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## **GLOBAL MIGRATION PERSPECTIVES**

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**International migration and livelihoods in southeastern Nigeria**

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## **Global Commission on International Migration**

In his report on the ‘Strengthening of the United Nations - an agenda for further change’, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan identified migration as a priority issue for the international community.

Wishing to provide the framework for the formulation of a coherent, comprehensive and global response to migration issues, and acting on the encouragement of the UN Secretary-General, Sweden and Switzerland, together with the governments of Brazil, Morocco, and the Philippines, decided to establish a Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). Many additional countries subsequently supported this initiative and an open-ended Core Group of Governments established itself to support and follow the work of the Commission.

The Global Commission on International Migration was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General and a number of governments on December 9, 2003 in Geneva. It is comprised of 19 Commissioners.

The mandate of the Commission is to place the issue of international migration on the global policy agenda, to analyze gaps in current approaches to migration, to examine the inter-linkages between migration and other global issues, and to present appropriate recommendations to the Secretary-General and other stakeholders. The Commission’s report was published on 5 October 2005 and can be accessed at [www.gcim.org](http://www.gcim.org).

The research paper series ‘Global Migration Perspectives’ is published by the GCIM Secretariat, and is intended to contribute to the current discourse on issues related to international migration. The opinions expressed in these papers are strictly those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Commission or its Secretariat. The series is edited by Dr Jeff Crisp and Dr Khalid Koser and managed by Nina Allen.

Potential contributors to this series of research papers are invited to contact the GCIM Secretariat. Guidelines for authors can be found on the GCIM website.

## **Introduction**

Countries such as Turkey, the Philippines, South Korea, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Cuba, Barbados, Mexico, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have encouraged international migration as a deliberate approach to development. A prime reason for this according to Russell (1995) is that emigration can provide relatively well-paid employment, especially attractive for governments struggling to keep pace with rapid labour force increases. This can produce large inflows of valuable hard currency remittances. However, there is concern that emigration deprives these nations of their best human resources, represents a transfer of educational investment from poor to rich countries and leads to abuses or exploitation of their workers.

The consequences of international migration for development (and the effects of development on migration) in countries of origin remain hotly debated - and poorly understood. Africa is no exception to these trends. Significant rural out-migration is taking place in sub-Saharan Africa where the majority of people are rural residents and poor. Similar migrations have occurred in other parts of the world (notably Europe, in the past), with urban populations doubling and tripling in one or two decades (Wilson, 2001). The key difference that triggers this trend is that urban dwellers in the developing world earn, on average, a per capita annual income as low as \$200, compared to the more than \$20,000 earned by their counterparts in the United States, for instance. What is therefore worthy of further re-examination is the contribution of migrants to the improvement of the homeland from which they migrated. That is, examining the issue of migration as a means of improving livelihoods.

Rapid urbanization, where governments are unable to meet the needs of a growing urban population, often results in poverty, unemployment, inadequate shelter, poor or non-existent sanitation, contaminated or depleted water supplies, air pollution, and other forms of environmental degradation. Squatter settlements and haphazardly placed 'substandard' housing, unsafe water and poor sanitation in densely populated cities are responsible for 10 million deaths worldwide every year, according to the United Nations (UNDP, 2005). The UN reports that 600 million urban dwellers now live in life- and health-threatening housing situations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Wilson, 2001). With specific reference to Nigeria, life expectancy at birth is 51.6 years, the Human Development Index for 2002 is 0.46, the Human Poverty Index is 35.1%, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to an improved water source in 2000 is 38%, the proportion of the population living below \$1 a day from 1990 to 2002 is 0.2%, the urban population in 2002 was 45.9% and is projected to be 55.5% in 2005, while GDP per capita in 2002 was only \$328. Where hope for efficient mitigation measures does not exist, this in itself could be an incentive for international migration.

In the absence of reliable statistics, there are various estimates of the proportion of rural and urban residents as well as the proportion of rural and urban poverty. Beede and Bloom (1995) estimate that the urban population of developing countries increased from 25 to 46 percent between 1970 and 1971. The annual growth rate of urban populations in developing countries accelerated from an average of 3.7 percent in the 1970s to 6.3 percent in the 1980s. However, other scholars such as Brockerhoff (1999) show a faster than estimated growth rate in urban population in Nigeria compared to United Nations projections. He observed that Nigeria's urban population by 2000 was projected in 1996 to be 55.5 million, about 25.8% higher than was projected in 1980. He also, however, raised issues on the reliability of the data upon which these projections were made.

This is a concern shared by Crisp (1999), who identified the weakness of migration studies which are not based on original empirical research. The approach in this research is a micro-level empirical examination of international migration and rural livelihoods. This study therefore identified and examined factors leading to international migration, and the consequences on rural livelihoods in selected states in Nigeria. Implications of international migration, in the context of its perceived impacts on the Nigerian economy as a whole, are also examined.

## **Conceptual and theoretical framework**

Migration, both internal and international, is a common feature of both developing and developed countries. Internal migration in this context refers to the movement of people within their country of origin (in-migration and out-migration), which could be due to various social, economic and political factors. International migration is the movement of people outside their country of origin (emigration) into another country (immigration). In Nigeria, especially in the southeast, both types of migration continue to increase. Migration is an inevitable part of human existence, with a long history. However, its pattern has changed considerably over time, from the search for space, especially in the middle ages, to that of congestion in large cities (rural-urban migration) in the modern age. This is especially so in the last millennium. By 2030 three-fifths of the world's population is expected to live in urban areas (Stephens, 2000).

Migration may be associated with development, urbanization or the forced movement of people fleeing from violent conflict or national disaster. There are many theories explaining the concept of migration (Boswell, 2002; Crisp, 1999; Russell, 2002; Taylor, 2000; Usher, 2005). However, there are three principal categories of international migration theory: the macro, meso and microtheories. Macro theories emphasize the structural, objective conditions which act as push and pull factors for migration. In the case of economic migration, pull factors would typically include economic conditions such as unemployment, low salaries or low per capita income relative to the country of destination. Pull factors would include migration legislation and the labour market situation in receiving countries. Involuntary displacement would be explained through factors such as state repression or fear of generalized violence or civil war.

Meso theories locate migration flows within a complex system of links between states. Two concepts are particularly important for meso theories: systems and networks. Migration is assumed to occur within a migration system. This is defined as a group of countries linked by economic, political and cultural ties as well as by migration flows. Thus the conditions generating movement are understood as the dynamics of relations between two areas, rather than a set of objective indicators. Finally, micro theories focus on factors influencing individual decisions to migrate, analysing how potential migrants weigh up the various costs and benefits of migrating (Boswell, 2002).

The economic theory of migration seems to be supported by Crisp (1999) and Russell (2002). For instance, Crisp (1999) is based on the scenario of people leaving low or middle income countries and seeking asylum in a more prosperous state. From this perspective, further questions arise: how are asylum seekers and others able to raise the large amount of cash needed to pay for their journey? To what extent are these resources mobilized by means of remittances, sent by members of the diaspora community?

The economic perspective is reinforced by Russell (2002), who examines the issue of remittances and their macro-economic effects on receiving countries. She specifically states that

At a time when foreign aid and foreign direct investment are declining, remittances have evolved as an important source of foreign exchange, when migrant workers remit a portion of their income to satisfy prior family commitments.

The family angle of migration is articulated by Taylor (2000), who states that typically, although individuals migrate, they do not sever ties with their source households. Source households may pay migration costs and support migrants until they become established at their destinations. Family members who remain behind (often parents and siblings) may reorganize both their consumption and production activities in response to the migrant's departure, and migrants (often children) typically share part of their earnings with their household of origin through remittances. Continuing interactions between migrants and rural households suggest that a household model would be more appropriate than an individual-level model of migration decisions. The vast majority of the world's migrations originate in rural areas, where most of the world's poverty is also concentrated. How migration out of rural areas affects those left behind is not only important from a social welfare point of view. In light of the increasing integration of markets, it also may have ramifications for economic growth outside rural areas (e.g. by affecting food production, agricultural exports, the rural demand for manufactured goods and future economic surplus in agriculture available for investment elsewhere in the economy).

Another issue that has been under considerable discussion is brain drain. This is the emigration of qualified professionals from developing countries, and the subsequent loss of skill more rapidly than it can be replaced. In contemporary literature, especially in the African developmental context, two issues have become increasingly relevant: that of remittances to relatives staying behind, and that of the long-term impacts in terms of the drain of Africa's human resources, which are so critical for developing the continent. For instance, according to the UNDP (1993), there were more than 21,000 Nigerian doctors in the United States alone, while Nigeria's health system suffers from an acute lack of medical personnel. Some 60 percent of all Ghanaian doctors trained locally in the 1980s had left the country, while in Sudan 17 percent of doctors, 20 percent of university lecturers and 30 percent of engineers in 1978 alone had gone to work abroad.

While brain drain still exists, emphasis has changed from its negative impact to the recognition of the positive effects on the development of the country of origin. Some scholars recognize that the patterns of international migration have changed from uni-directional and permanent to temporary, seasonal and circular (Usher, 2005). Moreover, new information and communication technologies facilitate contacts between migrants and those they have left behind. This has made it possible for migrants to maintain dual citizenship, that is, to maintain close affiliations to both countries of origin and residence. Consequently, migrants become involved in the economic development of their countries of origin. Migrants are now being increasingly considered as agents of development, who can strengthen co-operation between home and host societies. They can contribute to development not only through remittances, investment and entrepreneurial activities but also through the transfer of newly developed skills and knowledge, or through fostering democratisation and the protection of human rights in their countries of origin (Usher, 2005). All of these have implications for livelihoods.

## Research methodology

As is evident from the theoretical discussion, migration can be analysed from various perspectives in terms of motivations and factors, and at various levels: international, national and local. This study is conducted at the local level in southeastern Nigeria where there is a high level of out-migration.

### *Study area*

The study was conducted in two out of Nigeria's thirty-six states. These are Imo and Anambra states in southeast Nigeria. Based on the 1991 National Census (the most recent in Nigeria), Lagos has the highest population density in Nigeria, followed by Anambra and Imo (Table 1). With the exception of Lagos, which is outside the study area, the two states selected for the study have the highest population density in Nigeria. Fourteen local government areas (seven from each state) were selected. One community was selected from each local government area and ten households were selected from each community. This gave a total of 140 respondents, made up of household heads, whether males or females. In addition, one official of the department of rural development in each of the two states was interviewed. We thus had a total sample size of one hundred and forty-two (142) respondents.

Table 1 shows the demographic ranking in descending order, the population size, the land area and the population density of the first seven states in Nigeria. Four states in southeast Nigeria (Anambra, Imo, Abia and Enugu) are among the seven most densely populated states of Nigeria, implying that the southeast is the most densely populated area in Nigeria. As a result of this increased human pressure on finite resources, there is intense competition for the available natural resources in the area. Therefore, many people view migration as an alternative option of securing a livelihood.

**Table 1: Ranking of seven most densely populated states of Nigeria in 1991**

State	Rank	Population	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Density
Lagos	1 <sup>st</sup>	5,725,116	3,345	1712
Anambra	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2,796,475	4,844	577
Imo	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2,485,635	5,530	449
Abia	4 <sup>th</sup>	2,338,487	6,320	370
Akwa Ibom	5 <sup>th</sup>	2,409,613	7,081	340
Kano	6 <sup>th</sup>	5,810,470	20,131	289
Enugu	7 <sup>th</sup>	3,154,380	12,831	246

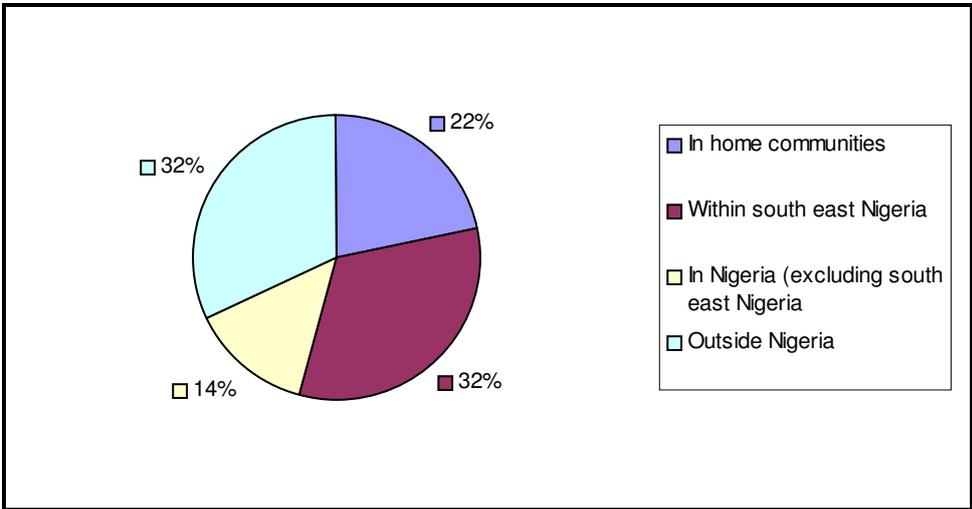
Source: FRN, 1997

**Results and discussion**

*Direction of migration*

On average, each community has a population of 3188.57 people. Of this, 702.41 people, or 22.03%, reside in the community. The average family size in the communities is of 6.9 people. This means that an average of 1.52 people (22.03%) per family reside in the community. Another 2.21 (32.03%) reside within the southeast region but not in their home communities, 0.95 (13.77%) reside in locations within Nigeria but not within the southeast. 2.22 (32.17%) reside outside Nigeria and therefore constitute the international migrants (Fig. 1).

**Fig 1: Destination of migrants from southeast Nigeria, 2004/2005**



Source: Field survey, 2004/2005

There are migrant southeast Nigerians in ECOWAS countries (Economic Community of West African States) such as Ghana, Niger, Chad and Ivory Coast. They are also found in other African countries, including South Africa, Cameroon and Gabon. Outside Africa, they are found in the United States, England, Ireland, USA, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Korea, Brazil, among other places. The distribution of the international migrants shows that 1.81% migrate to Europe, 1.06% migrate to the United States of America and 0.95% migrate to Asia. Other locations, including Canada, Middle East, Africa and South-America, make up 36.91% of receiving countries (Table 2).

**Table 2: Distribution of migrants by countries/regions, 2004/2005**

	<b>Average per community</b>	<b>%</b>
Europe	45.04	1.81
United States	39.63	1.60
Asia	23.56	0.95
Within Nigeria	1460.27	58.74
Other locations	917.57	36.91
<b>Total number of migrants</b>	<b>2486.13</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

International migration is not a recent phenomenon in Nigeria. Before Nigeria's independence in 1960, Nigerians travelled to the United Kingdom, USA, France etc. to obtain higher education. In that era, the tendency was to return to Nigeria immediately after completing studies. The turning point seems to be the collapse of the petroleum boom in the early 1980s, and the attendant economic hardship faced by Nigerians. Subsequently, Nigerians started seeking employment opportunities in other countries, while many who did not necessarily study outside the country began to leave. This is the phenomenon of brain drain. According to Takoungang (2004), the severe economic difficulties, increased poverty and political instability that have plagued many African countries in the last two decades have resulted in the large-scale migration of Africans to Europe and the United States. Unlike their counterparts in the 1960s and 70s, who were anxious to return home after acquiring an American education in order to contribute in the task of nation building, an overwhelming majority of recent immigrants are more interested in establishing permanent residency in the United States.

Many less educated youths may also have migrated, legally or illegally. Illegal migrants have become noticeable on the streets of Europe and North America doing menial jobs. Bamoul and Blinder (1998) observed that the role of immigrants in US has become a major political issue. Foreign workers, many of whom are illegal immigrants, do much of the relatively unskilled work. However, both legal and illegal migrants earn wages which are much higher than what they could have earned in Nigeria. The illegal migrants may remain abroad until they get documents that will enable them to regularize their stay; or they may relocate to a country whose resident permits are easier to obtain; or they await deportation. The population of Nigerian migrants abroad has been on the increase: Komolafe (2002) shows an increase in Nigerians of various ethnic groups in Ireland from 1996 to 2000 (Table 3). In this case, the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria outnumbered other ethnic groups, probably because its people had earlier contacts with the western world.

**Table 3: Ethnic composition of Nigerian migrants in Ireland (highest four, 1996 – 2000)**

Ethnic group	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Av. yearly pop
Yoruba	8	602	1160	1105	1934	962
Igbo	NIL	5	154	154	523	167
Edo	2	9	33	45	68	31
Urhobo	NIL	4	11	40	52	21

Source: Komolafe, 2002.

Southeast Nigeria is comparatively less developed in terms of infrastructure than other parts of Nigeria, which may be a constraint to economic development and employment opportunities. This situation creates a condition of poverty in the zone. Poverty and its socio-economic constraints are major causes of population movements (Komolafe, 2002).

Other factors affecting migration and destination of choice in the area are reflected in the fact that some Nigerian women of fairly wealthy backgrounds travel to Europe to deliver their babies. These babies will have the citizenship of the country in which they were born, and their parents can migrate there to make a better living. The opportunities for overseas migration have also been improved by the visa lottery policy of some countries, such as those of the United States and Canada.

#### *Determinants of migration destination*

Migrants are influenced by a number of considerations in the choice of destinations. These include economic (76.76%), social (11.27%), education (6.33%), climatic (2.82%), language (1.41) (see Table 4). The perception of an economically buoyant Europe and North America fuels the desire to migrate to those countries. In addition, social factors, including similarity in education and language, also impact on a migrant's choice of destination – for example, the English-speaking United Kingdom and United States. However, Table 4 provides overwhelming evidence that economic factors are the major reasons for international migration from southeast Nigeria. Nigeria has no major social or political crises creating the refugee scenario observable in parts of Africa.

**Table 4: Determinants of migration destination, 2004/2005**

	Number	%
Economic	109	76.76
Social	16	11.27
Education	4	6.33
Climatic	9	2.82
Language	2	1.41
No reason	2	1.41
<b>Total</b>	142	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2004/2005

### *Motivation or reasons for migration*

Migration stems from a search for self and household or family improvement and is usually to a place where opportunities are perceived as better – usually where comparatively more natural and or man-made resources are vied for by relatively few people. Because the southeast is the most densely populated part of Nigeria, some migrants seek areas where fewer people vie for the more abundant resources. The motivations for migration mentioned by respondents include economic (80.28), education (16.20%), climatic (1.41%), political (1.41), and religious (0.70%) (Table 5). Economic factors are an important motive for migration. The probabilities of an urban-rural real income differential and of securing an urban job determine the rate and magnitude of rural-urban migration in tropical Africa (Meier, 1995).

Some rural residents of southeast Nigeria, particularly young school leavers and traders, migrate to urban areas in search of jobs and better trading opportunities. Popular destinations are Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Ibadan, which are outside the southeast, and Port Harcourt, Aba, Onitsha, Enugu, which are within the southeast. When the migrants do not achieve their ambition in one urban area, they move to other urban areas in an urban-urban migration.

Rural-rural migration by farmers is also possible, where farmland is insufficient or has been exhausted of nutrients. Land degradation is a critical constraint to the agricultural sector of southeast Nigeria, with average farmland holding of less than two hectares per farmer (Nwajiuba, 2002). Farmers migrate from their rural communities to other rural communities where they can acquire more and better farmland to practice agriculture.

The motivation for migration is therefore predominantly economic (80.28%), which tallies with the dominant determinant of choice of migration destination, which was also predominantly economic (76.76%). Further examination of the role of economic factors in migration revealed that 75% of international migrants have left Nigeria since 1989. What is remarkable about this is that in 1986 Nigeria introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), a key element of which was reduction of employment in the public service as well as the reduction of the local manufacturing sector. Rural and agricultural sector desertion has increased since the introduction of the SAP, irrespective of the country and the degree of implementation of SAP. A study of the same southeast Nigeria by Akinsanmi (2005) shows that up to 100% of rural inhabitants have diversified into non-farm economic activities. Reduced real earnings through the inflationary impact of devaluation and trade liberalization as part of the SAP may have reduced living standards and therefore led to massive rural outmigration and the desertion of agriculture. The negative side effects of SAP on the agricultural sector arose from increased interest rates, constraints to input purchase and a fall in real farm gate prices. This has contributed to the significant illegal immigration of young Africans into Europe, especially since 1996.

**Table 5: Motivation for migration, 2004/2005**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Economic	114	80.28
Education	23	16.20
Climatic	2	1.41
Political	2	1.41
Religious	1	0.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

### *Effects of migration on the people*

Migrants contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of their families and communities. They remit money to their families every few months (11.3%), yearly (31.0%), and every 2 – 3 years (50.7%). About 7% of the respondents reported that their relatives made no remittance (Table 6). Although most respondents declined to reveal specific amounts, all agreed that remittances were an important means of meeting family needs. When asked about their perception of the contribution of family members in relation to places of residence, 80% of the respondents indicated Europe and the United States as more important than other places. 65% of respondents with relatives in Europe and United States indicated that such relatives provide the means to meet over 50% of family needs. Respondents with relatives other than Europe and the United States stated that on average their relatives provided about 20% of family needs.

**Table 6: Rate of contribution by migrants, 2004/2005**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Every few months	16	11.3
Yearly	44	31.0
Every 2-3 years	72	50.7
Not at all	10	7.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

73% of respondents reported a perception of differences in the living standards of migrant and migrant families (Table 7). This shows that migration is perceived as leading to clear improvements in the wellbeing of families with migrant members, which therefore fuels further desire to migrate

**Table 7: Perception of differences in wellbeing of families with migrants and non-migrants, 2004/2005**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
No difference	26	18
Difference	103	73
No idea	13	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

Remittances are put to some household and community uses which impact on livelihoods. There were multiple responses to this issue by respondents (Table 8).

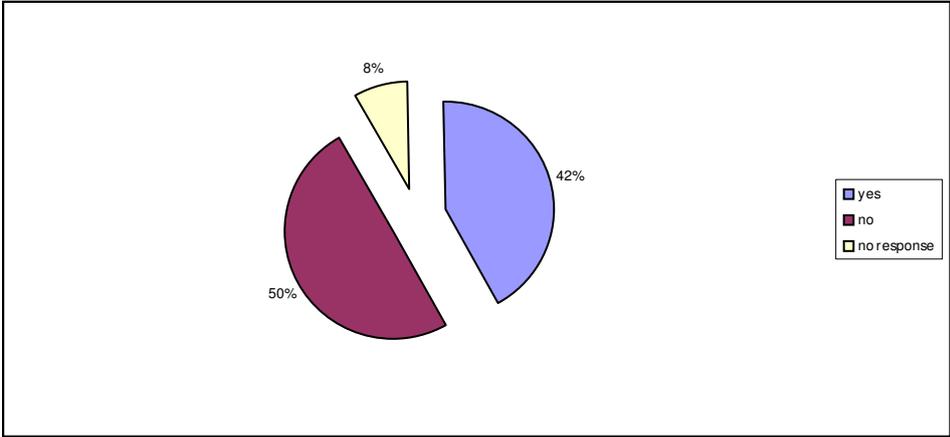
**Table 8: Uses of remittances, 2004/2005**

	Number	%
Road	86	22.7
Health	76	20.1
Education	74	19.5
Housing	40	10.5
Community contributions	37	66
Economic investments	66	17.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

The predominant use of remittances is not for farm purposes, although farming is a common occupation in rural areas. Only 42.25% of respondents stated that remittances were used for farming purposes (Fig. 2). As stated previously, a study in southeast Nigeria by Akinsanmi (2005) shows that up to 100% of rural inhabitants have diversified into non-farm-related economic activities. Agriculture can therefore neither be regarded as the dominant occupation in rural southeast Nigeria, nor the prime means of livelihood. Non-farm-related rural economic activities, remittances and agriculture are in competition for the prime rating. A comparative study of these could be an area of future research.

**Fig. 2: Uses of remittances on farms, 2004/2005**

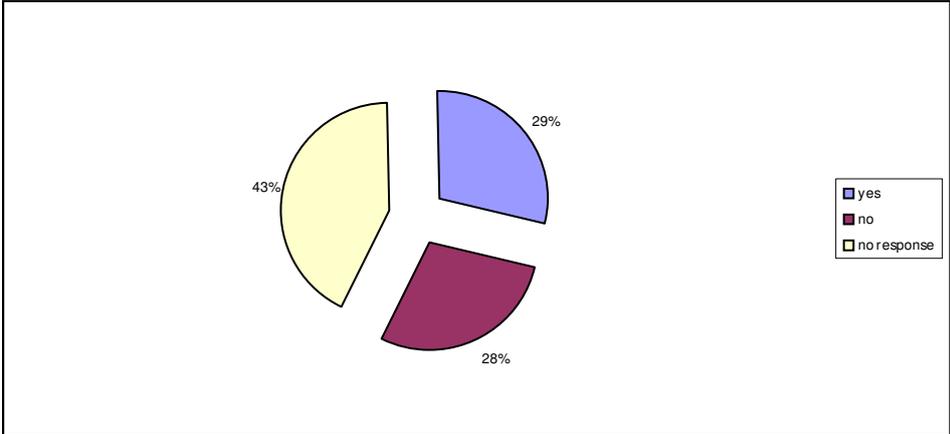


Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

*Links between migrants and ancestral homes*

The link between migrants and their homes is not a one-way traffic. Migrants also obtain farm produce from their homes. The responses as to whether farm produce are sent to migrant kith and kin are indicated in Figure 3. This however is mostly to migrants within Nigeria. International migrants are rarely beneficiaries of this.

**Fig. 3: Farm proceeds sent to migrant family members, 2004/2005**



Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

The continued link between migrants and their ancestral homes may be related to the mode of sponsorship of these migrants. Sponsorship modes are represented in Table 9. Traditional societies tend to be closely knit with significant degrees of communality.

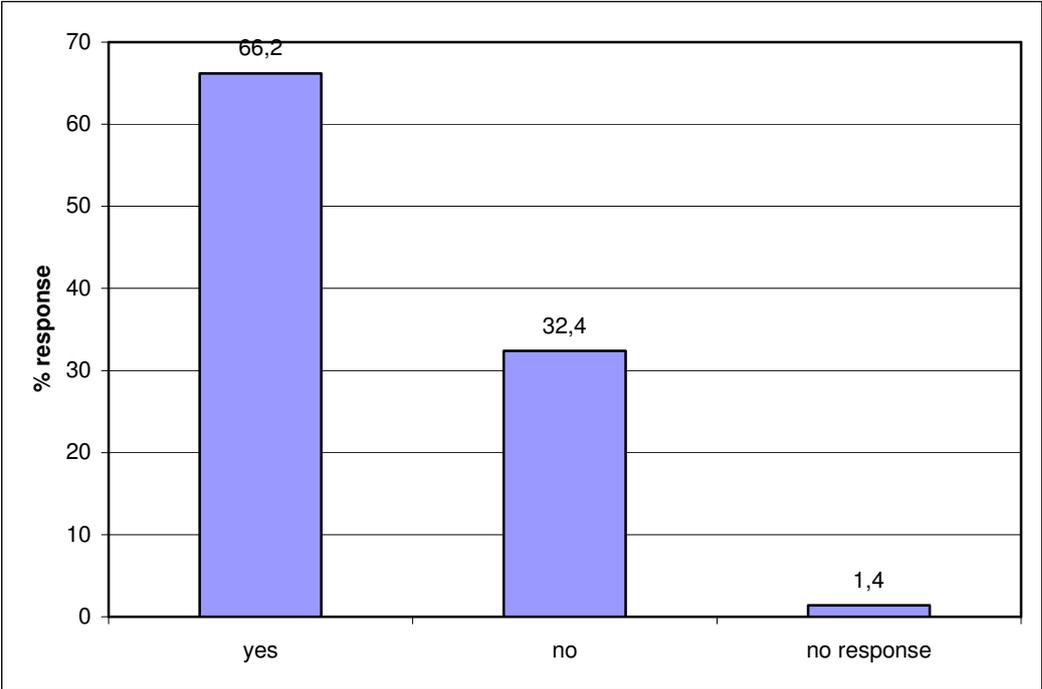
**Table 9: Sponsorship of migrants, 2004/2005**

	Number	%
Relatives/friends	75	52.82
Personal savings	42	29.58
Community	5	3.52
Government/company	4	2.82
Scholarship	2	1.41
Loan	1	0.70
Church	1	0.70
No answer	12	8.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

The high degree of communality informs the perception of migration as an investment from which the family expects returns. The major asset of rural families in southeast Nigeria is land. The seriousness of the desire for migration is demonstrated by family willingness to sell land to raise funds to sponsor the migrant’s journey. Family assets such as land have to be sold to sponsor migrants – see Figure 4. While we may not rule out the possibility, and in fact the likelihood, of the use of remittances by previous family member migrants sponsoring other family members, this revelation has thrown some light on Crisp’s (1999) questions: How are asylum seekers and others able to raise the large amount of cash needed to pay for their journey? To what extent are these resources mobilized by means of remittances, sent by members of the Diaspora community?”

**Fig. 4: Family assets sold to sponsor migrants, 2004/2005**



Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

In return for sponsorship family members have some expectations from the migrants. These include money (46.48%), gifts (24.65%), support/training (24.65%), and nothing (4.22%) (Table 10).

**Table 10: Family expectation from migrants, 2004/2005**

	Number	%
Money	66	46.48
Gifts	35	24.65
Support/training	35	24.65
Nothing	45	4.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2004/2005

At the community level, migrants have embarked on or contributed to some projects (see. Table 11). The Igbo-speaking people who occupy southeast Nigeria have a strong culture of communality, and of self-help development projects. Community development associations tend to be very strong institutions for development.

**Table 11: Community services and projects embarked on by migrants, 2004/2005**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Electricity	25	14.45
Church building	22	12.72
Water	20	11.56
Town hall	18	10.41
Schools/scholarship	13	7.51
Roads	12	6.94
Health	4	2.31
Market	2	1.16
Factories	3	1.73
None	54	31.21
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2004/2005

### *Return migrants*

Most of the migrants rarely returned home (Table 12).

**Table 12: Extent of return migrants, 2004/2005**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than half	104	73.2
More than half	25	17.6
Half	6	4.2
No answer	7	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2004/2005

### *Effects of migration on the economy*

The major effects of migration are at the family (micro), community and national (macro) levels and are least twofold, in the form of remittances and brain drain. Aggregate data on remittances to Nigeria from international migrants could not be obtained. Most banks in Nigeria operate formal means of remittances such as the Western Union and Money Gram. However, these banks were unwilling to provide this data. At the informal level, respondents were also unwilling to disclose the amounts provided by migrants. However, respondents stated that between 20% and 65% of family needs are met through international remittances. This is a significant contribution to the Nigeria economy.

Brain drain is defined as the loss of often better trained individuals at their mental and physical peak. However, respondents did not agree that this constituted a loss to families and communities. Rather, they saw migration as beneficial in terms of providing employment and livelihood. This reaction must be interpreted against the background of the high level of unemployment in Nigeria. The official national unemployment rate, as indicated by those

who registered as unemployed, was 4.3% in 1985, increased to 5.3% in 1986 and 7.0% in 1987, but fell to 5.1% in 1988. Nigeria commenced the SAP from 1986. Between 1993 and 1997 the average unemployment rate in Nigeria, by age group, was 56.3% for the 15-24 age group, 34.1% for the 25-44 age group and 9.15% for the 45-49 age group (Federal Office of Statistics, 1998). This indicates the limited prospects for young Nigerians residing in the country and therefore the need to migrate.

The simplistic tendency to estimate the loss to home countries of highly trained people who have migrated to developed countries must be countered with the opportunity cost of not migrating. Firstly, this is related to the net benefit in respect of remittances, and, very importantly, should also be related to the local employment scenario, especially for migrants who run the risk of unemployment. However, what is obvious at the micro level is that families and communities consider themselves better off with migration.

## **Conclusion**

There is a very high degree of rural-urban migration with 78% of Nigeria's native population residing outside their home. 32% reside within the southeast region but not in their home communities; 14% reside in locations within Nigeria but not within the southeast; and 32% reside outside Nigeria. Places of destination include the African continent and Europe, North America, South America and Asia.

The contribution of migrants to the improvement of the homeland from which they migrated is in the form of remittances. These are important sources of household livelihood. However, the overall impact of migration on the economy should be in the form of aggregate remittances and reduction of domestic unemployment. The contribution of those who migrate to locations outside the African continent may be up to 50% of household expenditure, despite the fact that there are fewer of these migrants than of migrants to other locations. Remittances are used in diverse areas as education, health, food, medicines and investments in housing, as well as community projects in education, health and recreational facilities. However, data on remittance amounts remains elusive, as the respondents were not forthcoming in this area.

The factors leading to international migration are predominantly economic. Migrants seek places to earn a living but also consider the ease of integration into such places. Hence, because of language factors, English-speaking countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Canada are preferred. Even within the African continent migrants prefer English-speaking countries such as South Africa, Ghana, Kenya etc. However, French-speaking countries such as Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Niger and Chad are also destinations of choice, principally because of an overriding economic interest and because they are Nigeria's immediate neighbours. These geographically close francophone countries have strong economic ties with Nigeria.

There is a strong perception that migration has immense positive implications for migrants, their families and communities. It can therefore be concluded that migration has a positive and significant net benefit for livelihood in southeast Nigeria.

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