (origin) district. This was the only destination which was not in line with the north-south direction observed in the discourse. It is however not out of place because Bawku which is in the same administrative region is a vibrant commercial settlement, linking trade between the country and Burkina Faso, the neighboring northern country. Therefore, some of the children migrated there to engage in non-farm activities to earn some money for use in school.

On the other hand, it emerged from analysis of the individual in-depth interviews that similar patterns (as categorised by Lynch) include; cyclical, step-wise, chain and leapfrog migration.

Cyclical migration

This type of migration involved children moving from their places of origin, direct to their destinations and back from the destinations to their places of origin, during given seasons of the year. It is repeated during the following season, beginning in July and ends in September, to be repeated in July of the following year. The children involved in this type of migration were school children who migrated during the end of year school vacation (which begins in late July and ends in early September) to work in urban destinations and returned to their villages when schools reopened (see figure 3).

Figure 3 Cyclical migration



Source: Own illustration from field data, 2014

As shown in figure 3, the pattern of movement is only between the origin and destination, as they migrated to Accra and back from Accra to their places of origin in Bongo district. They returned to their villages to attend school at the beginning of the academic year in their schools in Bongo district. The following are excerpts of narrations by 16-year-old boy and girl who embarked upon this type of migration.

Yes, I travelled to Accra during the vacation where I worked and got some money. We didn't stop anywhere when we were going. I travelled straight from our village to Accra with some of my friends. Some of them were my class and school mates and we all travelled together to Accra. We were able to get some work to do, so when school was about to reopen, we returned here to go to school. If you are here during vacation, you will not be doing anything and you will not also have money to buy what you need in school. But when you travel to Accra, you can get some work to do, so that by the time school will reopen, you can save some money to use in school (Interview with 16-year-old girl – Apagre, in Bongo).

I have travelled to work in Accra two times. I went last year and went again this year. It is very good because if you go there, you will be able to get some work to do and get some money to use when school reopens. So, we go every long vacation and return after vacation to attend school. We use the money we get from working in Accra to buy the things we need in school and also as pocket money to buy food during break time in school (Interview with 16-year-old boy – Abire, in Awiisi).

It can be deduced from these narrations that, school children migrate to urban destinations (mainly in Accra) to engage in menial work and return to their home villages to attend school after vacation. Migrating to urban destinations and returning after the end of the vacation, qualifies such migration to be classified as cyclical (Lynch, 2005) since it appears to begin from one point and return to the same origin, and repeated annually. This form of migration has economic and social benefits for migrants and for both receiving and sending areas and is practiced mostly by young, low-skilled people without dependents for whom the only other option is frequently disadvantageous job offers in their places of origin (Zimmermann, 2014). The children who engage in this type of migration, as observed by Zimmermann, have no employable skills, are young and without dependents. They are therefore engaged in the informal sectors, doing menial jobs in the cities of Ghana to earn money which they use in school. Although basic education is free in northern Ghana, children need pocket money to buy food and other basic things they need in school (Tamanja, 2012).

Networks of families and hometowns appear to be very effective at fueling child migration in Ghana. These networks do not only serve as links but actively provide information and other assistance to migrant children. According to Weeks (2008) the earlier migrants lay the groundwork for new migrants. Similarly, other categorisations emerged from analyzing the interviews, including chain migration.

Chain migration

This pattern of migration emerged as series of movements within a family or defined group of people. It often begins with the migration of a family member who serves as a conduit to bring other family members to the new location (see figure 4).



Source: Own illustration from field data, 2014

As shown in figure 4, networks of families and hometowns resident at intermediate destinations and Accra served as links for children to migrate from Bongo district to Accra. Narratives of child migrants featured elements of invitations by family members, friends and acquaintances to children to migrate and (in some instances) sending money for their transportation. The following are extracts of such accounts with migrant children in Accra.

It was my sister and her husband who told my father to let me come here to attend school and also help them with their work. So my father also told me about it. I was already praying to get the chance to come here, so I was happy about it (Interview with 15-year-old boy - Anabiisi in Accra).

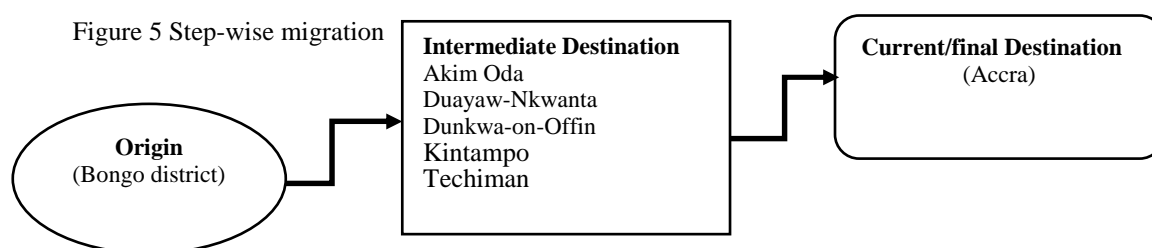
When I was at home, my friend (also from our village but living here in Accra) was calling me and asking me to come to Accra, but now he has travelled to South Africa. His younger brother, who is now here, was also always inviting me to come and help him to sell Khebab (roasted meat), especially during Christmas. So I decided to come here and work to get my own money (Interview with 16-year-old boy - Mumuni in Accra).

From these narrations, the acquaintances of the children who were resident in Accra served as links, inviting and encouraging the children to migrate to Accra. Although Anabiisi had an ambition of migrating to Accra and was praying for an opportunity, it was actualised by the invitation of his sister, who was living with her husband in Accra. On the other hand, Mumuni was repeatedly invited by someone from his home village (who he called his

friend) to migrate to Accra. Though he did not immediately honour the invitation and the friend migrated further to South Africa, his younger brother who assumed responsibility of managing the kebab business, persisted with the invitation until he (Mumuni) finally migrated to Accra. Mumuni was not given money for his transport, but Anabiisi had his fare paid for by his father. Furthermore, Afiako who migrated to a brother at Agona Wassa in the western region recounted that, *I didn't have enough money, so my brother sent some money to me to use and fare myself to that place. He sent GH¢20, then my mother also added GH¢10* (Interview with 15-year-old boy - Afiako). Afiako from this narration, did not only get the invitation to migrate, but was given part of the fare by the brother who invited him. Besides opportunities for achieving life ambitions, Accra is a destination for adult migrants (GSS, 2013) who serve as links and fuels chain migration in the country.

Step-wise child migration

Step-wise migration refers to a pattern where migrants get to their final destinations after migrating to and through intermediate destinations. It involves a series of shorter, less extreme migrations from a person's place of origin to a final destination. For instance, moving from a farm to a village, to a town and finally to a city (Lynch, 2005). For instance, moving from a farm, to a village, to a town, and finally to a city (Lynch, 2005). The intermediate destinations are used as steps in order to get to the final destination. This pattern emerged from analyzing interviews of children who were no longer in school but got to Accra by migrating through intermediate destinations as shown in figure 5.



Source: Own illustration from field data, 2014

As can be seen in figure 5, the children migrated from villages in Bongo district to Accra. However, they first migrated to intermediate destinations such as Akim Oda, Duayaw Nkwanta, Dunkwa-on-Offin, Kintampo and Techiman before proceeding to Accra. These settlements are along the way to Accra when traveling from the north to the south of Ghana (see figure 2). The following excerpts from interviews by a 17-year-old boy (Mumuni) who first migrated to Akim Oda and later to Accra, exemplifies children involved in this type of movements.

I left our village in July 2010 after my JHS, when I was 15 years old. I first travelled to Akim Oda and then to this place [Accra]. I went to my mother at Akim Oda for some time. I think it was about 5 months. At Akim Oda, I was learning fitting [apprenticeship in Auto Mechanics]. My mother was paying for me to learn the fitting. She paid GH¢100 for the entire period [3 years] of learning the job. But in December (that was before Christmas in 2010) my Grandmother died, so my mother left Akim Oda and went back to our home town, leaving me there alone. When my mother left, I didn't have anybody to give me money to stay there. Although my mother rented a room for me to stay, the living cost was very high. So I left there after suffering for three (3) months and came here. This place [Accra] is better and I always wanted to come her because I had heard a lot about how one can easily find work to do here, but I didn't have the money to travel direct from our hometown to this place. I knew that if I travelled to live with my mother at Akim Oda, she will give me money which I will be able to use to continue to this place. (Interview with Mumuni in Accra).

From this account, Mumuni first migrated from his village to a small town in the south of Ghana, where he lived for five months before proceeding to his final destination in Accra. As observed by Punch (2007), children 'may move seasonally or yearly depending on available opportunities or difficulties that arise', Mumuni could not cope with life at his intermediate destination (Akim Oda) where he first migrated to join his mother with the intention of continuing to Accra, after she returned to their home village. Although his mother got him enrolled on apprenticeship and rented a room for him to stay, he could not stay beyond three months after the departure of his mother. He continued his migration journey to Accra where he was working and earning money on his own. Akim Oda was thus used as a stepping stone (intermediate destination) to get to Accra, which was his long term dream destination. Furthermore, a 17-year-old boy (Atanzui) narrated his experience in the following.

My journey to this place (Accra) was not direct. I did not have enough money to take the bus direct from our village to this place. So what I did was to stop at Kintampo and work for about 3 months and when I got some money, I continued to Techiman where I worked for 5 months before coming down to this place. I didn't know Techiman, but some of the boys I was working with at Kintampo said Techiman was nearer to Accra and that I didn't need so much money to continue from there to Accra (Interview with Atanzui in Accra)

Atanzui's account is a clear depiction of step-wise migration as he travelled through intermediate steps, from a rural deprived district to a modern urban destination (Conway, 1980) through a nearby city, and from there to a larger city, and eventually to a metropolis (Weeks, 2008; Lynch, 2005) accumulating capital through working at the intermediate destinations towards his preferred destinations (Paul, 2011).

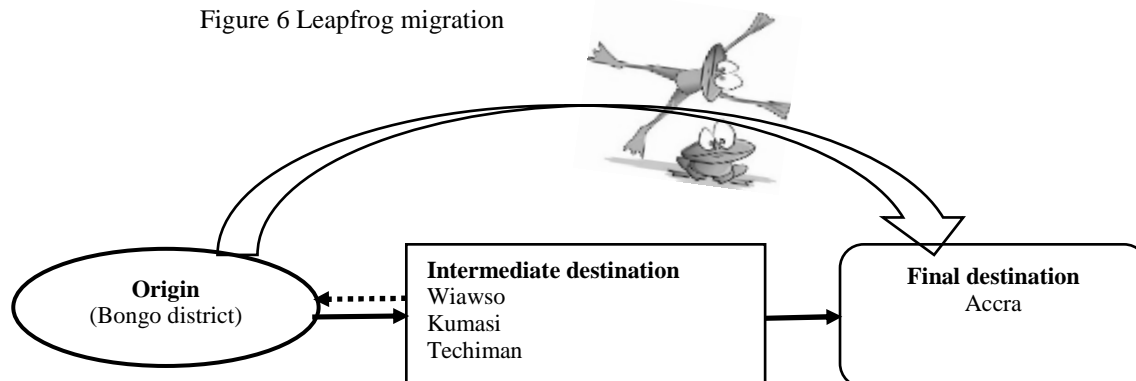
Although Mumuni and other children aspired to and were living in Accra, it cannot be concluded that Accra was their final destination, as they could further migrate to other destinations with prospects of better opportunities of work and livelihood options.

Nevertheless, other children leapfrogged their intermediate destinations to their final destinations in the course of their movements.

Leapfrog child migration

Further analysis of the interviews revealed a novel pattern of child migration which is a variant of step-wise migration, but differs slightly with respect to how children continue from the intermediate to their final destinations (see figure 6). It is termed leapfrog migration because children who were involved in it migrated to intermediate destinations, but instead of proceeding to the final destination, they return to their places of origin and move over the intermediates to the final destinations.

Figure 6 Leapfrog migration



Source: Own illustration from field data, 2014

As shown in figure 6, children migrated from their home villages in Bongo district to Techiman, Wiawso and Kumasi, but instead of proceeding to Accra, they returned to their villages and then moved direct over those intermediate destinations to Accra. In other words, these children migrated to initial destinations, returned to their places of origin (instead of continuing from the intermediate destinations) and then sprang over the first or intermediate destinations to the final or current destination. This pattern of movement was observed with three (3) children who recounted their experiences on how they first migrated to Kumasi, Wiawso and Techiman, returned to their home villages and then to Accra in the following accounts.

I first migrated to Wiawso, where I helped a 'brother' on a cocoa farm for one (1) year. I thought that that place would be good for me and I will be able to make money for myself and give some to my mother. I was able to earn something [money] small, but it was not much, because he did not treat me as someone who had gone there to look for money. So I decided to continue to Accra where I heard from friends that it was better there and I could make more money there. However, I went back home to see my mother and give her part of the money I got, before continuing my journey to Accra. It was part of the money that I brought from Wiawso, that I used to fare myself to Accra. I did not wait for it to finish, because it will have been very difficult for me to get money in the village to come to Accra (Interview with 17-year-old boy - Attis in Accra).

I first went to my sister at Kumasi (Moshie Zongo) but I couldn't get work there. So I went back home to see my mother before coming to Accra. When I got back home, my mother looked for the money for me to come here. I was crying to her every day, so within a week, she got the money for me to come straight to this place. I just wanted to work. So I wanted any work to do in Kumasi, but my sister couldn't find me any. So I returned to Boku. I stayed in Kumasi for one year and then left. I told my sister I wanted to go to school, but she told me that she didn't have money to send me and take care of me in school there in Kumasi, because in Kumasi they pay school fees. So, I decide that I will continue to this place because I heard I could get work to do here in Accra (Interview with 16-year-old girl - Lamisi in Accra).

I did not come direct from our village to this place (Accra). I first travelled to Techiman with two of my friends. We were working there and I got some money. I was happy when I was able to earn some money to be able to continue to this place, but I knew my mother and my other siblings were suffering back home. So instead of coming here from Techiman, I went back to give some of the money to my mother and to tell her that I will continue my journey to Accra. I took the bus from there (our village) straight to Accra. I did not stop at Techiman. I came direct from home. Techiman was good for me, but you know, everybody wants to come to Accra because it is a city and there are more opportunities here. Also, when you are home, they respect those who are in Accra, so we all want to come to Accra (Interview with 17-year-old boy -Abambire in Accra).

It follows from these narrations that, Attis, Lamisi and Abambire spent some time at their intermediate destinations (Wiawso, Kumasi and Techiman respectively) before continuing to Accra, after returning to their home villages. It appears Attis was exploited by his host (someone from his home village who he called his brother) as he explains not being treated as someone who had gone there to look for money. On the other hand, Lamisi's sister did not only fail to get work for her to do in Kumasi, but could also not enroll her into school because of payment of school fees. Although basic and secondary schooling is free for people in the north of Ghana, the same is not the case in the south (Hashim and Thorsen, 2011; Tamanja, 2012). Therefore, continuing her education in Kumasi meant that Lamisi's sister would have to pay for her education, which she was not in the position to do. Lamisi therefore, had to rethink and continue her journey to Accra, but had to return to inform and request transport fare from her mother at her home village.

On the other hand, Abambire was able to earn some money at the intermediate destination but needed to send some to his mother and also inform her of his decision to continue his journey to Accra. They all returned to their home villages in Bongo district and then migrated from there to Accra. The intermediate destinations served as means of accumulating capital and mapping out routes with minimal risks and cost to preferred destinations (Paul, 2011).

The novelty in this type of migration is that, Techiman, Kumasi and Wiawso are in the south of Ghana and closer to Accra (see figure 2) than the origin villages in Bongo district. For instance, the distance from Techiman, Kumasi, and Wiawso to Accra are 360km, 270km, and 400km respectively, while Bongo is 837km to Accra. It would have been expected or logical therefore, that these children will naturally continue their journeys to Accra from Techiman, Kumasi or Wiawso, since those intermediate destinations are closer to Accra and would cost less in terms of transport fares. On the contrary, they chose to return to their home villages and then migrated from there (over Techiman, Kumasi and Wiawso) to Accra, a distance of about 837km. Attis for instance explained that he was careful not to spend all the money at home, as he would not be able to get the needed fare to Accra. This suggests he had the intension of continuing his migration to Accra. However, he went back to his home village from Wiawso, whereas he could have spent less on fare, if he had continued from the intermediate destination. He however opted to go back to his home village and to move from there to Accra. The motives for going back to their home villages have been recounted to include going to see their families and give part of their earnings to their surviving parents before proceeding to Accra. Abambire, for instance had to return to give part of his earnings at the destination to his mother in his home village, inform her and seek her blessing before proceeding to Accra over the intermediate destination.

It can be deduced from these narrations that the main underlying motivation for the journeys children make is poverty. They all narrated migrating to work in order to support their parents (mainly mothers). This indicates that poverty is widespread in the district, which has a poverty incidence of 67.4% (GSS, 2015). Furthermore, Mohammed and Apusigah (2005), Hashim (2007), Hashim and Thorsen (2011), and Tamanja (2012) all identified poverty as the main motivation for migration in the north east of Ghana and in particular, children in Bongo district. It is thus plausible to opine that, curtailing the phenomenon of child migration and its attendant risky journeys in the district is contingent on instituting interventions and policies that will reduce poverty and empower parents and households to take care of their children instead of relying on them as economic agents to

support in the family finances. The introduction of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme instituted by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in 2008 is in the right direction. Although the programme offers a lifeline and has the potential to keep beneficiary households and individuals out of abject poverty, it is inadequate and not well targeted. Also, the accounts of the children revealed they were either in school or had completed nine years of basic schooling. Their involvement in migration has implications for their ability to progress in the pursuit of their education since they only engage in menial jobs at their destinations which could disrupt their education.

Conclusion

Child migration involves complex processes and patterns with several challenges; both in the course of the movement and at the destinations. This study explored the patterns that emerged from the trajectories of child migrants from Bongo district, in the north east of Ghana to the national capital (Accra). The patterns that emerge from the journeys of the children are similar to those of adult migration and include cyclical, chain and step-wise migration. However, a novel variant of step-wise migration emerged as 'leapfrog' migration. It involved children who migrate to intermediate destinations, but instead of progressing to their final destinations (as with step-wise migration), chose to return to the origin before leaping the intermediate destination to the final destination. Although this type of migration is novel, more data is required for its validation as it was identified in the movements of only three children.

These patterns have implications for decision making and implementing policies aimed at minimizing the risks associated with such journeys. This is because, minimizing such risks to enhance the benefits of the phenomenon of child migration need not only focus on the origin and final destinations, but paying attention to intermediate destinations as well. Furthermore, since the cardinal motivation for the migration of children from Bongo district is to escape poverty as the district has high (67.4%) incidence of poverty (GSS, 2015), establishing irrigation facilities will reduce the fallow period, provide more opportunities for the people to engage in economic activities and reduce the level of poverty. In the meantime, households most affected should be targeted for enhanced social intervention programs such as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) being implemented through the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection. The quantum of this support needs to be increased and well targeted at genuine beneficiaries in the district. This will minimize poverty among vulnerable parents and its attendant effects, enabling them to provide the needs of their children and reduce the urge for children to migrate to work and support their parents.

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