

Tackling Rural – Urban Drift in Ghana: Labour Intensive Public Work as a Tool in the Wa East District

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Abstract

Rural-urban drift has been among the topical developmental challenges in many countries. In Ghana, available statistics estimate that about 52% of the total population above age seven are the most mobile population. This current study seeks to examine the extent to which the Labour Intensive Public Work can be an efficient strategy to retain potential migrants in their respective communities using Wa East District as the study area. The paper argues that, although 93.8% of the respondents admitted that the Labour Intensive Public Work is beneficial, 70.8% still had the intention to migrate again if the project is not sustained especially during the off-farming season. This study therefore conclude that Labour Intensive Public Work can be a good social intervention tool for curbing rural-urban drift if it is sustained and efficiently implemented.

Keywords: Rural-Urban Drift, Labour Intensive Public Work, Wa East District, Ghana.

1. Introduction

Over the years, governments have employed myriad of approaches in dealing with rural- urban migration that has been a major developmental challenge in many countries. Generally, migration scholars have identified two parameters in defining migration: First, geographic units, thus, the potential origin and destination locations; and second the time period in which individuals must move between their respective communities and new found destinations - place of origin and destinations (Anarfi *et al.* 2003; Kwankye and Anarfi, 2011; Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008). Different people move from one place to another in order to satisfy variety of needs such as economic, social, political and cultural. Migration comes in many forms and the most prominent in most developing countries is the internal migration - movement within national border. Rural-Urban migration is the most common aspect of internal migration. Most poor people in rural areas embark on this form of migration because of the higher cost associated with travelling far to areas outside their national boundary (Abrar and Seeley, 2009) although there might be other reasons. As a result, the number of people who move within national borders is much higher than migrants who travel overseas for greener pastures. In line with this, UNDP Human Development Report (2009) has argued that the number of internal migrants is nearly four times the number of migrants who travel to other nations.

Migration is a common phenomenon in Ghana and available statistics reveal that about 52% of the population aged seven years and older are highly mobile. Again, young adults aged 25 – 29 constitutes the chunk of the proportion of the migrants (GSS, 2008). Exploring the migration phenomenon in Ghana with respect to its patterns, determinants, and impacts on welfare and poverty can be traced to the 1960's (Ackah and Medvedev, 2010). Although several researches alluded to the fact that migration improves the livelihood of migrants and their families (Afsar, 2009; Kwankye and Anarfi, 2011; Mahmood, 2011; Ranabahu, 2004) it is not without cost to the migrants and their immediate communities. School going children are most of the time left behind depriving them of proper parental care. These migrants face myriad of challenges which have detrimental effects on both their health and the development of the communities. Other scholarships on migration identified different determinants that influence the decision to migrate. Welfare related issues such as increase in household income feature prominently. For instance, Caldwell (1968) found a positive effect of a household's own income on the probability to migrate. Again, other important determinants that influence the decision to migrate include presence of friends or relatives in the destination locality, thus, migration networks, gender - with males more likely to migrate than females, age, with younger persons more likely to migrate and household size with larger households producing a greater number of migrants (Caldwell, 1968; Tutu, 1995). Findings with regards to the relationship between education and the probability to migrate have been conflicting, with Beals *et al.* (1967) estimating a negative relationship while Caldwell, (1968) reported a positive association. These findings can mean that the decision to migrate is dependent on the particular circumstance that the individual finds him/herself.

According to Anarfi *et al.* (2003), northern Ghana in particular has been identified as a region of high internal out-migration. Traditionally, north-south migration in Ghana was largely male-dominated, long-term and long-distance. However, due to the prevailing economic difficulties, a new dominant north-south migration stream has emerged: that of female adolescents moving independent of their families, largely towards the cities. This form of migration appears to be part of a pattern of labour circulation between the north and south regions of Ghana (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008). People migrate from their respective communities due to the lack of productive economic activities during the prolong dry season. This is because unlike the southern regions having double rainfall seasons, the northern regions have single rainfall season - three months of rains annually. Ironically, rain-fed farming is the predominant economic activity for the inhabitants of the northern regions. The area experience prolonged dry season which make farming during this period nearly impossible due to the absence of water which is a critical ingredient in farming. As an adaptive measure, these rural folks migrate from their communities to areas in the southern part of Ghana in search of job opportunities to fend for themselves and their families. This scenario supports the assertion by Cadwell (1969) and Frazier (1961) that most of the rural-urban migrants move in response to the "push" from the vagaries of rural living and the "pull" of opportunities of industry, commerce, and "bright lights" of the urban areas. The migrants engage themselves in menial and lower paid jobs which are associated with several forms of risks. This situation has created several problems at both their communities of origin and destination. Williams (2002) observed that female porters (commonly known as *kayayei*) mainly from the northern part of Ghana have become a nuisance in the central business districts of the bigger cities such as Accra, Kumasi, and all other hubs of business activities in the country. In the view of Twumasi-Ankrah (1995), policy makers should first investigate why people move from rural areas to urban areas to inform their intervention strategies which are geared towards solving this developmental menace.

To remedy the trend of rural-urban drift, researchers have proposed ways to curb the drift of labour from their respective communities of origin to other areas for perceived opportunities. The Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW) is one of the strategies that various governments have employed to curtail the aforementioned problem. Bentall (1999) defined labour-intensive approach as an approach where labour is the dominant resource for carrying out works, and where the share of the total project cost spent on labour is high (typically 25% - 60%). It is observed that the LIPW can aid the provision of needed material and financial resources to promote rural development programs that are geared toward reducing rural-urban migration as being championed in Ghana by the District Assembly concept introduced in the 1980's. The Government of Ghana through the Ghana Social Opportunities Project (GSOP) has instituted a number of social protection interventions as a safety net for the poor and vulnerable in the society. The LIPW is a component in the GSOP. It is to provide targeted poor rural households with access to employment and income earning opportunities, in particular during seasonal labour demand shortfalls through rehabilitation and maintenance of public or community infrastructure. The aim is to maximize local employment while rehabilitating productive infrastructure assets, which have the potential to generate secondary employment in the targeted districts and cushion households and communities against external shocks. Loggu and Saggi are part of the beneficial communities of the GSOP project in the Wa East District of the Upper West Region. The project employed two thousand four hundred (2400) active men and women in these communities. This current paper seeks to examine LIPW as a strategy for retaining potential migrants.

Literature Overview

Labour-Intensive Public Work Approach can be defined as a method of construction involving a mix of machines and labour, where labour, utilizing hand tools and light plant and equipment, is preferred to the use of heavy machines, in areas of economic and technical feasibility (EPWP Guidelines, 2005). Labour Intensive Public Works projects have been embarked upon in many less developed countries for many years. These projects are designed to provide short term employment for the unemployed especially those in the unskilled labour category. Most often than not, they are engaged in construction and maintenance, soil conservation, waste disposal and the likes. LIPW projects have two main objectives; one is the quick generation of employment to the poor unskilled labour. The second objective is ensuring that government performs its mandate of providing and maintaining infrastructure in order to promote the development of the country. Recently, due to global economic crisis, LIPW projects have assume larger importance as major safety nets providing income for the poor people and ensuring that they have adequate food that can sustain them.

Kalanidhi *et al* (2010) proposed three models for LIPW projects. The first model sees LIPW as a safety net

intended to provide cash income to self-selected participants in times of need e.g. seasonal income shortages or to respond to nation-wide or region-wide shocks such as a drought. The second model also sees LIPW project as a longer term safety net intended to provide a cushion, mainly as a poverty alleviation project but not totally eliminating poverty. Some programs provide an employment guarantee for a certain number of days or hire fewer people for longer period of time. Again, a third model was identified by Kalanidhi *et al.* (2010). They observed that, aside the provision of employment and infrastructure through public work; it also serves as a vehicle to graduate participants out of poverty, either through encouragement of savings or through a training component. Training is a core component in addition to the income transfer to encourage workers to acquire the needed skills to gain more permanent employment or become self-employed in the field in which he/she obtained the needed training.

LIPW projects are not new in Africa. It dates far back in the 1960s when some East African countries embarked upon aggressive experimentation of labour intensive public work to solve the increasing rate of unemployment. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria were among the pioneers to experiment public work projects in Africa. Morocco launched its version of labour intensive public work in June 1961. The project specifically targeted rural folks with the aim of engaging them in more productive work in order to curb the increasing number of rural people drifting to the urban centres. Subsequently, a national council was constituted in 1974 to prosecute this agenda. The project provided employment for about 85,000 workers per month during the peak season (Jara, 1971). In 1959-1960, the Tunisian government and the United States jointly funded a public work program known as the Workforce to Combat Underemployment, with the Tunisian authorities taking 80% of the cost while the United States absorbed the remaining 20% in the form of food aid. Thwala (2001) reported that the program employed large section of the Tunisian population equalling the national annual average of about 20.7 days per head of the Tunisian workforce.

The Expanded Public Work Program in South Africa gained a lot of successes. It was a partnership program between the South African Business Trust and the National Department of Public work. The Business Trust was initiated by business and government with the aim of creating job opportunities and developing the human resource of the unemployed. The Trust was established in 1999 and was financed by some major companies in South Africa. The program was governed by a board made up of government and business leaders (Song and Nell, 2006). The program created and sustained one million short term jobs over four years in infrastructure, construction, environmental and social services (The Mercury, 2008).

In the case of Ghana, high incidence of poverty, inadequacies of infrastructure and public goods provision and food insecurity were the main driving force that stimulated the government to establish and institute public works institutions and programs (Von Braun *et al.*, 1992). It is however important to note that, although the LIPW projects have been identified to be beneficial, it has also been criticized. Some evaluators of the LIPW projects in Botswana identified some major deficiencies. Valentine (1990) revealed that it would have been better for the government to pay rural folks to do something constructive than have them depend on welfare transfers, even if what they produced was uneconomical. Again, it is argued that, the project to a large extent has little effect on future consumption because the infrastructures created are poorly maintained. Furthermore, Asefa (1989) reported that, the temporary nature of income did not translate into appreciable investment at the household level. In addition to the aforementioned challenges, Manemela (1993) also reported that inadequate technical and managerial support from the district was a contributing factor to the low level of achievement in the projects. Some district assemblies operated the projects at a scale beyond their capacities.

In the same train of thought, McCord (2002) also identified the following problems with regard to the South African LIPW program; lack of project management expertise, lack of norms for processes or procedures, inconsistencies between projects (wage, terms of employment etc), duplication of effort by different line ministries, lack of efficiencies of scale, lack of social development expertise, limited community participation, and the lack of credible Integrated Development Plans to guide strategic asset selection and promote departmental coordination. These contributed to the inability to spend funds allocated to employment creation due to difficulties in identifying and implementing appropriate projects, and results in a sub-optimal outcome in terms of employment created per unit of expenditure. These problems were exacerbated by the short time scales of many projects, which entail high set up costs, (recruitment, training, development of procedures etc), and subsequently fail to realize the benefits of operating at the maximum efficient level.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, over the years, governments and policy makers have been preoccupied with how to manage rural-urban drift and LIPW projects have been identified as a tool that can sustainably deal with this menace if such projects are well planned and implemented.

3 Materials and Methods

The study took place in two communities – Loggu and Saggu which are located in the Wa East District (carved out of the Wa Municipality) in the Upper West Region of Ghana. It lies between latitudes 9°55'N and 10°25'N and longitude 1°10'W and 2°5'W. This paper surveyed and reviewed relevant literature which formed the theoretical framework. Field survey was also carried out in Loggu and Saggu communities in April 2013 to collect empirical data. Data were collected through questionnaire administration to the randomly selected participants of the project. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size to aid in the administration of the questionnaires and this was based on Taro (1970) formula: $X = \frac{n}{1 + n(e)^2}$. Where X is the sample size, n is the total number of registered participants (2400) in the LIPW and e is the alpha (0.10). Respondents were selected using systematic sampling technique at intervals of every twenty fifth worker in the register of the LIPW project. The questionnaires were administered to a total of ninety-six respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The survey revealed that out of the 96 respondents that were interviewed, 57% and 43% were females and males respectively (see Table 1). The high female participation is in pursuance of promoting income of women who are generally considered vulnerable compared to their male counterpart.

Table 1 indicate that 86% of the respondents were between the age range 18-60 and only 14% were more than 60 years implying that that majority of the respondents fall within the active working class. It can therefore be argued that the laborious nature of the LIPW project explain why the chunk of the participants fall within the youthful population with relatively low participation of the elderly population.

Again, 12.5% of the respondents were singles, 72.9% were married while 13.5% were widow/widower. The consequences of these figures are that, because majority of the respondents were married, they are charged with the responsibility to provide for themselves and their families. This situation exerts enough pressure on people to resort to out migration as a panacea to meet their needs as well as that of their families. It further forces the migrants to accept any kind of available job regardless of the risk involved and no matter how meager the wage/salary is. It came to light through the administered questionnaires that about 50% of the respondents accepted menial jobs regardless of the low wages that were paid to them while 27% of them also accepted jobs offered to them despite the various risks associated with these kinds of jobs. These revelations point to the fact that migrants are desperate to survive. Corroborating Amoasi (2010), the health of migrants are negatively affected in the long run.

The predominant economic activity of respondents was farming. Eighty-six percent (89.6%) were farmers while only 2.1%, were Traders. Again, 3.1% were also engaged in local-based industries and 5.2% were unemployed. This is an indication that majority of the respondents earn their livelihood from farming activities. However, due to the erratic rainfall pattern it makes farming difficult and unproductive. Consequently, during the dry season people migrate in search of jobs because the people largely practice rain-fed agriculture which is not sustainable.

Table 1: Background characteristics of Respondents (N=96)

Characteristics	n	%
Sex Distribution		
Male	41	42.7
Female	55	57.3
Age Distribution		
18-30	26	27.1
31-40	33	34.4
41-50	17	17.7
51-60	7	7.3
60+	13	13.5
Marital Status		
Single	12	12.5
Married	70	72.9
Widow/Widower	13	13.5
Level of Education		
No formal Education	75	78.1
Primary	13	13.5
Secondary/Vocational	7	7.3
Occupational Distribution		
Farming	86	89.6
Trading	2	2.1
Local-Based Industry	3	3.1
Unemployed	5	5.2

Source: Field survey, (2013) n: frequency of variables, %: percentage of frequency

Respondents within the age range 18 – 40 formed the chunk of the population that migrate from their respective communities. Out of the 96 respondents, 73% have ever migrated before for one reason or the other. This finding support earlier studies which indicated that it is the youthful population that usually embarks on out migration (Anarfi et al., 2003; Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008). The P-value of .001 further confirms earlier scholarships which indicated that there is a positive relationship between age and migration (see Table 2).

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests for Age and Migration of Respondents

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.203 ^a	8	.001
Likelihood Ratio	24.152	8	.002

Source: Field Survey April, 2013: Statistically significant association was set at $p < 0.05$

Furthermore, 78.1% and 20.8% of the respondents had no formal education and formal education respectively (see Table 1). The former can explain why they are compelled to migrate during the dry season in search of jobs outside their communities. The P value of .000 depicts a significant relationship between level of education of respondents and migration (see Table 3). Although 93.8% of the respondents admitted that the LIPW project is

beneficial, 70.8% still had the intention to migrate again despite the presence of the project and its benefits. Various reasons were given as shown in Figure 1.

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests of Education and Migration

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.056E2 ^a	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	25.823	6	.000

Source: Field Survey April, 2013: Statistically significant association was set at $p < 0.05$

Majority of the respondents (88.5%) argued that their continuous stay in the community will be dependent on the sustainability of the LIPW project in providing jobs especially during the prolonged dry season. About 7.3% also had the intention to migrate if they get better job and living conditions elsewhere. Some respondents (1%) and (3.1%) intended to migrate from their communities because the LIPW is not beneficial to them and also due to some personal reasons respectively.

In order to know the performance of the implementation of the project, respondents were asked to recommend ways of improving it. Majority of the respondents (54%) recommended early payment of their wages while 16% and 12% wanted their wages increased and food provided respectively.

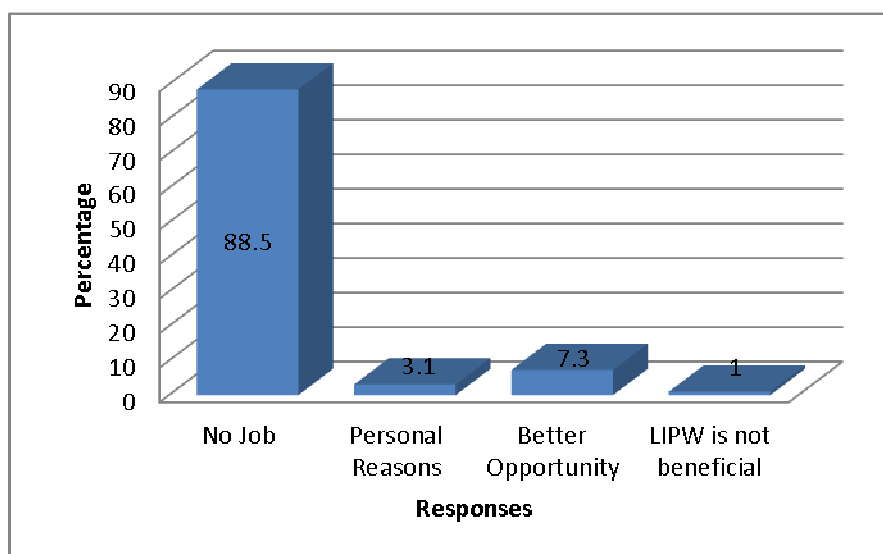


Figure 1: Reasons why respondents will migrate again.

4.0 Conclusions

The paper concludes that rural-urban drift persists in the study communities and it is the youthful population that embarks upon this exercise. It is largely due to the limited job opportunities especially during the prolonged dry season which militate against the predominant economic activity - farming. The movement of the youth further emphasizes the argument that there is a significant relationship between age and migration. Again, the sustainable and efficient implementation of the Labour Intensive Public Work can be a good social intervention tool for curbing the perennial migration of the youthful population from their communities of origin (rural) to other communities (urban) in search of job opportunities. This is because majority of the respondents (88.5%) consider the LIPW to be beneficial and are willing to stay in their respective communities on condition that the main challenge that is facing the project (such as delay in the payment of wages) will be resolved and the implementation will also be sustainable to engage them throughout the year, especially during the prolonged dry season. This paper therefore put forth the following recommendations:

1. The LIPW should not be a “nine day wonder” but rather be a sustainable project that will continue to

create job for the intended population.

2. Payment of wages should be prompt and should be devoid of any cumbersome procedures.

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