



Researchers visit a community in northern Ghana. © IOM 2013

Vulnerabilities, Coping Strategies and Preparedness of Communities Affected by the Massive Return of Migrants from Libya

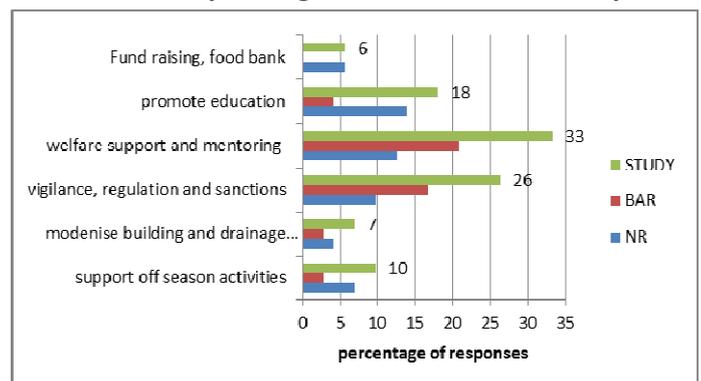
Summary

The massive return of migrants caught in foreign crises with no other alternatives but to return home brings untold hardship to hosting households and communities as was experienced in Ghana in the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and in 2011, when Ghanaians returned from Nigeria, Liberia, Ivory Coast and Libya respectively. In such instances, hosting households and communities become more impoverished as they struggle to care for returnees, continue to meet their own basic needs and deal with the loss of remittances/financial support. Difficulties faced by such hosting households and the coping strategies adopted need to be understood to create effective and sustainable assistance programmes focused on community resilience for emergencies and large-scale migration movements.

As part of the reintegration project *Emergency Reintegration Assistance for Ghanaian Migrants Affected by the 2011 Libyan Crisis*, funded by the Japanese Government, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides business skills training, start-up grants, access to the National Health Insurance Scheme and psycho social counselling. Further, IOM commissioned a study of communities the Brong Ahafo Region and Northern Region of Ghana impacted by the massive

return of migrants since 2011. More than 18,000 Ghanaians were evacuated from Libya and neighbouring countries (Egypt, Niger and Tunisia), with assistance from IOM and the Government of Ghana in 2011. The study focuses on difficulties and vulnerabilities; positive behavioural practices; partners or local institutions; and livelihood strategies, including alternative livelihoods, in host or return communities that can reduce future vulnerability to emergencies such as the massive return of migrations. The research combined both qualitative and quantitative data collection and multi-stakeholder consultations. Interviews were conducted with municipal and district institutions, community focus groups and household surveys.

Community Strategies to Reduce Vulnerability



NOTE: BAR and NR refer to Brong Ahafo Region and Northern Region respectively.

Key Study Findings

- The migrant hosting households of Brong Ahafo and Northern regions were identified as poor or middle class, with the large majority engaged in subsistence farming or petty trading.
- Financial pressure and related food, shelter and clothing needs are the main difficulties facing migrant sending households. This has a corresponding impact on health, nutrition and education.
- The main vulnerabilities of migrant sending communities include shocks such as bush fires, floods and storms. Other vulnerabilities include increasing cost of living, and the sudden return of migrants from Libya.
- Migrant host communities and the returnees rely on support from friends and relatives. They also cope through increased aid dependency.
- Although migrant sending households and communities anticipate shocks such as massive return of migrants, fire, floods and storms in the near future, they are unprepared for such events.
- Most migrant hosting households and communities were aware of the positive behavioural practices in health, nutrition and sanitation, but adoption was found to be weak.
- Local and national agencies, international organizations, NGOs and financial institutions can assist in reducing community vulnerability and increase resilience. (see report for full list)
- Migrant sending households and communities have limited access to existing development programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study sites, migrant sending households and communities are not prepared and do not have the resilience to face the challenges associated with the large-scale return of migrants, just as they are unprepared against fires, floods, storms, urban sprawl, seasonal shortages of food and other vulnerabilities faced currently. This study proposed the following recommendations for future sustainable livelihood interventions in migrant sending communities:

Vocational training: Members of the hosting communities, especially the youth, should be provided vocational training opportunities, along with the necessary tools, to be repaid within one or two years after graduation.

Innovative lending products: Communities have expressed the need for start-up, working capital, savings and other financial services. To address this need, flexible, competitive and sustainable innovative lending products should be designed.



Above: A community focus group discussion. © IOM 2013

Improved farming technique and programmes: Training in improved farming techniques and programmes to promote the transition from subsistence to commercial farming and to increase food security and income.

Organization of block farming: Programmes for block farming, where organized groups have their farms in one location, should be carried out.

Health, nutrition and sanitation campaigns: Campaigns for the adoption of good practices in health, nutrition and sanitation should be intensified in the hosting communities. The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) need proper waste management to avoid the outbreak of epidemics.

Diversification of livelihoods: Migrant households and communities need support to diversify economic activities to avoid over dependence on one activity and make them more resilient to shocks such as sudden return of migrants, fires and floods.

Anti-bush fire campaigns: Relevant institutions such as the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) should intensify anti-bush fire campaigns in the communities. Further the creation of fire-belts and tree planting exercises should be encouraged.

Disaster preparedness and disaster management training: Training for communities and general capacity building on disaster preparedness and management to strengthen local resilience and emergency response.

Pilot introduction of community disaster/emergency insurance: A community disaster/emergency insurance scheme could be introduced on pilot basis. The insurance scheme could be managed by the communities with the oversight of a board of directors with representatives from the MMDAs, Development Partners, Communities and NGOs.