

Narratives of Migration
Complex Answers of a Society in Transformation, Ghana

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Abstract

Northern Ghana, by virtue of its location in the semi-arid Savannah Ecological Zone is not only exposed to environmental risks and effects, but also generally characterised by persistent migration of people to the southern fringes of the country since time immemorial. In consequence, migration in the area has often been attributed to the effects of climatic and environmental change on the livelihoods. Yet, recent debates on the environmental change and migration nexus have been contentious. Empirical evidence in the area and the West African point to a highly mobile Sahel, where population movements have generally characterised and shaped the social organisation and population dynamics of the people. These observations have necessitated the need for research to transcend the environmental change question in order to fully appreciate migration dynamics in the region.

In line with these ongoing scientific debates on the migration-environmental change interrelationship within the Sahel, this research engages the question of an unambiguous relationship between climate change impacts on agrarian livelihoods and productivity on the one hand, and migration dynamics on the other hand, in northern Ghana. Based on qualitative data and complementary quantitative statistical data in the Bongo District of north-eastern Ghana, the research draws on the concepts of ‘cultures of migration’ and ‘travelling models’ to examine the following research questions: how do people perceive climate change and its impact on agriculture in the area? What is the relationship between persistent outmigration and the effects of environmental risks in northern Ghana? And lastly, how has migration evolved and affected agriculture, development and population dynamics in the study area?

The research points to observed changes in the climate and environmental conditions in the study area. These observed changes are manifested in the highly variable and erratic rainfall pattern as well as high temperatures that have characterised the area. The local climate change narratives in the area indicate a period of ‘good’ rainfall pattern and buoyant agriculture hitherto the droughts and famines that hit the Sahel in the early 1980s. However the situation in recent times has been a highly variable rainfall pattern, high temperatures and prolonged seasonal dry spells. This has invariably affected the mainstay of rain-fed agriculture and with implications for food security and poverty reduction in the area. Aside from environmental changes, the issue of broken gutters and mismanagement of irrigation infrastructure, lack of agricultural inputs, declining soil fertility and lack of land have all contributed to the declining yields over the years.

In spite of suggestions to the effect that recent variability in rainfall pattern accounts for the poor agriculture in the area, historical rainfall data and general climate models seem to give the impression of rainfall anomalies being a characteristic of the climatic regime of the area and hence may not be a recent occurrence. As such, recent claims of changes in the rainfall pattern in the Bongo area may stem from people’s accumulated knowledge of past experiences and current environmental happenings. Nonetheless, observed changes in the rainfall pattern and declining agricultural productivity in the area have been attributed to moral transgression and disregard for customs and traditions. On the other hand, other people also subscribe to conventional scientific explanations like the destruction of forest vegetation

and unfavourable farming practices in the area. This has seen interventions aimed at tackling climate and environmental changes and the poor agricultural yields along cultural and scientific models of blame.

The research further highlights migration in northern Ghana as a very complex phenomenon that has generally been part of the way of life of people. It is elaborated that migration is one of the responses that people make in the bid to cope with declining agricultural productivity, high levels of poverty and general food insecurity in the area. In addition to the conventional north-south migration of mostly males, the area has witnessed an imperceptible in-migration of persons into the district. A new migration trend that is gathering momentum, however, is the movement of persons, mostly middle aged women, to work as farm hands or labour in the rural areas of the Northern Region of Ghana. The research notes that although the role of failing agriculture in contributing to movement cannot entirely be discounted, there is not enough evidence to suggest that climatic/environmental change directly accounts for migration of people, as climate determinists may want to state as the situation in northern Ghana.

The research recognises that environmental risks and the associated effects may be true of the situation in the study area and as such people migrating as a coping strategy. But the same can be said of migration being an enduring theme in the area. Environmental risks and effects may thus be contextual or background factors to migration, but historical antecedents and changing socio-cultural constellations have served to sustain these movements by establishing enduring 'cultures of migration' in the area. Human mobility in the Bongo area and for that matter northern Ghana is thus envisioned to be an integral part of the social lives of the people rather than a spontaneous or 'knee-jerk' response to environmental risks.

The effects of migration in the in the study area have been both positive and negative. Apart from migrant remittances contributing to improvement in household welfare, the prolonged duration of stay at destination areas has seen changes in household structure and the shortage of the needed household labour for the strenuous small-scale farming, which is typical of farming activities in northern Ghana. Also, it is also shown that migrants as agents of change have contributed to community development and social transformation in the Bongo area. Migrant returnees have contributed to infrastructural development, the transfer of knowledge and experience in farming techniques. In-migrants, on the other hand, have contributed in imparting knowledge, employable skills and stimulating economic activities in the area. It is further highlighted that in spite of the persistent exodus of people, there is a seemingly growing disinterest in migrating to the south of the country. The growing disinterest stems from the unfavourable economic conditions and bad experiences of people who have returned from southern Ghana in recent times.

From the empirical insights therefore, the research acknowledges that the effects of environmental risks on livelihoods and economic motivations cannot entirely be absolved in the explanation of migration dynamics in the study area. It is, however, stressed that the migration phenomenon is inalienably part of the socio-cultural and economic organisation of rural communities in northern Ghana. The overemphasis of environmental risk factors and natural resources scarcity as the primary causes of migration in the area may therefore be insufficient and unsustainable. This is because migration is rooted in the minds of people and hence will continue to be persistent irrespective of the environmental, climatic and agricultural situation in the area. In view of this, the research therefore makes several policy recommendations at dealing with the loss of human capital, poverty reduction, bridging the north-south development gap in the country and improving agriculture as well as effective environmental management.

Zusammenfassung

Nord-Ghana ist aufgrund seiner Lage in der Landschaftszone der semi-ariden Savanne nicht nur Umweltrisiken und -auswirkungen ausgesetzt, sondern auch durch anhaltende Migration seiner Bevölkerung in die südlichen Gebiete Ghanas gekennzeichnet. Infolgedessen wurde Migration in der Region häufig den Auswirkungen von Klima- und Umweltveränderungen auf die Lebensbedingungen der dort lebenden Menschen zugeschrieben. Allerdings sind die aktuellen Debatten über den Zusammenhang zwischen Umweltveränderungen und Migration, vor allem in der Sahelzone Westafrikas, umstritten. Empirische Daten deuten auf eine sehr hohe Mobilität in der Sahelzone hin, in der die Bevölkerungsbewegungen die Sozial- sowie Bevölkerungsdynamiken der Menschen stark beeinflusst haben. Daraus ergibt sich die Notwendigkeit tiefergehender Forschung, um über die Frage der Umweltveränderungen hinaus ein Verständnis für die Migrationsdynamiken in der Region zu gewinnen.

Diese Doktorarbeit greift daher die Frage auf, ob eine eindeutige Beziehung zwischen den Auswirkungen des Klimawandels auf landwirtschaftliche Lebensgrundlagen sowie Produktivität und den Migrationsdynamiken in Nord-Ghana besteht. Auf der Grundlage qualitativer und quantitativer Forschung in der Region Bongo im Nordosten Ghanas stützt sich die Forschung auf die Konzepte der „*cultures of migration*“ und „*travelling models*“ um folgende Fragen zu untersuchen: Wie nehmen Menschen Klimaveränderungen und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Landwirtschaft im Forschungsgebiet wahr? Wie stellt sich das Verhältnis zwischen anhaltender Abwanderung und den Auswirkungen von Umweltrisiken in Nord-Ghana dar? Und abschließend, wie haben sich Migrationsmuster entwickelt und wie beeinflussen sie Landwirtschaft, Entwicklung und Bevölkerungsdynamiken im Untersuchungsgebiet?

Die Forschungsergebnisse legen nahe, dass verzeichbare Veränderungen der Klima- und Umweltbedingungen im Untersuchungsgebiet existieren. Die beobachteten Veränderungen zeigen sich in sehr variablen und unregelmäßigen Niederschlagsmustern sowie hohen Temperaturen in der Region. Die lokalen Klimawandelnarrative verweisen von einer Periode mit „gutem“ Niederschlagsmuster und ertragreicher Landwirtschaft bis zu den Dürren und Hungersnöten mit denen die Sahelzone in den frühen 1980er Jahren konfrontiert war. Hingegen ist die Situation in den letzten Jahren durch sehr variable Niederschlagsmuster, hohe Temperaturen und längere saisonale Trockenperioden geprägt. Dies hat unweigerlich zu Auswirkungen auf die dortige Landwirtschaft geführt, die stark vom natürlichen Niederschlag abhängt. Diese Veränderungen können Folgen für die Ernährungssicherheit und Armutsminderung in der Region haben. Neben den Umweltveränderungen haben im Laufe der Jahre auch defekte Bewässerungskanäle und Misswirtschaft der Bewässerungsinfrastruktur, der Mangel an landwirtschaftlichen Produktionsmitteln, sinkende Bodenfruchtbarkeit und Landknappheit zu sinkenden Ernteerträgen geführt.

Trotz Vermutungen, dass die jüngsten Niederschlagsschwankungen für die schlechte landwirtschaftliche Situation in der Gegend verantwortlich sind, vermitteln historische Niederschlagsdaten und allgemeine Klimamodelle den Eindruck, dass Niederschlagsanomalien für die Untersuchungsgegend charakteristisch sind und kein neues

Phänomen darstellen. Somit könnten jüngste Behauptungen von veränderten Niederschlagsmustern in der Region Bongo von dem von den Menschen angesammelten Wissen über historische Ereignisse und den aktuellen Umweltereignissen beeinflusst sein. Während viele Menschen die veränderten Niederschlagsmuster und geringen Ernteerträge mit moralischen Verstößen und Missachtung von Sitten und Gebräuchen in Verbindung bringen, nutzen andere Personen herkömmliche wissenschaftliche Erklärungen wie die Zerstörung der Waldvegetation und ungünstige Anbaumethoden in der Region. Dies führt zu Interventionen mit dem Ziel der Bewältigung sowohl von Klima- und Umweltveränderungen, als auch der geringen landwirtschaftlichen Erträge durch kulturelle und wissenschaftliche Schuldmodelle.

Darüber hinaus unterstreicht die Forschung, dass Migration in Nord-Ghana ein sehr komplexes Phänomen ist, welches gemeinhin einen ‚*way of life*‘ der Menschen in der Region darstellt. Es wird aufgezeigt, dass Migration eine der Antworten der Bevölkerung repräsentiert, um mit rückläufiger Produktivität in der Landwirtschaft, einem hohen Maß an Armut und allgemeiner Nahrungsmittelunsicherheit in Nord-Ghana umzugehen. Zusätzlich zu der von Männern dominierten Nord-Süd-Abwanderung, hat das Gebiet eine unmerkliche Zuwanderung verzeichnet. Ein neuer Migrationstrend gewinnt an Eigendynamik: Migration von meist Frauen mittleren Alters, die als Landarbeiterinnen in den ländlichen Gebieten im Norden Ghanas anheuern. Obwohl die Rolle der schlechten landwirtschaftlichen Situation als Faktor für die Migrationsbewegungen nicht geleugnet werden kann, macht die Recherche ebenso deutlich, dass nicht genügend Anhaltspunkte existieren, um die Umweltveränderungen vor Ort in direkten Zusammenhang mit Migrationsbewegungen zu setzen, wie es Klimadeterministen für Nord-Ghana möglicherweise feststellen würden.

Die Untersuchung zeigt auf, dass Umweltveränderungen und die damit verbundenen Auswirkungen auf die Situation im Untersuchungsgebiet zutreffen könnten und daraus resultierend Menschen als Bewältigungsstrategie migrieren. Gleichzeitig ist Migration jedoch eine anhaltende Thematik in der Region. Es ist daher davon auszugehen, dass Umweltrisiken und -auswirkungen kontextuelle oder Hintergrundfaktoren der Migration darstellen können. Historische Vorläufer und wechselnde soziokulturelle Konstellationen haben aber dazu beigetragen, diese Migrationsbewegungen als ‚*cultures of migration*‘ in der Umgebung aufrecht zu erhalten. Migration in der Region Bongo und in Nord-Ghana kann daher als ein integraler Bestandteil des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der Menschen und nicht als spontane oder reflexartige Reaktionen auf Umweltrisiken gesehen werden.

Die Auswirkungen der Migration auf die Region sind sowohl positiv als auch negativ zu sehen. Abgesehen von Rücküberweisungen, die zur finanziellen Unterstützung der jeweiligen Haushalte beitragen, haben längerfristige Aufenthalte in den Zielgebieten zu Veränderungen in der Haushaltsstruktur und zu einem Verlust von Arbeitskräften für die anstrengende Feldarbeit in Nord-Ghana geführt. Zudem haben die Migranten auch zu Veränderungen im Bereich der kommunalen Entwicklung und dem sozialen Wandel in der Region Bongo beigetragen. Migrationsrückkehrer haben einen Beitrag zur Infrastrukturentwicklung, dem Wissenstransfer und der Weitergabe neuer landwirtschaftlicher Anbautechniken geleistet. Eingewanderte Menschen haben darüber hinaus mit Wissensvermittlung, Beschäftigungsfähigkeiten und der Ankurbelung der Wirtschaft die Region Bongo geprägt.

Die Forschung betont weiter, dass es trotz der anhaltenden Abwanderung von Menschen ein wachsendes Desinteresse gegenüber der Migration in den Süden des Landes gibt. Dieses ergibt sich beispielsweise aus ungünstigen wirtschaftlichen Bedingungen und schlechten Erfahrungen von Menschen, die in den letzten Jahren aus dem südlichen Ghana zurückgekehrt sind.

Aus den empirischen Erkenntnissen lässt sich für die Forschung ableiten, dass die Auswirkungen von Umweltrisiken auf die Lebensgrundlage und wirtschaftliche Beweggründe nicht vollständig von der Migrationsdynamik im Untersuchungsgebiet losgelöst werden können. Es wird deutlich, dass das Phänomen Migration unveräußerlich Teil der Wirtschafts- und Sozialstrukturen der ländlichen Bevölkerung im Norden Ghanas ist. Die Überbetonung der Umweltrisikofaktoren und die Knappheit der natürlichen Ressourcen als primäre Ursachen der Migration in Nord-Ghana könnten zu kurzgegriffen sein. Migration ist im Leben der Menschen verwurzelt und wird deswegen weiterhin anhalten - unabhängig von ökologischen, klimatischen oder landwirtschaftlichen Bedingungen in der Region. Vor diesem Hintergrund präsentiert die Untersuchung Politikempfehlungen für den Umgang mit Verlust von Humankapital, zur Armutsminderung, zur Überbrückung der Nord-Süd-Entwicklungsunterschiede im Land, für die Verbesserung der landwirtschaftlichen Aktivitäten sowie für ein wirkungsvolleres Umweltmanagement.

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Chapter One

Problem Setting and Definition of Research Objective

1.1 Introduction

Human mobility has historically been an integral feature of the population dynamics of societies across the world. These movements are normally precipitated by a multiplicity of complex factors including the need to explore new opportunities, flee from war, disease or environmental stress (Castles and Miller, 2009). With specific reference to Africa, population movements have since time immemorial been the hallmark of the social organisation of Societies (Rain, 1999). The movement of people for settlement, in search of pasture, to trade or spread Islam across the continent has historically characterised the way of life in contrast to the perceived sedentarisation of people on the continent (Arthur, 1991; Anarfi *et al.*, 2003).

Alongside these movements is the increasing momentum in the international migration of people. In particular, the surge in international migration of people from West Africa to Europe, North America and other parts of the world in contemporary times has led to the sub-region being envisioned as the most mobile of the African continent (De Haas, 2007a: 8). The intensity of the movement of people, goods and ideas may have been facilitated by globalisation, improved modes of communication and regional economic cooperation between countries. In spite of the complexity of population movements in Africa, scholarship has also sought to emphasise migration as environmentally induced in the wake of ongoing global changes in climatic and environmental systems.

This is perhaps reinforced by observed changes in global ecological systems driven by climate and environmental change and the associated effects (Parry *et al.*, 2007; Burkett *et al.*, 2014). Interestingly, global climate has always been changing across space and time. However, “what makes the current concern for climatic change different from past interest in its perturbations and anomalies is the unprecedented pace and magnitude of the predicted change and the attendant dangers to human and environmental systems” (Ribot *et al.*, 1996). The projection is that the effects of climate change on agriculture and the livelihoods of people worldwide, particularly in developing countries, will be enormous in the near future (Huq *et al.*, 2003: 12; Black *et al.*, 2011). The gravest of these effects will be on human migration as many people will be displaced and as such forced to move (Gutmann and Field, 2010: 6).

In the light of these projections, ‘environmental maximalists’¹ envision an apocalyptic surge in the number of ‘environmental refugees’² (or ‘eco-migrants’) in the near future and the potential for acute conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1991; Myers, 1993; Reuveny, 2008). Especially, the West African Sahel has often been a gullible point of reference by advocates of the ‘environmental refugee’ debate with regard to the flight of people in response to the effects of environmental change (Jacobson, 1988; Barrios, Bertinelli and Strobl, 2006). This gullibility is exemplified by Hammer’s (2004: 234) claim that “hundreds of thousands of people from rural Sahel regions are displaced every year as a consequence of environmental change and desertification.”

However, recent migration discourses draw attention to the fact that migration is an integral part of the economic and social structure of societies within the sub-region in the face of environmental decline (Doevenspeck, 2011: e62). In line with these observations there have been calls to, apart from the climatic or environmental change imperative, look at migration within the context of the prevailing socio-cultural, economic, demographic and political situations in source areas in order to gain better insights into its dynamics and patterns (Black *et al.*, 2011: S6; Doevenspeck, 2011: e52). With the foregoing background as a point of departure, it is incumbent to therefore delve into the following for the purposes of the discussion: what is the situation of global climatic and environmental change? How does climate change and its associated environmental risks relate to population movements in West Africa and northern Ghana in particular? A broader engagement with the global climatic change scenario and in West Africa will serve as a starting point to engaging the question of the migration-environmental change nexus in northern Ghana.

1.2 The Global Climatic Change Scenario and West Africa

The latest IPCC report alludes to an unprecedented warming of the earth’s climatic system since the 19th Century with the decade of the 2000s being the warmest. From observations over the period of 1880 to 2012, globally combined average land and ocean surface temperature is reported to have increased to 0.85°C and ranging between 0.65–1.06°C (Hartmann *et al.*, 2013: 194). The forecast is that by 2100 global surface temperature changes will most likely exceed 1.5°C. Global sea levels are also expected to rise between 0.09mm and 0.88mm (IPCC, 2014: 10). The activities of humans, especially deforestation and the

¹ School of thought which believes that climate or environmental change is a direct cause of force migration (Suhrke, 1994: 474).

² Environmental refugees or eco-migrants refer to persons who have been displaced or forced to migrate due to the effects climate and environmental change.

burning of fossil fuels, have been identified as the main drivers of climate change (McLeman and Smit, 2006: 31; IPCC, 2014: 40-46).

In Africa, there has also been observed changes in the climatic system with relative variation across the continent (Collier, Conway and Venables, 2008: 2-3). Based on General Circulation Models (GCMs), the IPCC projects that mean annual surface air temperature will increase between 3 to 4°C within the period of 2080 and 2099. In addition, mean annual rainfall will also decrease by 20 percent from the Mediterranean coast along the northern Sahara up to the west coast with slight increases in eastern and tropical Africa (Boko *et al.*, 2007: 443). Much more specifically, rainfall activity within the Sahel region of West Africa is seen as the most important climatic parameter affecting human activities (Brooks, 2004:1). Rainfall variability in the Sahelian belt coupled with warm temperatures characterises the climate regime in the area (Giannini, 2008: 366-367). This notwithstanding, available data (Fig 1.1) suggests that prolonged periods of rainfall desiccation is not only peculiar to the Sahel of West Africa but across the African continent (Nicholson, 2000: 145).

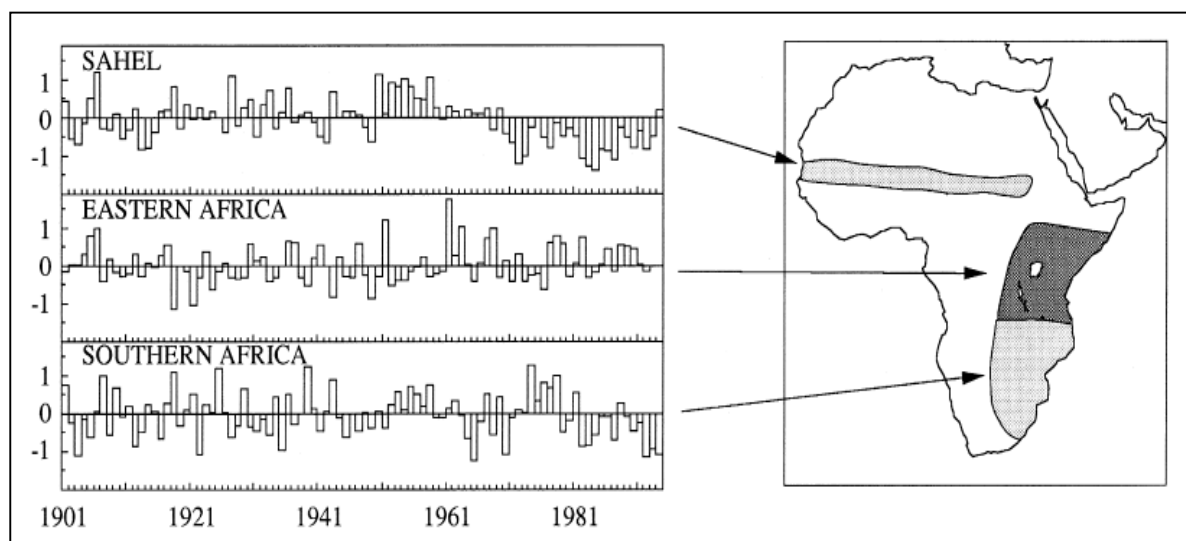


Figure 1.1: Rainfall Fluctuations in the Sahel, Eastern and Southern Africa (1901-1994)

Source: Nicholson (2000: 145) (Rainfall fluctuations in the Sahel, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa from 1901 to 1994, expressed as regionally averaged standardized departure. Regions represented are shown in the small map).

The rainfall pattern as shown in Fig 1.1 illustrates fluctuations across the continent. Despite suggestions to the effect that there may have been a recovery in annual rainfall totals within the West African Sahel in contemporary times, rainfall fluctuation and variation across the region is still very evident (Hulme, 2001: 21-22; Brooks, 2004: 2). Apart from climate change serving as a catalyst, it is argued that the associated environmental deterioration and desertification conditions have been aggravated by activities of humans such as overgrazing

of pastureland, deforestation and unfavourable farming practices. The impact of the observed climatic and environmental changes on health, agricultural livelihoods and food security within the sub-region will be pronounced (Tanser *et al.*, 2003: 1797; IPCC, 2007a: 13, 444; Codjoe and Nabie, 2014: 6930). This is because many economies of African countries are dependent on agriculture, which in itself is influenced by rainfall activity (Nkomo *et al.*, 2006: 12).

As has been observed as the case in the Sahel, the situation of changes in the climate and environmental deterioration is not different in Ghana. The country is characterised by two distinct climatic zones. As a consequence, the northern and southern parts of the country experience comparatively different climatic conditions. The following section brings into focus the climate and environmental situation in Ghana with specific emphasis on the northern part of the country.

1.3 Climate and Environmental Change in Northern Ghana

In Ghana, climate change like in different parts of Africa is manifested in the observed changes in rainfall patterns and temperature across the country (GoG, 2011). The country has consistently witnessed increases in temperatures, variable and declining rainfall totals, floods and rising sea levels (Rain *et al.*, 2011). For all the 6 ecological zones (Sudan Savannah, Guinea Savannah, Transitional, Deciduous Rainforest, Rainforest and Coastal Savannah), climatic events like flooding, droughts and high temperatures remain important parameters affecting people. But rainfall variability, according to Owusu and Waylen (2009: 116), has been the most significant climatic component affecting the different agro-ecological zones across the country. Rainfall variability, coupled with other stressors have not only led to environmental deterioration, but also contributed to the slump in agricultural productivity over the years (Webber, 1996; GoG, 2007; Antwi-Agyei *et al.*, 2011).

Although data on temperature and rainfall patterns in the three northern regions (Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions) are scanty, the north of Ghana has experienced climatic changes as manifested in highly erratic and variable rainfall patterns and increasing temperatures over time (Friesen, 2002: 44-49). Available data shows that temperatures have been warming at 1°C since the beginning of the 20th century with average annual rainfall of up to 1200mm also fluctuating considerably (Dietz *et al.*, 2004). Minia *et al.* (2004) project that mean annual rainfall in northern Ghana will decline from 1.1 percent in 2020 to 12.8 percent in 2080 while temperatures will also become warmer with increases from 0.8 to 5.8°C within the same period (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Climate Change Projections for Northern Ghana

Year	Mean annual change in Rainfall (%)		Mean annual temperature change	
	Sudan Savannah	Guinea Savannah	Sudan Savannah	Guinea Savannah
2020	-1.1	-1.9	0.8	0.8
2050	-6.7	-7.8	2.6	2.5
2080	-12.8	-12.8	5.8	5.4

Source: Compiled from Minia *et al.* (2004, cited in GoG, 2011: 9)

With a specific emphasis on the Upper East Region (UER), the area experiences semi-arid climatic conditions. Over the last 20th century, the rainfall activity, which influences environmental and economic activities, has become increasingly variable (Friesen, 2002). This has resulted in a delay in the onset of the rainy season and a shift in pattern from April to May or sometimes June. The aridity of the area has ensured the perennial drying up of riverbeds and loss of water, thereby making the UER a drought prone area. In spite of the recurrent droughts, the region has paradoxically been plagued with perennial flooding. The perennial flooding derives from the occasional high torrential rainfall and spillage from the Bagre Dam upstream of the White Volta River in Burkina Faso (Glazerbrook, 2011). These floods have been a major threat to the sustainability of agricultural livelihoods with the yearly destruction of crops, loss of life and property in the greater part of northern Ghana (Armah *et al.*, 2010: 121).

In the wake of these environmental challenges, migration in the area has been a persistent phenomenon. The general migration discourses on northern Ghana have often attributed the outmigration of people to the ongoing changes in the climate and environmental challenges that confront the people and their livelihoods (Mensah-Bonsu, 2003; Schraven, 2010; Van der Geest, 2011). Rademacher-Schulz, Schraven and Mahama (2014: 51) in their analysis of seasonal migration in northern Ghana, for example, are of the view that “rainy season migration is an adaptation to crisis or survival strategy running contrary to the local agricultural cycle.”

These perspectives on the environmentally induced migration rhetoric in the area are perhaps reflected, for example, in this news report: 'Climate Change 'Fights' Farmers in Northern Ghana'. This captions a major headline that was reported by the Ghana News Agency and published on myjoyonline.com on August 30, 2011.³ The report highlights the devastating effect of poor rainfall as a result of a prolonged drought on agriculture in northern Ghana. In the report, Mr Maxwell Akandem (the 2010 Second National Best Farmer) lamenting about the inability to meet his rice production target for the year due to poor rainfall stated that: "normally we get the peak between August and September but this year's story is quite different. Due to the drought some farmers may get one or two 84 kilogram bag per acre of land even with good agronomic practices, describing it as a total failure. There are many of the farmers who are ignorant of the existence of the changing weather pattern. So it will take some time for them to be abreast with the phenomenon and adapt to it."

Similarly, Mr. Yakubu Mahama, a farmer in the Tolon District of the Northern Region, reeling over his loss due to the poor nature of the rains indicated that, he might stop rice cultivation altogether in respect of the huge debt he had incurred as a result of the investment made in rice farming. He there complained that: "I am now thinking of how to raise money to take care of my family and also pay my loans." To ensure food security, reduce extreme hunger and poverty in order to meet the millennium development goal one as well as reduce outmigration to southern Ghana, Alhaji Naa Von Salifu, a representative of the Ghana Rice Inter-Professional Body (GRIB) appealed to government and civil society organisations to invest in climate change education as a way of tackling the effects of climate change on agriculture in northern Ghana.

This news headline and report highlights the effect of climatic changes in terms of inadequate and poor timing of rainfall in the area. Subsequently, the main livelihood (agriculture) and wellbeing of the people have been undermined and thereby exacerbating the poverty situation in the area. But the questions that still linger are: whether the people in northern Ghana are not diversifying their livelihoods? Or are they over reliant on rain-fed agriculture and thereby making them vulnerable to climatic changes and hence the persistent outmigration in the area as a coping strategy? Are the concerns raised by the farmers as captured in this news report peculiar to the case of only rice farmers in northern Ghana or it is just an isolated case of a general bad year in terms of poor rainfall and farming in the area?

³ <http://opinion.myjoyonline.com/pages/feature/201112/79038.php>, accessed 10.09.13

In the wake of these environmental risks, it is important to state that people in the area have not been passive. Aside from demographic adjustments in terms of migration, many households in the UER have, for instance, resorted to livelihood diversification and agricultural intensification in order to cope with the effects of climatic and environmental changes (Debpuur *et al.*, 2002: 157; Laube, 2007: 168; Faulkner *et al.*, 2008: 156). People, amongst other reasons, also move in response to socio-cultural factors (Grindal, 2003: 51; Cassiman, 2008: 27; Frempong-Ainguah, Badasu and Codjoe, 2009: 93-94). Several studies and ensuing discourses seem to point to environmental risks as the cause of the ongoing north-south migration in the country. But the phenomenon and pattern may well be understood within the context of its historical antecedents.

Increasingly, the movement which used to be circulatory seasonal migration to work in the mines and cocoa producing areas of southern Ghana has seen people moving to the urban centres with Accra and Kumasi mostly the places of destination (Adaawen, 2009). Although males dominate the movement, many females and children are also migrating in droves to work in the south of the country (Hashim, 2005: 12; Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008: 174). In spite of this pattern of movement, some level of in-migration including return migration can also be observed (GSS, 2002a: 22-23). The north-south migration in Ghana is particularly important not only because of its historical underpinnings but the socio-economic problems that emerge at both the places of origin and destination in the south. The migration of mostly economically active persons in the area has brought changes in household structure with implications also for agricultural productivity.

1.4 Problem Statement and Justification

Despite the relative improvements in agriculture in terms of dry season irrigation farming and other interventions at poverty reduction, outmigration in the region is still pronounced in contrast to the rate of return and in-migration (GSS, 2005a, cited in Van der Geest, 2011: e76; Songsore, 2011: 254-262). The outmigration of people in the area is often an all year round activity. But it is in the dry season that movement is pronounced, when there is little or no economic activity, and hence may not really raise concerns about labour shortage for agricultural production. However, more people are also migrating during the wet farming season in recent times with many sometimes staying longer or even permanently in the places of destination in the south of the country (Kwankye, 2009: 1; Van der Geest, 2010: 600).

The persistent outmigration of both economically active females and males, in the light of climatic and environmental change, has had implications for agriculture, 'reproductive behaviour', labour availability, socio-cultural dynamics and development in the area. Most of the destination areas of migrants are in the middle belt and forest areas of the southern Ghana. There is thus the tendency for norms and values in these areas to influence migrant behaviour, socio-cultural values and practices in the source communities of northern Ghana. Considering that kinship ties are couched in the extended patrilineal family system in the region, these effects also undermine the support systems that household members rely upon in times of agricultural adversity, economic hardship or care for the aged.

Although the role of climatic and environmental change in influencing migration in the area cannot be discounted, it is important to delve into the complex multi-causal but self-enforcing socio-cultural factors and historical antecedents that act to perpetuate migration and how these factors influence general population dynamics in the northern Ghana. This will tease out information with a view to contributing to a better understanding of migration within the context of general climate and environmental change, and risks in the area.

1.5 Significance and Objectives of the Research

The significance of this study is based on the fact that Ghana, like other West African countries, has consistently witnessed large-scale labour migration towards the wet southern fringes and the coast. Alongside the exodus of people, in the case of northern Ghana, the area is exposed to environmental risks and has consistently witnessed a decline in agricultural productivity over the years. In line with this, claims of environmental changes have often featured prominently in explaining population movement in northern Ghana. But with recent reservations and calls to transcend the environmental change-migration imperative, this research examines the discursive processes, historical and economic factors that seem to give a comprehensive and better explanation to the persistent migration of people in the area.

Against the foregoing background, the general objective of the research is to examine the interrelationships between migration, environmental change and agriculture, on the one hand, and the effect on development and social transformation in Northern Ghana, on the other hand. Specifically, the research seeks to examine and analyse:

1. the perceptions of people on climate and environmental change, and its effects on agriculture in the study area;
2. the relationship between migration and environmental change in the study area;
3. and lastly, the effect of migration on social transformation, development and population dynamics in the area.

In tackling these aforementioned objectives, it is important to examine the theoretical debates that abound on migration. An overview of the various theories on migration will highlight the theoretical and analytical concepts that have been chosen to provide theoretical insights into the analyses and discussion of the issues under investigation in this research. The various theories and analytical framework of the research are therefore examined and discussed in the following chapter below.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Perspectives and Analytical Framework

2.1 Introduction

There have been a lot of stimulating debates on the issue of migration, environmental change and development over the years. The displacement or forced migration of people due to environmental risks, which have been orchestrated by extreme climatic events like flooding, tsunamis, hurricanes and droughts across the globe, have become persistent. The effects of these risks have led to concerns in relation to food insecurity, displacement of people, forced migration and development (Tacoli, 2009: 517-519).

The migration of people often also culminates in outcomes for the migrant, and at both the places of origin and destination. In particular, migrant remittances are important in improving household welfare and also serve as vital source of development finance for many developing countries (Ratha, 2007: 173). Also of relevance to the understanding of development is also Amartya Sen's (1999: 3) conception of development as freedom. This way of conceptualising development focuses on constraints to sustainable livelihoods and the capabilities and choices available to people in improving their wellbeing. The livelihood constraints that people may face sometimes translate into implications for their wellbeing and vulnerability. At the same time, scholarship has underscored the agency that humans possess to respond to the constraints that the structures (environmental and socio-economic) in which they find themselves and interact with will impose on them (Giddens, 1984: 9). Normally within any vulnerability context, migration is often one of the many responses that people consider in their quest to cope or adapt to the risk that they face.

As part of this chapter therefore, the different theoretical debates on migration and the interlinkages with environmental change and development are discussed. In addition to the theoretical discussion is a thorough engagement with the main theoretical concepts from which analytical insights are drawn for the research. In this regard, the chapter is broadly divided into six sections. The first section sets out with a brief overview of migration across the globe. This is followed by a discussion of some of the theoretical debates on migration in the second section. This discussion will bring into focus the functional and structural perspectives on the factors underpinning human migration.

The third section examines the concepts of development, vulnerability and livelihoods with a reflection on the link between migration and development. Recognising development as a broad concept that has evolved in its meaning and practice over time, the section will further shed light on how development is conceptualised within the context of the research and study area. The following section four engages the question of environmental change and migration interlinkages. This section basically highlights the discourses on the ‘environmental refugee’ debate with emphasis on the contrasting views on environmentally-induced migration. The last section of the chapter deals with the main analytical concepts of ‘cultures of migration’ and ‘travelling models’. This section entails a thorough discussion of the main theoretical arguments underpinning these concepts and their suitability in adequately providing analytical insights into the findings of the research.

Having outlined the structure of the chapter, the theoretical discussion will proceed with an overview of the nature of migration dynamics across the globe in the following section.

2.2 Theorising Migration

Human migration is an important and enduring demographic feature across the globe as people have constantly been on the move. In contemporary times, the world is said to currently be in the ‘age of migration’ where globalisation and improved transportation have accelerated the spate of international migration (Castles and Miller, 2009: 10-12). However, the phenomenon has increasingly become complex, feminised and politicised, and as such drawn widespread attention amongst scholars and policy-makers (Ibid.).

More importantly, migration all over the world has variously been attributed to complex multi-causal factors, which are environmental, economic and socio-cultural in nature. In view of the complexity that surround human mobility, many intellectual discourses and theories have evolved in the attempt to adequately explain migration dynamics and patterns across the globe (Massey, *et al.*, 1993: 432). At a more general level, the various theories and concepts regard migration as either the result of subjective individual action (agency) or due to structural influences or imbalances. Functionalist perspectives emphasise individual rational choice in the decision to migrate (De Haas, 2007b: 12). Structural perspectives, on the other hand, attribute migration primarily to structural forces (Goss and Lindquist, 1995: 317). For structural theory, therefore, migration occurs in response to structural imbalances in socio-economic conditions normally between two geographic areas (Massey, 1990: 3).

Other migration theories emphasise the role of both agents and structures in dictating migration. Perspectives such as Giddens' (1984: 25) 'duality of structure' and Bourdieu's (1984: 170) concepts of 'field' and 'habitus' have stressed that both individual and structural forces interact to affect humans. The explanations of Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1984) on structure and human agency give insights into how the duality of structure influences human migration.

In the attempt to give a balanced explanation of social action that does not obscure the role of agency and structure, Giddens (1984) proposed the 'theory of structuration'. The theory downplays notions of structures constraining human actions but emphasises the *agency* that humans possess. It highlights that humans are purposive agents who will strive to improve any constraints that may be imposed by social or physical structures (Giddens, 1984: 9). The theory, however, posits that social action and structures are not independent of each other. They are very much interdependent and also pose constraints to each other and hence the 'duality of structure'. Although humans normally act purposively to achieve a particular end, their actions do often also produce unintended consequences that also feed back into the social system over time and space (Rose and Scheepers, 2001: 220; Entrikin and Tepple, 2006: 34).

Akin to the theory of structuration are the concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' (Bourdieu, 1984). These concepts have been developed to analyse power relations in a social system. The notion is that the perceptions and understanding of people and their environment is central to understanding power relations. In this sense, the perceptions and understanding that people have about their environment shapes their appreciation of resources, institutions, behaviour, as well as, their power relations. The concepts also bring to light the kind of strategies that people, institutions and states adopt in a particular context in relation to their interests (Leander, 2009: 2).

Like the social structure of Giddens (1984), Bourdieu conceptualises 'field' in brief as that social setting or structure which comprises the rules, norms and interactions between people in a social setting (1984: 3-4). Each 'field' is essentially distinct from the other. As such, each 'field' defines the values, what is acceptable behaviour and capital; and lastly, what generates power for a person in a relationship. These shared expectations in the 'field' make people accept and see the resulting power relations as normal. The position of an individual and the resulting power that comes with it defines advantages or access that one has to certain

benefits that are often at stake in the 'field'. In the effort to consolidate or enhance their positions, people constantly adopt strategies based on the assets or capital that they possess in the 'fields' of interaction. Consequently, boundaries of 'fields' are always constantly evolving. Hence people constantly negotiate or struggle over the varying worth of their capital or asset endowments in the 'field' (Ibid.).

'Habitus', on the other hand, refers to the expectations, attitudes, values and understanding that people have acquired through the accumulated experience of people who have found themselves in different 'fields' over time. In other words, 'habitus' refers to the perceptions and orientations of people, which are shaped by the social structures or 'fields' they find themselves (Bourdieu, 1984: 6, 94). He states further that 'habitus' is not "a structuring structure, which organises practices and perceptions of the practices, but also a structured structure" (Bourdieu, 1984: 170). That is, it emanates from not only the free subjective will of individuals or determined by structures, but by a combination of both over time. The dispositions of people, perceptions and actions are shaped by the happenings of the past and the existing structures and their prospective capital that they possess within the field. In relation to the environment, Croll and Parkin (1992: 11-36) are of the view that 'habitus' is the totality of perceptions and cultural understandings that people have of the environment. This also informs the kind of responses or pathways that people often make to address environmental risks or constraints that may confront them (De Bruijn and Van Dijk, 2005: 7-9).

Individuals may therefore be endowed or advantaged with 'capital', but their actions are influenced by existing social structures like social expectations, rules or laws. Hence, human actions are determined by a combination of the agency of people and the elements of social structure. 'Habitus' is therefore not fixed, but changes in relation to specific contexts and with time. In the view of Bourdieu therefore, 'field' and 'habitus' are inextricably interlinked. That is, human actions and structures, like Giddens' 'duality of structure', interact and are interdependent. This is the case such that they influence and constantly reproduce each other. Hence, the 'field' (social structure) shape the 'habitus' (dispositions and behaviours) of individuals, while the actions of people also shape these 'fields' of engagement.

In relating these theoretical orientations to migration, it can be said that people may take into account rational cost implications in making the decision to migrate. Nonetheless, these decisions are often taken within the context of the socio-economic conditions prevailing, which are often influenced by interactions within the wider political-economic structures (Massey, 1990: 7). Drawing on the foregoing background, an overview of some of the theoretical debates on migration will give more insights on the phenomenon as well as reflections on the theoretical basis for the analysis of this research.

2.3 Theories of Migration

In view of the complexity of the migration phenomenon, many theories, models and concepts have evolved in the bid to explain migration patterns (De Haas, 2007b: 36; Skeldon, 2008: 3). This has led to the many disjointed studies, intellectual debates and the different theoretical perspectives that abound (Massey, 1990: 3-4; Goss and Lindquist, 1995: 317-319). Most of the theories that have been proposed can be seen to be linear or have a cause-effect relationship. These theories often seem to suggest that migrants indulge in linear movements where a person moves from one point to another or move back and forth between two areas. It is also suggested that migrants may move from say, point A to C with point B as a transit point. In all these types of movements, it is assumed that structural influences from normally the point of origin or destination serve to influence these movements.

Although the linear perspectives on migration may suffice for gaining understanding into migration processes, the phenomenon has over time assumed some complexity in its nature. The classical migration theories stress rational choice and structural forces in precipitating migration. These structural causes of migration can be divided into economic and environmental causes. The theoretical perspectives of migration that highlight economic and environmental factors as precipitating movement and other theories emphasising the complex interaction of factors are examined in the discussion below.

2.3.1 Economic Theories of Migration

The *neoclassical economics theory* is one of the earliest attempts at explaining migration. With neoclassical economic perspectives on migration, the pioneering work of Ravenstein (1885) is worth mentioning as a starting point. In postulating his seven laws of migration, Ravenstein (1885: 198) is of the view that the demand for labour in centres of commerce and industry were primary causes of migration. That is to say, the economic motive for movement was paramount in the migration process. He further pointed out that the issues of population

density and distance were also crucial in dictating movement (Wood, 1982: 300). The seven laws of migration of Ravenstein (1885: 198-199) as summarised by (King, 2012: 12) include:

1. Migrants move mainly over short distances; those going longer distances head for the great centres of industry and commerce.
2. Most migration is from agricultural to industrial areas.
3. Large towns grow more by migration than by natural increase.
4. Migration increases along with the development of industry, commerce and transport.
5. Each migration stream produces a counter stream.
6. Females are more migratory than males, at least over shorter distances; males are a majority in international migration.
7. The major causes of migration are economic.

Although Ravenstein's laws were basically criticised as generalisations and hence did not follow or they have the rigidity of natural laws (Lee, 1996: 47), they have provided a good platform for the theorisation of migration over the years. These laws of migration are underpinned by perspectives of individual rational-choice or action theory and structural inequalities in terms of development between rural and urban areas (King, 2012: 13). Following the work of Ravenstein, the 'push-pull' framework of migration by Lee (1966) came into prominence.

Lee (1966: 50) explains that "in every area there are countless factors which act to hold people within the area or attract people to it, and there are others which tend to repel them." For every migration there is always the element of origin, destination and intervening obstacles, irrespective of the distance or ease of the movement (Ibid.). The assumption is that for both the origin and destination areas there are normally some positive factors which act to keep people within it or pull others to it, while there are also negative factors which may push people out of the area or make it unattractive for people to come (Todaro, 1976: 26). Thus 'push' factors at the place of origin (unemployment, declining soil fertility and scarcity of land, and poverty) and 'pull' factors at the place of destination (employment opportunities, good weather, high wages and better living conditions) will dictate movements (Harris and Todaro, 1970: 27).

In addition to these 'push-pull' forces are sets of 'intervening obstacles' that also influence migration. These obstacles normally confront people in the migration process and may provide little or difficult resistance. The obstacles could be physical distance, transportation costs, unfavourable immigration policies or quotas and language barriers. It is envisaged that the negative and positive forces operating at both the areas of origin and destination will be appreciated or defined differently according to people's peculiar traits and personality (Lee, 1966: 50; Todaro, 1976: 26).

It is noted that a comparison of the factors prevailing at the places of origin and destination may initiate migration. Nevertheless, a perceived positive outcome or benefit is often crucial for actual movement. The structural forces operating at the macro-level in both the places of origin and destination can influence migration. But at the micro-level, the individual characteristics of people and how they process the information available about the conditions (especially networks with family, friends or ethnic members) at the place of destination is vital for actual movement. Hence the decision to migrate is unpredictable or not completely rational since they do not have all the information to inform a rational decision (Lee, 1966: 51).

In spite of the simplicity and the insights that Lee's 'push-pull' migration framework has given to the explanation of the migration phenomenon, the framework has been criticised as being too general. It is also accused of not being able to tell which negative or positive factors operating in both destination and origin areas are in quantitative terms the most important to the different types of people. Hence it does not give sufficient information for policy formulation in, especially, developing countries (Todaro, 1976: 29-30). Nonetheless, the works of Ravenstein and Lee have provided the basis for further theorisation of the migration phenomenon. The 'functionalist' and 'structuralist' perspectives seek to highlight the considerations normally taken in the migration decision-making. The two next sections engage these different perspectives.

Functionalist / Rational Choice Approach

The functionalist perspectives view migration as the means by which surplus labour in poor source areas is transferred to resource-endowed or industrial areas (Goss and Lindquist, 1995: 319). On a more general level, the neoclassical economics theories at the micro or individual level conceive of migration as an economic phenomenon that hinges on the rational economic decisions of individuals (Todaro, 1976: 40-41). The decision to migrate is viewed as solely

the preserve of the individual (normally the actor or agent) in the bid to maximise income. The explanation is that migrants as decision-makers often seek to maximise their gains. Individuals will decide to migrate to an urban area if the gains of migration will increase his/her income or wages (Ibid.). The migration decision is often based on the migrant weighing the cost and benefits to see the expected net positive returns (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 435).

At the macro-level, it is postulated that migration is caused by the structural imbalance or differences in the supply and demand of labour, and wages between different geographic areas (Harris and Todaro, 1970: 127; Massey *et al.*, 1993: 433). It is opined that areas or countries with abundant labour supply but with low wage levels and unfavourable ecological conditions will trigger the migration of people to areas which have a high demand and wage levels for labour (Goss and Lindquist, 1995: 320). Associated with these movements are the return of migrants with better skills and the flow of capital to the source areas. It is envisaged that the movement of capital from rich destinations to poor source areas will even out wage differentials and improve social wellbeing and with time reduce the motivations to migrate (Wood, 1982: 301; De Haas, 2007b: 10).

Neoclassical economics theories of migration can thus be seen to operate at both micro and macro-levels. The theories have elements of rational-cost/functionalist approach and structural theory. In this vein, individuals may consider the cost-benefit implications in deciding to move. However, these considerations are influenced by the structural conditions prevailing at both the source and destination area (occasioned by the larger political economy), which are sometimes beyond the control of the individual that shape the decision to migrate (Massey, 1990: 7).

In as much as the neoclassical economics theory has given much insight into migration, it has also received criticisms. The functionalist orientation of the theory, where it is estimated that movement of labour between two areas marked by structural inequality will lead to equilibrium, have been noted to be unrealistic. The movement of labour between source and resource endowed destination areas will set up a situation of 'cumulative causation'. This will result in 'backwash effects' where there will be more regional disparities (Wood, 1982: 304). The implication is that movement of surplus labour to endowed destination areas will lead to a self-enforcing situation where more people will migrate. This will further impoverish the less economic endowed source areas. Secondly, neoclassical theories have been dismissed as

not only ignoring structural constraints and market imperfections but also accused of being Eurocentric (Castles and Miller, 2009: 23). This is with regard to its assumption that societies will go through the process of modernisation as it unfolded in Europe.

In consequence, the *new economics of labour migration* have broadened the focus on the individual as decision-maker to include the larger family members of the migrant. This focuses on the wider scope of family and relatives in influencing the decision for a member to migrate or not (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 436). The new economics of labour migration in contrast to the neoclassical micro-economics views contend that, the household plays a pivotal role in migration decision-making as a way to supplement or maximise family income and to forestall any capital constraints or risks that may confront the family (Stark and Bloom, 1985: 174-175).

The theory conceives of migration as a livelihood strategy by households to diversify their sources of income and a way to reduce risks to their socio-economic wellbeing (Massey, 1990: 9). This is the case because most sending areas often lack programs, capital markets like insurance or social security schemes and lucrative jobs to help address risks to household income. For example, developed countries are endowed with the presence of private insurance schemes, credit or capital markets, and governmental programs like social security allowances that household members can rely on in times of crises. However in developing countries these facilities are either unavailable or are inefficient, or cannot be accessed by poor households thereby predisposing members to resort to migration to diversify risks. Thus, families or household members play crucial roles in influencing migration or migration decision-making.

The new economics of labour migration theory is thus seen as a micro-level theory with the household or family as the unit of analysis in the decision to migrate. At the same time, it is influenced by larger economic structures. The unfavourable economic conditions, which result in the scarcity of lucrative jobs and capital markets that normally threatens household wellbeing influences the decision by the family to diversify or reduce potential risk by encouraging a member(s) to migrate. At the community level, physical structures like better transportation and communication to urban areas or unequal distribution of land among households may predispose members to also migrate. The structuralist approach or explanations to migration are examined next in the section below.

Structuralist Approach to Migration

In contrast to notions of migration being a result of the rational economic decisions of individuals or household members to maximise income, the *dual labour market theory* attributes international labour migration to structural forces driven by the high demand and labour requirements of modern industrial societies (Castles and Miller, 2009: 23). Piore (1979: 19-24) is of the opinion that international labour migration is caused by the economic structure of industrialised countries, which is such that there is the persistent demand for immigrant labour. He argues that it is not 'push' factors in sending areas that drive the migration of people, but that migration is a consequence of 'pull' factors in developed or receiving countries which is often characterised by a 'chronic' demand for immigrant labour. This is because the economic structure of advanced economies is such that equitable wage increases across the job hierarchy may be expensive and disruptive, and hence may lead to what he terms as 'structural inflation' (Ibid.).

According to Piore (1979: 31), wages also perform social functions where they (wages) depict one's social status and hence the job. These social expectations, acting in tandem with a plethora of formal institutions, try to ensure that wages reflect the status and prestige that is associated with positions that are on top of the job hierarchy. Increasing wages at the lowest ebb of the job hierarchy will set the precedence for the call for a corresponding increase by those at the top to maintain their status and prestige, which comes with their qualities and job positions they hold. This situation will invariably add additional costs to employers.

In order to reduce cost therefore, employers will opt for the recruitment of cheap migrant labour or workers who will in most cases accept lower wages. Additionally, motivational problems in terms of ascending the job hierarchy to attain some status, economic dualism due to job instability and the absence of the prospect of occupational improvement at the lower parts of the job hierarchy and the changing demography of the labour supply all play a part in influencing international migration from developing countries to developed countries (Piore, 1979: 33-43). Hence, the insatiable demand for labour from developed countries is the reason driving international labour migration. In similarity to the views of the dual labour market theory, other schools of thought subscribe to *historical-structural* influences in driving migration.

The *historical-structural perspectives* on migration and development have their roots in Marxist political economy and world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974). In criticising neoclassical economics theory, advocates of these perspectives contend that actors do not often have the freedom as perceived but are influenced greatly by structural forces at play. They explain that people migrate due to the penetration and subsequent disruption of the traditional economic structure in underdeveloped countries by global economic capitalism. According to this theory, the migration of people from underdeveloped areas hamper development, as it disrupts traditional economies and livelihoods, and therefore further impoverishing them (Castles and Miller, 2009: 26).

The penetration of capitalism therefore causes some disparity between developed and underdeveloped countries in terms of political and economic power (De Haas, 2007b: 15). Dependency theory as an aspect argues that the exploitation of resources by colonialists is the cause of underdevelopment in less developed countries (Frank, 1966: 19). Normally, global capitalist structures like multinational companies in developing countries or unfair trade relations consolidate this inequality by limiting the access of people to resources in underdeveloped countries. Consequently, the prospect of economic development in underdeveloped countries is undermined as the inequality that result limits development. This partly makes the developing countries dependent on developed countries (King, 2012: 18).

The historical-structural perspectives on migration have largely been criticised by scholars (Wood, 1982: 308-312). Its perspectives on migration have been criticised for treating migrants as passive agents who merely succumb to the socio-economic structural forces at play. In this regard, it has failed to recognise the agency of migrants as actors who can move on their own convictions (Castles and Miller, 2009: 27). Also, the view that the incorporation of underdeveloped periphery regions would lead to their further impoverishment and underdevelopment has also been questioned. This is because countries which were relatively underdeveloped and marked by significant emigration of people, like Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia among others have, over time, experienced significant economic growth and development.

Despite the criticisms, the historical-structural theory of migration has helped in recognising the role of the world economic and political structures in influencing migration. A related approach that is also worth discussing is the complex systems approach. Advocates of this theoretical reasoning highlight its ability to transcend notions of linearity and to stress the complex and multi-causal nature of migration. The theoretical arguments of the complex systems approach are highlighted below.

2.3.2 Complex Systems Approach

The complex systems approach to migration derives from systems theory. Its strengths are in its ability to transcend linear and ‘push-pull’ perspectives and to focus on the complex multi-causal linkages between structure and other factors whose cause-effect relationship can be traced in a system (King, 2012: 20). As global economic and political conditions evolve constantly, countries may enter and be part of a particular system or leave in respect of the prevailing unfavourable conditions. The systems theory holds the view that some countries experience a persistent pattern of the movement of people, exchange of capital and goods between them than with other countries. Hence, migration derives from ties that normally exist between the places of origin and destination. These ties could stem from trade relations, investment, political influence, colonisation or cultural ties (Castles and Miller, 2009: 27). Migration according to this theory is also influenced by interactions between micro and macro-structures.

The macro-structures as envisaged in the systems theory of migration refer to the global economic, political and institutional structures that act to influence migration. These include the effects of the capitalist economy, terms of trade, migration policies and border controls instituted by governments, and economic partnerships that serve to influence the migration of people from normally sending countries. The micro-structures, on the other hand, refer basically to the social networks that develop between migrants. The social capital, which results from these networks, involves a complex web of interrelationships between migrants, family members and non-migrants. This relationship is highlighted by *network theory*.

Related to the systems perspective is Akin Mabogunje’s (1970) *systems approach to a theory of rural-urban migration*. Mabogunje (1970: 3) refers to a system as “a complex of interacting elements, together with their attributes and relationships.” He conceives of the migration process in Africa as operating as a system. But for any system, it often operates in an ‘environment’. Thus the explanation is that normally socio-economic ‘push’ factors act to

influence movement (Mabogunje, 1970: 3-8). These factors may include land scarcity, the lure of the city and the perceived opportunities that abound. Also included may be the need for income and the quest for better education. According to Mabogunje (1970), the migration process is conceptualised as a system made up of a series of interrelated cause-effect loops. The system approach highlights the self-enforcing factors in the migration system that serves to perpetuate the migration process and the effects on the source and destination areas.

From the discussion, the various migration theories highlight perspectives on structural imbalance or the role of 'push-pull' factors operating in sending and receiving areas as central to migration. Functionalist perspectives suggest rational economic decisions of individuals or the larger household in migration decision-making. On the other hand, structuralist explanations stress the role of structural factors in influencing migration. The structural factors, which are economic in nature, interact at both the micro and macro-levels to influence migration. Normally, these migrations come with outcomes for both the source and destination areas. These outcomes often also have implications for development.

The vulnerability context of people can serve as impetus for migration as a coping strategy. In view of this, both livelihood vulnerability and migration of people have implications for development. As with other social concepts, development is a complex and broad concept. In consequence, its conceptualisation and meaning has evolved over the years. Scholars and practitioners for different reasons and purposes have defined development differently. In spite of the varying conceptualisations of the concept, the interrelationship between migration and development has been widely noted in migration discourses. The following section will engage the different discourses on development, livelihoods and vulnerability. Also the migration and development nexus will be examined to give an appreciation of the interlinkages for the purposes of this research.

2.4 The Concept of Development

Human migration across the globe also raises issues related to development. Indeed, economic development in countries have contributed and facilitated movements. Nonetheless, the migration of persons also affects development in both source and destination areas. The loss of human capital in source areas is often the dominant issue in terms of the effects of migration. However, migrant remittances also facilitate the economic growth and development in especially poor source areas. In order to understand the migration-development nexus, it is necessary to delve into the broad concept of development.

The conceptualisation and meaning of what is ‘development’ has evolved over the years (Ziai, 2011: 3-8). While earlier practices of development were trying to establish the actual linkage between agriculture and industrialisation, in the context of which development was conceived as catching up with the advanced industrialised countries, Cowen and Shenton (1996: 242-263) conceived of development as the remedy for the challenges and problems to progress. The two (development and progress) were perceived as being essentially distinct, with development being complementary to progress. They noted that progress was linear and development curvilinear (Cowen and Shenton, 1996: 123).

During the colonial era, development was used to imply colonial resource management. This was basically to equip colonies to be more cost effective and be able to manage their own economies for national development. After World War II, development was seen to have elements of western-led trusteeship. This appeared to be the case following President Truman’s 1949 agenda for peace and freedom, amongst which developed nations were to help developing countries realise their aspirations through modernisation (Morse, 2008: 4-5). In contemporary times, development has often been equated to economic growth or development with the aim at improving infrastructure and national/per capita income.

Neoliberalism as an aspect of development endorses the forces of market as catalyst to development than to the role of government. To achieve economic growth, neoliberalism among other things advocates for the deregulation, liberalisation of trade and privatisation of state enterprises. This development agenda was suggested to proceed without compromising the ability of future generations to also do same (meet their needs of development) and hence sustainable development (Morse, 2008: 5). This culminated in the consideration of the environmental aspects of development with an emphasis on participation and interventions by civil society organisations (Redclift, 2005: 212-213).

Post-development thinking has, however, been critical of the mode of operation and the objectives of the development agenda (Ferguson, 1994: 77-178). Post-development thinkers have highlighted the problems and lapses of the development process, which are often shrouded in ‘Foucaultian’ knowledge power relations, and how this has affected human populations the world over (Brigg, 2002: 431). As a result, development has been likened as an ‘empty signifier’ that can be used to describe anything or filled with any content (Ziai, 2009: 196). Development is criticised as an ‘amoeba-like’ concept (Esteva, 1985: 79) and Eurocentric with societies of western countries seen as ideal to which poor countries must

strive to look like (Ziai, 2011: 5). Post-development scholars therefore call for the total rejection of development in pursuit of ‘alternatives to development’. The post-development paradigm argues for a renewed interest in local knowledge and culture, communities taking control in the areas of politics, economics and knowledge through grassroots movements at the local level.

Another perspective worth noting is the United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) conceptualisation of development as the enlargement of people’s choices. By this, the goal of development is to facilitate an enabling environment where people will lead long and healthy lives, and have a decent standard of living. Also of importance are political, economic and social freedoms, opportunities for people to realise their potentials, enjoy personal self-respect (ability to mix with others) and be guaranteed of their human rights (UNDP, 1990: 10). Development is therefore supposed to transcend concerns of satisfying the basic needs of people to also ensuring freedom: freedom to control their lives and also participation in all spheres of life (Alkire, 2010: 5). Akin to this notion of development is Amartya Sen’s conception of development as freedom (1999). The next section discusses Sen’s argumentation and how constraints (sources of unfreedom) affect development and exacerbate people’s vulnerability context.

2.4.1 Development as Freedom

Sen (1999: 3) refers to development as the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. With this notion, human freedom is an integral component of the developmental process. This is because development can be measured by the extent of freedom that people enjoy and secondly, the free agency of people to take control of their lives. Other conventional perceptions of development like economic growth, rising per capita income and industrialisation can contribute to expanding freedoms. Yet, these human freedoms are, in part, also dependent on socio-economic factors (education, health facilities, trade and production), political and civil rights (freedom of speech and elections) and technological progress.

These institutional factors are also influenced by the extent to which people can freely make choices and partake in the decisions that affect their lives and ability to take advantage of the opportunities that the institutional arrangements present for their sustenance. That is, human freedoms are not only the end result of the development process but are part of the means (Sen, 1999: 10). Development thus entails “the removal of major sources of unfreedom:

poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states” (Sen, 1999: 3). In this wise, development should aim at removing all obstacles that limit people’s choices or constrain individual capabilities.

Most often, the development interventions that are undertaken to a larger extent do not always reflect the motive to improve wellbeing. The development process sometimes excludes the very people it seeks to help and thereby making them impoverished and vulnerable (Heijmans, 2008: 124). The poverty and marginalisation that people face curtail their freedom of choice and ability to take control of their lives thereby making them vulnerable (Hilhorst and Bankoff, 2008:1). This has resulted in the call for ‘adaptive governance’ where people within the context of institutional frameworks are able to take decisions, mobilise and take control of their lives in response to environmental changes (Cannon and Müller-Mahn, 2010: 10).

People can also become vulnerable as a result of the depletion of resources, poverty and marginalisation, and the risks that people are exposed to as a result of both local and global processes. Vulnerability is thus seen as a consequence of risks of large-scale deprivation of entitlements to people (Watts and Bohle, 1993: 47). ‘Entitlements’, according to Sen (1987: 8), refers to the “set of different alternative commodity bundles that a person can acquire through the use of the various legal channels of acquirement open to someone in his position.” A person’s endowments or asset base will thus determine the totality of the different goods (including food) one can acquire in the exchange economy (Sen, 1981: 434-435). The endowments of a person may include labour, land and other properties that a person may possess. In this sense, a person’s ‘entitlement set’ encompasses all the endowments and the different commodity bundles each of them can fetch through the exchange economy (exchange entitlement mapping) (Sen, 1987: 8).

Within the scope of the entitlement approach therefore, vulnerability is as a result of fluctuations or changes in the exchange entitlement, which occurs due to shifts in the exchange entitlement mapping. If people’s entitlements or ability to acquire the alternative commodity bundle to satisfy their basic necessities of life is undermined, they become vulnerable. When people’s livelihoods are undermined, migration as a coping strategy is one of the numerous options people often consider. This notwithstanding, what defines a person’s vulnerability and the relationship to sustainable livelihoods has attracted significant

scholarship in that respect. A brief discussion of vulnerability and the DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Framework in the following section will bring to light how a person's vulnerability context can influence migration and the associated outcomes.

2.4.2 Vulnerability and Livelihoods

Various scholars have conceived the concept of vulnerability differently. Chambers (2006: 33) defines vulnerability as the “exposure to contingencies and stress, and difficulty in coping with them.” Vulnerability therefore has to do with one being exposed and susceptible to risks, stress and shock. This is further exacerbated when households are defenceless or unable to cope with these stresses without damaging losses. That is, a household or individual being susceptible to these stresses such that they become economically and physically weak, suffer humiliation and psychologically affected as well as become a social liability (Chambers, 2006: 33).

Within the context of climate change, the IPCC (2007a: 883) defines vulnerability as “the degree to which a system is susceptible to, and unable to cope with adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes.” Hence, vulnerable categories will include groups, individuals or regions that will be most exposed to risks of hazards or climate change extremes like hurricanes, floods, droughts, and whose ability to cope and recover from the impact of these hazards are very limited (Watts and Bohle, 1993: 45). Although people's exposure to a particular risk (hazard) and their ability to cope or adapt (resiliency) defines their vulnerability, Cannon (2008: 351) is of the view that “vulnerability must be understood as people being vulnerable to something – natural hazards of various types – and having various social characteristics that make them likely to be harmed by a particular hazard to a greater or lesser extent.” Disasters that may arise as a result of the vulnerability of people to natural hazards are therefore often determined by the complex interplay of political, economic and social factors.

For Cannon (2008: 350), social factors interact to make some people more vulnerable to disasters than others. In this regard therefore, vulnerability can be seen to encompass the interrelationships that people have with the environment, the socio-economic and political forces, and the cultural values that influences these relationships (Oliver-Smith, 2008: 10). Vulnerability is thus rooted in both social and environmental spaces where “human security, freedoms, and human rights are struggled for, negotiated, lost and won” (Bohle, 2007: 9). Social vulnerability recognises the agency that people living in risk-prone environments

possess as they try to cope and adapt to the stress, crises and hazards that affect their livelihoods. In the midst of the crises and stress that threaten livelihoods and survival, vulnerable people are not passive. Vulnerable people often strive to initiate measures (innovative) at coping or reducing the risks that they face in order to safeguard their livelihoods (Bohle, 2007: 9).

The sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) has been central in the vulnerability and development discourse over the years. It provides a good framework for analysing sustainable rural livelihoods by linking socio-economic and ecological consideration in a comprehensive way (Krantz, 2001: 6). In the words of Chambers and Conway (1992: 6), a livelihood comprises “the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.” Central to the SLF (Fig 2.1) is that it recognises the assets or capital base that people possess.

These assets include the physical, social, human, natural and financial capital. Poor people may be confronted with lack of money or savings, which they can use to make a living. They are also endowed with both material and non-material resources and assets. The resources encompass the knowledge (ideas and skills), health, natural resources, labour, family and friends that poor people possess. The SLF argues that poor people should not be perceived as passive agents. But, it is important to analyse the available resource in the context of the prevailing socio-economic conditions in order to identify their vulnerabilities and opportunities available to them. The various components of the SLF interact in complex ways to produce livelihood outcomes.

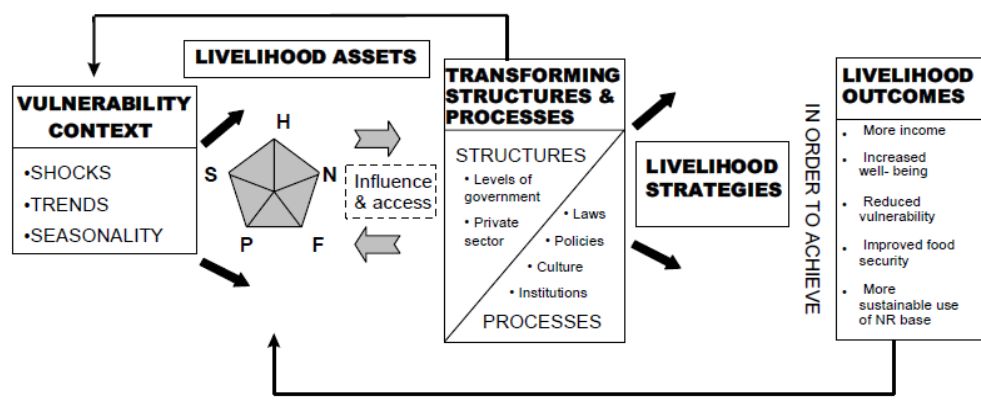


Figure 2.1: The DFID’s Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
 Source: Carney *et al.*, (1999: 9)

Both the vulnerability context and transforming structures and processes can affect the livelihood assets that poor people possess. The vulnerability context in itself is also influenced by structural contexts including organisations and institutions (rules, laws, policies and legislation), which shape the livelihoods of the people (Thieme, 2008: 54). Therefore, the vulnerability of people is dependent on their ability to deal with the constraints on their assets or capabilities presented by the vulnerability context.

It is widely acknowledged by scientists and policy-makers that global climatic change (hazards or disasters) is exacerbating the vulnerabilities of people and redefining development in especially developing countries (Haile, 2005: 2176-2179). This is partly because less developed countries are often saddled with inadequate capacity and resources to respond to the effects of climate change (Hugo, 2008: 14). However, most rural poor people normally engage in different livelihood strategies to cope or adapt in order to improve their wellbeing. Migration is often one of the important livelihood options that people consider (Hugo, 1996: 105; Thieme, 2008: 56). This is especially the case amongst rural farming households whose agrarian livelihoods are dependent on rainfall.

The vulnerability context may trigger the migration of people; at the same time, it is important to note that migrant remittances play a significant role in the improvement of household welfare, poverty reduction and economic development in developing countries (Giuliano and Ruiz-Arranz, 2009:148). The section below brings into focus the migration and development linkages.

2.5 Migration and Development

The debate on the migration-development nexus has generally evolved over time (Martin, 1992: 1000). Migration can be perceived to have both negative and positive consequences on development. The phenomenon was perceived as a consequence of failure in development, which brought about ‘backwash effects’ in exacerbating poverty in sending countries (Black, King and Tiemoko, 2003: 2). The loss of especially skilled labour in sending countries and the effects on economic development has been topical in the migration-development debate (Newland, 2003: 2). But, migrant remittances in developing countries have been considered as an important contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and poverty reduction (Ratha, 2007: 174-175). Remittances from migrants can be in the form of food, knowledge or cash (economic) to families and their communities of origin.

2.5.1 Economic Remittances

Apart from migrants' investments in businesses and agriculture in their home communities, they also contribute to the improvement of household welfare through the economic or cash remittances that they send (Kabki, 2007: 121-125). Migrant remittances have become a major source of foreign exchange in many developing countries. The projected remittances from migrants abroad to developing countries of about \$414 billion in 2013, representing a 6.3 percent of what was received in 2012, is expected to increase to \$540 billion by the close of 2016 (World Bank, 2013: 3).

Aside from the income inequality that remittances often create in the home communities, they have contributed to poverty reduction and have been supportive in social resilience in times of disasters or agricultural failures (Adger *et al.*, 2002: 364-365). The contribution of remittances has also been very significant in housing, bride price payment, cattle, education and agricultural sector (Russell, 1984: 601; Pickbourn, 2011: 141). Migrant or hometown associations also mobilise resources to develop their home communities. This is done through 'collective remittances' (Castles and Miller, 2009: 61), where the migrants influence the development of their home communities through interventions like the construction of roads, hospitals, schools and the provision of potable drinking water.

It is however argued that remittances do not always guarantee "sustainable economic and social development" (Ibid.). That is, migrant remittances do not enhance the productive capacity of developing or sending countries, but exacerbate inequality, develop the taste for imported goods amongst people and create a pattern of dependency (Newland, 2003: 4). This notwithstanding, remittances can also be reverse with the flow of capital (human and financial) from sending countries to migrant receiving countries. This happens when migrants in their early period of arrival receive money from relations back home to be able to settle or sort out problems. Furthermore, migrants who migrate abroad to pursue further education can bring along capital with them to pay fees. In spite of these different perspectives, cash remittances are undeniably an important conduit through which migration contributes to development in especially source areas. Also of particular importance are the knowledge, skills and new ways of behaviour, which often bring about social transformation and development in the source areas. These types of remittances as explained in the next section below are often termed as 'social remittances'.

2.5.2 Social Remittances (Knowledge Transfer)

Aside from the role of remittances in facilitating development, migrants have also been considered as agents of change in their communities of origin (Scheffran, Sow and Marmer, 2012: 123). This is normally because of the transfer of new knowledge, behaviours, innovation and skills acquired from the developed to developing countries. Social remittances refer to the “ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital flow from receiving- to sending-country communities” (Levitt, 1998: 927).

Basically, three types of social remittances can be distinguished: *normative structures*, *systems of practice* and *social capital* (Levitt, 1998: 933). The ‘normative structures’ type encompasses norms on interpersonal behaviour and responsibilities towards the family. This type of social remittance also involves the transfer of appropriate ways of how a church, state or organisation should function back to the places of origin of migrants. The ‘systems of practice’ type of social remittances reflects the actions that are often influenced and shaped by normative structures. This type borders on actions such as forms of religious or cultural practices, styles of leadership and participation. Lastly, the ‘social capital’ type depicts the privileges that migrants normally enjoy in their home communities by virtue of the status and social prestige that are accorded to persons who have returned or migrated abroad.

These various forms of social remittance can be transmitted in a variety of ways. This can be through visits or returns to the home, letters, phone calls or audio/video cassettes. Social remittance or the knowledge that is often transmitted back to home communities can have both negative and positive impacts (Levitt, 1998: 941). In as much as migrant social remittances can contribute to development, by way of the transmission of skilled knowledge and attitudinal changes in sending areas, they can also negatively derail the process of development by triggering the emigration of people. The potential of social remittances is dependent on the kind of training or living conditions in which migrants find themselves and how this can translate into contributing to the development of their home communities. Moreover, when people receive information and ideas about opportunities abroad, it can set in motion waves of emigration or outmigration. This can invariably also lead to the loss of human capital, which has implications for the development of sending countries or areas.

Most importantly, the issue of *brain drain* and its effects on developing countries has been of concern to governments in sending areas. The emigration of skilled personnel like doctors, nurses and other health professionals to North America and Europe has brought some costs to healthcare delivery in developing countries (Manuh, 2006: 22-23). This transfer of human capital in recent times is facilitated by educational facilities and immigration legislations or policies in most developed countries that encourage the immigration of highly skilled personnel from less developed countries. The loss of the human resource in less developed countries impacts on the ability to develop, thereby further widening the developmental gap between the rich developed countries and the less developed poor countries.

Despite the pessimism that arises in the light of the *brain drain* that sending countries suffer, migrants have in the light of transnational orientations served as agents of development (Newland and Patrick, 2004: 14). It is argued that *brain drain* can transform into *brain gain* or *brain circulation*, and may actually stimulate human capital formation which could be beneficial for both sending and receiving countries (Beine, Docquier and Rapoport, 2008: 648). The rationale is that the flow of remittances from these skilled migrants to their home countries will lead to economic development. Subsequently, as the home country economies grow with time, these skilled migrants will return with their knowledge and experience acquired in working abroad to accelerate the development of their countries. Notwithstanding the loss of human capital (*brain drain*) in developing countries, the mutual benefits or effects of migration on the individual, places of destination and origin cannot be underestimated.

The discussion so far has shown the intricate interrelationship between migration and development. It has also evoked development as a broad and contentious concept that has resulted in its evolution in meaning and practise over time. For the purposes of this research, development is conceived as the contribution of migrants to infrastructural development, provision of social amenities, economic activities and social transformation in the study area. More importantly, migrants are recognised as agents of change in promoting social transformation and infrastructural development in source communities. Therefore, conceptualising development in this way will bring into focus the extent to which migrants as agents of change facilitate development, social transformation and at the same time perpetuate migration in the rural communities of the study area.

But in the light of ongoing global changes in climate and environment, many affected areas have witnessed the displacement and subsequent large-scale migration of people. This has consequently also generated contentious debates with many researchers attributing the migration of people to environmental risks (Myers, 2002: 611; McLeman and Smit, 2006: 32-33; Piguet *et al.*, 2011: 7). In the wake of these widespread debates, many other studies have expressed reservations and insisted that the relationship is not clear-cut. Following these divergent viewpoints, an engagement with the migration-environmental change nexus will bring to light the different debates on the subject. The next section will therefore deal with the different argumentations on migration and environmental change interrelationship and how this relates to migration dynamics within the West African region.

2.6 Migration and Environmental Change: What are the Debates?

Global climatic changes have, in part, also accelerated in the environment. It is envisaged that the effects of these ongoing changes in climatic and environmental systems on human populations will be enormous in the near future (Barnet and Adger, 2007: 641). The brunt of these effects will be felt more in developing countries; especially in sub-Saharan Africa (De Bruijn and Van Dijk, 2005: 4). This is because the economies of most African countries thrive on rain-fed agriculture and have larger proportions of their populations engaged in this sector (Nkomo *et al.*, 2006: 12).

With migration already an integral part of the social lives of people, the phenomenon has evolved as one of the major responses that people consider in their quest to cope or adapt to the effects of environmental change (Hugo, 2013: xvi). Many migrate as a coping or adaptation strategy to climate and environmental stressors (Tacoli, 2009: 520). Several others have generally been displaced due to these events (Perch-Nielsen, Battig and Imboden, 2008: 119; Gutmann and Field, 2010: 6-7). This has led to persons affected often variously referred to as ‘environmental refugees’ or ‘eco-refugees’ (Myers, 2002: 610).

Advocates of the ‘environmental refugee’ debate, whom Astri Suhrke (1994: 474) refer to as ‘environmental maximalists’, point to the overarching role of environmental change as the cause of human migration. This conviction has been echoed by other studies that have sought to establish the complex relationship between migration and environmental change (Boano *et al.*, 2008: 9-10). Jacobson (1988: 257) writing about the effects of environmental change in Africa contends that desertification has become prevalent to the extent that whole villages and farmlands were being overtaken by sand. He explains that the mass migrations that were

experienced in sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1980s were a manifestation of the pervasive hunger and famines that had plagued the region as a result of the droughts.

Following observations such as these, Myers (1997: 168) concludes that the plight of people affected by environmental risks “drives them to seek a livelihood wherever they can, often in marginal environments or environments that are too wet, too dry or too steep for sustainable agriculture of conventional kind.” Consequently, Myers projected that global climatic and environmental changes will displace about 150-200 million people by 2050 and as such forcing them to migrate (Myers, 2002: 610-611).

In spite of the foregoing apocalyptic projections, many other scholars have argued that the relationship between migration and environmental change is not explicit or clear-cut. Scholars like Richard Black (2001:4) and Stephen Castles (2002: 8) have been critical about notions of environmental change as the direct cause of migration and as such producing ‘environmental refugees’. In addition to the conceptual ambiguity of the term, Black (2001: 3) has, for example, questioned the notion of ‘environmental refugees’. Although he acknowledges that environmental factors may play a part in forced migration, he argued that political, economic and other socio-cultural conditions prevailing were crucial in dictating movements (Black, 2001: 6). Based on a series of case studies, Castles (2002: 8) similarly criticises the explicit or ‘common sense’ attribution of human migration to climatic or environmental factors as misleading, biased and simplistic.

Nonetheless, it is projected that future climatic change scenarios will further trigger the displacement and persistent migration of millions of people across the globe (Myers, 2002: 610). The effects of environmental risks will be felt more by rural poor people and as such the migration of persons will most likely be towards urban areas (Barrios, Bertinelli and Strobl, 2006: 367; Etzold *et al.*, 2014: 90). Most often, the West African Sahel is a common point of reference to the effects of environmental risks by policy-makers and researchers. However, a cursory examination of migration patterns in West Africa gives an indication of a phenomenon that has been a common feature and a way of life of people in the region since time immemorial (Van Dijk, Foeken and Van Til, 2001: 6).

The phenomenon is an integral part of the economic and social structure of societies within the sub-region. Rain (1999: 35) shedding his thoughts on the subject avers that the West African region is a “walked-across land” in both historical and contemporary terms with seasonal mobility being a feature of the Sahelian environment and climate. Following these

observations, scholars have called for studies to transcend the climate or environmental change rhetoric and look at migration within the context of the prevailing socio-cultural, economic, demographic and political conditions in source areas to understand its dynamics in the region (Black *et al.*, 2011: S6; Doevenspeck, 2011: e52). These calls have, therefore, stimulated the need for migration research to align more with the complex multi-causal and changing cultural valuations that serve to facilitate and perpetuate migration in especially the African-setting.

In summarising the theoretical discussion, it is worthy to note that Ghana as a country has experienced different migratory patterns over the years. Several factors and discursive processes involving various actors in the society have shaped the different patterns of migration in the country. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge that most of the theories discussed have their contextual relevance. But to gain deeper insights into migration in northern Ghana, it is imperative to analyse the historical and socio-cultural factors that have served to shape and perpetuate movements as well as influence development in the face of environmental risks.

Against this background and in reference to the nature of migratory movements within northern Ghana, this research will draw on the concepts of ‘cultures of migration’ and ‘travelling models’ as the theoretical frameworks for analysis in this research. The following sections are therefore devoted to an in-depth exposition of the theoretical underpinnings of these concepts and the reasons for the choice of the concepts in explaining migration within the context of environmental change in northern Ghana.

2.7 Migration as Complexes of Cultural Representations

The migration process in societies of many developing countries has over time become part of their way of life. In especially the rural areas of Africa, migration has not only become established in the psyche of people but is perceived more as a ‘normal’ social phenomenon. De Bruijn *et al.* (2001: 64) in their ‘cultures of travel’ have been more unequivocal about the fact that “[...] in Africa some people have developed travel as the very basis of their existence.” This is the case such that travelling out of one’s community has to some extent become a *rite de passage* in most societies of Africa (Cassiman, 2008: 16-19).

As part of the social order, the cultures of migration that evolve derive from the changing cultural valuations and understandings of the phenomenon in these societies. Apart from the household, migration decision-making is also often a manifestation of existing communal traditions, socio-cultural practices, national and international trends (Cohen and Sirkeci, 2011: 2). Firstly, the section below examines the concept of ‘cultures of migration’ as an analytical framework for migration in the study area.

2.7.1 Cultures of Migration: Migration as Discursive Space

The concept of ‘cultures of migration’ seeks to bring into perspective the socio-cultural, historical and economic factors that shape human migrations. The concept takes as its point of departure the view that migratory movements are outcomes or complexes of evolving cultural representations. By ‘cultures of migration’, the contention is that the phenomenon in particular has some historical grounding in the source area. In his work on migration in Mexico, Cohen (2004: 5) indicates that by ‘cultures of migration’ it is acknowledged in the source area that: migration is pervasive and indeed has a historical presence or precedence. Secondly, migration decision-making is part of the social organisation or lived experiences of people. Lastly, the phenomenon is a means to economic empowerment, enlightenment, staking a claim for recognition in social spaces, community and maturity into adulthood.

Central to the concept of ‘cultures of migration’ are social networks that tend to bind migrants, relations, non-migrants and places together. In this sense, the concept does not just depict changing patterns of migratory movements as Cohen (2004) seek to highlight, but is seen as “flows, momentous results of interactive processes among people and between them and their surroundings” (Klute and Hahn, 2007: 14). That is to say ‘culture’ in this context is not to highlight differences or distinguish between autochthones and foreigners but is used here as an open concept. As explained by Hahn (2007: 169), ‘cultures of migration’ is also “acknowledging the perpetuation of local cultures which have the capacity to cope with the temporal absence of some of its members and to integrate the migrants’ experiences from abroad into their own horizon.” Following this argumentation, culture is conceptualised as “discursive space or sphere of meaningful negotiations” (Hahn, 2007: 151).

In conceiving the migration process this way, it provides a space for the analysis of articulation of particular interests of migrants, families and non-migrants at the source area. The concept signifies the discursive negotiations, new understandings of interrelationships and identities that evolve in the migration process. In this regard, the interstitial space of

negotiations, making compromises, developing new identities, maintaining relationships and new understandings of migration is what Hahn (2007: 151) refers to as ‘discursive space’ and also as culture. Embedded in this discursive space, which also reflects Bourdieu’s (1984: 170) ‘field’, are the constant negotiations of persons with varying interests or ‘translations’ of the evolving perceptions and new understandings of migration as a travelling token or idea by the various actors in source areas (Rottenburg, Behrends and Park, 2014: 2).

These changing valuations and understandings that result also help induce cultural change or social transformations. In this sense, social transformation will refer to the “the fundamental change in the way society is organised that goes beyond the continual processes of social change that are always at work” (Castles and Miller, 2009: 54). Apart from the change in perspectives and behaviours that migrants from areas of origin may take to the destinations, they normally imbibe certain new kinds of behaviour, lifestyles and ideas, which they transmit or bring to their communities upon return. The relationships or networks and conflicting negotiations that exist between migrants facilitate the migration and transformation process (Lambert, 2007: 137-139). Related to ‘cultures of migration’ are also the perspectives of *network theory*, which highlight the complex web of interrelationships between migrants, non-migrants and family both at the source and destination areas (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 448). The networks tend to bind migrant categories through ties of friendship, kinship and same community origins they share. Migration costs and risks are often reduced when there are networks, which provide information and refuge for new migrants (Hart, 1971: 28).

Normally when migration is undertaken, for example, it changes the social context or circumstances under which the decision to move was made. These changes in turn also influence subsequent migration decisions as networks increase by facilitating more movement. As more people begin to migrate at the community level, people’s perceptions and values change with the acquisition of new experiences (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 451). Most often, people after migrating encounter new experiences that change their perceptions, life-worlds and motivations. They in turn transmit these new experiences to others upon return (Levitt, 1998: 936). The new pool of information diffuses in the community over time, equipping potential migrants in source areas with information and the urge to migrate. The initial intent may be to migrate once to earn some income. However, the different lifestyles, tastes and understandings of migration internalised but cannot be attained at the local level reinforces the tendencies to migrate upon return.

These alterations experienced in the social context or circumstances, under which the movement was taken, then set the precedence for more likely movements and hence migration due to *cumulative causation* (Massey, 1990: 9). With time, however, migration is reified and becomes deeply ingrained in the psyche of people such that values acquired become part of the community's value system leading to the development of cultures of migration. Over time, the phenomenon becomes rooted in the value system via the constant negotiations, contestations and reterritorialization by the various actors in the migration process.

As succinctly put by Klute and Hahn (2007:16), the migration cultures are “continuously propelled and modelled through ongoing and often conflicting negotiations which take place among migrants and between them and other social actors they deal with.” They develop in such a way that it is sometimes prestigious or conventional for a person to migrate in his or her lifetime for experience. This is especially evident in many traditional African societies where migration has assumed some socio-cultural significance over the years. The drive to enjoy the prestige, recognition and to gain experience which have over time become prominent in the value system of source areas serve to drive and sustain migratory movements (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 451).

Taking into account that migration in northern Ghana has been pervasive and embedded in the social lives of the people; this research draws on the concept of ‘cultures of migration’ for analysis. The *cumulative causation* perspectives and Cohen's (2004) thoughts on ‘cultures of migration’ are acknowledged. However, the research follows the line of reasoning of Klute and Hahn (2007) and their colleagues to conceive cultures of migration in northern Ghana as ‘discursive space’. This is against the background that although the area is prone to environmental risks, migration in the area has historical underpinnings and indeed a common demographic and social feature even before colonialism. There is thus the need, as Cohen and Sirkeci (2011: 2) put it, to “look beyond the present and the person to understand the history and socio-cultural setting of the mover.” That is, examining the historical influences and patterns of movement, and the socio-cultural constellations in order to relate to contemporary migration patterns within the context of ongoing environmental changes in northern Ghana.

Also of particular importance is the fact that migrants and other actors translate or transmit migration as a travelling idea to people in the study area and hence its persistence. The concept of ‘travelling models’ stresses the role of actors or mediators in influencing or

facilitating change across certain spaces over time (Rottenburg, Behrends and Park, 2014). The underlying arguments of the concept are further elaborated below.

2.7.2 Migration as a Travelling Idea: Concept of Travelling Models

The analytical concept of ‘travelling models’, as espoused by Richard Rottenburg (2009a), basically seeks to understand or analyse transformation processes or change that occur within certain spaces or in organisational settings. Essentially, the concept examines how changes or developments in one setting are linked to or influences change in another setting. It analyses how certain issues of importance diffuse and are selectively taken up in other areas. The concept highlights the changes and reordering that can occur when a model is introduced in a particular site or area.

In developing the concept, Rottenburg, Behrends and Park (2014: 1) defined a model as “an analytical representation of particular aspects of reality created as an apparatus or protocol for interventions in order to shape this reality for certain purposes.” In this regard, models and the corresponding reality or ideas are often objectified and represented in mechanisms (blueprints) that enable their efficient transfer to new areas and subsequent practice. To be considered a model therefore, it is envisaged that the travelling apparatus or objectified reality is already in circulation. However, models often do not travel or diffuse in isolation. Models get transferred and taken up by being ‘translated’ often by mediators. For Rottenburg, Behrends and Park (2014: 4), “opening the ‘black box’ of transfer means not only to observe how ideas assembled in one site connect with meanings and practices in another, but also to focus on the many steps of the trajectory when an idea is de-territorialised and re-territorialised in any given site or problem space.”

By ‘translation’, models travel by being “conveyed, carried, picked up, called for and interpreted by various actors or mediators” (Rottenburg, Behrends and Park, 2014: 2). ‘Translation’ in this sense helps to distinguish between prevailing and imported socio-cultural forms while highlighting the role they play in transformations that occur in different places. Inherently embedded in these travelling models are unique techniques or perceived ‘skilled practices’ that are often considered as appropriate or ideal for certain circumstances or solving problems at the new site but that often do not travel with the model. These techniques are often re-invented or re-territorialised through negotiations, practice and experience at the new areas. To this end, models can be seen to work within the precincts of existing institutions that normally do not travel with the objectified model.

Another important argument of the concept is that a model in transit does not necessarily suggest superiority over existing ideas or assumes coherent rationality between the travelling model and the existing circumstance at the site of experimental practice. Thus, a model becomes valued and imitated only after going through negotiations between different and contesting rationalities in reference to the interests and understandings of the mediators as well as the circumstances at the new site (Rottenburg, 1996: 196). When the model is de-territorialised from its original setting and understanding; it is re-territorialised or *vernacularized* in reference to the new settings, institutional set up and problems-spaces and then becomes a 'token' (Merry, 2006: 44).

It becomes a 'token' because the model adapts to the new settings it enters and as such is perceived as a socially valued and ideal representation or symbol of the reality it seeks to represent. The travelling token itself changes as it encounters new sets of understanding, institutional set-up and technological infrastructure so as to be able to fit in the new environment and circumstances it seeks to address. In this light, the more a token changes to fit the new environment, the more likely it will become a stable, black-boxed model that can travel and easily be picked up (Rottenburg, Behrends and Park, 2014: 3).

Consequently, the area of origin of the token over time becomes reputed as a source of models that are perceived to be worth imitating by those who want to achieve success. The actors or mediators play an important role in the transfer of models. This is in the view that as carriers, the thinking of mediators is often influenced by the ideas or orientations of the model. Also, translation of the model and its embedded ideas of the reality it represents are influenced by the prevailing knowledge and beliefs. Hence mediators therefore act in the middle between models that are in transit and circulating globally and the local areas that pick them up.

Normally the mediators, based upon their understanding and circumstances in the new site, can change the problem that the model seeks to tackle and as such produce new interpretations of their reality. That is, mediators as agents that convey or translate the ideas of the model to the new sites also have the tendency to subjectively influence and twist these ideas (Merry, 2006: 43). The new site that often receives the token also changes or transforms. Although there are instances where a travelling model gets picked up without necessarily altering the new sites they have been introduced, they can also transform new sites by turning them into something different from what they were before. In trying to

elaborate the strength of travelling models, Rottenburg, Behrends and Park (2014: 11-19) distinguished the concept from the related theories of *diffusionism*, *modernisation* and *rational choice*. All these theories also seek to explain how ideas travel and effect changes between places.

Diffusionism essentially tries to bring into perspective why some cultural traits in one area spread or diffuse to another area. Drawing from the concept of *kulturkreise* (expanding cultural circles) as put forward by Schmidt (1926), cultural practices or traits spread through physical processes normally from an epicentre of cultural concentration to peripheral areas. For Rottenburg, Behrends and Park (2014:12), however, the distinction between diffusionism and travelling models lies in the force that moves the ideas. Hence instead of emphasising the physical process by which ideas and for that matter a cultural trait diffuses from one area of concentration to another, the perspective of travelling models is concerned with how and why a token travels and is accepted in a new area while another is not. Also, while diffusionism presupposes a centre-periphery where ideas move from the concentrated centre to the periphery, travelling models on the other hand involves simultaneous circulation, contestations and negotiations of tokens between different areas.

Also related to travelling models is *modernisation theory*. Modernisation theory presupposes that change comes as a result of people's adoption of things or foreign concepts perceived as more advanced or better-off. Central to modernisation theory is industrial and economic innovation as pathways to socio-economic development. Like diffusionism, modernisation theory is also seen to assume a centre-periphery approach. This is in view of the fact that the theory takes as part of its propositions the notion that there are different levels of modernisation where certain areas are assumed to take the lead and others will follow. Unlike modernisation theory, which assumes that models can travel without any changes or transformation in any form, the idea of 'travelling models' emphasises the de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation of ideas. The explanation is that normally when models or ideas are transferred from their original site, they are re-territorialised in the new site and take on new meanings and perceptions of the reality they represent in relation to the new situation. The situation where ideas are re-territorialised and take on new meanings therefore constitutes an innovation.

Another theory of importance in conceptualising travelling models is rational choice theory. Its relationship to the concept of travelling models borders on the bid to unravel the underlying reasons why people accept or pick up new ideas. That is, to provide an explanation as to the reasons why models travel. The rational choice theory argues that normally, actors often consider the benefits or their best interests before accepting or picking up a new idea. The theory thus stresses or endorses the notion of rationality of actors in picking up new ideas. It highlights the various interests of actors and the tendency for actors to pick up ideas that best serve their interests. But ‘travelling models’ is concerned with how these varying interests of actors are often re-negotiated when, especially, others introduce new ideas.

For an idea or model to be picked up therefore, Rottenburg (2009a, cited in Rottenburg, Behrends and Park, 2014: 17-18) advanced the notions of *aura* and *code-switching*. It is pointed out that a token must have an *aura* in order to make it attractive as a model and considered worth imitating. The factors that make a model worth imitating are not necessarily bounded by rational choice. In this regard, the more a token is accepted in different sites as the best way to deal with situations the more likely that it will be picked up again. However, the likelihood of acceptance to a greater extent depends on the way the token is translated or mediated and how it fits with the existing institutional set-up in the new site (Rottenburg, 1996: 195).

The *code-switching*, however, involves moving between a *cultural code* and a *meta-code*. That is, people being able to realise that what they know or perceive of something can be different and accepting to make compromises. With the meta-code, it refers to the consensus building process between people with divergent interests in the decision to pick up a particular token or idea. This whole process is incumbent on people being conscious of their rationalities and also admitting that other rationalities exist and differ from theirs. A meta-code establishing terms of agreement, interaction and cooperation is therefore necessary to ensure balance, fairness and consensus between the differing rationalities in picking up a new idea.

2.8 Summary of the Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical discussion so far recognises that the migration phenomenon is a much more complex process influenced by a host of interlinked and complementary factors. Nonetheless, the concepts of ‘travelling models’ and ‘cultures of migration’ are considered as ideal for theoretical analyses of migration dynamics in northern Ghana.

The concept of ‘travelling models’ has been used extensively to analyse how new ideas or models are transferred, picked up and bring about changes in different places within the field of development practice, conflict management and organisational dynamics (Rottenburg, 1996: 192-197; Merry, 2006: 39; Rottenburg, Behrends and Park, 2014: 24). The strength of ‘travelling models’ as an analytical concept for migration therefore lies in its ability to recognise that changes constantly occur in the process of an idea being transferred from one place to the other. It highlights the ongoing changes that take place through interactions and negotiations between actors in the migration process. These negotiations are in relation to the different rationalities of actors as an idea is translated from one place to the other and over time gets picked up.

Secondly, the model helps to analyse socio-cultural changes across the globe. By being able to critically examine how ideas are translated and become established, it facilitates the analysis of historical events and how they relate to present happenings and situations between places. The concept has the ability to bring into perspective how migration as a travelling idea, and certain socio-cultural practices and values, has over time been translated by various actors. It also brings into focus how the phenomenon is perceived, interpreted and valued as well as influences the social setting of the area.

In the case of northern Ghana, migration of people to the south of the country can be said to have undergone some *vernacularization* due to how actors have interpreted and translated the phenomenon as a travelling idea in the area over the years. More importantly, the phenomenon has also undergone what Merry (2006: 39) will refer to as *indigenisation* with time to fit the socio-cultural setting and expectations of people and as such the persistent exodus of people. The concept of ‘travelling models’ will therefore provide analytical or theoretical insights into how migration as a travelling idea has apart from the changes it has brought to rural communities been reterritorialized and picked up to become an integral part of the social lives of people.

On the other hand, the concept of ‘cultures of migration’ is considered because it provides the basis for analysis into the changing societal valuation, perception and understanding of the migration process within the context of environmental change and risks in northern Ghana. The concept gives theoretical insights into the changing cultural meanings, perceptions, and conflicting negotiations in the migration process that serve to perpetuate the phenomenon in the area. Migration as discursive space of negotiations in the study area will also bring into focus how migrants as actors in the migration process contribute to socio-cultural transformation and development.

Taking into consideration the various theoretical perspectives, migration dynamics in the study area can be diagrammatically represented in a conceptual framework (Fig 2.2). The phenomenon in northern Ghana is envisioned as being influenced by a multiplicity of complex interrelated factors operating at different scales. These include complex political, economic, environmental and socio-cultural factors. In order not to propagate the much more simplistic assumptions of ‘push-pull’ factors, the conceptual framework recognises the complexity of migration. The framework, therefore, highlights how the different factors or actors at the various scales or levels: from the global to the local level as well as basic conditions within the household and community setup, act in tandem to influence migration in the study area. The framework as presented below may not reflect migration dynamics in other rural areas of the world, but it sufficiently captures the migration process as it evolves in northern Ghana.

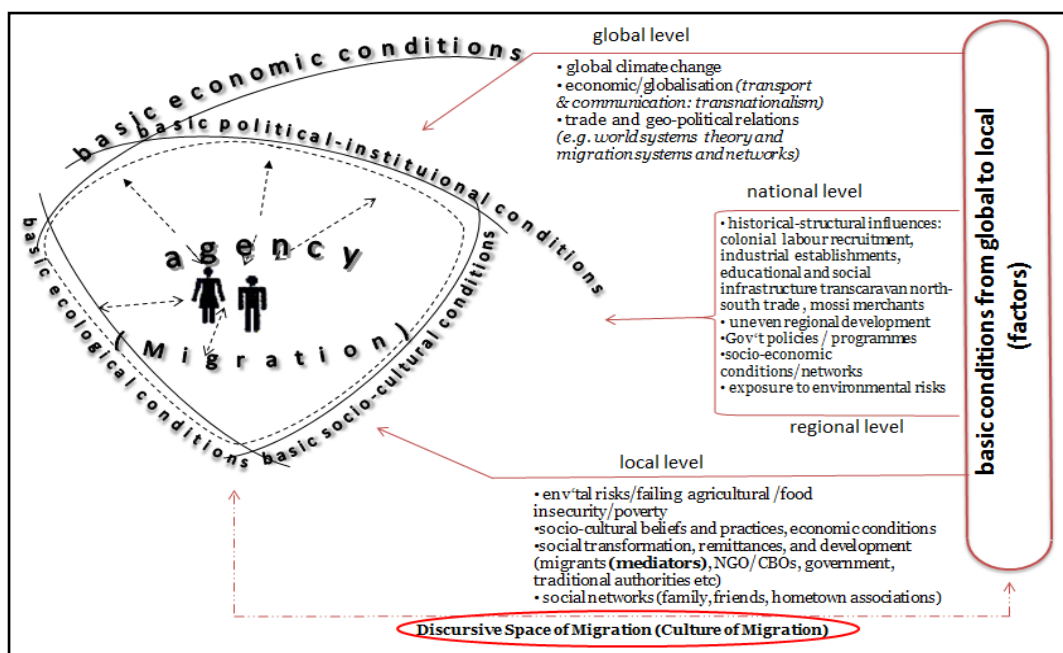


Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework Explaining Migration Dynamics in Northern Ghana
Source: Adapted from Rauch (2003: 42)

The conceptual framework illustrates the interactions at the various levels that contribute to influencing the migration of people at the household or community level. It is envisaged that forces at the global, national/regional and local levels act together to influence the migration of people in the area. These forces may negatively or positively alter the basic conditions (ecological, political-institutional, economic and socio-cultural) at the household or community level. Taking into cognisance the agency that people possess, the changes in the basic conditions may necessitate different responses of which migration is of significance for the purposes of this research.

For the study area, it is envisaged that the migration of people has been ongoing for a long time. Within the context of environmental change, however, the research seeks to bring to light the historical-structural and socio-cultural forces that seem to dictate and perpetuate population movements in the study area. These convictions have thus informed the choice of the concepts of ‘cultures of migration’ and ‘travelling models’ for the analysis of the research findings. Hence of particular importance in relation to the framework is the discursive space of migration. This highlights the discursive negotiations and contestations ongoing between various actors or mediators within the interstitial space of the migration process. A much more detailed elaboration of how the forces or actors at the different scales interact to influence migration in the study area is highlighted in chapter four (section 4.6).

In view of the theoretical concepts chosen to help analyse migration dynamics, the research adopted an ethnographic approach to collect qualitative data. This was complemented by household surveys to collect quantitative data in the study area. The methodological approach and the methods of data collection are discussed in the following chapter three.

Chapter Three

Research Approach and Methodology

3.1 Research Context and Design

This research is embedded in the large scale West African Science Service Center on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL) interdisciplinary research project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). As part of the project therefore, the research objectives have in part informed the design and methodological approach of this research. A brief introduction of the WASCAL project and the research design and approach are discussed in the following sections below.

3.1.1 The WASCAL Project

The focus of the WASCAL research project spans across the West African Sahel region with ten partner countries – namely: Burkina Faso, Benin, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. Climatic change and variability, and environmental deterioration in West Africa have been major issues of concern in the region. Particularly, the effects of rainfall variability, flood, droughts and other extreme events have threatened livelihoods and food security in the region (Hulme, 2001: 23-24; Brown, Hintermann and Higgins, 2009: 8018). Hence, the project's main aim is basically to develop effective adaptation and mitigation strategies aimed at dealing with climate change challenges that confront the West African region. That is, to help improve the resilience of human populations and environmental systems to the effects of climate change and variability.⁴

The project as part of its core research programme has six research clusters: climate and weather, landscape dynamics, agricultural systems, markets and livelihoods, risk management and integrated assessment. This present research is part of the population dynamics working package (WP. 4.1), which is under the markets, and livelihoods research cluster of WASCAL. The working package examines the complex interrelationship between demography and human mobility, land use and climate variability. It seeks to analyse an integrated household decision-making in relation to the human mobility, land use and climate variability nexus (WASCAL, 2010: 192). Three field sites or watersheds were therefore identified in the first phase of the project for research work (Bongo/Vea-Ghana, Dano-Burkina Faso and Dassari-Benin). This research is situated in the Bongo/Vea watershed in the north-eastern part of Ghana.

⁴<https://icg4wascal.icg.kfa-juelich.de/> accessed 12.11.2014

3.1.2 Research Design

In social science research the theoretical framework normally also shape the orientation of the research (Mertens, 2005: 2). That is to say, a research paradigm often informs what is under investigation, why and how to investigate the social phenomenon or problem (Porta and Keating, 2008: 19). This epistemological stance often underlies the whole research process and methodological approach. In this vein, no research is conducted in a vacuum or without a philosophical underpinning (Kitchin and Tate, 2013: 4-6). However, the enterprise of research and choice of methods is a very dicey adventure. Indeed, scholarship has witnessed the evolution of different philosophies of science in the attempt to develop an ideal way of doing scientific research (Porta and Keating, 2008: 32). Generally, three major philosophies of science or paradigms have informed research: positivism (post-positivism), social constructionism and critical realism (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009: 15-49).

The theoretical underpinning of positivism in brief is that, reality or facts exist or are out there. It is the task of researchers to gather and systematise these facts. For positivists, social phenomena can be studied like the natural sciences and as such reality can be known through observation and measurement (O'Leary, 2004: 5; Mertens, 2005: 8). However, post-positivists have been critical and therefore reject the idea of an objective reality out there. For them, the world is not only ambiguous but there are multiple realities. Post-positivists believe that research is influenced by different theories aside from the fact that researchers by themselves cannot be absolved of bias (Cook and Campbell, 1979: 24). In this light, research or observation is subject to errors and as such often open to revision. There is thus the need to adopt triangulation of methods to appreciate reality or objectivity. Triangulation originally drawn from surveying basically entails relying on different methodological approaches and data to gain better understanding of a research problem from different perspectives (Flick, 2008: 178-182).

In line with post-positivists convictions, social constructionists believe that all reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 37). Hence research is to examine how these social constructions evolve (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009: 15). Despite its popularity, social constructionism has not gone unscathed. One of the many criticisms borders on its denial of objective reality and the seeming subscription to relativism. In this regard, it is criticised that research findings cannot readily be absolved of bias. Another criticism lies in the usage of the 'construction' metaphor. The usage of 'construction' presupposes that social constructions are planned activities. It gives an indication that reality or natural phenomenon

is not, as it were, social but carefully planned and controlled. This however defeats social constructionism's own argumentation that reality is socially constructed through human interactions. In the light of the criticisms, critical realism came to the limelight. Critical realism criticises both positivism and social constructionism of not being able to find truth or reality. Inspired mostly by writings of Roy Bhaskar, critical realism stresses that there is absolute reality independent of human beings and also "there are deep structures in this world that can be represented by scientific theories" (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009: 16).

Consequently, critical realists propose a shift from epistemology to ontology with an emphasis on the underlying factors or mechanisms that produce observable phenomena. The concern of critical realists is mainly "investigating the underlying mechanisms and structures of social relations and with identifying the building blocks of reality" (Kitchin and Tate, 2013: 15). The notion of reality on the part of critical realists consists of the domains of the actual, which is independent of the researcher, empirical (observable) and the real. The task of science therefore is to "explore the realm of the real and how it relates to the other two domains" (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009: 40). What is thus of concern to critical realists is to "investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience, what actually happens and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world" (Danermark *et al.*, 2002: 21). Like the other research paradigms, critical realism also has shortcomings.

The notions of objective reality as advanced by critical realism has been criticised as being exaggerated and not modest. The belief that by finding objective reality it can direct what research method to use and outcome to expect is a "naïve conception, and to see the researcher as having privileged access to the object, seems pretentious" (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009: 45) This is in light of the fact that there are in general, multiple realities. Hence, different researchers have different appreciation of phenomena and so will have different views or ideas regarding what constitutes an object and the underlying dynamic events that may produce such phenomena or objects. Secondly, the paradigm's convictions on structure and mechanism are fuzzy. The view of structure being a collection of internally related objects is not sufficient. It is explained that a closer and broader approach to the internally related objects that make up the structure will give a better view of the varying and ambiguous picture of the world.

Furthermore, the concept of mechanism as proposed by critical realism is problematic. There are different life situations or mechanisms that determine the force of objects. So describing social phenomena in similarity to perspectives from physics is simplistic. This is because, unlike the natural science, social science is more of an open system. As such, forces and mechanisms may not well be applicable in for example, understanding complex social relations (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009: 48). Despite the criticisms, critical realism has been an important response to the shortfalls of positivism and social constructionism. It has challenged researchers to transcend the mere appreciation of the empirical to a deeper examination and theoretical analysis of objects or research phenomena.

Having briefly discussed the various scientific paradigms to research, the approach of this research is highlighted in the next section. The reasons, which have informed the choice of the approach, are also justified.

3.2 Research Approach

Informed by the different perspectives and debates on migration, environmental change and development, this research is framed by social constructivist perspectives on understanding reality or social phenomena from the viewpoint of people. Over the years, there have been divergent views on the nature of population movements and the relationship with climate and environmental change in Africa. However, a broader look at human mobility in Africa depicts a picture of migration being more of a normal social phenomenon and hence part of the African reality (De Bruijn, Van Dijk and Foeken, 2001: 1). Moreover, recent studies have questioned the role of environmental change as a direct cause of population displacement across the globe (Black, 2001: 6; Castles, 2002: 5).

The ensuing debates have prompted calls to look at environmental change and migration within the socio-cultural and political contexts of places of origin (Klute and Hahn, 2007: 16; Doevenspeck, 2011: e52). Considering that changing local valuations of social phenomenon influences migration and varying everyday life strategies, Cohen (2004: 26) stresses the need for a phenomenological understanding of migration from the perspectives of migrants themselves and their places of origin. From these perspectives, interpretivist-social constructivist approaches to research will therefore provide a good platform to understand migration patterns in the study area of Bongo.

The research draws on qualitative methodological approach in order to bring to light phenomenological perspectives of the underlying factors dictating migration patterns within the context of environmental risks in northern Ghana. Nonetheless, quantitative data is also collected to give the qualitative data collected a statistical outlook. The main methodological approach and reasons for its choice are elaborated in the following section.

3.3 Research Methodology and Justification

Methodology may be defined as the process by which information or knowledge about the object or problem being investigated is collected. This is normally shaped by the theoretical framework in which the whole research is situated (Walter, 2006, cited in Makenzie and Knipe, 2006: 196). As earlier noted, the choice of a research method to a greater extent often depends on its ability to generate or tease out the information being sought in contrast to its convenience to the researcher. Despite the scathing criticisms of social constructionism, its associated methodological crony of qualitative research seems attractive and mostly used in this research.

This present research sought basically to examine and analyse the perceptions and views of people on migration, environmental change, development and societal transformation in northern Ghana. In cognisance of this motive, qualitative methodological approaches thus seemed appropriate and were considered for this research. This is in the view that qualitative research often goes beyond the numbers to dig deep into the perspectives or views of people about a particular problem or social phenomena and hence its appeal. According to Flick, Von Kardoff and Steinke (2008: 3), qualitative research claims to “describe life-worlds ‘from inside out’, from the point of view of the people who participate. By so doing it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features.”

Normally, the naturalistic approach of qualitative research to inquiry affords the researcher the opportunity to study social construction of reality or the “how and why” of a social action in its natural setting (Bray, 2008: 300-301). In this regard, its findings are normally interesting and much more revealing as compared to quantitative statistical findings. Apart from being more concerned with the deeper meanings of social action, qualitative research recognises that human behaviour is unpredictable and subjective. Its approach thus grants researchers the flexibility to modify, when the need be, in order to adequately capture the views, perceptions and emotions of research subjects (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 8).

But a problem often associated with qualitative research is the stressful and laborious analysis of data. Secondly, it is criticised as falling short when it comes to reliability and the generalisability of findings (Morse *et al.*, 2002: 14). The arguments are that perceptions and personal influence of researchers may affect findings. Hence a research sanctioned on the same topic and area may be confronted with different findings and hence may not be reliable. Another criticism is that the samples that qualitative research often relies upon are mostly small and may not really present a good reflection of the larger population. However as a methodological approach, qualitative research is open to different methods of data collection. Indeed, Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 6) point out that qualitative research does not necessarily favour any methodological practice over another.

The appeal of qualitative research, according to Flick, Von Kardoff and Steinke (2008: 5), stems from the fact that it is “more open and thereby ‘more involved’ than other research strategies that work with large quantities and strictly standardised, and therefore more objective methods and normative concepts.” Taking into account the research questions and theoretical orientation of this research, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative statistical data collection methods were however employed to gain deeper and varied insights into the issue of migration and environmental change in the study area.

The motivation for the mix was informed by convictions that qualitative and quantitative data affords the researcher a comprehensive appreciation of the problem under investigation from both a micro and macro perspective (Bray, 2008: 299). Moreover, Iosifides (2011: 33) has drawn attention to the limitations of studies on migration decision-making in focusing solely on the individual. Iosifides emphasises that the calls for better understanding of migration through the subjective individual conception of the phenomenon, intersubjective meanings, shared norms and socio-cultural factors can better be studied through qualitative methods like in-depth interviews and participant observation (2011: 33). Although Iosifides bemoans the inevitable challenges that may emerge through the combination of the different theoretical positions of positivism and interpretivism/constructionism, he suggested critical methodological pluralism: where it is “perfectly possible and more than desirable to combine quantitative and qualitative methods” (Iosifides, 2011: 128).

Complementary quantitative data were therefore collected during the research to mainly augment and give a statistical outlook to the qualitative data collected. In addition, secondary data from published works, statistics or complementary quantitative data from relevant

government agencies/institutions, NGOs and online sources were also accessed and utilised in the analysis of research findings. In order to collect the data therefore, several methods were engaged during the research process. These methods of data collection are elaborated below.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

The research relied on both primary and secondary data. With the resolve to delve into the issue of people's perceptions and opinions of climate-environmental change and migration nexus in northern Ghana, the field research involved the triangulation of methods. Data was thus collected through in-depth, oral/life histories and focus group interviews, household survey and participant observation. Secondary data mainly from published works, government institutions and non-governmental organisations were also collected during the fieldwork.

3.4.1 In-depth Interviews and Oral/Life Histories

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 2) define interview as “an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest.” Interviews may come in a variety of forms such as through mail administered, telephone, one on one or group exchanges (Fontana and Frey, 2000: 645; Madden, 2010: 67). A main advantage of interviewing is that it gives “voice to common people, allowing them to freely present their life situations in their own words, and open for a close personal interaction between the researchers and their subjects” (Kvale, 2006: 481). Interviews also grant researchers the flexibility to dig deep into the issues under discussion or the nature of the situation during the research process (Bray, 2008: 309-311). Aside from the flexibility, the interviews allowed for a thorough insight and grasp of migration, climate variability, agricultural livelihoods and societal transformation from the viewpoint of the people in the study area.

As part of the research therefore, both migrant and non-migrant households and in-migrants were interviewed through the use of an interview guide. The interview guide served as good reference to make sure that areas of interest of the research were fully covered during the interview process. For the research, household heads and members with or without migration experience were interviewed to elicit information ranging from: motivations for outmigration or in-migration, their perceptions about climate and environmental change impacts on agriculture as well as effects of both outmigration and in-migration on the household and socio-demographic transformation in the study area. In addition, other relevant stakeholders

in the community like *kanbonabas*⁵, *tendaamba*, *mangazias*⁶, assemblymen and women⁷, farmers; officials of government agencies and NGOs in the district were also interviewed to solicit their views on the subject. Because of my limited understanding of the local language of Gurune or Frafra, a research assistant/translator was recruited to assist during the research.

The interviews were in the form of open-ended and semi-structured interviews. Although semi-structured interviews often set some order or limits for questioning or discussion, informants normally enjoy some freedom to delve more into the issue under discussion. In contrast, open-ended interviews ensure complete flexibility or freedom for the informant to express the feelings of what is relevant about an issue. The open-ended questions, according to Madden (2010: 70), are “ways to subtly steer an interview; they allow for expansion and clarification.” Informants in this type of interview are not consigned to predefined answers (Bray, 2008: 310). In general there were five interview guides (see appendix). These guides were basically for in-migrants, ‘experts’ (government officials and public servants), life histories, household heads and members. Although the interview guides targeted different sections of the population, the questions or topics of discussion did not deviate much from each other.

Oral/life histories were also used to collect information on mostly the patterns of out/in-migration, rainfall patterns and agricultural productivity over time in the study area. By oral history, unwritten past events that might have influenced livelihoods, migration and socio-cultural change aside from environmental change were collected to check and compare with existing published works on the subject matter. The life history approach provided the opportunity to collect people’s biographies, age at first marriage, marriage relations, responsibilities under migration, experiences, perceptions and views on climatic change (rainfall variability) and agricultural production in the area. The exercise entailed sourcing information from elderly people, and both returned migrants and non-migrants.

A shortcoming of in-depth interviews is that it is more subjective. It is criticised as relying more on the personal views of informants and as such its objectivity is suspect. Furthermore, the analysis of qualitative data is not only sometimes ambiguous but difficult and confusing (Fontana and Frey, 2000: 661). This situation is bemoaned to sometimes create the room for

⁵ Sub-chiefs or sectional heads that often help the paramount chief to rule the various sections under the chiefdom.

⁶ Leaders of local women’s groups.

⁷ These are people often elected to represent their electoral areas at district assembly meetings.

bias. Notwithstanding these shortfalls, its use as a method of data collection through the one-on-one situation provided the opportunity to probe in detail and for people in the study area to open up. The flexibility allowed for more probing into topics under investigation and as such more valuable insights were provided to enhance the quality of the research.

3.4.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation is defined as “going out and staying out, learning a new language, and experiencing the lives of the people you are studying as much as you can” (Bernard, 2002: 324). It is essentially an ethnographic enterprise that entails immersing yourself in the community you are studying and striking rapport with the people so as to get a good appreciation and grasp of the issues being investigated (Tedlock, 2000: 465; Madden, 2010: 77). In line with this, my stay within the Bolgatanga area granted me better access to informants. This sort of immersion is what Madden (2010: 79-80) will term as ‘step-in-out’ ethnography where the researcher gets to be in the study area the whole day but sleep in a different or the nearby town. By being always almost present in the communities, it created the platform to be able to participate in social events like funerals, traditional durbars (Azambeni Festival), marriage ceremonies, and community and governmental departmental meetings.⁸

By engaging in informal conversations and discussions, especially with migrants who had just freshly returned from the south of the country, I was able to gain insights into some pertinent issues regarding topics of my research. It is however important to state that much of the observation was mainly a covert exercise without the knowledge of people that I was studying them. Normally, there are concerns about the ethical implications of these covert observations. In particular the idea of ‘gaze’, according to Foucault (1979, cited in Madden, 2010: 97), relates to coercive power and politics.

As a researcher my ‘ethnographic gaze’ on happenings during my field research is in a way marked with power, politics and history and may lead me to selective observation or not adequately and objectively representing happenings in the field (Madden, 2010: 97). Nonetheless, the effort was normally made to establish a good rapport with the informant(s) and to be careful as to the kind of information to record or report. Moreover, information from the observation was mostly complementary to the data collected from the in-depth and

⁸ I had the privilege of attending one of the weekly meetings of the agric extension officers at the district office of Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and some circuit supervisors at the district office of Ghana Education Service (GES), Bongo.

focus group interviews and hence minimising the bias that may be associated with the observations.

3.4.3 Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were also used to gather information from four different groups and sections of the target population in the study area. In all, target groups of separate females, males, and females and males of all ages in different communities plus students at the Bongo Secondary School were interviewed (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Focus Group Discussion

Session	Composition	No of Persons	Location
1	Males & Females	12 (8 males, 4 females)	Gowrie
2	Males	10	Adaboya
3	Females	6	Bongo Soe
4	Students	24 (12 males, 12 females)	BONSEC

Source: Field Work (2012/2013)

The groups were formed this way in order to cater for the sensitivity of the issues that were under discussion like migration decision-making, socio-cultural practices and reproductive behaviour among others. In this way, people had the freedom to express their different opinions, perceptions and experiences on the research topic. Generally, the focus group interviews drew people from different backgrounds in the Adaboya, Bongo-Soe, and Gowrie communities, and Bongo Senior High School (BONSEC) to solicit diverse views on motivations underlying outmigration/in-migration decisions at the household level.



Figure 3.1: Male Focus Group Interview (Adaboya)

Source: Author's Own Photo (2012/2013)

Although there were certain times of the interviews when some members were more vocal and domineering in the discussions, conscious efforts were made but in subtle way to allow all members with different opinions to feel free to say them. It was thus interesting to witness the divergent opinions and debates during the interview sessions. This was especially the case with the male focus group interview in the Adaboya community (Fig 3.1) where the male participants were very open about agricultural productivity, marital infidelity and stability within the contexts of environmental change and migration respectively.

3.4.4 Survey

As part of the research, a household survey was also conducted in randomly selected communities within the Bongo Township Council where the in-depth interviews did not cover. The Ghana Statistical Service defines a household as “a person or group of persons, who live together in the same house or compound and share the same catering arrangements” (GSS, 2010: xxiii). In line with this definition, members of a household may not necessarily be related by blood. As part of the survey, questionnaires of mainly close-ended questions were administered to 120 households. The household survey basically solicited background information from household members who were not necessarily blood relations but were living together. The information collected included but not limited to household size, migration experience and duration of stay, age at first marriage, and number of children among other issues of interest for the research. The form of collecting the data was through face-to-face interviews. Two male research assistants who hail from the study area, and are also professionally trained teachers with experience in research administered the questionnaires. Like with other methods of data collection, the household survey also faced challenges during the period of the research.

A major challenge was the issue of accessibility in the study area. As a rural area and with much of the data collection done in the rainy and farming season, it was difficult to access some communities and houses (this will be discussed extensively in the limitations section). Secondly, respondents were sometimes away on their farms in the bush. So it was difficult to collect information considering the time frame of the research as interviews were sometimes postponed or cancelled. This sometimes led to what Bernard (2002: 243) refers to as ‘sampling by convenient replacement technique’ where a house or person was selected as a stand-in for the interview in case the interviewee was unavailable. Despite the challenges encountered, the face-to-face interviews were crucial to the data collection in that most of the

respondents were uneducated. The data collected from the survey has provided further statistical insights to the qualitative data collected on the various issues.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Research Process

The focus of the research was primarily on rural farm households. However, it was practically impossible to interview all household units in the study area. In this regard, households were carefully sampled for the interviews and survey. The main sampling techniques that were adopted for the interviews were purposive and snowball sampling methods. Bernard (2002: 182) explains that with purposive sampling “you decide the purpose you want informants or communities to serve, and you go out to find some.” The purposive sampling was thus of immense help in selecting people and households for interviews. In the case of the snowball sampling, a household that was purposively selected for interviewing was asked to suggest another informant or household for interviewing. Since the research sought to delve into issues related to migration and climate variability, migrant households were therefore central to the research. But non-migrant households with varying socio-economic and demographic characteristics were also considered during the sampling process.

The data collection started with a preliminary visit to the study area of Bongo in the wet farming season of July 2012. The reconnaissance visit created the opportunity to reconnect with some friends and classmates who were either from the area or now working there. An old classmate from the area eventually became my research assistant. The research assistant coming from the area had good knowledge of the communities and terrain. He eventually became the ‘gatekeeper’ through whom I was able to efficiently enter the communities for my research (Wolff, 2008: 199).

Through the preliminary interaction with people in the Bongo Township, it was disclosed that the people from the Bongo-Balungu and Bongo-Soe communities were mostly known for out-migrating to southern Ghana. So my initial intent was to use Bongo-Balungu as a starting point as it was nearer in distance to Bongo town than Bongo-Soe. However, it was difficult and risky to move on the main road through Gorogo, Balungu to Namoo. This was because the rains had made the untarred road very muddy and slippery to ply on a motorbike. As a result, the interviews were started in the Gowrie community, which is very close in distance to the Veia Irrigation Dam. So as part of the research, a house was purposively identified or selected.

The purpose of the research was readily communicated and explained to the head of the house after the formal traditional exchanges and greetings. By being able to interview a head or member of the household, I was able to strike a rapport and through my interactions gained the trust of members of the Gowrie community. Other households of relevance to the research were subsequently suggested through ‘snowballing’ for further interviews. Importantly, entering a community with a pen and recorder as a stranger and to be able to access information considered as private will need some level of trust. Hence, employing these sampling techniques and with the help of my research assistant who was well known in the area created the platform for me to be able to conduct my research.

For the household survey, systematic random sampling was used. With this type of sampling, a sampling frame consisting of a list of all houses and names of members within the Bongo Township, Soe, Namoo and Balungu Area Councils was obtained from the district office of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Bongo. This list of farmers was compiled mainly for agricultural extension purposes in these areas. While the various lists were admittedly not very comprehensive, a sample interval of every fifth house on the list for the various area councils chosen was selected for interviews. For a house that was chosen, a household head was selected for interviews. But in the many instances that the household head was male, an effort was made to select at least a female member in order to capture a more balanced gender perspective on the issues under investigation.

3.6 Characteristics of the Informants

For the duration of the research, 57 in-depth interviews including life histories and expert interviews, 4 focus group interviews and a survey of 120 households were conducted. The Table 3.2 below is a summary of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the informants for the qualitative interviews. The 57 interviews were mainly made up of three expert interviews, three life histories and the rest consisted of in-depth interviews of persons with or without migration experience as well as in-migrants who were living in the study area.

Table 3.2: Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Informants (In-depth/Life Histories and Expert Interviews)

Sex	Male	Female	Total								
Freq	40	17	57								
Marital Status	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Total						
Freq	13	28		3	44						
Education	SHS/O'Level	JHS/Middle	Primary	Tertiary	No Education	Total					
Freq	11	10	12	6	18	57					
Occupation	Farmer	Trader	Tailor	Bar Operator	Student	Other*	Total				
Freq	25	6	1	4	12	9	57				
Age	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-59	60-64	65+	Total
Freq	3	4	9	13	8	6	2	5	3	4	57

*Other - Pharmacists, teachers, nurse, civil servants, photographer, pensioner etc.

Source: Field Interviews (2012/2013)

The majority of informants interviewed were within the ages 20 and 59 years and with the many of them being male informants. This was partly due to the fact that as a patriarchal society, males are by custom the household heads and the persons allowed to talk on behalf of the family. Although this was sometimes the case, female household heads or members were also interviewed to give a more balanced but different opinions to the issues under investigation. It can also be observed that many of the informants in the area had little or no education. Expectedly, people were mostly engaged in agriculture and small scale informal economic activities. A small number of the informants reported as working in the formal public sector as teachers, nurses and other civil servants. The socio-economic characteristics of the household survey (Table 3.3), on the other hand, did not also deviate much from that of the qualitative interviews.

Table 3.3: Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of Household Survey Respondents

Sex	Male	Female	Total								
Freq	81	39	120								
Age	19-35	36-50	51-60	61-89	Total						
Freq	37	40	24	19	120						
Marital Status	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Consensual Union	Total					
Freq	13	80	1	24	2	120					
Education	SHS/O'Level	JHS/Middle	Primary	Tertiary	No Education	Total					
Freq	10	21	9	16	63	120					
Occupation	Farmer	Trader	Student	Unemployed	Civil Servant	Others*	Total				
Freq	49	16	5	15	24	11	120				

Other* - artisan, apprenticeship, retired / pensioner etc

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

From Table 3.3 it can be seen that the majority of the respondents in the household survey were males and the occupation of respondents being farming. In similarity with the educational levels of the informants as recorded in the interviews, many of the survey respondents had little or no education. The situation of lower levels of education in the study area has to do with relatively lower levels of development and poverty in the area, and hence lack of educational infrastructure. Although the area has witnessed some level of improvement in educational infrastructure and an increase in enrolment, levels of educational attainment are still low (DISCAP, 2005: 11-13). In contrast to the interviews, the household survey had a fair representation in the various age groups. The systematic random sampling that was employed, to some extent, ensured this age balance. Although the intent was always to interview household heads that were mostly males, there was a conscious effort to also include households that were headed by females by their names or at least a female member in many cases.

3.7 Bias, Reliability and Validity

Social science research cannot entirely be absolved of bias in the research process. With the research influenced largely by social constructivists' perspectives, the tendency for the researcher to have a personal influence on the findings of the research cannot be dismissed. Research bias may emanate from the start of the planning of the research, interviewing and sampling process. Also, the filtering of information by the research assistant during the interpretation and translation process can lead to bias.

A challenge to the rigor of qualitative research has always centred on the issues of reliability and validity. Reliability borders on "whether or not you get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once" (Bernard, 2002: 50). Validity on the other hand seeks to dwell on how truthful, trustworthy or accurate research findings represent or reflect what it seeks to measure. Qualitative research has often been accused of lacking the rigor and certainty associated with the numbers of quantitative research (Morse *et al.*, 2002: 14). Consequently, Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Lincoln, 1995: 277) proposed four criteria to ensure rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research. These criteria are credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability. In Lincoln and Guba's criteria they proposed, 'credibility' has to do with the truthful and original representation of the lived experiences of people, which is a reflection of validity as in quantitative research. 'Transferability' on the other hand refers to how the research is applicable to other

circumstances outside of the situation under study, which will relate to generalizability in quantitative research.

‘Dependability’ relates to how consistent a study is or devoid of personal ideas and perception from the researcher in the interpretation of the data through participants and outsiders reviewing the work in what is termed ‘member checks’ (Seale, 1999: 468; Janesick, 2000: 393). ‘Confirmability’ dwells on the objectivity and neutrality of the study. It deals with bias and personal interests that may have influenced the interpretation and analysis of the study data. Seale (1999: 468) however discloses, in cognisance of social constructivists’ or relativists’ convictions of multiple construction of reality, that ‘authenticity’ have been added to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research. ‘Authenticity’ is manifested “if researchers can show that they have represented a range of different realities (‘fairness’)” (Seale, 1999: 468). Taking into account that there are multiple realities and hence different opinions and perceptions of the issues under study, a conscious effort was made to capture informants from different sections of the population.

Hence, informants across the age, sex and different social backgrounds from the different communities of the study area were included in order to grasp the different perspectives of the issues being investigated. Although it is acknowledged that the sample population is small and may raise issues about representativeness of the population of the study area, the complementary methods used allowed for diverse and in-depth approach to the issues under study. Despite complaints that triangulation does not allow for a thorough attention to the theoretical basis of the different methods usually referred to as ‘extreme eclecticism’ (Flick, 2008: 179), the in-depth/focus group interviews and observation allowed for a better appreciation of the subject matter from different standpoints (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 126-127).

In addition, a critical reflexivity during the research to ascertain the level of subjective influence and to revise appropriately was constantly done to consolidate the credibility of the research findings. In addition ‘member checks’ as recommended to ensure validity by Creswell and Miller (2000: 127), were done constantly during the fieldwork as well as during the process of interpreting and writing up the findings. This was done through phone contacts that I still have with some of the informants and my research assistant who lives in the study area. In spite of the seeming limitations and biases that may have influenced the research, it is believed that the measures that were taken in the light of the challenges enumerated have to a

greater extent ensured the dependability, confirmability and indeed the credibility of the findings as emphasised by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Related to the issue of research bias are also power relations, positionality of the researcher and critical reflexivity. These issues as they panned out during the data collection and analysis are discussed below.

3.8 Power Relations, Positionality and Critical Reflexivity

Scientific research also often translates into issues of power. The positionality of the researcher and the culminating effect this may have for the outcome of the research normally calls for a critical reflexivity in the research process. These various concerns in the research process are examined in the sections below.

3.8.1 Power Relations

Embedded in social science research are also issues of power. Power is manifested during the research process, analysis, and interpretation and reporting of the findings. The issue of power is particularly evident in the interviewing process. This is in view of the fact that qualitative research interviews involve a hierarchical and exploitative power relationship where the researcher controls and does the interrogation. The manner in which research subjects' views are interpreted and a researcher's subjective perceptions of subjects all translate into some form of power. In social science research three types of power relations can be discerned. These power relations as identified by England (1994: 82) are reciprocal, asymmetrical and potentially exploitative relationships.

With the reciprocal relationship, there is always some form of mutual respect and reciprocal benefits for both the researcher and the researched. The researcher in this type of relationship acknowledges the depth of knowledge of the subject and assumes a learning position. The asymmetrical power relationship, on the other hand, grants the subject an influential position. This is in contrast to the potentially exploitative relationship where the researcher is in a position of power where he/she draws or exploits research subjects to gain knowledge. Kvale (2006: 484-485) spells out that the power asymmetry in qualitative interviews is often pervasive in that the researcher dictates the interview, and also the interview itself is an instrumental dialogue geared towards an end determined by the interviewer. The asymmetrical relationship is sometimes manipulative as interviewees are coaxed into giving out information and lastly, the interviewer often enjoys the sole monopoly of interpreting the findings.

Although Kvale acknowledges that the use of power in qualitative research to tap information or gather data is a legitimate and important way of conducting social science research, he concedes that “overlooking the complex power dynamics of the social construction process may, however, seriously impair the validity of the knowledge constructed” (2006: 485). England (1994: 85) argues that being conscious of power relations does not guarantee their removal. Therefore, as a ‘young’ educated researcher interviewing elders, persons of authority and persons of the same age range, situations of ‘asymmetrical’ and ‘potentially exploitative’ power relations were very evident during the field interviews. This is because, by designing the research and absolutely determining whom to interview and not, I was in a way wielding some form of power during the research process.

In as much as the issue of power was manifested in different ways throughout the research period, the effort was often made to diffuse that perception of exploitative power by introducing myself as one of them. Although my hailing from the study region may raise issues of ‘positionality’, the introduction as coming from the area often facilitated acceptance and the opening up of informants to divulge the much needed information for the research. Moreover, the attention of informants was always drawn to their freedom to opt out. An explanation of the purpose of the research and consent was also always sought before the conduct of an interview. This was always done in order to gain their trust and for them to open up and give insights into the issues under study.

3.8.2 Positionality

Normally also, a researcher’s positionality and biography can also affect the findings of the research. A researcher’s status in society, cultural beliefs, race, sex and personal history often influence the interpretation and appreciation of research findings (Lincoln, 1995: 280). This is because as researchers we are “differently positioned subjects with different biographies, we are not dematerialised, disembodied entities” (England, 1994: 85). It is thus sometimes very difficult to detach one’s subjectivity from the professional self. Recognising this challenge and taking the necessary steps at detaching yourself, albeit the difficulty is crucial to the success and credibility of the research.

Aside from my position as a young male researcher, my status in a patriarchal rural society such as in northern Ghana means that I wield enormous power. In this regard, the influence of my ‘position’ as a male having been socialised in a society such as this in the research process cannot be entirely denied. However, my awareness of the customs and traditions in a

way made me conscious of some of these issues that may emerge during the research. Consequently, extending courtesies and acknowledging authority as well as giving respect was a top priority during the research.



Figure 3.2: Field Interviews in Gowrie and Balungu (Bongo District)

Source: Author's Own Photos (2012/2013)

During the fieldwork therefore, courtesies such as the way in which I talk and showing respect during interviews to informants both old and young were strictly noted and adhered in order to gain their trust and open up to me. This sometimes involved sitting on the floor or interviewing informants on the farm so as to identify with them and to let them know that you are learning from them through the interview (see Fig 3.2). This awareness and measures taken to a greater extent facilitated the progress of the research.

3.8.3 Critical Reflexivity

Related to the issues of power and positionality in social science research is reflexivity. Taking into account that qualitative interviewing is inherently hierarchical and as such the researcher's position can influence the research, there is the need to constantly assess one's influence on the findings of the research. Critical reflexivity is thus very important in order to deal with the issues of power and positionality that may emerge during the research process. Reflexivity is conceived as a "self-critical, sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England, 1994: 82). In other words, reflexivity is a "conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself" (Lincoln and Guba, 2000: 183).

Critical reflexivity thus allows us to do a self-introspection of the possible socio-cultural beliefs and historical forces that may influence our interpretation of the research. To this end, a critical assessment of my own influence relative to my knowledge of the issues relating to migration, climate variability and agriculture as coming from the study region did not impede the research process. I tried as much as possible to detach myself by not letting my personal assumptions and beliefs predispose me into doing selective observation of the issues. Although there were instances where some of the accounts of people and their life situations looked sympathetic during the field work, I was able to guard myself not to be overwhelmed with personal feelings in order not to jeopardise the interview sessions and hence my interpretations and quality of the research.

3.9 Ethics of the Research

Qualitative research also raises ethical issues. Research ethics often borders around the manner in which it is carried out. Ethics during the research relates to the morals, responsibilities and obligations of the researcher such that the entire research process does not cause harm or cause any damage to the wellbeing of the subject under study (Punch, 2014: 36). Most researches often relegate the issue of morality to the background during the research process. However, the ethical issues during the research process are very important and indeed crucial for the trustworthiness and validity of the findings (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 59).

With the research dealing with the personal lives and issues of people and making them public, it is important to be circumspect so as not to cause damage to the research subjects. Stake (2000: 447) in looking at ethics maintains that qualitative research often has an “interest in personal views and circumstances. Those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing, employment, and self-esteem.” In line with maintaining moral principles during the research process, therefore, several measures have been recommended in recent times. These measures include informed consent (where subjects voluntarily consent to being part of the research based on adequate information made available to them), eschewing acts of deception, ensuring privacy and confidentiality by protecting the identities of subjects, and making accurate reports of research findings (Christians, 2000: 138-140).

Because the research was probing into sensitive issues at the household level, the effort was always made to clearly explain the purpose and objective of the study to the informants and their consent sought before the commencement of any interview (Bray, 2008: 313). Their awareness was always drawn to the fact that they had the liberty to withdraw or choose not to answer any question they deemed uncomfortable. In many cases, some of the informants were experiencing ‘researcher fatigue’. Many indicated that they had been interviewed many times by people conducting research in the area and yet did not see how beneficial the participation had been to them over the years. They were often made to believe that they were going to get some support for their agriculture.

In many of these instances, the aim and purpose of the research was often patiently explained to them. Normally, I make it crystal clear to them that I was not promising them any form of support. But I was rather coming to learn from them and through the publication of research findings it might bring to the public domain their challenges, which may attract some support. While assuring informants of their anonymity, their consent was always also sought before recording interviews. In cases where they refused to be recorded, an appeal was often made to allow for the writing or jotting down of important issues. These measures that were taken helped cater for the ethical aspect of the research.

3.10 Data Analysis

The interview data were basically collected through the use of digital audio recorders. Interviews were later transcribed and thoroughly edited. The transcripts and field notes were manually sorted and coded into themes for interpretation in the form of a matrix. For the sorting, the themes were identified and categorisation of the data done according to their relationship with the broad themes identified. The interpretation of the data was then done in relation to the objectives, theory and concepts of the study. Data analyses are done in relation to a host of existing theories on migration and development. However the main concepts of ‘cultures of migration’ and ‘travelling models’ have been used extensively to provide better and theoretical insights into migration in the study area.

The survey data were processed into Stata 12.0 for descriptive statistics in order to provide further statistical insights into the qualitative data collected. However, data were sometimes exported to excel to generate figures like histograms and pie charts to give a visual impression of data generated on a particular issue under investigation. The qualitative and quantitative data for the study are augmented and analysed in relation to secondary data in the

form of statistics and information from books, journals, online sources and articles. This is done to basically make meaning out of the findings by linking them to the theoretical framework of the study.

3.11 Limitations/Challenges of the Field Research

During the course of the research, several challenges were encountered. As earlier noted, a major problem during the research was accessibility to the communities. The poor road network had made some of the communities inaccessible. This was compounded by the rainy season which had cut off some of the communities that were located across big streams. The occasional heavy torrential rainfall sometimes cut off communities from road transport. Because of this problem, some of the communities that had been earmarked for interviews were sometimes substituted.

A related limitation to the issue of accessibility in the study area is the sample size of the research. The research basically aims to study migration and environmental change in northern Ghana and yet draws a small sample from the study area of Bongo District. This raises issues of transferability or the generalizability of the research. Additionally, it was relatively difficult to get informants to conduct interviews. As the research was conducted in the wet farming season, most people were very much engaged on their farms. So it was common for people to be working on the farm or far away on their bush farm plots and hence not available for interviews. As a result, many of the interviews were conducted on farm plots or sheds in the house when informants were either on a short break in the day or had finished with farm work in the evening. With most informants sometimes tired after work, interviews were sometimes postponed.

Another problem was researcher fatigue. Most of the informants expressed their frustration at being interviewed by many people without any support. Some farmers intimated that they were often promised some support but never heard from these persons again. These frustrations were justified in the sense that so much research have been done in the area with people often having the hope that some sort of support will be brought to them. In instances like this, being sincere and explaining the purpose of the research was important. There were circumstances where some few people in remote areas who were in dire situations but were not informants were given some help in the form of cash.

Although these limitations and challenges enumerated are not exhaustive, the quality of the research was not compromised. These challenges were duly noted in addition to my own issues of positionality and power relations that might have influenced the research, interpretation and analysis of the data. The critical reflexivity and ethical consideration were strictly observed during the course of the research and analysis stage which to a greater extent consolidated the quality and hence the validity of the research.

Having outlined the research methodology and tools employed in the research process, the next chapter focuses on the study area of Bongo District. The research is situated in this area because the WASCAL research site of the Vea Irrigation Dam watershed which is located there. Therefore, an overview of the study area in a broader perspective with highlights of the socio-economic and environmental conditions as well as the migration patterns and trends is necessary to put the research in context.

Chapter Four

The Study Area in Context

4.1 Geographic Location (site selection) and Background of the Bongo District

The research focuses on northern Ghana with a concentration on one of the research sites of the WASCAL project in the Upper East Region (UER). This PhD research is situated in the Veia Dam water catchment. The Veia watershed, which is drained by the Yarigatanga River, was developed as an irrigation project between 1965 and 1980. Covering an irrigable area of 468ha, the Veia dam is located in the Bongo District of the UER near Bolgatanga (DCPU, 2010: 6).

The Bongo District is one of the 13 districts of the UER of Ghana. With Bongo as its capital, the district was carved out of the then Bolgatanga District (Bolgatanga Municipal) as far back as 1988 during the implementation of the decentralisation programme in Ghana.⁹ It is located between longitudes 0.45°W and latitude 10.50°N to 11.09°N, and bordered to the North and East by the Republic of Burkina Faso, Bolgatanga Municipality to the South and the Kasena-Nankana West/East Districts to the East. The district lies within the oncho freed zone¹⁰ and covers a total land surface size of 459.5 km².

The district consists of Frafra, who are also known as Gurunsi, and the Bossi. The Gurunsi and Bossis together make up 94.2 percent of the population of the study area (DCPU, 2010: 16). The main languages spoken within this ethnic group include Frafra (Gurune), Nankam, Booni, Tallensi and Nabdam (Sow *et al.*, 2014: 379). Other ethnic groups like the Kasena, Balsa, Dagaati and Nankani have also settled in the area. Figure 4.1 is a map of the research area showing the Veia Dam water catchment and research sites, Bongo District in the UER of northern Ghana.

⁹Decentralisation of governmental structures followed the *Local Government Law* (PNDC Law 207) in 1988 which led to the devolution central governmental powers and structures to the district assembly and local levels to enhance democratic governance in Ghana.

¹⁰ Areas that have been eradicated of the Oncho black fly bites that causes river blindness and discomfort to both humans and animals

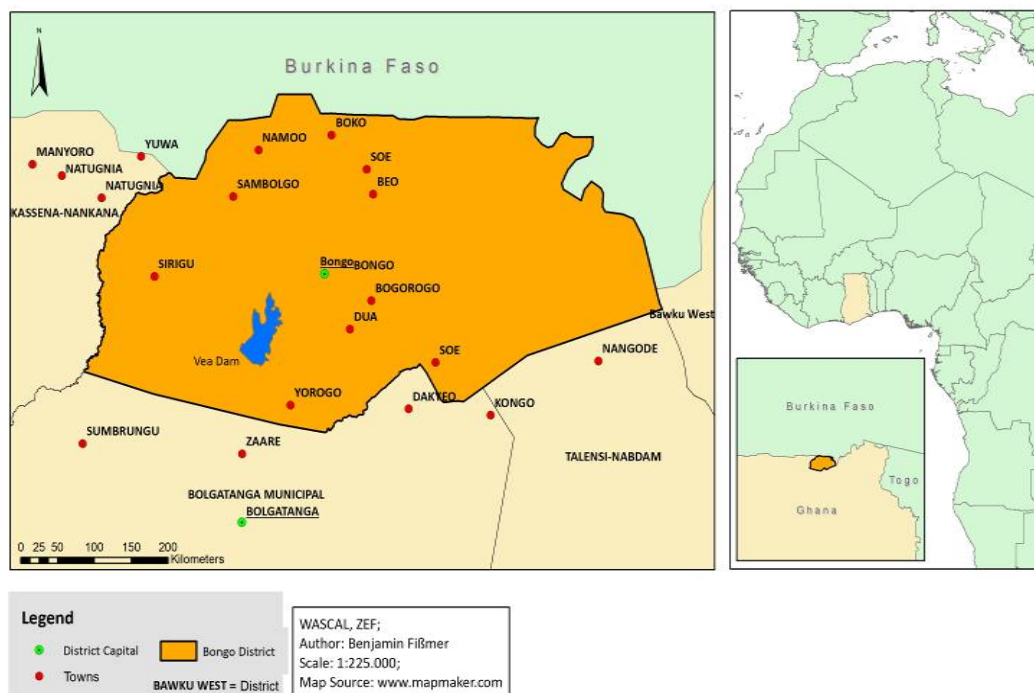


Figure 4.1: Map of Bongo District showing the research sites (UER)

The overview of the study area as part of this chapter is highlighted along the components of the DFID’s sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF). The chapter will thus proceed by looking at the exposure of the district in terms of the physical environmental, climate and ecology of the district in the first section. This will be followed by a thorough exploration of the asset or capital base (human, physical, financial, system of production and social capital) of the area in the second section. The third section looks at the transforming structures in terms of the traditional or indigenous social structures, governmental forces and physical infrastructure and how they influence socio-economic. The migration patterns in northern Ghana over time are discussed in the fourth section of the paper. Lastly, the link between the migration patterns and the conceptual framework (Fig 2.2) of the research as well as research questions are well elaborated in the fifth section. Going by this sequence, the chapter will thus commence with the area’s exposure to environmental risks below.

4.2 Exposure: The Physical Environment

The geographic location of the Bongo District has exposed the entire area to the semi-arid and harsh environmental conditions prevailing in the area. In spite of the influence of anthropogenic activities in exacerbating the current unfavourable physical-environmental conditions in the area, the climate has generally dictated socio-economic activities in area. Climatic and environmental changes have been perceived differently amongst the people in

the area. These changes are often perceived in terms of rainfall variability, coupled with the large diurnal temperature and land degradation that has characterised the area. But what is the climatic and ecological situation in the area? The following section explores the climatic and environmental situation in the Bongo District based on available information on the region.

4.2.1 Climate and Ecology

The Bongo District exhibits similar climatic and environmental characteristics like other areas in the UER and northern Ghana. In general, the Bongo area is characterised by a wet and dry season. The wet season is marked with rainfall activity that often starts from April/May to October. The dry season with very marginal rainfall, on the other hand, spans between November and April (Friesen, 2002: 24; Blench, 2006: 3). Average annual rainfall for the district is estimated to range between 600mm and 1400mm per annum with relative humidity ranging between 92 percent in the wet season to 15 percent in the dry season (Faulkner *et al.*, 2008: 153; DCPU, 2010: 7).

The Bongo area is drained by the Red Volta River and its tributaries: Kulumasa and Ayedema, Yarigatan-Atanure and Atankuidi. There are also several dams and smaller reservoirs found in the district amongst which the Vea Dam is the biggest (Liebe, Van de Giesen and Andreini, 2005). The potential of these dams as sources of water for irrigation farming is sometimes undermined. This is often due to the prolonged dry season that facilitates the drying up of the riverbeds and water sources on the one hand. On the other hand, dilapidated dam infrastructure like faulty pumps and damaged gutters lead to loss of water.

Geographically, the Bongo area falls within the semi-arid Savannah Ecological Zone with the southern fringes bounded by Guinea Savannah which grades into Sudan Savannah along the Gambaga escarpment towards the northern-most part of the region (Blench, 2006). The vegetation of the region is marked with drought resistant *parkia (dawadawa)*, kapok, shea, neem and *adonsonia digitata* (baobab) being the common tree species interspersed with grasses and shrubs. The continuous cultivation of land, overgrazing and related human activities, which are compounded by the semi-arid environment, have facilitated the degradation of the land through the loss of vegetative cover, severe erosion and loss of soil fertility (Brammoh and Vlek, 2005).

Land use and cover changes through bush burning for hunting and agricultural purposes, and the exploitation of woodland for charcoal and firewood has facilitated the loss of vegetative cover leading to open grassland in much of the Savannah areas of the region (Wardell *et al.*, 2003; Braimoh, 2006). In the Bongo District, for instance, the estimated percentage change in land area covered by forest was posited at 6.3% for the period of 1990-2000 (Codjoe, 2004). The few trees of economic value left in the Bongo area include *adonsonia digitata* (baobab), Shea and *dawadawa*. Many of the people in the district, particularly women, derive their livelihood from the Shea trees by picking the seeds for sale and the production of Shea butter and dawadawa for cooking. Apart from the nutritional values of these products, the sale of these products provides income for households.

4.2.2 Relief of the Area

The relief of the district is marked by low lying plains, with a few gently rolling outcrops of rocks, mainly of granitic and birimian type. The landscape in the area is generally rocky with stones and rock boulders scattered over fields (Fig 4.3). With the exception of a few outcrops of inselbergs that rise to a few meters above sea level, it is estimated that 40 percent of the land surface area is covered by rocks (DCPU, 2010: 6). These rocks provide the potential for the setting up of quarries and promoting tourism in the district to provide jobs for the youth. This could provide income for households and thus improve the welfare of the population.

The soils in the area are derived from weathered granitic and birimian rocks. They are generally classified as moderately drained but coarse textured and reddish-brown soils comprising mainly of Yorogo and Zorkor series. The Yorogo series are mainly groundwater laterites, which are pale in colour and coarse sand with a gritty iron-pan lying beneath. On the other hand, the Zorkor series are mostly poorly drained lithosols that develop from weathered rock on the edge of valley slopes. The fertility of the soil is, however, said to be declining because of the activities of intensive farming, erosion (sheet, gully and rill) and overgrazing as well as land mismanagement.



Figure 4.2: Rock boulders spread over a groundnuts farm in Bongo

Source: Author's own photos (2012/2013)

The rocky landscape in the face of population growth has, to a greater extent, reduced landholding for agricultural production in the Bongo area. Due to oncho flies infestation; much of the population is concentrated on less than half of the land size of the district. Taking into account that more than 70 percent of the population of the district is engaged in the agricultural sector, the limited availability of land has had implications for agricultural productivity and socio-economic wellbeing of the people. Comparatively, the Bongo area is one of the densely populated districts in the UER. The population density of the district had, for example, been projected to increase from 169 in 2000 to 217 persons per km² over a land size of 459.5km² as of 2009 (DCPU, 2010: 13). The increase in population density has intensified the pressure already on land and natural resources in the area. Population growth in relation to land has triggered the encroachment of forest vegetation and riverbanks for farming. This practice has further contributed to the depletion of forest cover and siltation of rivers in the district.

4.3 Assets/Capital Base

Apart from the unfavourable environmental conditions and challenges that the study area faces, it is also endowed with assets in terms of human, natural, physical and social capital. These assets influence the socio-economic activities and the wellbeing of the people in the area.

4.3.1 Human Capital: Demographic Characteristics

Demographically, the population of the Bongo District was estimated to be 77,885 people in 2000. This subsequently increased to 84,545 people in 2010 (GSS, 2013a). Like the entire UER, Bongo District is densely populated in comparison to other districts in the region. The population structure of the Bongo District is similar to the national level with a broad base youthful population structure that gradually tapers with age. The broad base population structure of the district indicates that the population is youthful. With a median age of 19 years, there is a fair representation of persons between 15-19 years (11.1%) (Ibid.). The working force age of about 15-64 years forms about half of the population in the region with a potential youthful labour force (15-39 years) of 64.4 percent. The population aged 15-64 years constitute 48 percent of the population of the area and as such has a youthful labour force (DPCU, 2010).

The sex ratio is low in the Bongo District (90.2) and for the region (93.8) with variations in the different age categories. Bongo District has 52.6 percent of its population being females. The female representation in the entire UER also stands at 51.6 percent of the population with significant differences in the 15-69 years age group (GSS, 2013a: 28-32). The low sex ratio in both the Bongo area and region shows the varying mortality rates and different migration patterns amongst males and females in the region. This could be attributed to the persistent outmigration of economically active males to southern Ghana and partly due to the high male mortality as a result of morbidity, ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts that has plagued certain parts of the region for some time now.

The dependency ratio in the Bongo District is high with 99.2 in 100 persons as of 2010. This means that every economically active person in the region caters for almost one dependant (GSS, 2013a). In spite of the purported enormous effect of population growth on land and agriculture in the area, the youthful population structure of the district provides a potential human resource base in terms of labour supply to the district and the region at large. If this human resource base is effectively tapped, it will have the potential of propelling the district in its developmental and poverty reduction efforts.

4.3.2 Physical Capital: Social Infrastructure

Since the creation of the Bongo District in 1988, the district assembly has embarked on the provision of social infrastructure and services. As part of the Medium Term Development Plan of the Bongo District under the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS1), education

and health were earmarked as two of the most important thematic areas for consideration (DISCAP, 2005: 24). In terms of education, the goal of the district assembly was to increase access to education, improve teaching and learning for quality education. Consequently, a significant 60 percent of resources were devoted into the construction and rehabilitation of educational infrastructure across the district, spanning the period of 2002-2005. This saw the number of basic schools in deprived areas across the district soar from 56 percent to 69 percent (Ibid.).

The efforts of the district at improving education have been complemented by the interventions of civil society organisations like World Vision International, the Catholic Church and some philanthropic individuals who have helped in the construction of schools in the area. As of 2013, there were 69 kindergartens, 63 primary and 43 junior high schools in the district (GES, 2013). In addition, the district is endowed with three senior high schools situated in the Bongo Township, Gowrie and Zorkor, and a vocational institute in Bongo town. The Table 4.1 shows the number of educational institutions in the district.

Table 4.1: Educational Institutions for all Circuits in Bongo District

Educational Level	Public	Private	Total
Kindergarten	67	2	69
Primary	61	2	63
Junior High School	42	1	43
Senior High School	3	-	3
Vocational/Technical Institute	1	-	1
Total	174	5	179

Source: Ghana Education Service, Bongo District (2013)¹¹

Despite numerous efforts at improving the quality of education and infrastructure, accessibility is still very challenging in the district. Indeed, many of the communities like, Beo, Balungu, Soe, Valley Zone and Zorko Area Councils, that are located across streams find it difficult to access schools in especially the rainy season. Additionally, the problem of lack of teachers in the district is a challenge to promoting quality education. The current teacher – pupil ratio for Primary (1:62) and Junior High School (1:31) is high in comparison with the national average of 1:35 and 1:22, respectively for Primary and Junior High Schools (Akudugu, 2013: 48).

¹¹ Composed with statistics from Ghana Education Service, District Secretariat, Bongo.

Healthcare delivery in the area has seen some improvements and some successes. In addition to the Bongo District Hospital, there are also a number of health centres, clinics and Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds dotted across the district. These health facilities provide essential primary healthcare to the people in the district. With the help of NGOs like Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision International (WVG) and World Food Programme (WFP), various feeding centres have been set up across the district. These centres, which distribute food amongst the populace, have led to a significant decline of malnourished children from 60 percent to 24.4 percent within the period of 2002-2004 (DISCAP, 2005). The aforementioned interventions, which have been supported by the different awareness programmes initiated by the 'Community Based Nutrition and Food Security Programme' (CBNFSP), and the CHPS compounds have facilitated healthcare delivery. These programmes educate the people on basic healthcare and the involvement of local communities in the delivery of health in the area. More specifically, the notable efforts of the Ghana Health Service and the subsequent training of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) have culminated in the reduction of child mortality rates from 5 percent to 3.2 percent within the period of 2002 to 2003 (Ibid.).

In spite of the improvement in healthcare delivery, the issue of lack of adequate staff to address the demanding health needs of the people in the district is still problematic. Akudugu (2013) in relation to the issue of poor staffing in health facilities notes that there are only three doctors in the district. This has put the doctor-patient ratio as of 2009 at 1:33,296 patients. The influx of people from communities of neighbouring Burkina Faso to access healthcare further puts pressure on the staff of health facilities in the district. Taking into consideration the population of the area in relation to meeting their health demands, this number of doctors is woefully inadequate.

The district is also connected to the national electric power grid and boasts of a post office, rural bank and an irrigation dam. By way of transport, it is connected by a second-class road from Bolgatanga all the way to Namoo near the Ghana-Burkina Faso border, and has a host of feeder roads linking parts of the district. Most of the roads are in a poor state and very much cannot be used when the rains set in. As a result, some of the communities are often virtually cut off in especially the wet season when the district experiences much rainfall activity. This notwithstanding, the road from Bolgatanga through the district to Yelwongo, a commercial town on the Burkina Faso side of the border has facilitated trade. Also, the abundance of cheap motorbikes has facilitated movement and hence transportation in the

district. Taking into account the booming market for livestock and agricultural produce at Yelwongo, a rehabilitation of the road will facilitate movement and trade. This will generate revenue and open up job opportunities for people.

In terms of information technology, the district has access to IT services. The use of mobile telephones as means of communication has also increased. It is therefore very common to find persons in the remotest part of the district with mobile phones. Several internet and printing cafes can also be found in the Bongo Township. Information dissemination in the district has also been boosted through radio and television. The access to these various sources of information has tended to influence the social lives of the people. Increasing levels of education, Christianity, and all other forces of change to a larger extent have influenced the socio-economic wellbeing, perceptions and general social change in the district.

4.3.3 Financial Capital: Economic Activities

With a predominantly rural population, the Bongo District is one of the poorest areas in the region (GSS, 2007: 13). The north-eastern part of the district in particular has the most severe poverty pocket (DISCAP, 2005). In generally, the local economy has four main sectors. These sectors are basically the agriculture, industry, commerce and service sectors. The majority of people are engaged in the agricultural sector (72.6%) (GSS, 2014). Other sections of the population can also be found in the informal and formal economic activities. These activities include pito¹² brewing, craftsmanship, service, professional and technical work, as well as, small-scale mining (*galamsey*). Most people are engaged in the agricultural sector, but it is common to find many people also engaged in petty trading and other informal economic activities to diversify their sources of income. Notable groups of persons mostly found in formal or government employment are nurses, teachers and workers of the district assembly.

With regard to unemployment, the Bongo area has 2.1 percent of persons who are 15 years of age and above as being unemployed (GSS, 2013a). Apart from the different economic activities that people do for a living, the area is also endowed with touristic sites where most people could derive a living. Touristic sites that have the potential of providing employment when exploited include the site of Apasepanga's¹³ mythical footprint on the rock, the beautiful rocky formations and the Vea Irrigation Dam that attracts people to come regularly

¹²*Pito* is local beer brewed from sorghum, common in most parts of northern Ghana.

¹³A legendary warrior who was endowed with supernatural powers such that he left the print of his foot and that of an arrow he shot on the rock at Bongo

for picnics. The townships of Bolgatanga and Bongo are also notable for handicrafts such as leather artefacts, straw hats and baskets (Ibid.). All these economic activities provide some level of income for the people of the district.

At the regional level, the industrial activities are limited. The main processing factories in the region are Pwalugu Tomato Factory, the Meat Processing Factory at Zuarungu, and the Rice Mills in Bolgatanga. The recently established cotton ginnery at Pusu-Namongo near Bolgatanga is worth mentioning. Also, stone quarrying activities are common in the region with the Upper Quarry Limited, and Granites and Marbles Company Limited being the main commercial quarries.

4.3.4 System of Production

Basically, many of the people do compound farming where adjoining plots around the house or compound are constantly cropped. The compound system of farming is such that the cultivation cycle is closely linked to the seasonal rainfall calendar of the area. Farming in the Bongo area is essentially geared towards household consumption. The crops cultivated include mainly cereals like millet, sorghum, maize and rice. Groundnuts, cowpea, Bambara beans, tomatoes and other vegetables are also cultivated. These cereals or staples are often inter-cropped to give better yields. The crops are also often varied across different fields every season depending upon the perceived level of fertility of the soil (Webber, 1996: 440).

For the farmers that have plots around the Vea Irrigation Dam, they do commercial rice, vegetables and tomato farming. Vegetable gardening normally complements this commercial irrigation farming. The vegetables produced are often for household consumption or sold to supplement household income. In addition to farming around the compound, most farmers normally also have *moe* (bush) plots. These plots are mostly about 3 to 7 kilometres away from the house or compound. In the Bongo area, most farmers go across the Red Volta River to cultivate these fields. These fields in the bush have been little tampered with and as such have fertile soil for cultivation. Therefore many farmers cultivate mostly groundnuts and maize on these bush plots in addition to the compound plots. This form of agriculture is mostly slash and burn, and bush fallow type of farming. The bush fallow system of farming in the area is, however, increasingly being curtailed as a result of population growth and pressure on limited land (Mensah-Bonsu, 2003).

Agricultural activities in the study area are basically a family or household affair with the household or entire family often serving as a production unit. But many of the farming households also sometimes hire labour in addition to the household labour. This often depends on the nature of agricultural work to be done and the financial capital available. Household farm production in Bongo and northern Ghana in general, however, is highly gendered. Apusigah (2009: 53) discloses that “under the compound residential arrangements, members of the farm household play specific and critical roles – together and independently – toward its provisioning. These roles are based on culturally-specified gender divisions of labour, authority structures and social obligations.” Traditionally, men as heads of the household are in charge of agricultural production. Men control and are indeed owners of family resources including land and hence production. Women and children offer labour on the farm.

Women mainly cultivate non-staple crops. These include vegetables, groundnuts, and cowpea. Normally, the men produce the main food (staples) and the women cultivate crops that serve as ingredients for the soup that accompany the main food. Apart from these agricultural engagements, women also engage in non-farm income economic activities like basket weaving, petty trading, *pito* brewing and handicrafts. Women also engage in picking shea nuts and the processing of shea butter for sale. Income generated in undertaking these economic ventures is used to help in the maintenance of the household. The children in the family merely provide support in terms of labour on the farm. Apart from having household chores as part of their responsibilities in the house, children also help in preparing and weeding plots for cultivation, herding cattle and taking care of livestock belonging to the family or compound. As in most traditional African societies, allowing children or youth of ages below 15 years to work on the farm is seen as part of the socialisation process. Against this background, child labour is said to be very high in the Bongo District.

The estimation is that 30 percent of children of school going age are engaged in child labour in the district. This situation has raised concerns about the education and health of these children as 85 percent of these child labourers are also said to be in school (DCPU, 2010). The social networks that often develop in the district through affinal relationships, communal solidarity and extended family system also serve as a pool of labour that farm households sometimes rely upon in their agricultural activities. These networks that develop serve as some form of social capital to people in the district. The section below looks at the social capital aspect of district.

4.3.5 Social Capital: Family System and Cooperation

The various forms of customarily recognised social relations, alliances, solidarity and other forms of social networks that abound highlights the social capital endowments of the study area. Socially, the Bongo District like other societies of northern Ghana, practice the patrilineal and extended family system. As a patriarchal society, men are customarily the heads of the household. Male children in the family are potential heads and breadwinners. Young persons in the area are socialised and brought up in conformity with these cultural expectations while females are socialised to be subordinates and housekeepers. In line with the patrilineal system of inheritance, men own and are indeed heirs to household resources and land. Women or females do not own land. They may however access land through their husbands or their first-born sons who are often the heirs to family resources and land (Apusigah, 2009).

Many extended family members live together in a shared house or on a compound with several households. These compounds or houses are such that they consist of several rooms according to the number of wives, an inner kraal for animals situated normally at the entrance to the main house, a barn or granary for storing millet and other grains. These compounds are often constructed out of mud or earth. Their spectacular round and rectangular shape, roofed with thatch made of wood and long dried grass is not only common in northern Ghana but also characteristic of the architecture of the Frafra, Kasena-Nankana, Tallensi and Bulsa in the UER.

Customarily, it was a taboo or a basis for spiritual attack by witchcraft amongst many of the ethnicities for one to build and roof with iron sheets. However, with social change it is now common to have these local structures with iron roofing and cement blocks in the area (see Fig 4.3). The iron roofing sheets and rooms with cement blocks are also a mark of wealth and prestige of the particular family occupying the house. These materials also help to prevent the deterioration of the mud houses and the laborious work of having to rebuild or mend after every rainy season. Normally, smaller gods (except some special deities stored in rooms) made of stones or moulded earth mounds are located in front of the main entrance to the house or compound where libation and sacrifices are normally made on them. The belief is that these gods protect the compound and also drive away evil spirits.



Figure 4.3: Farm Compound and frontage in Balungu-Doune (Bongo)

Source: Author's own photo (2012)

In the Bongo area, the head of the house or compound (*yir-daana* or *yidaana*) is often the senior-most male elder in the patrilineage. Even in times of migration, the male *yir-daana* remains as such, although a male family relation of the patrilineage often acts on his behalf. In instances where there is no senior-most male to head the house, a male from the related house or compound becomes the *yir-daana* (Eguavoen, 2008). The person also serves as a spiritual head that intercedes and pours libation to the gods and the ancestors on behalf of members of the compound. Aside from representing the compound at sectional or community meetings, disputes and disagreements between members of the family or compound are also settled by the *yir-daana*. The *yir-daana* is therefore an embodiment of several roles as a head of a compound or house in the traditional setting in Bongo.

The extended family system in itself is a social safety net. This is in view of the fact that members of the same family/clan or even section identify and see each other as one. Consequently, members often tend to lend support to each other in times of farming, marriages and adversity. This support is normally manifested in the reciprocity and social solidarity that members offer to each other. These kinds of cooperation are also couched in affinal relationships between families. Marriages serve as platform for alliances and cooperation between two or more families, sections or even villages in northern Ghana.

Polygyny is very common and accepted form of marriage. It is thus very normal for a man to have more than one wife. Indeed, it is often prestigious and a sign of wealth to have many wives and children. The many wives and children also serve as a potent source of labour during the weeding and harvesting period of the farming season. Hence, household sizes are generally larger in the study area. Typically, a Frafra household consists of a man (often the

head), his wife, married and unmarried children. A man with several wives may have several yards on a compound thereby forming more households. Comparatively, although the Bongo District has an average size of 5.6 persons per household as compared to the national average of 4.4 persons per household, a household size can range from 5-10 persons (DCPU, 2010; GSS, 2013a).

4.4 Transforming Structures

Since the creation of the Bongo District in 1988 under the legislative instrument (LI 1446), the area has undergone much transformation. Apart from the improvement in physical infrastructure, the district has also constantly undergone social change over time. This is very much manifested in changes in the social organisation, religion, customs, worldview and culture of the people. In particular, the influence of colonialists and missionaries, formal government structures, globalisation, civil society, migration and media have contributed to this social transformation. It will thus be insightful to first of all find out: how the society is organised and structured in the study area. The following section brings to the light the social organisation of the people in the study area.

4.4.1 Social Organisation of the Study Area in a Broader Context

Historically, the people of Bongo and their Gurunsi counterparts in the region and Burkina Faso are believed to have originated from the state of Mamprungu in the Northern Region of Ghana. The conviction is that they migrated and settled in their present location from the Kingdom of Mamprungu. Indeed, the annual Azambene (Fire) festival of Bongo, which is also celebrated in the states of Mamprungu, Dagbon and Mossi of Burkina Faso, lends credence to their origins from the Mamprungu Kingdom. The Bossis who are the royals or heirs to the Paramountcy of Bongo owe their allegiance to the Nayiri (overlord) of the Mamprungu Kingdom. In line with this, the *Bonaba* (paramount chief of Bongo) like most paramount chiefs in UER are enskinned by the Nayiri. Nonetheless some *tendaamba* are also known to come from Soe, Zorko, Namoo and other communities in the area (DCPU, 2010).

The district boasts of an ethno-linguistic diversity with 53.6 percent of its population practicing traditional religion and 28.3 percent reporting as Christians (mostly Catholics) as well as the imperceptible practice of other religions like Islam (Ibid.). Although there are other protestant and charismatic churches, the dominance of Catholicism in Bongo and other parts of the UER is explained by the historical arrival and penetration of the region by White Missionaries who converted much of the local population to the catholic faith.

The religious classifications in the Bongo District may seem distinct; but there are often overlaps. People are not only attached to their tradition and culture, but blend their beliefs in traditional worship with other religions (Fortes, 1971). It is therefore common to have people who attend church and yet worship ancestors or perform traditional rituals at the same time (Amenga-Etego, 2011). The belief in traditional religion, animism and spirits also influence the people's appreciation and use of the environment. Most people in the region give sociological explanations to misfortunes, disasters, crop failures and environmental change. In many cases therefore, any strange sickness, poor rains, floods or bad harvest usually has a spiritual explanation where the *bogro* (soothsayer) is often consulted for direction as to how to address the predicament. The *tendaana* is also sometimes called upon to offer sacrifices and rituals to the gods and ancestors for intervention.

4.4.2 Political and Administrative Framework of the Bongo District

The Bongo area is marked by a scattered or dispersed pattern of settlement. A typical village is often divided into sections, which also have sub-sections. These sections most often have *tendaamba* or sectional/sub-chiefs appointed by the *Bonaba* as leaders or political heads. Apart from the council of elders of the *Bonaba*, the sectional chiefs also help in the administration of the chiefdom of *Bonaba* at the sectional or local level. Historically, Bongo, like other areas in the UER, was an acephalous society.

Although it is believed that chieftaincy in the area was historically transmitted by migrants and already established states and kingdoms before colonialism, village headsmen or warriors were selected with the arrival of the British colonialists to help them rule the local people. During colonial times, chiefs were very important agents of political power. With the 'indirect rule' policy of the then British colonialists, people of their protectorates were often ruled indirectly through their chiefs. The traditional rulers also facilitated trade with the British and provided able-bodied men to feed the mines in the south of the country. They also offered men as part of tributes to the colonialists to be conscripted into the then Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) (Nabila 1975, cited in De Lange, 2003). Over time, however, the political powers in Ghana have increasingly been relegated to spiritual leaders and custodians of the land (Amenga-Etego, 2011: 84-86).

The promulgation of the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (NJO) in 1883 resulted in the regulation of the power and jurisdiction of local chiefs by colonial authorities. They were allowed to make byelaws but their power could not usurp that of the colonial authority

(Governor).¹⁴ Chiefs established native courts and as such became more concerned with judicial tasks over time.¹⁵ The *tendaamba* who are believed to be the first settlers have become mostly responsible for land related issues and the performance of rituals and sacrifices to the gods. They are not only landowners in spiritual terms, they have allodial power and can give consent to anybody who wants to settle or farm in their territory (Kunbuor, 2003). Hence much importance and reverence are, for instance, accorded persons like the *saawiira*¹⁶ and *tendaamba*, who mediate and perform rituals to the gods for rain and bountiful harvests respectively during the rainy season (Apusigah, 2009). In contemporary times, chiefs and *tendaamba* are still recognised and respected at the local level.

Administratively, the district assembly as part of the decentralisation process is the most important governmental structure. The District Chief Executive is the political head of the district. For the Bongo District, it has fifty-four assembly members¹⁷ with the area further divided into seven (7) area councils. These area councils also have unit committee members who liaise with assembly members as part of ensuring participation in decision-making. Other governmental decentralised departments like the Ghana Police service, Ghana National Fire Service, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana Education Service, Ghana Health Service, the National Board for Small Scale Industries and Department of Social Welfare can also be found in the district. Non-Governmental Organisations, the district assembly, and governmental departments and agencies, facilitate and make developmental interventions in the district to enhance the socio-economic wellbeing of the people.

4.5 Agency/Strategies: Mobility Patterns

As an agrarian society that depends on rainfall activity, the district has been vulnerable to the seasonality of agricultural production. As a result, many engage in other income earning ventures in the dry season when there is little or no agricultural activity. Many others migrate out of the district to the forest belt and urban areas of the south (Cassiman, 2010). Considering the complex nature of migratory movements in the Bongo area, the phenomenon and patterns may well be understood within the context of the historical antecedents. The next section highlights the evolution of north-south migration pattern in the country.

¹⁴ http://ghanadistricts.com/home/?_=49&sa=4768&ssa=780, accessed 02.04.2014.

¹⁵ <http://www.spyghana.com/chieftaincy-in-ghana/>, accessed 02.03.2015

¹⁶ Custodian of rain or rain-maker in Frafra (Gurune) language.

¹⁷ Persons often elected to present the various electoral areas at the district assembly

4.5.1 Overview of North-South Migration in Ghana

Historically, the migration of people from the UER and other parts of northern Ghana to the south of the country had been ongoing for a long time before colonialism (Plange, 1979a). The nature and pattern of movements was, however, aggravated with the emergence of colonialism and other actors in then Gold Coast (Ghana). The historical antecedents to migration in northern Ghana are examined below.

Historical Antecedents of North-South Migration

Hitherto the arrival of the British colonialists in the then Gold Coast, there was already some movement of people between Ashanti in the south and northern Ghana, and other African states to the north of the country. Apart from the flight from warfare and movements in search of fertile lands, certain historical activities to a greater extent also dictated migration dynamics at the time.

Northern Ghana by virtue of its middle location controlled the *Kumasi-Kong-Djenne* ancient trans-caravan trade route that passed through the historical town of Salaga (Dickson, 1968). People travelled down to the south from Western Sudan and Northern Nigeria to Salaga to trade in the kola nuts that the Ashantis brought from the south. Other traders went further to the forest zones and coastal areas with shea butter, livestock, leather goods and returned with salt and fish. Aside from the 'middleman' role that northern Ghana enjoyed in the control of the kola trade, the area also enjoyed relative prosperity from the collection of caravan tolls on cattle (Ibid.). In 1744, however, Ashanti invaded the two northern states of Gonja and Dagbon. This invasion was compounded by the activities of notorious slave raiders like Babatu and Samori. These happenings drew much of Northern Ghana into the trans-Atlantic slave trade which saw the capturing of many people to southern Ghana for export (Der, 1998).

During the period of colonialism, the notable abolition of slave trade by Britain in 1807 and the subsequent defeat of the Ashanti Empire in 1884 saw the redirection of trade towards the coastal areas. In addition, the collection of caravan tolls was also deliberately abolished in 1908 by the colonial administration as a way of influencing cattle dealers from northern Ghana and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) to bring down their livestock to the south to sell in Ashanti (Dickson, 1968: 688-689). The boom in the gold mining sector in the country after the closure of the mines in South Africa, due to the Boer War, and also the defeat of Ashanti by the British, stimulated the demand for more labour. Consequently, much labour for

underground mining was drawn from the Northern Territories (northern Ghana) and the French Territories to the north of Ghana in 1906 (Lentz and Erlmann, 1989).

The flourishing export economy along the colonial Gold Coast led to the deliberate development of northern Ghana as a labour recruitment reserve to feed the mining industries and plantations in south. This was done by way of dislodging indigenous self-sufficient peasant societies and livelihoods as a way to precipitate temporal migration from agrarian societies in the north to work in the south of the country (Plange, 1979b; Cleveland, 1991). Men were not only induced to travel to the south of the country to engage in the wage labour economy but were also conscripted into the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) as soldiers (Killingray, 1982). The activities of European missionaries in the Christianisation and education of northern Ghana also significantly influenced the sociology and migration dynamics of the people.

Although Zambarima slave raiders and caravan traders, as part of their activities brought Islam to northern Ghana, the infiltration of the first Catholic White Fathers into Navrongo (UER) in 1906 saw the spread of Christianity to a greater part of rural northern Ghana (Der, 1980). These European missionaries and other churches that sprang out later established schools that began educating and providing medical care to the locals in their communities. For those who were ostracised from the society for converting to Christianity and the ‘Whiteman’s education’, they sought refuge in the mission houses, while the ‘enlightened’ ones travelled to the south of the country to further their education in the ‘big’ schools established by the colonial administration (De Lange, 2003). These historical antecedents in part played a role in developing the north-south migration pattern in the country.

A comprehensive understanding of the historical precursors in setting the stage for what will become the sustained migration of people to southern Ghana is of great relevance for the discussion. This notwithstanding, the seeming north-south development gap is also worth noting in relation to the migration pattern in Ghana.

Regional Development and Migration in Northern Ghana

Having been deliberately developed as a labour reserve for recruitment to feed the cocoa and mining industries in the south, the subsequent construction of schools and other infrastructure along the natural resource endowed forest and coastal belt meant that northern Ghana was neglected in the development agenda. This set in motion a trend of unequal regional development between the north and south of the country (Arthur, 1991). Post-independence

governmental economic policies also lagged greatly in bridging the north-south developmental and poverty gap in the country (Songsore, 2011). The high levels of poverty and development gap in post-independence times have served to sustain the southward exodus of people from northern Ghana (Plange, 1979b).

The impact of economic reforms (like trade liberalisation and privatisation) in Ghana on agricultural production and land use, coupled with unfavourable global market trade have also been seen to have affected small-scale farmers in the northern Ghana (Braithmoh, 2009; Awo, 2010). The introduction of trade liberalisation in 1983, as part of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment policies (SAPs) in Ghana, contributed immensely to the ease in doing business and the subsequent proliferation of foreign companies and industries across the country (Grant, 2001). As part of SAPs, import quotas were abolished while there was a general reduction of 20 percent in tariffs on imported agricultural produce (Robinson and Kolavalli, 2010).

These economic policies did not only draw Ghana into the world's globalisation and international trade loop, but resulted in an increase in the cost of agricultural inputs and the influx of foreign agricultural produce in the country. The general effect on the agricultural sector included the crumbling of the tomato and meat production sector in the UER. Furthermore, the preference for cheap and quality tomatoes as well as cattle from neighbouring Burkina Faso, and tomato paste from Europe in part also led to the closure of the Pwalugu Tomatoes and Meat Factory in the UER (Awo, 2010). The closure of the factories worsened the situation of unemployment in northern Ghana and also in a way dislodged majority of the farmers who were into tomato farming and cattle rearing in the area. These conditions, in tandem with the conglomeration of foreign companies and factories in the south and along the coast, further served to attract people to engage in the waged labour economy (Songsore, 2011).

Urbanisation in the wake of relative development in northern Ghana has also brought about societal transformation. Improvements in the road network, mobile telephony, internet and education in way have facilitated the migration of people. Travelling by road has not only become easier, but information and knowledge about conditions and opportunities in the south and elsewhere have become readily available with information technology, television and radio (Fortes, 1971). The motivation of people, especially the youth, to enjoy 'modern' lifestyles and educational facilities that abound mostly in the urban cores of the south see

outmigration as the only means to realising this dream. The remittances, ideas and information that migrants often bring upon return helps to improve socio-economic welfare of household members. In relation to the north-south migration pattern, different trends have been observed over the years. Available historical data on migration patterns depict a fluctuating north-south migration trend. These fluctuations in migration trends have been in response to changing socio-economic, environmental and political changes over time in the country. These fluctuating trends are highlighted below.

4.5.2 North-South Migration Trends

The north-south migration of people in Ghana in precolonial times was generally not very pronounced. This was because of the recurrent conflicts and warfare that limited the large-scale movement of persons. The activities of slave raiders, coupled with conflicts, especially amongst the northern states of Dagbon, Gonja and Ashanti, curtailed the free movement of persons. The politically centralised states of Mossi, Mamprungu and Dagomba as recounted by Binger (1892, cited in Laube, 2007), were warlike and ruthless. The frequent internal clashes and conflicts at the time was a security threat to any traveller who dared to tread along those areas.

The insecurity situation in the area of the Northern Territories (northern Ghana and parts of Burkina Faso) was orchestrated by the occasional raiding of scattered groups like the Kasena, Balsa and Grushie by slave raiders on horsebacks (Dickson, 1968). However, the incursion of the British colonialists and missionaries, and the subsequent ‘pacification’ of the then Northern Territories opened the ‘floodgates’ for the voluntary movement of labour to southern Ghana. The migration trends from the available statistics from 1931-2000 illustrate varying periods of sustained and less outmigration from northern Ghana to the south of the country. Trends in north-south migration propensities estimated from census data from 1931-2000 are illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Trends in North-South Migration Propensities from 1931-2000

	1931	1948	1960	1970	1984	2000
Population N-Ghana (1000)	717	1,077	1,289	1,590	2,375	3,141
People born in N-Ghana	759	1,150	1,215	1,708	-	3,673
Population S-Ghana (1000)	2,131	3,042	5,438	6,969	9,921	15,595
North-South Migrants	44,013	152,960	189,160	262,296	144,588	677,069
%pop N-Ghana	6.1	14.2	14.7	16.5	6.1	21.6
% born N-Ghana	5.8	13.3	15.6	15.4	-	18.4
%pop S-Ghana	2.1	5	3.5	3.8	1.5	4.7

Source: Compiled from the Census Office (1932;1950;1962;1973), GSS(1995; 2005a) in Van der Geest (2011: e74).

The 1960 population census reported that the three northern regions of the country recorded net losses of about 189,160 people born in the region who had migrated out of the area (Table 4.2). This period of sustained north-south migration coincided with the relative economic prosperity that the country enjoyed in the immediate post-independence period until the late 1960s. An increase in demand for labour in the mines and cocoa industries of the south meant the increasing movement of persons to the south to work. In consequence, the number of migrants from northern Ghana increased to 262,296 persons as of 1970.

Migration from northern Ghana to the south, especially in the 1980s, however, declined as a result of economic downturns, which in a way also affected cocoa production in the country. Coupled with political instability, Ghana undertook several economic initiatives in order to revamp the ailing economy at the time. The introduction of SAPs in the country led to the retrenchment of many workers and closure of many businesses. As a result, many people lost their jobs and sources of income. This brought unemployment and economic hardship to many people. While the infamous repatriation of Ghanaians from Nigeria at the time had compounded the problem, the drought and famine that swept across much of sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s worsened the plight of many people. In the result of this, many labour migrants who could not make ends meet returned to northern Ghana while outmigration to the south declined drastically (Anarfi *et al.*, 2003).

The development of irrigation schemes through governmental interventions and farmer-driven initiatives since the mid-1990s, which to some extent enhanced agriculture and economic activities in the area, also contributed to the decline. This was in the sense that people took advantage of the numerous governmental social interventions and irrigation dams that had been constructed across northern Ghana to engage in agriculture. People found it

plausible to stay back and exploit the opportunities that these interventions offered and hence the decline in outmigration to the south of the county at the time.

Despite the seeming recovery from the droughts of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the decline in migration had not been sustainable. The UER recorded net-losses of -20,762 and -201,532 people in outmigration in 1984 and 2000 respectively (Agyei and Ababio, 2009). Comparatively, the Upper West Region also experienced some net-losses in migration with an increase from -3,083 persons in 1984 to -191,653 persons in 2000 (Ibid.). The outmigration rate from other parts of the northern Ghana is still very pronounced with the UER being a principal source of outmigration to southern Ghana (Van der Geest, 2011). The recent population and housing census of 2010 recorded that the UER experienced a net-loss of migration of -267,692 persons (GSS, 2013a).

Some level of in-migration and return migration into the region can also be observed. It is estimated that the in-migration of people account for 6.7 percent of the population in the UER. Return migrants, on the other hand, constitute 23.6 percent of Ghanaians by birth in the region (GSS, 2008: 51). With the exception of Bongo, Bawku, Bolgatanga and Navrongo, which are close to the Togo and Burkina Faso borders and thereby attracting cross-border movement (7.9%), almost 90 percent of the in-migrants in the region are Ghanaians. While the Northern and Upper West Regions account for 22.7 percent of the in-migrants, 69.4 percent are from southern Ghana – mostly the Ashanti Region (32.6%).¹⁸ Most of these migrants come into the region as government employees like nurses, civil servants, teachers, and for educational purposes. Others are also engaged in wholesale and retail trading, farming (onions and tomatoes) and small-scale mining (*galamsey*). These in-migrants and return migrants bring new ideas, innovations and lifestyles thereby influencing socio-economic activities in the region.

The north-south migration pattern in Ghana has variously been attributed to environmental causes, coupled with poverty and population growth (Webber, 1996; Rademacher-Schulz, Schraven and Mahama, 2014). Van der Geest (2011), for example, points to a significant relationship between less rainfall, poor vegetative cover and outmigration from northern Ghana. But Plange (1979a), in contrast, have long dismissed suggestions attributing the perpetual southward movement from northern Ghana as what he terms as ‘naturalistic

¹⁸http://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/uppereast.asp?menu_id=6&menu_id2=14&sub_menu_id=136&gender=, accessed 03.03.2012.

fallacies'. He emphasised, on the other hand, the role of colonial capitalist influence in under-developing northern Ghana and making the area a labour recruitment reserve to feed the cocoa plantations and mines in the south (Ibid.). These happenings have contributed in setting a precedence of high rates of poverty, illiteracy and lack of social amenities that have marked the lag in development of the area (GSS, 2007; Songsore, 2011).

From the discussion, it is envisioned that the north-south migration trends and patterns in Ghana are influenced by a multiplicity of complex interwoven historical, socio-economic and environmental factors at different scales as highlighted in the conceptual framework of the study (Fig 2.2). The linkages between the migration dynamics in the study area and the conceptual framework are elaborated below.

4.6 Linking the Conceptual Framework to Migration in the Study Area

As in other parts of northern Ghana, the social networks that evolve from family relations, migrant networks and other relations serve as impetus for migration. The conceptual framework (see Fig 2.2) illustrates that migration in the study area is influenced by forces operating at different scales (global, national/regional and local). It is important to emphasise that these factors at the various scales do not act in isolation to affect basic conditions at the community or household level. These factors can be seen to overlap at all the levels and act together to influence the migration of people.

In linking the conceptual framework to migration dynamics in rural communities in northern Ghana, therefore, it is envisaged that climatic and environmental change effects at the global, national/regional and local level affect basic ecological conditions. The UER by its location in the semi-arid savannah zone is exposed to these risks. These environmental risks often manifest in the form of erratic rainfall, long dry spells and perennial floods that destroy crops and property in many of the communities. While these environmental constraints may have undoubtedly undermined livelihoods and as such the vulnerability context of people, the ability of the household to cope or adapt to a larger extent depends on the livelihood assets that it possess.

At the global level also, the forces of globalisation and geo-political relations and interactions serve to influence conditions at the national level as well as the basic economic, political institutional, ecological and socio-cultural conditions at the local and community level. It is reckoned that in the case of northern Ghana historical factors and socio-cultural influences, at the national and local levels, have played an important role in establishing or translating

migration as an integral part of social lives of people in the study. The colonial recruitment of labour from northern Ghana and the concentration of social infrastructure along the coast, as already noted, have created an imbalance in development towards the south.

Post-colonial governmental policies and programmes at the national level have not also been able to bridge the north-south developmental gap and poverty situation in the area. These circumstances may have changed the various basic conditions and hence the southward movement of persons as people seek to participate in the wage labour economy. However, the drive by many to experience the 'unknown' ('bush'/Kumasi), modernity and seek greener pastures serves to sustain migration in most of the communities. Many other people, at the local level also migrate because of socio-cultural reasons or to be able to fulfil certain social demands often associated with migration experience in the communities.

Furthermore, land and resource use at the local level may change in response to climatic or environmental changes as well as population growth. Rainfall variability, for example, affects the availability of water for irrigation and other agricultural purposes with regard to the Veia Irrigation Dam and other water points. Also, the yearly flooding and destruction of the crops have created an 'insecurity' situation in the district. The lack of support and credit facilities (by political-institutional actors) in rural areas of the study area to help people to recover and also venture into other income making ventures has created livelihood uncertainty. At the local level therefore, people whose livelihoods have been undermined, in terms of their inability to command the adequate food bundles as part of their entitlements, may resort to outmigration as a coping strategy.

It is worthy to note the role of migrants as mediators in transmitting migration as a travelling idea over the years in the communities. Return and in-migrants acting as mediators in the migration process also 'translate' or transfer new ways of doing things, lifestyles and new ideas that may influence the socio-cultural and economic activities and hence development in the communities. This influences perceptions, cultural values, behavioural change and tastes, which could encourage or discourage migration. The economic activities of in-migrants and government workers coming in to settle in the study area also contribute to development and social transformation in the area. Better still, migrants can also bring along ideas and social values that are very peculiar to societies outside of the source areas and which may have implications for social order or basic socio-cultural conditions at the local or community level.

Aside from the remittances that a migrant may send, a loss of one person to migration can reduce the number of persons that would have had to rely on the meagre food and income available to the family or household. Similarly, household members may also make demographic adjustments by delaying marriage, reducing childbirth or sending children to live with other relatives in response to constraints or changes in the basic conditions. Stress from agricultural adversity could in itself be a disincentive to getting married or making more children, and hence a decline in fertility levels in the communities.

The forces of formal education, globalisation, media and NGO activities are complementary forces that have also brought societal transformation and development in the study area. The spread of mobile telephony, internet, television and radio have contributed to social transformation and improved people's access to information about opportunities and better conditions outside the district. When conditions are favourable, information is often relayed back to the community. The remittances that the migrants send to the community may trigger or serve as bait for other households to encourage members to migrate in order to also improve their income and welfare. However, when migrants stay longer or permanently perhaps due to changes in the socio-economic situation at the place of destination, it may also have adverse effects both at the household and village level.

At the village level it may lead to depopulation and loss of human resources with implications for development. While outmigration may reduce demand or pressure on land in the study area, land use may change when migrants decide to use available land in the community for non-agricultural purposes. On the other hand, the effect of a permanent or long stay at the place of destination on the household may result in the loss of farm labour, changes in the household structure or improvement in household welfare through remittances.

From the framework, the important area of focus and for the purposes of this research is the interstitial space of the migration process, which in this context is the discursive space of negotiations, "translation" of ideas and evolving cultures of migration. It can be observed that migration is driven by cumulative causes, which are self-perpetuating. However, the interstitial space of the migration process has become a vital space of meaningful negotiations amongst actors in the migration process that serve to sustain the migration phenomenon and hence its persistence in the Bongo area. This discursive space of migration signifies a space where power is negotiated and people seek economic empowerment. It is the arena where the valued experience needed as part of the socialisation process is acquired. The

experiences also contribute to the change in perceptions, understandings and values in the source communities. These new experiences and changing values have evolved into ‘cultures of migration’ that tend to perpetuate migratory movements in study area.

In relation to the foregoing, the following research questions can therefore be raised:

1. How do people perceive climate change and its impact on agriculture in northern Ghana?
2. What is the relationship between persistent outmigration and the effects of environmental risks in the area?
3. How has migration evolved and affected agriculture, development and population dynamics in the study area?

By drawing on the concepts of ‘cultures of migration’ and ‘travelling model’, as highlighted in chapter two, the research delves into these questions by dedicating a chapter each to these questions. This will bring to light the non-ambiguous interrelationship between socio-cultural factors and historical antecedents in influencing the persistent migration of people within the context of ongoing climatic and environmental changes in northern Ghana.

Chapter Five

Environmental Risks, Perceptions and Livelihoods

5.1 Introduction

The implications of global climatic and environmental change effects for sustainable livelihoods partly also defines the vulnerability of people. But, the way people may perceive risks and threats to their wellbeing differ from one person to the other and also context-specific. That is to say, risk perception has do with “the subjective assessment of the probability of a specified type of accident (*or event*) happening and how concerned we are with the consequences” (Sjoberg *et al.*, 2004: 8) (*emphasis by the author*). The study does not seek to delve much into the complexities of conceptualising ‘risk’. Nonetheless, the kind of response people may make is very much shaped by their cultural or socially constructed knowledge of the perceived risk and its causes (Eguavoen *et al.*, 2013).

Taking the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) as a point of departure, it is pointed out that the vulnerability context of people is often defined by their exposure to risks and their ability to deal with them. However, rural poor people within the context of their vulnerability are not passive. People as active agents often utilise the livelihood assets that they may possess to negotiate any constraint to their livelihood (Giddens, 1984). Seen as purposeful and goal directed, the actions of individuals apart from the interests they may have are often guided or shaped by the ‘structures’ in which they find themselves. Bourdieu (1984) in his thesis about ‘habitus’ and ‘field’ underscores perceptions, experiences and the way people appreciate their environment and capital endowments inform their behaviour and the kind of strategies that they may adopt in relation to their vulnerability context.

Most livelihoods in the rural areas of northern Ghana are agrarian. These rain-fed agrarian livelihoods are also very much exposed to environmental risks associated with climatic change and extremes. The location of the study area in the north-eastern corner of the country along the semi-arid Guinea and Sudan Savannah Ecological Zone has exposed people and livelihoods to environmental risks. The inability of people to command adequate food, as part of their entitlements, can be seen to exacerbate the poverty and food insecurity that are major problems in the region.

In the wake of these risks, people have generally responded differently in the bid to deal with their vulnerability context. In dealing with the question of environmental risks, perceptions and livelihoods in the study area, this chapter is broadly divided into five sections. The first section examines people's perceptions and causes of environmental changes in the study area. This is followed by a thorough discussion of the effects of these perceived changes on livelihoods and agricultural productivity in the area. In the third section, the institutional (structural) challenges acting in tandem with environmental factors to affect agriculture are also highlighted. The chapter proceeds in the fourth section to discuss the various efforts that have been sanctioned to deal with ongoing environmental changes in the area. Lastly, a discussion of the various issues in relation to theory and conclusions are featured in the fifth section of the chapter. With this outline, the chapter will proceed below with a discussion on the perceptions of local farmers on ongoing environmental changes in the Bongo area.

5.2 Environmental Change Perceptions amongst Local Farmers

Rainfall variability is the most significant climatic parameter affecting the Guinea Savannah in the UER and other agro-ecological zones across Ghana. In view of this, the majority of people in rural northern Ghana therefore perceive climate change in the form of rainfall variability.

The general local narratives and consensus amongst people in the study area regarding the climate and environment relates to a period of good, timely and abundant rainfall regime prior to the droughts and famines of the early 1980s. There are also accounts of occasional invasion and subsequent destruction of crops and deaths of livestock by locusts and diseases respectively, sometimes as some form of punishment from the gods for misdeeds of a kind. But, the climate and weather narratives that persist in the study area cast a picture of a hitherto good rainfall pattern and buoyant agriculture. This not too distant 'good' past were also times where customs and recognition for the gods and ancestors for blessings were religiously followed and acknowledged.

These local cultural discourses or narratives of the environment and weather are very much influenced by the religious beliefs of the people. The conviction amongst many of the people is that God sanctions everything in the world, including environmental events. Der (1980: 173), in writing about religion in the study area observed that the belief amongst people in the area was that "God gave the necessary rain for agriculture. Thus just before the onset of the wet or rainy season, sacrifices were normally made to God either directly or indirectly

through the ancestors in order to obtain rain. Similarly sacrifices were offered to God after the harvest in thanksgiving ceremonies.” In as much as one can get favours and blessings from God, one can also get sanctioned through sickness, agricultural adversity and environmental mishaps for an abomination or disobedience towards the gods or ancestors, which are intermediaries to the supreme God. Hence traditional rainmakers, fetish priests and witch doctors in this case play a vital role as intermediaries in ensuring a good relationship with the gods and the ancestors in order to obtain good rains and harvests.

In terms of the highly variable and unpredictable rainfall, people often make reference to the droughts and famines that ravaged the most parts of the Sahel in the 1980s as the beginning of the perceived environmental deterioration. The overarching endorsement of social change, total disregard for customs and moral transgressions as accounting for the changes in the rainfall pattern illustrates the different perceptions of people regarding the environmental change. The perceptions of good and bad times in terms of environmental phenomena have over time become embedded in the memory of people as well as local environmental and weather narratives in the study area. The following section thus delves into the perceptions of the local people regarding rainfall activity in the study area.

5.2.1 Rainfall Variability

People in the study area allude to observed changes in the climate (in terms of the rainfall activity) over the years. For both the focus groups and farmers interviewed, the admission was unanimous that “*saa la teeri me*” (literally: the rainfall activity has changed in Gurune language) in the last 30 years. The normal seasonal timeline as experienced over the years is that the rains start in early April with the planting of crops, like the early millet, commencing already in the beginning of May. But because of the erratic nature of rainfall activity in recent times, one could no longer be sure as to when to prepare plots or even sow seeds for crop production. The experiences of previously good times in comparison with highly variable rainfall activity and crop failures in contemporary times have created a feeling of uncertainty amongst farmers.

The majority of people (94.17%) in the surveys conducted acknowledged that the climate, in terms of rainfall and temperature in the area, had changed since the drought and famine that plagued the area and much of the Sahel in the early 1980s (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Perceptions on climate change (rainfall variability) over the last 30 years

Changes in climate/rainfall and temperature?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	113	94.17
No/don't know	7	5.83
Total	120	100

Field Survey (2012/2013)

For those who alluded to a change in the climate, the perceived changes were manifested in the irregular and less rainfall amounts, and warm temperatures (94.59%), or high temperatures and no rain (5.41%) (Table 5.2). People made submissions to the effect that anytime there was cloud formation to come down as rain, the weather suddenly becomes windy. As a result, the rain only drizzles for a while with little precipitation amounts. Many of the people further intimated that temperature in the area is also increasingly becoming warmer and unbearable.

Table 5.2: Perceptions of Climate Change in Bongo District

How has climate changed?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Irregular and less rainfall	105	94.59
High temperatures and warm temperatures	6	5.41
Total	111	100

Field Survey (2012/2013)

The views of the people, as illustrated by the interviews and survey results, suggest a change in the rainfall pattern and temperature in the study area. The responses give an impression of a hitherto relatively 'good' rainfall regime in the area as compared to what pertains in recent times. These climatic conditions being experienced are purported to have deviated or changed from a hitherto good climatic pattern with adequate rainfall and cooler temperatures from about 30 or more years ago.

An appraisal of available rainfall data from the Ministry of Food and Agricultural (MOFA) for the Zuarungu weather station from 1980-2011 corroborates observations of people regarding the rainfall pattern in the study area. The data as highlighted in Fig 5.1 depict a fluctuating rainfall pattern over the years. As expected, the early 1980s, which coincided with periods of drought and famine in much of sub-Saharan Africa, experienced low rainfall averages that gradually peaked in 1989. This was followed by rainfall seasonal fluctuations up until 2007 where the region and most parts of northern Ghana recorded heavy torrential rains, flooding and the subsequent destruction of crops and property.

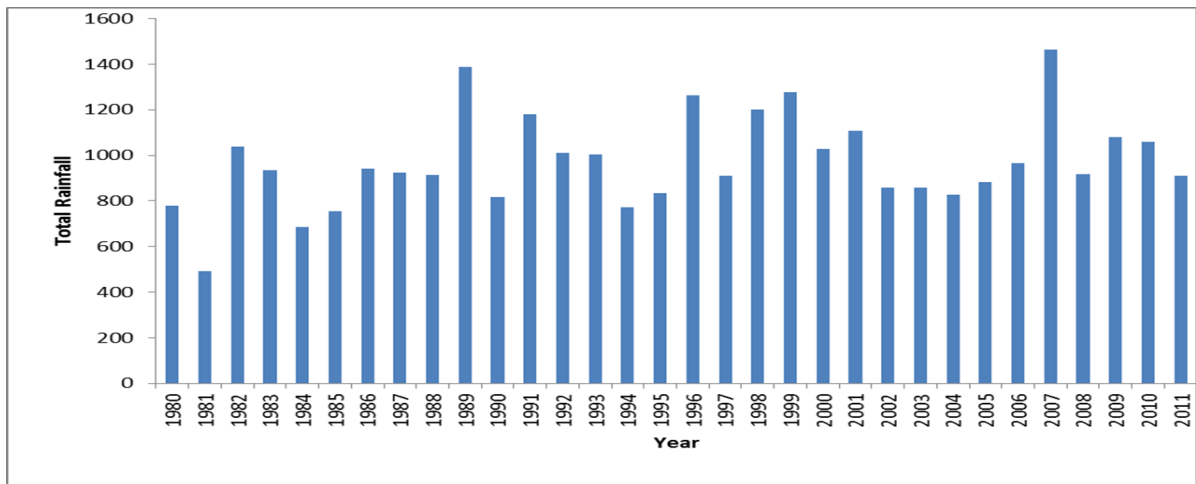


Figure 5.1: Average Annual Rainfall Totals for Zuarungu (UER) (1980-2011)

Source: Composed with rainfall data from Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) (2012/2013)¹⁹

Similar studies of historical rainfall trends in northern Ghana by Dietz *et al.* (2004: 156) from 1900-1993 also show that seasonal rainfall variability and fluctuations have generally been the pattern of rainfall activity in the area (Fig 5.2). It is shown that from 1900-1915, the study area experienced unfavourable rainfall with droughts in 1904 and 1912 (Ibid.). There was, however, an improvement in rainfall activity from 1915, which gradually peaked in 1917. This period of good rainfall was followed by a drought within the period of 1918-1920. The subsequent years as depicted below has been a consistent pattern of alternating ‘good’ and ‘bad’ years of rainfall activity.

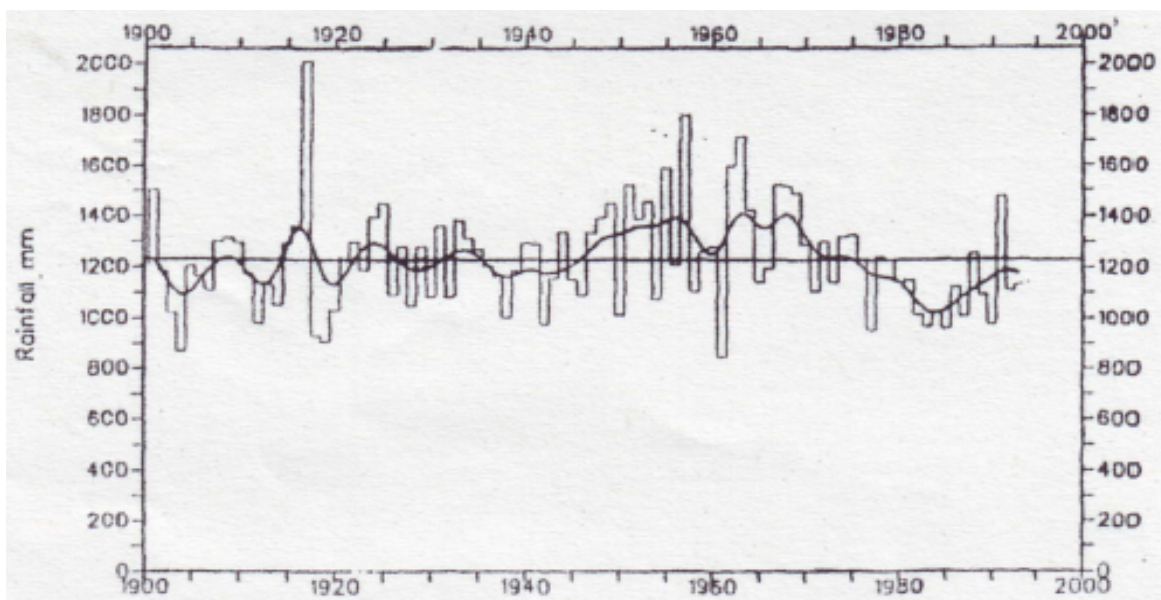


Figure 5.2: Rainfall Trends in Northern Ghana (1900-1993)

Source: Dietz *et al.* (2004: 156)

¹⁹ Average rainfall data from Ministry of Food and Agricultural, regional office, Bolgatanga

These historical rainfall data and general climatic models seem to give the impression of rainfall variability as a characteristic of the West African climatic regime. However, the recent convictions of local farmers on changes in the rainfall pattern may stem from their accumulated knowledge due to past experiences and current environmental happenings. These experiences and personal observations of people in their continuous interaction with the environment have created some mental models of a changing local climatic situation and associated environmental risks in the study area.

Informed by these mental models which encapsulates a “summative conception of all a community’s climate knowledge based on their observations and experiences of past and ongoing climate variability” (Shaffer and Naiene, 2011: 224); people have given diverse explanations to the seeming changes in the environmental and climatic situation in the area. The explanations as to the underlying causes of these changes in the area most often translates into models of blame which seem to establish a causal chain of events by apportioning blames (Eguavoen, 2013). An examination of the various causes will give a background to the opinions of people as to the underlying causes of climate change or rainfall variability in the Bongo District.

5.2.2 Local Models of Blame: Explaining Environmental Change and Risks in the Bongo District

Following accumulated mental models of changing local climate; people have constructed their own models of blame to explain changing environmental phenomena and the associated risks and effects in the study area. These local models of blame can be seen to have assumed both cultural and scientific orientations (Eguavoen, 2013). On the one hand, people offer conventional scientific explanations like indiscriminate cutting of trees and unfavourable farming practices as accounting for the seeming environmental changes or changing climate. On the other hand, ensuing local cultural weather discourses emphasise cultural models like moral transgressions and total disregard to the gods and customs in the area. The various explanations for the ongoing climatic and environmental changes are examined below.

Local Scientific Models of Blame

Along with common scientific views on the role of human activities in facilitating ongoing changes in global environmental and climatic systems, local notions of blame also abound in explaining environmental change and risks in the study area. The wanton destruction of tree cover and forest in the area has variously been mentioned as a cause of rainfall variability or environmental deterioration in the area. Three-quarters (75%) of the people interviewed are

of the opinion that the cutting down of trees, most especially Shea, for charcoal and fuel wood was to blame for the observed changes in the rainfall and high temperatures. People were unequivocal about the fact that the lack of tree cover or *moe* (forest/bush in Gurune) and vegetation were the underlying causes of the poor rains and environmental deterioration. As shown in Fig 5.3, more than half of the respondents (63%) alluded to the loss of forest cover and vegetation due to the cutting of trees as one of the reasons accounting for the changes being observed in the rainfall pattern.

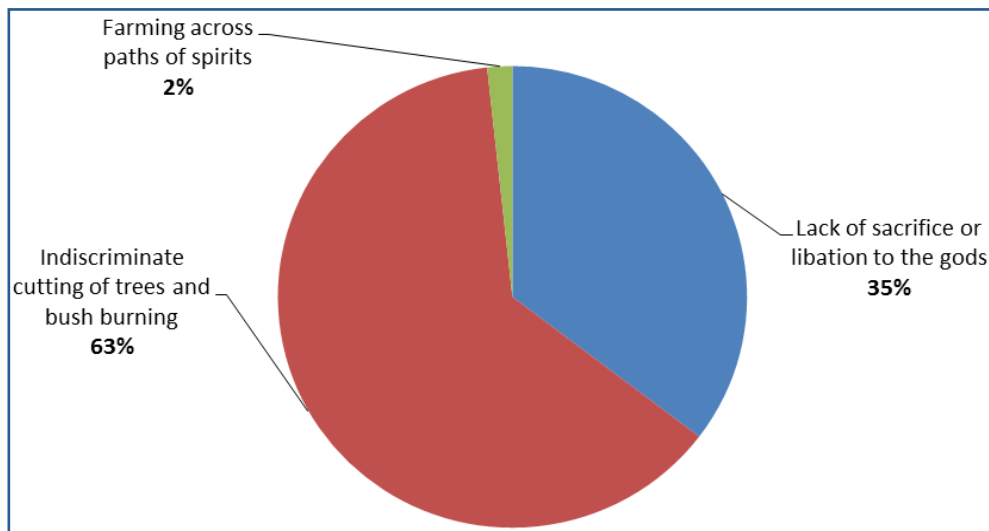


Figure 5.3: Reasons for Perceived Changes in the Rainfall Pattern

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

Apart from the nutritional and economic importance of Shea, the wood is good fuel wood for cooking and brewing *pito*. Unlike wood from other tree species, fuel wood from Shea purportedly does not burn faster. Therefore, in addition to the persistent depletion of Shea for fuel wood and charcoal, other forest vegetation are also cut down for farming and construction of thatch houses in the area. A look at the vegetative cover reveals that a greater part of the UER have lost much of the forest cover over the years due to the influence of anthropogenic activities. Codjoe (2004) estimates, for example, that the Bongo area has lost 6.0 percent in the land area covered by forests within the period of 1990-2000.

Akin to conventional scientific models of explaining rain formation, people in the study area explained that trees release some moisture into the atmosphere, which helps to create clouds and come down as rain. For them, the forest and vegetation cover serve as obstacles and brakes that prevent expected precipitation from turning into wind or storms, and from destroying their crops and houses. The warm temperature in the area is not only attributed to the scorching sun but also the seeming lack of forest cover to blow cool air and absorb the

heat. In resonance with similar findings in the area by Eguavoen (2013), people explain that the loss of forest vegetation and the heat accounts for the changes observed in the climate and environment of the area over time.

From the responses, people seem to subscribe to the more conventional scientific explanation or blame of the cutting down of trees, bush burning and unfavourable farming practices as responsible for the environmental challenges or risks that confronts them. This seem to be the case amongst farmers and people who have had ample knowledge about climate change perhaps through local radio programmes, agricultural extension officers or other sources. Based on the ongoing local cultural discourses on the environment and climate, many other people in the Bongo area also subscribe to cultural models of blame to explain environmental change. These cultural explanations to environmental change are discussed in the next section below.

Cultural Models of Blame

Aside from the scientific explanations, other people also mentioned socio-cultural, religious and moral reasons for the rainfall variability and environmental risks. More than a quarter of the informants interviewed (37%) attributed the changes in the rainfall pattern to religious reasons and attitudinal change on the part of people in recent times. Informants are of the view that changes in the attitudes of people, total disregard and lack of respect for the gods and customs are to blame for the inadequate rainfall amounts and agricultural adversity in the area.

The indiscriminate farming across ‘paths’ of spirits, according to informants, is a major problem in the area. Normally, there are certain ‘spaces’ or ‘paths’ on farm plots that are often supposed to be left uncultivated for the free movement of spirits in the night. However, many people in recent times tend to ignore this customary practice and farm across these ‘spaces’ and ‘paths’. Farming across these ‘paths’, according to informants, hampers the free movement of the spirits at night.

It was recounted during the research that there was, for example, a long dry spell with no rainfall in the 2010 farming season. In response, a *Bogro* was consulted as to the cause of the lack of rain. It was consequently revealed that cropped farm plots blocked certain ‘paths’ of the spirits. In response, the chief of the area subsequently ordered the clearing of these areas to create those paths for the spirits. After clearing of the crops to make way for the ‘paths’, the rains started falling for the season. Local farmers see themselves as victims of the

‘irresponsibility’ of some people in the area. On the other hand, the views of traditional authorities like the *tendaamba* and *saawiira*²⁰ (or *saadaana*: in Nankam language), suggest that the farmers are the architects of their own suffering due to their negligence and misdeeds.

A *tendaana*, who is also a farmer, bemoaned the distasteful attitudes and bad deeds of people as partly accounting for the lack of rain and poor yields in Bongo and its environs. The *tendaana* explains that:

“[...] in the past, before or even when you cultivate your crops and you have raised animals, fowls, guinea fowls and goats; at the end of the season when you harvest, you prepare food, *pito*, and sacrifice some of the animals. You do this to thank the gods, your ancestors and the spirits who have protected and helped you throughout the rainy season. But today everything has changed; people do not honour that again. Nowadays when people harvest at the end of the season, they just bring someone from nowhere to come and buy or catch animals anyhow. They send the produce to the market and sell everything without recourse to thanking your late father whose spirit has guided you throughout the year and given you a bumper harvest. So, why will the gods and spirits give us rain? The pouring of libation and sacrifices has changed. Just imagine that you have children in the house and they have completed school and they do not even know that it is because of the libation that they have been able to come this far and they are asking why you have killed and wasted the biggest animal to sacrifice to the gods but not rather sell it to get money and pay their fees. Sometimes they refuse to eat the food and animals killed and sacrificed to the gods all in the name of Christianity. So this sometimes discourages you from making sacrifices and as such making us suffer the consequences: which are often the poor rains and bad harvests.”²¹

The *tendaana* did not also mince words about the fact that the pouring of libation was necessary for good rains, health and a bumper harvest. Like other informants, he attributed these changes to general disregard for customs and social change brought about by education and Christianity and hence the suffering people were going through in the area.

In speaking to a rainmaker (*saawiira*) in another community, he did not hesitate to express his displeasure at people no longer coming to consult for rain. He indicated that people do not even come to make sacrifices to enable him command rain for the community. For him, this is the reason why the place was so dry without rain. When asked why he was not calling the rain for himself since he needed it for his crops, he argued that he was not going to do so until people begin to realise that there was the need to appease the gods. Besides, he stressed that whether it rained or not he was still going to be able to feed himself. So he was not going to command rain until people resolve to conform to customs.

²⁰ *saawiira*, literally means “rain caller”/rainmaker in Gurune language. That is a rain-maker or fetish priest with supernatural powers that can command or make rain.

²¹ *tendaana*, Gowrie-kunkua-Age: 36 years, 24th July, 2012, duration: 1hr 2mins.

The opinions of people as highlighted above also show that rain and environmental management in traditional African societies also reflects some politics of power. The *tendaana* and *saawiira* in many rural communities of northern Ghana wield enormous political power. Like in many traditional African societies, persons like these often hold important statuses in the traditional social set up. Sanders (2014) maintain, for instance, that Ihanzu rainmakers in Tanzania are embodiments of spiritual super power and traditional authority. They command rain and are indeed very important stakeholders in decision-making in the society. Ihanzu rainmakers therefore wield much power in the society and are still very much recognised in contemporary times. In the case of the Bongo area, the perceived laxity of people in adhering to traditional customary demands and practices also translate into challenges or threats to the authority and relevance of persons like rainmakers and fetish priests. Although these models of blame were more commonly advanced by elderly folks who sought to emphasise how ‘good’ things were in the past, the frustrations of traditional rainmakers and priests such as the *saawira* and *tendaana* show not only the evolution of blame regarding environmental change but the challenges to their waning authority in the society.

Whereas the call for people to adhere or conform to religious practices or customs has been emphatic, certain spiritually powerful persons are also reckoned to sometimes hold or prevent rainfall out of sheer greed or show off. Although claims about the ability of persons with supernatural powers to withhold or command rain cannot be scientifically proven, such persons are still present and common in the study area and many parts of Africa. This is exemplified in a narration of an informant during the research. The incident, as recounted, involved a person who was supposedly summoned before the Chief for preventing the rain from falling to the displeasure of members of the community.

“[...] I think it was 5 or 6 years ago; someone from Dua community who was believed to have the power to command or withhold rain actually held it for some time. The land and crops were so dry that if you even set fire it will burn the crops. So the elders had to make sacrifices and consultations with soothsayers. It was then revealed that this particular man was behind the lack of rainfall activity. So he was summoned to the chief palace. Actually, chief threatened and asked him to let it rain or else he will also deal well with him accordingly. Upon persistent persuasion he confessed and agreed to release the rain. Actually, he went home that day and it rained massively. So some of these things they are spiritual things. You see it; very hard to believe. So these things they happen.”²²

Accounts such as this could not be independently verified. However, informal discussions with people in most of the rural communities seem to acknowledge and corroborate not only

²²Abana, accounts clerk-Age: 29 years, Bongo-Adaboribisi, 10th October, 2012, duration: 58mins.

this account but also the existence of such persons and the super natural powers they possess. There were accounts to the effect that one could just farm a small plot around the house and harvest bountifully to sustain the family all year round. These were times people were conscious about traditions and customs. But in contemporary times, this is not the case because people no longer strictly adhere to traditional and customary practices. Hence the disregard for customs and the misdeeds of people is to blame for the lack of rain and agricultural adversity.

Having brought to light the varying perceptions of people with regard to rainfall, environmental change and the underlying causes, it is important to also delve into the effects of these changes on people in the area. The majority of people in the area are engaged in small-scale agriculture, which is highly dependent on rainfall activity. In this light, the livelihoods of people will be highly exposed to risks associated with ongoing changes in the environment. The next section is therefore dedicated to a discussion on the exposure of people to environmental risks and the associated effects on their livelihoods and wellbeing in the study area.

5.3 Exposure to Environmental Risks and Agriculture in the Bongo Area

The exposure of people and livelihoods to environmental risks such as the devastating perennial heavy torrential downpours, storms, floods and prolonged seasonal dry spells over the years has defined the vulnerability context of the people in the area. A look at the effects of environmental risks on rural livelihoods in the next section will open the discussion into the kind of responses people make to cope with environmental risks in the Bongo District.

5.3.1 Rainfall Variability and Livelihoods

The issue of seasonal rainfall variability and prolonged dry spells have been a major challenge to the local farmers in the Bongo area. The changes in the rainfall pattern have led to a shift in the start of the wet rainy and farming season. Many of the people (77.34%) contend that the delay in the onset of the rain in the wet season has shifted the start of the farming season from April to May (and for the year 2012, June) with the rainfall becoming highly erratic and scanty.

During the whole period of the research, for example, the rains ('first rains') that were needed to start sowing seeds for the season in the entire UER had delayed. Although there was an initial period of rainfall activity, it was interspersed with dry spells in what is often termed as 'false starts' (Laux *et al.*, 2007; Nyantakyi-Frimpong and Bezner-Kerr, 2015). This has

consequently led to a shift in the cropping calendar of the area in accordance with the late onset of the rain in the farming season. For the farming season of 2012, farm plots in the area were prepared awaiting the rains to commence with sowing as early as the beginning of May. However, adequate ('real') rains started falling, albeit scantily, in late June. A farmer disclosed in an interview that:

“[...] the rainfall is very poor as compared to the past. In the past 8 years or more, we used to sow in March/April when the rains set in. But now in June and even July when we used to have abundant rains, you sometimes don't have anything nowadays. You cannot sow crops in time to have good yield, how do you survive or take care of your family?”²³

In relation to similar observations in Burkina Faso by Roncoli, Ingram and Kirshen (2002), the local farmers explained that the arrival of certain birds or insects, or the flowering of certain trees that are often used as proxies to predict the onset of the wet season or rains have become unreliable. These proxies and other events used to predict the start of the wet season are local weather or climatic narratives that have become part of the cognitive landscapes of the people over the years. They have over time become experienced or conversant with similar occurrences of 'false starts' of rainfall, which have constituted their *mental models* of climate change in the area.

According to farmers when the rains start, the long dry spells and high temperatures that come with the scorching sun often cause the crops to wither and die. They explain that the crops normally appear to be growing well after planting. But at the time the rain is expected to ensure good harvests, it is delayed or never comes.

The rain sometimes stops early in the season although it might have started late. This makes harvesting of crops like groundnuts, which need some amount of moisture to make the ground soft for easy uprooting difficult. Furthermore, the torrential and stormy nature of the downpours destroys the late millet and guinea corn. The stems of the millet crops (especially late millet) normally bend or break off and fall to the ground due to the intensity of the wind associated with the storms.

“The rainfall pattern is unpredictable. Some years, the time you need the rains to come it will not come. Then at the time all the crops have gone beyond the stage they need more rain, you will now see more rains coming. So the rain pattern here is just unpredictable. Sometimes we (*farmers*) will plant late because of the rain. We (*farmers*) depend on the rain to do everything. So when the rains delay like this year; we (*farmers*) plant late. Around July/August we should have been harvesting but that is not the case because the rains started late. So the rains are changing and it is getting bad every year.”²⁴

²³Atama, male farmer-Age: 36 years, Gowrie-Kunkua, 16th July, 2012, duration: 51mins.

²⁴Agati, male pharmacist-Age: 27years, Bongo-Nayire, 26th July, 2012, duration: 1hr 24mins.

In corroboration with similar findings by Nyantakyi-Frimpong and Bezner-Kerr (2015), local farmers disclosed that the intensity and heat from the scorching sun in recent times is unbearable. During the field research it was observed that for 2013, the months of January to the end of February, which were usually cold and dry months due to the activity of intercontinental dry Sahara (harmattan) winds, were indeed very hot. The scorching sun and heat period which normally has temperatures up to 37°C–40°C and normally starts in March of every year had already started in early February.

In as much as local narratives of changes in the climate may have been influenced over time by perceptions of a hitherto good rainfall regime, the effects of the seeming changes in the rainfall pattern, and that of insects and pests on agriculture in the area cannot be underestimated. The reliance of agricultural livelihoods on rainfall has exposed farmers to the risks and uncertainties associated with the seeming changes in the environment. These challenges seem to be exacerbated by ongoing global changes in climate and environmental systems. Also, issues relating to land and water scarcity as well as declining soil fertility amongst other constraints were also mentioned as challenges to agricultural livelihoods in the study area. These challenges act in tandem with environmental change stressors to affect agricultural productivity with implications for food security in the Bongo area. But how has agricultural productivity in the area generally fared in the face of these challenges? The next section tackles this question by looking at the state of agriculture in relation the main climatic parameter of rainfall in the study area.

5.3.2 Rainfall Variability and Agricultural Productivity

The Government of Ghana in collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and other agencies, have introduced newly improved and drought tolerant sorghum and early maturing varieties as well as other crop improvement programmes in the study area.²⁵ These interventions are geared at improving agricultural productivity in the most parts of northern Ghana. In spite of these ongoing efforts, the trend in crop yields according to local farmers has been a consistent decline since the droughts and famine that struck the Sahel in the early 1980s. Many of the farmers (41.03%) who were doing compound farming reported that on the average, they often made 1-2 maxi bags (50kg) for all the major staples (late and early millet, maize, groundnuts and sorghum) harvested for a season (Fig 5.4).

²⁵ <http://bongo.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/?arrow=nws&read=50992>, accessed 2.05. 2014.

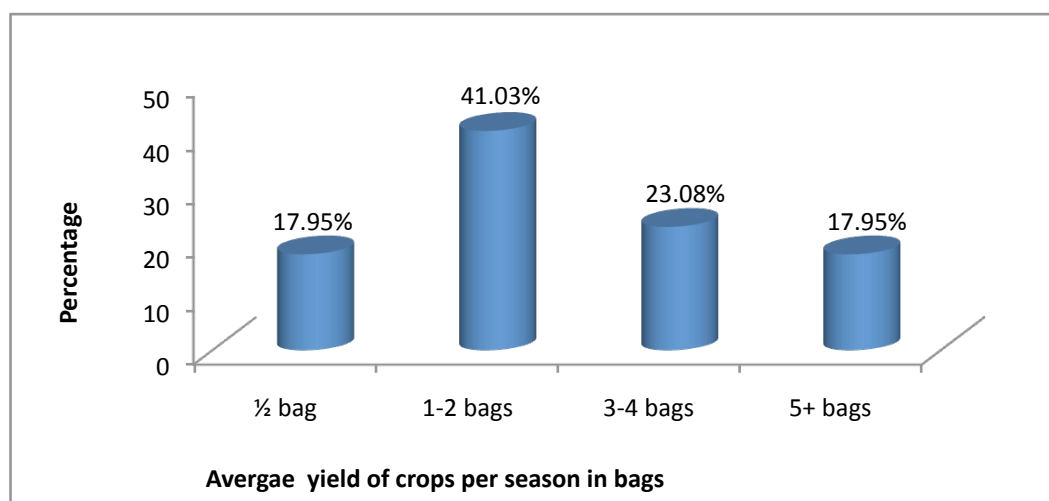


Figure 5.4: Average Yield of Major Staples (in bags)

Source: Composed from field survey data (2012/2013)

Other farmers also reported that they sometimes even get half a bag or less of crops harvested in a season depending on how ‘bad’ the season was in terms of rainfall and harvest. For farmers who indicated that they harvested between 3-5+ bags, they were mostly those who had additional bush farms or were into commercial irrigation farming around the Vea Irrigation Dam. Taking into account that agricultural production is often geared largely towards household consumption in the rural areas, more than half of the farmers as captured in the survey (68.13%) lamented that feeding the family was challenging because of the low crop yields that they harvest (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Crop Yields and Family Sustainance

Crop harvest unable to support family?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Because harvest was poor	62	68.13
Family so big so food not sufficient to feed family	21	23.08
All have been sold out	8	8.79
Total	91	100

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

The issue of large family sizes and hence more people to feed, or food being sold for money to solve other family problems were also cited as challenges to family sustainance. But, a look at statistics from MOFA (Table 5.4) on yields of selected crops in the Bongo District from 1995-2011 does not deviate much from the reports by famers. The data from MOFA show, for example that staples like millet, sorghum and guinea corn have generally not fared well in terms of yields over the years. From Table 5.4 the yield for the major staple of millet, for instance, consistently declined from 1.06t/ha in 1995 to an all-time low of 0.33t/ha in 2007. The year 2007 in particular, for instance, witnessed an uncharacteristic long dry spell in the

wet season. This was subsequently followed by heavy torrential rainfall and flooding that ravaged and destroyed crops and property in the whole of northern Ghana. Millet production received a boost with an increase to 0.86t/ha in 2008. But this increment has not been sustainable as there have been subsequent declines over the years.

Table 5.4: Yield Estimates of Selected Crops in the Bongo District, UER

Crop	Year								
	1995 (t/ha)	2004 (t/ha)	2005 (t/ha)	2006 (t/ha)	2007 (t/ha)	2008 (t/ha)	2009 (t/ha)	2010 (t/ha)	2011 (t/ha)
Maize	0.94	-	1.35	-	0.62	1.32	0.90	1.20	1.06
Rice	2.00	1.12	1.76	1.85	2.1	2.42	3.61	2.70	1.90
Millet	1.06	0.61	0.61	0.59	0.33	0.96	1.08	0.58	0.68
Sorghum	-	-	0.97	1.00	0.62	-	-	0.96	0.73
Guinea Corn	1.27	0.67	0.97	1.00	0.62	1.06	0.53	-	-
G/Nuts	0.59	0.68	0.97	0.96	0.50	1.04	1.03	0.98	0.64

Source: Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), (2012)²⁶

Apart from rice, similar observations of relatively poor yields can be made for sorghum, guinea corn, maize and groundnuts. Comparatively, rice production has been relatively better. The commercial production of rice around the Tono and Veia Irrigation Dams may account for the relatively good rice production. This notwithstanding, the use of agricultural inputs and labour intensive methods are also contributory factors. The use of fertiliser, chemicals to control weeds and pests, government programmes and interventions at improving rice production, and market for the produce give a better explanation for the relatively good rice production.

Some farmers indicated that they sometimes have to sell some of their livestock to provide income to purchase food for the family or upkeep of household. For families faced with food shortages without other sources of income, they often rely on other family members for support. The social capital borne out of familial relations and social networks become very important in times of agricultural adversity and food shortage. This social capital is often translated in the form of social solidarity that families and community members offer to each other through acts of reciprocity. It is however revealed that social solidarity, which was hitherto a virtue and a potent form of social capital in times of distress for many families, is waning in many rural communities of the study area. Social solidarity in recent times is much more visible at the community level in terms of sectional or communal farming, funerals and

²⁶ Yield estimates from Ministry of Food and Agriculture, U/East Regional Office, Bolgatanga

other social events. But the same cannot be said of solidarity or support at the family or household level. The seeming decline in social support at the family level has variously been attributed to economic hardship, social change and the mistrust that had ‘eaten’ deep into the society. People are now more concerned or aligned to their immediate nuclear family with little or no regard to the welfare or concerns of extended family relations.

The research highlights that the inability of people to adequately produce or command enough food as part of their entitlement bundle needed for sustenance has exposed them to hunger as a result of food scarcity. With the Bongo District experiencing high levels of poverty, the effects of rainfall variability on agriculture have undoubtedly worsened the plight of people in the area. Furthermore, the decline in the social solidarity that had hitherto served as a potent safety net in times of agricultural adversity and distress can also be seen to exacerbate the vulnerabilities of the people. The shock that comes with some of these climatic uncertainties or risks sometimes undermines the resiliency or capacities of people to be able to cope. This is because people’s livelihoods are sometimes overwhelmed, whereas the social systems of support are also dying out.

The issues of rainfall variability, flooding, seasonal dry spells and high temperatures may serve as environmental risks that pose challenges to agricultural livelihoods and wellbeing of people in the district. However, other background factors or challenges are also reported as affecting livelihoods and agriculture in the study area. These factors, which are environmental and structural in nature, act in tandem with each other to pose some shocks to the livelihoods of people. This is especially the case for local farmers who are into irrigation farming around the Vea Irrigation Dam. These factors, as revealed by the research, ranged from issues of water scarcity, lack of inputs to declining soil fertility amongst other factors that poses challenges to agricultural production in the area. The next section examines these institutional-structural and environmental factors affecting agriculture in the area.

5.4 Institutional-Structural and Environmental Challenges to Agricultural Production

The availability of water is vital to any effective agricultural production across the globe. The IPCC (2007a) report notes that water scarcity threatens the survival of bio-life, agricultural production and will most likely be the cause of conflicts across the globe in the near future. These effects will particularly be enormous for sub-Saharan African countries that depend largely on water resources for irrigation and other agricultural purposes.

The Bongo area has been vulnerable to water scarcity over the years. This is especially the case for farmers who are into irrigation farming around the Veia Dam. At the commencement of the research (June/July, 2012), many of the streams, dams and riverbeds in the Bongo area had dried up. In spite of the fact that the period was in the wet farming season, the water in the Veia Dam had retreated to a very low level. The hope of water filling up the dam for dry season farming looked bleak as the rains at the time had not even started for farming in the wet season. The dilapidated gutters and canals that channel water to the fields for irrigation compounded the situation.

“[...] the only place that helps us is the dam over there. In the dry season we go there to farm. I have been farming on my own for a long time but recently went for a loan to do the farming. Initially there were good gutters there. But now the gutters are broken. Because the gutters are broken, when they open the water it washes everything away. With rice in particular, when you sow it, there are days that you should provide water to irrigate the plots. But because the gutters are broken, when you apply the fertiliser and they just open the water it will come and wash everything away. You see that some of the plots are not being cultivated simply because of the gutters. Initially the gutters used to run meters away and supply those plots with water. But because they are broken, the water cannot get to those areas. It spreads out and just floods those small plots around instead of your rice farm or plot ahead.”²⁷

Sometimes when the water is allowed to flow through the broken gutters, it mostly overflows or better still washes away the crops and fertiliser that has been applied. Also, the irregular opening or problematic management of the water (37.86%) from the dam to irrigate crops, according to farmers, was hampering production (Fig 5.5).

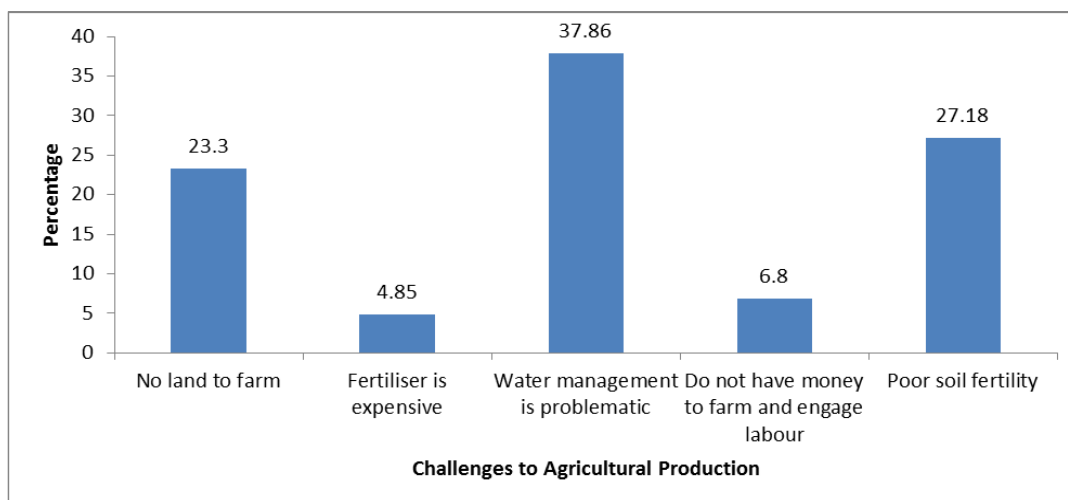


Figure 5.5: Challenges to Agricultural Production

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

In the study area, compound farming is the common and main system of farming. With this type of farming, plots adjoining the compound are continuously cropped. The persistent cultivation of plots and destruction of forest vegetation have exposed the soil to erosion and

²⁷ Male participant, Focus Group Interview, Gowrie-Kunkua, 14th August, 2012, duration: 57mins.

hence a decline in soil fertility. As a result, people have now resorted to cultivating bush plots where the land is relatively fertile in comparison with the plots adjoining the compound. When asked why people were going long distances to cultivate bush plots, a farmer explained that:

“The fertility of the soil is a main factor. That is why people are moving out of the community to the bush. Because as you go down every year, you are tilling the land without adding any manure and other things to it. The main source of manure we depend on is the one from animal waste (*droppings*). It is now that we are getting this fertiliser (*chemical*) and others, and we are using that on the plots in the bush. So mostly, we are moving out to the bush to do the major farming.”²⁶

The main means of fertilising the soil in the rural communities is through animal droppings, kitchen waste and compost. Over the years, the use of cattle and animal droppings from the kraal located within the compound has not been effective. This is because cattle have now become scarce in the area as a result of deaths from diseases, sale for income and rustling in the area. Moreover, the practice of keeping cattle within the main entrance to the compound is also gradually fading out because of the associated health implications and challenges.

Except in the farming season when cattle are herded or kept in a kraal, they are mostly allowed to roam and graze in the open range system. As a result, cow droppings are sometimes littered or scattered over distant fields. Therefore, farmers will normally have to go round picking animal droppings in order to store and spread them on their plots at the start of the farming season. Because of the relative decline in herds of cattle nowadays, the farmers complain that the picking of droppings have become a competitive venture in the area. Many families now set out during the dry season to pick animal droppings to store for spreading at the start of the farming season. This makes it difficult for one to have as much as possible to spread on the fields.

“[...] the fertility of the soil is also included. Because when you do not have enough manure; you know we deal mostly with compound manure (*animal droppings*) and this current one (*chemical fertilizer*). The compound manure does well with the crops we grow right now. Suppose you do not have the animals and you are a lazy man, such that during the dry season you do not go round to pick the cow dung (*droppings*) to store them so that when the rains come you start to spread them on your farm, then automatically you cannot get a good yield.”²⁷

For those who are doing irrigation farming around the Veia dam, it was relatively difficult to access chemical fertiliser that was being subsidised by the government. The cost of fertiliser and other inputs are expensive for most farmers to also afford. The issue of chemical fertiliser being diverted by the authorities for other interests was a problem people were contending with in the area. The complaint is that some of the fertiliser meant for farmers is sometimes either distributed amongst political party faithful or smuggled into neighbouring Burkina

Faso to sell at exorbitant prices. Although these allegations could not independently be verified at the time of the research, several efforts to speak to authorities at the Veia Irrigation Project office on the concerns of the farmers proved futile. The authorities could not be reached to solicit their views as they were almost always absent or occupied with other engagements during visits.

In spite of this, the smuggling of agricultural inputs and produce to Burkina Faso is a problem that has lingered for a long time even at the regional level. The diversion of fertiliser by authorities has undermined the ability of local farmers to effectively engage in farming in order to adequately command their food entitlements. The alleged actions of the irrigation project authorities are institutional ‘bottlenecks’ that tend to affect agricultural production in the area. The inability to effectively engage in agricultural livelihoods is a ‘shock’ to local farmers. The ‘shock’ comes as a result of costs associated with the cash and labour investments farmers sometimes make on the plots. Those who take loans and credit are sometimes unable to pay back or face the daunting task of having to commit meagre resources into paying back the loans. The exploitation and marginalisation of people have worsened the poverty situation in the district. People thus become vulnerable to risks associated with hunger because of food shortage and poverty.

Land, as highlighted by the SLF, is an important livelihood asset that can both be affected by the vulnerability context of poor people or transforming structures or processes. People depend on land for farming and settlement. For most parts of northern Ghana, issues of land ownership and usufruct rights have been at the centre of land disputes (Tonah, 2002). As a collective resource therefore, land is crucial to household production in northern Ghana. However, land in the Bongo area has increasingly become scarce with population growth over the years. Population growth and expansion of cropped areas have led to the increasing fragmentation of land amongst families into smaller plots with implications for agricultural productivity. Interestingly, the problem of scarcity and fragmentation of land in the area is perhaps summed up in Konnings’ (1981: 6) observations that “fragmentation of land through the existing inheritance pattern, rapidly deteriorating soil conditions and erosion contribute to the increasing land shortage.” Whereas population growth has over time contributed to the mounting pressure on limited arable land, the rocky landscape of the Bongo area may have compounded the land scarcity problem.

Averagely, farming households in the study area have plots (including bush plots) ranging from half to four acres depending on the size or number of members. People who reported as doing ‘large scale’ farming (rice irrigation, groundnut and maize farming) in the bush plus compound farming had plots ranging between 5-10acres. Land had become scarce in the communities such that it was relatively difficult to do large-scale crop farming for family sustenance. Farmers are of the view that when the land is even available, one is confronted with the problem of planting his or her crops late. The delay in the onset of the rains partly explains the lateness. Also, the inability to get a tractor or bullock plough to till the land early enough is a major challenge.

“The major challenge is the lack of tractors to plough the plots on a large scale for you to cultivate in large quantities for consumption. But if the tractor is available, where is the money? No one will come and plough your land for you for free. They have to take money from you. What I do is to use the hand to weed. This manual work cannot help you to cultivate on a larger scale. I do it on a small scale to feed the family; that is the major challenge.”²⁸

The lack of adequate physical and human capital or assets in terms of production equipment and labour shortage respectively, had made farmers more vulnerable to the environmental risks. People are unable to acquire inputs such as tractors and ploughs or hire extra labour for agricultural production. Compounding the situation is the high cost involved in acquiring these services. The vulnerability of the people in this regard relates to the economic space of vulnerability as noted in Watt and Bohle’s (1993) ‘causal structure of vulnerability’.

In spite of the varying perceptions about environmental change and rainfall variability, the climatic situation in comparison with the status quo many years ago may, however, be suspect due to the short memory that people sometimes have about past events. This is more likely the case because humans as a common tendency often try to “predict the future (*environmental changes*) on the basis of more or less incomplete information and experience regarding the past and present, which are largely embedded in traditional knowledge” (Casimir, 2009: 27) (*emphasis by the author*). The rural folks in the study area may therefore not be equipped with the necessary equipment to record and do scientific analysis of the climatic situation overtime in order to make informed claims of the changes in the environment and rainfall pattern in comparison with former times.

It is worthy to mention that the perception of environmental events and the kind of response a person may make is influenced greatly by the shared expectations and experiences in the study area. These shared expectations or ‘cultural consensus’ and experiences amongst the

²⁸ Nsor, Male Farmer-Age:40 years, Gowrie-Nayire, 20th July, 2012, duration: 45mins.

people shape what is perceived as good or bad, dangerous or an unusual happening, and how to deal with it. These experiences have with time become part of people's cognitive landscapes in the area. The varying perceptions and accumulated experiences of people in the district therefore inform the kind of response that they make in the quest to deal with their vulnerability context.

The people's belief in the power of gods, spirits of ancestors and rainmakers to withhold or cause poor yields has become part of their cognitive landscapes. In this light, it is therefore probable that every misfortune like agricultural adversity, lack of rain, floods and sicknesses are offered a spiritual or sociological explanation. The habitus or specific mental models that have been constructed by people and upon which they give meaning to possible causes of uncertainties also informs the strategies or responses taken to deal with the perceived uncertainties or risks. Environmental risks in the Bongo area have been given a mixture of cultural and scientific explanations. But the kinds of interventions often sanctioned to address these risks are influenced by perceptions as to whether it is *official* or *unofficial risk*.

Official risk, as explained by Eguavoen *et al.* (2013), has to do with general threats to human survival and is often more recognised formally by governments, and often also the focus of aid subvention and policy formulation. Unofficial risk, on the other hand, is more associated with the social and cultural realms where threats or risks to the wellbeing of humans cannot be scientifically explained. The research in Bongo has already shown that both cultural and scientific models of blame seem to dominate the environmental change and risk narratives in the study area. However, the recognition given on the part of government and aid agencies to official risks in the area has given rise to interventions associated more with scientific models of blame than cultural explanations to environmental risks. The various interventions aimed at addressing the ongoing environmental and climatic changes in the study area are discussed below.

5.5 Efforts at Tackling Environmental Risks

In the face of environmental risks in the Bongo area, attempts have been made to deal with the associated effects. The visible interventions at environmental change and risks in the study area have mostly been geared towards scientific models of blame. The government in conjunction with various non-governmental organisations and local authorities have initiated attempts at sensitising people and recommending ways to deal with risks and effects associated with ongoing environmental change in the UER and most parts of northern Ghana.

Additionally, the chief of the area has with the support of assembly members, local opinion leaders of the various area and town councils, as well as sub-chiefs ordered a stop to the wanton cutting down of trees in all the communities. People in the various rural communities have also been urged to plant more trees. These moves are aimed at checking the increasing loss of vegetation, land degradation and poor rainfall activity in the district.

The chief has with financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the ‘Green Bongo for Sustainable Environment’ project in 2009 (GNA, 2009) (Fig 5.6). The aim of the project was to embark on an ‘aggressive’ tree planting in 32 communities of the Bongo District. As part of the project, people are to be educated to reduce bush fires, stop cutting down trees and plant more trees. Furthermore, people are encouraged to adopt efficient farming methods. These efforts are aimed at tackling flooding, deforestation and environmental deterioration with the view to stemming the effects of climate variability in the area.



Figure 5.6: Green Bongo for Sustainable Environment

Source: Author's own photo (2012)

As has been common with the implementation of most development projects in developing countries, the achievement of the goals of the tree planting project is beset with challenges. As a result, some of the locals have expressed their reservations about the success of the project, as they did not see any progress or any physical signs of tree planting in the communities. The complaint amongst people is the inability to access the plant seedlings the project has supposedly earmarked to be distributed to the various communities. Informants have reportedly tried to access some of the seedlings at the designated nurseries but could not

get some to transplant. With some members of the community expressing their unhappiness, further attempts were made to find out about the progress of the project. When an informant was asked about the awareness of the tree planting project initiated by the chief, he affirmed that:

“Yes I have heard about ‘Green Bongo’ project. I personally took an interest and went there. I did not see anything. Because when you are going towards Bawku, there is a dam located on the way. We were told they nurse seedlings there. I went there to see, there was nothing there. If they have moved the seedlings to a different place, I don’t know. The chief initiated it. But let me tell you; I can be honest, it is only paper work. I have been there to see whether I can get the seedlings to come and plant but I did not get anything. I rather went to Burkina Faso and bought mango seedlings. If I take you to my house right now, I planted those mangoes and they are surviving. But right now if you want to get seedlings for free, go to Parks and Gardens-Bolga. That is the only place you get seedlings.”²⁹

Attempts made to speak to authorities on the claims of the people regarding the project did not materialise because of his busy schedule. A report, however by the Chronicle (2011), quotes the chief as indicating that over 150,000 trees with a survival rate of 60 percent have been planted since 2008. Also, over 1000 additional grafted mango seedlings were reported as having been secured for distribution amongst communities. Aside from the fact that this information could not independently be verified, the only sight of the ongoing project was perhaps the old sign posts located in the community.

Another tree planting project ongoing in many parts of the UER and northern Ghana is the government sponsored Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) afforestation project. At a cost of GH¢32 million (approximately 8 million Euro), the project aims at planting 50 million seedlings of varying tree species in the 50 districts of the SADA catchment area (Chronicle, 2012). The tree planting is geared towards mitigating climate and environmental change as well as enhancing economic prosperity in the northern savannah zone of the country. As has often been the case with government-sponsored projects in the country, the SADA afforestation project is not also without challenges and allegations of financial malfeasance. Media investigations have particularly been critical of SADA and the implementation of the afforestation project.³⁰

In spite of the reservations, an evaluation by the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources of the University for Development Studies suggests that the tree planting was progressing with a high survival rate. Several other campaigns and programmes are ongoing in northern Ghana to sensitise the people on the realities of climate change and ways to combat its associated

²⁹ Doe, Male Civil Servant-Age:30 years, Namoo, 19th October, 2012, duration: 36mins.

³⁰ <http://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2014/April-15th/sada-ghc32m-afforestation-project-go-waste.php>, accessed 15.08.2014.

effects. The sensitisations are done via educational campaigns through durbars and radio programmes. The signboard in Fig 5.7 for instance shows an advertisement warning and suggesting ways at tackling climate change in the study area.



Figure 5.7: Billboard Warning that Climate Change is Real in UER

Source: Author's own photo (2013)

Aside from the formal institutional efforts, suggestions on the part of the people as to the ways to tackle climate and environmental change in the study area resonate with views of the scientific and cultural models of blame. In addition to calls for people to adhere and respect customs, concerted efforts at stopping the indiscriminate felling of trees and bush burning is vital to checking the continuous environmental deterioration and its associated effects in the area.

Despite these calls, the prospect of stopping or reducing the rate at which trees are cut is bleak. This is because many people in their quest to expand cropping area are resorting to farming on bush plots (*moe*). The implication is that people will continue to cut and clear more trees and vegetation to expand their farm plots and crop production. Some local farmers have indeed registered their displeasure at the campaign and order by the chief of the area for people to stop cutting trees in the various communities. For the local farmers who did not appear to identify with this directive, they suggested that trees do not only limit the space available for farming in the wake of land scarcity but serve as hideouts for birds and insects which invade, feed and destroy their crops. One of the farmers explained in an interview that:

“[...] although the fertility of the soil has declined, the birds have also increased in their numbers as compared to those days in the past. At the time, you could not find insects and birds destroying the farms like you see today. Besides, we have been asked not to cut down the trees and that we should

plant more trees; we have planted the trees all over and now the birds have taken the trees as their 'humble abode'. They perch and nest there, and come down to take all our millet away and we suffer [...].”²²

As highlighted in the interview above, some of the farmers therefore see the planting of more trees as potential hideouts for birds and insects to destroy their crops. For these farmers, therefore, the prospect of encouraging others to refrain from cutting down trees is bleak. Moreover, with economic hardship and poverty still very endemic in the area, the hope that people will utilise other sources of sustainable energy other than fuel wood does not look likely. What this means is that, more people will depend on fuel wood while others will basically see the production of charcoal and the sale of fuel wood as an alternative source of income.

5.6 Discussion and Conclusion

The foregoing discussion suggests that people and agricultural livelihoods in the study area are exposed to environmental risks. The effects of ongoing changes in the global climatic system and the impact of human activities on the environment serve as catalysts to environmental change and climatic variability in the area. The perceptions of people with regard to local climatic change translate more into the ongoing considerable seasonal rainfall variability and warm temperatures in the area. Converging largely with similar observations on studies conducted in Burkina Faso and other parts of northern Ghana, the research point to the fact that the delay in the onset of rains in the wet season has undoubtedly disrupted the cropping calendar. The seasonality of agriculture and its dependence on rainfall activity in the area has compounded the seeming food insecurity and poverty situation. With coping capacities sometimes overwhelmed, people have increasingly become vulnerable.

Rainfall variability and increasing temperatures in the recent years may seem to be the case in the study area. However, historical rainfall data and various models seem to suggest that the situation is not new. That is to say, rainfall anomalies and warm temperatures are normal climatic occurrences that have characterised the West African region for a long time. Climatic projections point to a progressively wetter regime in the West Africa. But it is undeniable the effects climatic anomalies have become sources of 'unfreedom' that stifles people's ability to farm for their sustenance.

Compounding these vulnerabilities is land scarcity. Population pressure on scarce land has exacerbated the poverty and vulnerability context of the people. This pressure emanates from population growth over the years, which has contributed to increasing fragmentation of family farm plots. In this vein, Konnings (1981: 6) is of the opinion that the shortage of land in the area “combined with declining soil fertility, increasing erosion, the low and unreliable rainfall, and simple production techniques make each successful year’s survival precarious.” The availability of food based on previous years’ experience of good harvest in the area is no longer an assurance. What has become established, as part of the cognitive landscapes of the people, is no more a good source of reference or basis to predict environmental events.

More importantly, the observable divergence in perceptions as to the causes of climate and environmental change reinforces the profound influence that the socio-cultural worldview and level of education have on the people’s appreciation of environmental events. Although the research findings illustrates that people have different convictions about the causes of climate change in the area, their awareness of the ensuing anomalies lends credence to the fact that the phenomenon is affecting agriculture, livelihoods and health of the people in the area. These effects can be seen to be crosscutting, irrespective of the gender, age and economic conditions.

For households that have external sources of income or migrant members who remit home, they are often able to cope in the advent of any stress. Several studies emphasise migration in northern Ghana as principally influenced by climatic and environmental changes. The discourses on migration seem to suggest climatic variability and risks associated with environmental change as the primary precursors of movement in northern Ghana. However, the nature of migration patterns in the area over time calls for the need to transcend the mono-causal explanation to migration of people in northern Ghana.

The pattern of migration has constantly evolved in the wake of ongoing climatic variability and environmental deterioration in the area. The phenomenon having become common and part of the way of life of people raises questions about the role or extent to which environmental change and risks play in dictating migration in the study area. This brings into perspective the divergent ‘minimalist’ and ‘maximalist’ views on environmental change and migration (Suhrke, 1994). An examination of migration dynamics in the following chapter will provide the basis for insights into the complex interplay of varying factors and discursive processes that surround the migration-environmental change nexus in northern Ghana.

Chapter Six

Cultures of Migration

6.1 Introduction

Several reasons and theories have evolved to explain migration dynamics across the globe. ‘Environmental maximalist’ school of thought endorses climate or environmental change as crucial in precipitating the migration of people and in many cases the underlying cause of conflicts in many societies. On the other hand, the ‘environmental minimalist’ perspective expresses reservations about the direct causal relationship between environmental change and migration (Suhrke, 1994). They emphasise environmental change as a background factor that contribute to population movement.

An appreciation of human mobility in Africa, however, gives an impression of a phenomenon that is part of the daily activities and experiences of people in traditional societies (Rain, 1999). The evolving cultures of migration do not only serve to sustain the persistent migration of people, but brings into question the extent to which environmental change can be enumerated as a direct cause of migration. These arguments may suffice in their own right depending on the context and place. However, the abundance of varying perspectives on migration depicts a situation of highly contested views on the migration-environmental change nexus. The debate may rage on, but it is undeniable that migrant remittances and the transfer of new knowledge are important to the economic development and improvement of household welfare and social resilience in many developing countries.

In the Bongo District, migration is an important feature of the population dynamics of the people. Interestingly, oral folklore amongst almost all the ethnic groups in northern Ghana suggests each group migrated from elsewhere to settle at their present locations. Precolonial migration in northern Ghana was mainly of small-scale movements. However, migration and the direction of movement gathered pace with the arrival of European missionaries and colonialism in the country.

Yet, migration as a travelling idea is envisioned as being ‘translated’ through different actors or mediators who convey or disseminate information and new ideas in the various communities. The phenomenon has through constant negotiations between various actors or mediators metamorphosed to become an important part of the value system in rural communities. At the same time, environmental risks in the communities have had dire

consequences for the people. But if the migration trend in the study area has been the persistent movement of people since time immemorial, what are the underlying factors that seem to sustain the persistent outmigration of people? How does environmental risks contribute to migratory patterns in the area? Taking the varying migration theories into account, the chapter draws on the concepts of ‘cultures of migration’ as ‘discursive space’ and ‘travelling models (ideas)’ to examine the factors underlying migration and the associated dynamics in the Bongo District.

To do this, the chapter proceeds first of all by examining the migration experience of people in the district. This is followed by a discussion on the factors underlying migration, decision-making and the persons involved in the migration process. In the third section, the chapter brings to light the migration trends observed and the preferred places of destination. The fourth section examines in-migration and challenges confronting in-migrants in the study area. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary and discussion of the major findings of the research in relation to theory.

6.2 Migration Experience

In Ghana, the migration of people in search of farmland, to engage in waged labour, visit family relations or flight from disaster and warfare has been part of the social lives of people. Migration in the study area can thus be seen as a normal activity and not a recent phenomenon. From the research and informal discussions with people in the various communities, what seems apparent is that every nine in ten persons have had migration experience, or at least have a relation who has migrated or living and working somewhere else other than the study area or home community.

About 81 percent of respondents interviewed in the household survey reported as having ever migrated to work or visited family relations for some time outside of the home community (Fig 6.1). What was revealing is that even people who reported as having migrated to visit family relations or friends ended up working to support family or accumulate some income.

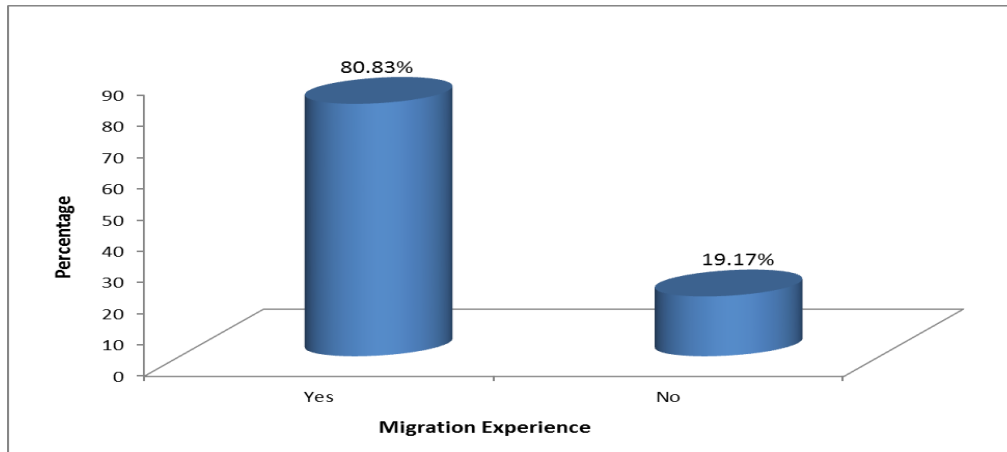


Figure 6.1: Migration Experience

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

For people who indicated they had no migration experience at all, they were either planning on travelling in the near future or had relations who had migrated and were living in the south of the country. The reasons they advanced for not having ‘travelled’ or migrated before related to issues of not having money to embark on the journey or waiting to finish up the season’s farming activities as well as not being able to leave because of ailing or aged parents. Despite these constraints, people were planning on migrating to experience the proverbial ‘bush’ or ‘Kumasi’ (often used to refer to southern Ghana).

The overwhelming illustration of the migration experience of people brings into focus the extent to which migration is pronounced in the study area. The deep rootedness of migration in the area corroborates Fortes’ (1936) observations amongst the Tallensi category of the Frafra of the study area. He noted that many able-bodied persons had at least been involved in some form of migration to the south (Ashanti) to work or visit over time in the area. In words of Hart (1971: 25), migration is a “universal phenomenon in Frafra life, leaving no family unaffected.” The drive to experience the unknown (‘bush’) is seen as a means to the acquisition of wisdom and success in life. The experience is a ‘token’ of cultural significance that enables one to be able to endure the rigors and adversities of life. As a result, it has become conventional for one to travel, at least once in his/her lifetime, to experience the ‘bush’ and modernity, which lies outside and beyond the confines of the home village to the south. An informant further intimated that:

“[...] I can say that, historically all energetic young men in this community; for you to be successful you had to move down-south (*southern Ghana/Kumasi*). Previously, that was the mentality of the people here. So at that time, anytime you are getting to 18 years you start thinking of how you can get

down-south to do something (*work*). We have one rainy season. So after that rainy season, they will go down-south to work and come back the next rainy season.”³¹

The different experiences and new ideas transmitted or translated from other places by migrants in the various communities have triggered some changes in values, perceptions and socio-cultural systems in the study area. These changing constellations in what is deemed as prestigious or successful has resulted in migration being reified in the minds of the people and becoming part of the value system of the society. Consequently, migration in the various communities of the study area has become a ‘token’ of prestige and accomplishment. The phenomenon is an adventure upon which almost every person in the study area relishes the dream or motivation to have the ‘down-south’ (southern Ghana) experience.

In this regard, migration in the society is not only because of the economic benefits that often come with it, but also the experience, prestige and recognition that sometimes comes with being a ‘successful’ migrant. The phenomenon, in this sense has become a life-long venture most people have undertaken or wish to undertake as it became apparent throughout the research. The migrant networks that evolve have become a resource upon which people draw upon in their bid to migrate. Having highlighted how migration has become a normal phenomenon and assumed some societal value, it is important to delve into the underlying factors that explain the migration of people in the Bongo District.

6.3 Factors Underlying Migration in the Bongo Area

The general classical economic theories of migration have stressed the role of structural forces (economic and environmental) in precipitating migration. Protagonists of these views claim that unfavourable conditions at the place of origin tend to push people out while the perceived better living conditions attract people to the destination region. Nonetheless, the tendency to move and the place of destination for most people is often informed first of all by the context or circumstances that may confront an individual. Migration in the study area is influenced by complex multi-causal factors, which are socio-economic and environmental in nature. With migration having been ongoing since time immemorial in the Bongo society, it is imperative to bring into perspective the historical antecedents that have contributed to establishing the phenomenon as part of the social organisation of people in the area. These historical antecedents are examined below.

³¹ Atiah, Farmer, Age: 41 years , Gorogo, 26th July, 2012, duration: 1hr: 05mins.

6.3.1 Historical Antecedents of Migration in the Bongo Area

The people of the Bongo District are Frafras (Gurunsi). Frafras in the history of population movements in Ghana are reputed to be a highly mobile and hardworking people. Their mobility is evidenced by their ever presence in the informal labour economy in southern Ghana since colonial times. Frafra migration perhaps gathered momentum with their participation in the colonial capitalist labour economy and their subsequent conscription into the then Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF).

Historically, colonial structures in a way contributed to enticing people to migrate to the south of the country by literally tempting or forcibly recruiting them to work in the south. The people of northern Ghana after having initially been deliberately dislodged from their main livelihood of small-scale peasant farming, the colonial capitalist predatory inducements ensured the constant provision of cheap and hardworking labour for their economic establishments in the south as far back as 1902 (Songsore, 2011).

Reflecting much earlier about the labour migration situation in northern Ghana, Dickson (1968: 690) notes that “young men in northern Ghana were more attracted to the gold mines and cacao farms in Ashanti and southern Ghana than to the cotton farms. Paradoxically, it was the Government (*colonial administration*), which while seeking to encourage commercial agriculture in northern Ghana also tempted the young men to go south. This began in 1906 after a carefully selected group of young men from all over Northern Ghana were taken on a conducted tour of the gold mines, where they were highly impressed by the decent and higher standards of living enjoyed by the mining employees” (*emphasis by the author*). A consequence of this was the subsequent abandoning of farms and the unprecedented migration of economically active peasants from northern Ghana to the south to work in the mines.

The sustained voluntary migration of people from the area after independence contributed to many of them working in the mines and plantations in southern Ghana. Many others also worked in the Ghana Police Force at the time and the public sector as labourers. But an important aspect of these movements was that, most migrants never lost the connection with the family and home community. They were always in a constant touch with relations back at home and occasionally returned to visit home. The ideas and information that constantly trickled from these migrants coupled with the demand for cheap labour in the capitalist economy of the south served to sustain the migration from the area.

Apart from colonial influences, the Bongo people believe that Mossi traders and merchants from neighbouring Burkina Faso passing through the area since precolonial times triggered the interest or desire to migrate amongst the people as in other parts of northern Ghana. As recounted during the research, the Mossi migrants or merchants used to pass through Bongo to trade their goods at the historical commercial town of Salaga in the Northern Region and also the big town of Kumasi in Ashanti.

“[...] I know migration, very well here in Bongo. We used to sit here and donkeys, a lot of them come from Burkina Faso; it was Upper Volta at the time. The Mossis will come here; in fact they needed kola and salt. But they were bringing us date palm. The Mossis call it ‘*gabire*’. When they bring it here, then they continue down south. They come back again on the same donkeys with salt when they are going up in front of my house here, right here. They use to come in cycles: go and come; that is how they were migrating – that is the Mossis. So formally, it is the Mossi who taught us how to go to Kumasi (*southern Ghana*). Kumasi was the next brisk business town. It is the Mossi migration that taught Bongo or for that matter the people of the Upper East Region how to move down to Kumasi. And now we are moving out too. I saw it because the Mossis are; I mean we even look at them as our ancestors. So it is the Mossi migration that made our people to follow.”³²

Indigenes of Bongo and its environs see the Mossis as their ancestors and as such believe they all migrated from Mamprungu Kingdom to settle at their present locations. Aside from these convictions, the Mossi are also traders who are notable for the sale of quality cloths that are important material for the sewing of local smocks and gowns for men. For most people therefore, the persistent migration to southern Ghana may have been influenced by Mossi traders and merchants who used to pass through the area to the south of the country. This transit sometimes involved camping for longer periods in the area.

The cultural contact in a way inculcated that motivation or idea to migrate to also acquire items like salt and kola in the south that were important commodities in the northern territories at the time. That is to say, migration to the south of the country as a travelling idea in the Bongo area may have been ‘translated’ by Mossi merchants constantly passing through the town as mediators. People at the sight and interaction with the transiting Mossi and other migrant traders may have imbibed the tendency to also travel. Moreover, the prospect of getting exotic commodities like kola and salt which were valuable items at the time and to trade in hide and shea butter had also stimulated the interest of people to also sojourn towards the south of the country.

Apart from these historical happenings and trans-caravan trade which partly influenced the migration of people, the significance of the infamous relocation of Frafra from the Bongo area to Damongo in the Northern Region as part of the Gonja Resettlement Scheme in 1951

³² Mr. Jimmy, Retired Civil Servant, Bongo-Nayiri, Age: 60 years, 16th October, 2012, duration: 56mins.

cannot be underestimated. With the problem of population pressure looming in the UER, the resettlement scheme was aimed at initiating mechanised farming to raise foodstuff production with the resettlement of Frafra farmers from the Bongo area to the thinly populated Damongo area (GSS, 1995). Although the resettlement scheme could not be sustained due to its own challenges, it succeeded in moving a significant chunk of Frafra from their home communities with many believed to still be living in the Damongo area (Akwabi-Ameyaw, 1990, cited in GSS, 1995).

The influence of these historical antecedents at creating a culture of migration in the area cannot be underestimated. In addition, several other factors were also enumerated as motivations or reasons why outmigration was enduring in most communities of the study area. As many of the migrants often move in search of economic opportunities, it is important to bring into focus for the purposes of a better understanding, the multiplicity of socio-economic motivations that also come into play to dictate movements in the study area.

6.3.2 Economic Motivations: Migration as a Coping Strategy?

The quest to look for jobs or waged labour economy in the urban cores of the south also featured prominently during the research. The situation of failing agriculture coupled with general economic hardship in the area, according to the informants, did not seem to offer any better opportunity for individuals and families to live the better lives they so much envisage. As shown in Table 6.1, almost three-quarters of respondents for both the interviews and household survey respectively declared that they migrated to work or look for jobs.

Table 6.1: Reasons for Migrating by Interview Responses and Household Survey

Migration					
Interviews			Household Survey		
Reasons	Freq	Percentage(%)	Reasons	Freq	Percentage(%)
To look for Job/Work	42	71.19	To look for Job/Work	75	74.26
Visit Friends, adventure//Family relations/born there	9	15.25	To visit family relations and friends	20	19.80
For Education/School	6	10.17	Adventure/enjoy social amenities	3	2.97
Fled due to Customs (Bride price FGM, Witchcraft)	2	3.39	Witchcraft / customary practices	3	2.97
Total	59	100	Total	101	100

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

Ghana having been drawn into the global capitalist economic system and a party to the ECOWAS protocol had facilitated international trade in the country.³³ The infiltration of cheap quality agricultural produce like tomatoes from the neighbouring Burkina Faso and rice from Thailand and unfavourable pricing by local trader associations have contributed to dislodging local farmers who are into large scale tomato and rice farming in the area (Laube, Schraven and Awo, 2012). The situation coupled with unfavourable effects of climatic change stressors in terms of rainfall variability, long seasonal dry spells and floods have affected agriculture and exacerbated poverty in the area. With poverty being endemic and economic opportunities in the study area resigned to only small scale seasonal farming, migration presents an opportunity for people to earn money, become self-sufficient and gain new experiences outside of the home community.

“I went to Accra. I went there to work. I sold Kebab for eight years at the Army Officers Mess. I decided that I had to go there to work and get some small money. So I was able to earn some money to come and construct the room I am sleeping in now. Because of the nature of the work, I could not visit home regularly. I just stayed in Accra for eight years and was only able to visit for 2-3 months; I never came home to settle.”³⁴

The economic motivation to look for employment opportunities can be seen as one of the deciding factors accounting for migration from the Bongo District. Aside from being a coping strategy to reduce the number of persons on the meagre food harvest, according to informants, people migrate to look for jobs as a way to also make up for the idle time they sometimes have after the major farming season. Because majority of these migrants normally have little or no education, they often engage in menial and low income earning jobs. The influx of capitalist economic firms and industries in the country has created an insatiable demand for cheap labour. This has tended to attract the hitherto self-sufficient peasant farmers who migrate to exploit the ‘good’ wages that these economic establishments offer. These circumstances are in part reinforced by colonial or historical-structural forces, which have orchestrated an uneven development pattern between northern and southern Ghana.

The resolve of people to diversify or maximise their sources of income coupled with the structural demand for cheap labour to do low skilled and less paying jobs in southern Ghana contribute to the drive to migrate in the study area. Migrant households in the area were not all that significantly distinct from non-migrant ones in economic terms. Their relatively better conditions, however, created the urge for other members of the community to also migrate.

³³The ECOWAS protocol is a political decree that allows for the free movement of persons and goods within the West African sub-region.

³⁴ Ayariga, Migrant, Namoo, Age: 29 years, 19th October, 2014, duration: 31mins.

Moreover, people's experiences, network support and easy means of transport have facilitated movements and setting up a cumulative causation of migration in the various communities of the study area.

It is worthy to note that not all persons in the study area migrate for economic reasons, although many end up working at the places of destination. Most often, people also migrate to experience 'big' town life or visit places of interest just for a change. Indeed, persons such as these were unequivocal during interviews that they did not work at all during their stay at the place of destination. The purpose was always to spend some time with relations or for holidays. An informant discloses that:

"I normally go to Accra to spend my Christmas and New Year holidays and come back. I go there because I have family there, my brothers are there. Apart from that, I like Accra because I was born there. I go there to rest, have fun and come back to continue my work here. I don't go there to work or look for a job. Sometimes I decide to go myself or my brothers will call me to come. I don't stay in Accra because I have work contracts that I take to sew things like school uniforms for people."³⁵

The motivation to visit family relations, friends or for adventure to experience big town life outside the community are also driving factors dictating migration in the Bongo area. This motivation has also been confirmed by the fifth round of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS5) 2008. The countrywide survey showed that family consideration was the main impetus driving internal migration in the country (GSS, 2008). Normally, the family or friends are often the objects of attraction even if a person decides to migrate in pursuit of job opportunities.

"I travelled to Tema in Accra. I just went there to visit my friends there. Some are from Bongo here and they are there working. I know them and I have phone contact with them. They called me to come and my parents allowed me to go because they knew my friends I was going to stay with were good guys. So I went there to visit them and work to get money for my school fees and to get experience."³⁶

The interview excerpts show that people may migrate because they want to visit some family relations or friends but sometimes eventually end up working. These relations or friends serve as sources of information and support for potential migrants. This notwithstanding, most people especially young male migrants, travel to the south for adventure and to relieve themselves of intergenerational conflicts and control from elders.

As in many typical traditional African societies, being a young person in northern Ghana sometimes implies that your views are not considered very much in major decisions concerning the family. This marginalisation at the household or family level also comes along

³⁶ Kwame, Male Migrant, Bongo-Tingre, Age: 18 years, 11th September, 2012, duration: 15mins.

with being subservient and obedient to elders. What this invariably implies is that, in spite of the labour that an individual may offer, one normally does not have financial independence as a young person. In all contexts within northern Ghana, a young person according to Grindal (2003: 51) is “subservient to the wishes and demands of one’s elders. This is especially true economically; the young man has no financial independence because the product of the labour belongs to his father or father’s brother. In return, the father provides for the son’s needs, approves of a wife and arranges the bride price, and otherwise protects the son ritually under his auspices as a shrine owner.” Undoubtedly situations such as these sometimes breed tension between youths who rebel or oppose authority.

So for youths in the district who so much wish to enjoy some freedom and be independent, migration is often an option. In the Bongo area, for example, people sometimes feel that they are overly “restricted and prevented from doing certain things in the home. Sometimes it may be that they have a family problem, marital difficulties, educational problems and would want to travel to far away where they could have total freedom to do whatever they like with their lives without restrictions” (Mohammed and Apusigah, 2005: 50). Mostly the youth move to the city centres in the south of the country to wean themselves of marginalisation and control from elders and also experience big town life and enjoy things that come with being modern but abound only in the city.

Some of the youth in the study area admit that they sometimes go on adventure to southern Ghana, even without the consent or knowledge of parents and without any information about the destination area. For those who do not have the consent of parents or no financial means, they are often confronted with two scenarios. Firstly, one may clandestinely leave in the night by stealing a fowl, goat or any animal in the house to sell in order to finance the journey. In other instances, one can decide to steal money from the parents or better still borrow from friends or relations to embark on the journey. These unconventional strategies often adopted to leave for the south are common occurrences that have over time become normal and ‘silently’ acknowledged in the various communities. Fortes (1936) explains that while some migrants stealing away by night or absconding due to circumstances is common, the flight is often triggered by a crisis of some sort. Accounts from informants illustrates that what they do is to arrive and ask for any Frafra kin around. This fellow Frafra then also take up the responsibility of helping them settle into their new environment and to find jobs.

“[...] I migrated several times. When I was schooling in 1994, I went to Accra. From there I travelled to Brong Ahafo and Kumasi. I went to Abisim in Brong Ahafo just to look for greener pastures. I went

there just to do 'by-day' labourer work. I just got up and went there with my friends, we didn't know anyone there. When we arrived, we asked of the Frafra chief's house. So they took us there. We travelled during the farming season, so when we arrived, the following day people asked for 'by-day' labourers. So within a short time, we started working and became familiar with the place and we looked 'oga' (*big men*)."³⁷

The interview is indicative of how adventurous some youth can be. It emphasises the extent to which migration is deeply ingrained in the minds of people and how they can also risk by migrating even when they have little or no information of the destination area. The tendency to undertake this risk is facilitated not only by the drive for economic accumulation, but by the conviction that they will always find a fellow Frafra kin or other migrants of northern Ghana origins who will lend them the needed support.

"They (*Frafra kin*) will welcome and make you feel at home. Because here we have that sought of human affection for our neighbours so when you go there, you tell them that home is not 'fine' (*hardship*) that is why you are here. Even if there is no job or if the market (*sales*) is not moving on well they will retain and absorb you, and you will continue to work with them small-small."⁴²

Informed by these convictions as illustrated above, people are often predisposed to travel out even if they do not know anyone. This motivation emanates from the social networks and hometown associations that have evolved between migrants in the destination areas and people in the various communities. These networks tend to serve as vital social capital that forestalls any risks or costs that may come with migration. Migrants also use these networks to get information or quickly get jobs anytime they arrive. The presence of *mangazias*³⁸ and other northern ethnic groups who often have their various chiefs, other than a migrant's own kin group, is often enough to make one feel at home and welcome.

Generally, migrants of northern origins see fellow 'northerners' as family and the need to stick together in unity considering the 'hostile' environment and economic hardship that often characterise most urban centres and cities in the country (Amenga-Etego, 2011). Barbara Meier (2003: 61) explains that "*northerners*, as people from the three northern Ghanaian regions tend to call themselves to distinguish themselves from southern Ghanaians, normally explain their presence in town, or perhaps more to the point, their absence from home with the poor economy in the north." This sense of belonging tends to bind them and serve as a safety net for new arrivals in the south or places that they find themselves. Hence people are normally unperturbed about any risk that they may encounter should they decide to migrate out of their communities.

³⁷ Atanga, Male Trader, Bongo-Atombisko, Age:39 years, 10th September, 2012, duration: 34mins.

³⁸ Women's leader

The construction of new identities, the networks that ensue, as well as, the conflicting interests between migrants and those left behind, and the unconventional strategies employed to embark on a journey points to the migration process as a ‘discursive space’. They bring to light the risks and sometimes the odds that people will have to defy in order to migrate. These dynamics and contestations have become part of the migration cultures in northern Ghana. This is the case such that, stealing animals or money to leave at night and the cultural obligation to help one’s kin in the ‘bush’ have become normal and part of the cultural values of the society. As a result, the phenomenon has become established as part of the socialisation process in communities.

6.3.3 ‘Rites de Passage’: Migration for Experience

The quest to experience modernity and its social significance partly also explains the persistent outmigration in the area. Many people in the various communities make it an annual ‘ritual’ to travel to the south of the country when there is little or no economic activity after the wet farming season. Migration has become a measure of self-fulfilment, and for the youth, maturity or initiation into adulthood. Migrating out of the community to the ‘bush’ (Kumasi) is some form of enlightenment to one’s personal progress in life. Aside the independence that one enjoys through the money and resources acquired by migrating to the south to work, a ‘successful’ return to the home community demonstrate that a migrant is experienced and psychologically matured as a member of the society. Others also just migrate to have the experience of the different societies and how things are done in comparison with their communities.

“You see, when you travel out; normally the life at home and the one outside are not the same. It comes with some sense (*wisdom*). We don’t travel out for money alone, but also for experience too. The experience you get here, it is totally different when you get there (*southern Ghana*). From that experience, when you come back, you are able to cope with hardship and life. So, it is not basically because of money that we travel, but for experience.”²⁷

Sentiments such as this came out strongly, albeit contentiously, during focus group interviews that youth travelling to work in the south was some form of training or socialisation. Travelling to experience life in southern Ghana and perhaps work to accrue money was a *rite de passage* and a ‘springboard’ to moving away from outmoded lifestyles or ways of doing things (often referred to us ‘Colo’³⁹). It provided the means to experience all the things associated with ‘modernity’ like non-farm jobs, mobile phones, bicycles, new dressing, wealth and money.

³⁹ Colo: literally refers to “colonial”. Hence old or outmoded lifestyles or doing things are simply termed as “colo”; to wit colonial ways of doing things in Ghana.

“[...] another thing is also that people are becoming more aware of wealthy living and modern things. They want to wear jeans, colourful dresses and have white-collar jobs. But those things you cannot get them in Bongo here. So they will want to travel to the south. And you know when people get to travel down-south or out of the country, they tend to adopt different lifestyles that are strange or new to Bongo and its environs. They come back with new clothing. They dress up looking more like foreigners with big clothing and chains around the neck. Some of them even wear skinny jeans and their walking changes. So other friends who want to get those things, you see they will also move to the south in order to also get them.”⁴⁰

The predisposition to migrate in order to meet these social expectations is even much more with the youth. In her study of the Kasena, Cassiman (2008) observes that a young man's return after his experience of the modern world in the south is often reflected in his physical appearance. A manifestation of being part of this experience of 'modernity' is often shown in his new foreign shoes, clothes and jeans. Male migrants in particular show off their success and accumulation by buying drinks for their peers. The new dresses, western gadgets and display of one's accumulation through generous payment for drinks has set up a culture where it is normal, if not expected of other potential migrants, to travel out in order to be able to also accumulate and do same. With the colonial administration having set the precedence for a massive gap in infrastructural development between southern and northern Ghana, post-colonial governmental efforts at bridging this gap have lagged greatly. In consequence, southern Ghana has become the centre of social amenities, infrastructural development and the 'cradle' of all the things associated with modernity. Thus people who want to enjoy these amenities are predisposed to migrate or relocate to southern Ghana.

The hitherto forced labour migration initiated by the colonial powers has been 'appropriated' as part of the socialisation process in the study area. Voluntary migration has become important such that the experience brings with it societal recognition and prestige. In addition to the remittances or incomes that people accrue, migration provides a platform for one to ascend the social ladder and be respected in the society (Cassiman, 2008). In this regard, social stratification or power hierarchies are being redefined in the 'discursive space' of migration. The interstitial space of the migration process has become a space where power relations are negotiated between actors. In this vein, migration is not only a course to 'development' but also a means to empowerment in all contexts in the area.

The quest to attend better schools or attain higher levels of education is a reason for some of the movements in the Bongo District (Table 6.1). These movements involve people who are enrolled in institutions of higher learning like universities and polytechnics. Because these

⁴⁰ Atogiba, Male Medical Nurse-Age: 30 years, Bongo, 15th November, 2012, duration: 50mins.

institutions are non-existent in the area, people are forced to migrate or sometimes relocate temporarily when school is in session. Social demands and expectations coupled with the problem of unfavourable cultural practices and customs have also been enumerated as influencing migration. As a rural area, the study area has customs and cultural practices that tend to push people to migrate. The issue of migration and socio-cultural demands are discussed in the following section.

6.3.4 Migration and Social Demands

As in most traditional African societies, the Bongo area has certain social demands that tend to put pressure on people and hence their continuous exodus. The issue of exorbitant bride price is a contentious social issue in the area. Bride price is an important source of finance and resource to most families. But the bride price, involving 3–4 cows and several other payments and services, is too expensive for prospective young men to bear. Agricultural adversity and economic hardship may have perhaps instigated bride price adjustment as a way to deal with failing agriculture. Sow, Adaawen and Scheffran (2014: 390) reckon that the “insistence on the customary payment of the cows can also be seen as a way to accumulate wealth in the form of increasing the family cattle stock to forestall any food shortages due to crop failure.”

Although marriage and the payment of bride price is the collective responsibility of parents and extended family members, general economic hardship, social change and the increasing nucleation of the extended family system have shelved this responsibility to young people. As a result of this pressure, young people also migrate to southern Ghana with the hope of securing a job to work and accumulate money and resources to come back and marry. Fortes (1971: 10) writing much earlier notes that “indeed one of the main motives in the thirties, and even nowadays, for the migration to southern Ghana of peasants in search of work, has been the desire to earn money for a bride price.” In the Bongo society, male migrants who are staying or may have had the experience of living in the south of the country are mostly perceived to be psychologically stable and economically better-off as a potential spouse.

This perception of people in the area is perhaps elaborated more by Cassiman (2008: 18) that “the young man who successfully travelled, survived, and conquered ‘the bush’ of the city, will now have a better position in the village and be more desirable as a spousal candidate. The ultimate goal of the migrants is to become a self-made ‘big man’, an achievement that was originally restricted to the aristocracy, but that since colonial trade and the expanded

opportunities of accumulation, has come within reach of every ordinary man.” Whereas the desire to accumulate enough money and resources to come back and marry may serve to be a motivating factor in the migration of young men to the south, the situation is not peculiar to only male youth but the female as well.

Like the Jola women in Senegal who travel to the city to gather new stylish dresses and trousseau of cooking apparel for marriage (Lambert, 2007), females in the Bongo area are also involved in the exodus to accumulate money to buy utensils, cloths and other crockery to get married. The acquisition of these items in addition to the fanciful hairstyles they sometimes return with makes them appealing and good candidates for male suitors in the community. The cultural significance of the acquisition of these items in tandem with the quest for economic empowerment via waged labour seems to legitimise female migration and hence the impetus it has gained in recent times in the study area.

Furthermore, the fear of witchcraft, which is very common in most communities of northern Ghana, is also driving migration in the area. As in many traditional African societies, the belief system and worldview of the people have been greatly influenced by the traditional ancestor worship, which happens to be the major religion in the study area. To this end, ancestral spiritual displeasure and witchcraft is often seen as the cause of misfortune and deaths of many people. Although it is difficult to determine who is a witch, or what misfortune is as a result of witchcraft if you are not a witch yourself or a soothsayer by the admission of informants, they did not mince words about the fact that witchcraft was real and pervasive in the area. People acknowledge that there is good and bad witchcraft.

However, the general impression in discussions with people is that witchcraft is dangerous and can be used to derail one’s success or even kill. So for those who fear or find out from the soothsayer that witches are attacking them, they normally flee or migrate elsewhere far away from the community, preferably to southern Ghana.

“[...] there are also smaller issues that cause people to move but not mostly seen and which is these witchcrafts. I know one, two or three people that say: oh because my house witches chased me away. They say if I stay in the house I may not survive and many stories. Some of these people are still living in southern Ghana. They have to; because if you are running away from something, may be what will make you return is when you think the one that targets you is no more and that is why you will return. If only the person you think is targeting to kill you is still alive, how can you come back and die?”²³

Some informants intimate that the situation is serious to the extent that even close family relations who are jealous of one’s progress in life could bewitch or kill such a person. Out of fear most people or migrants sometimes refuse to give physical cash to persons suspected to

be witches. The belief is that monies given out to such people could be used as a conduit to spiritually attack someone out of jealousy. In this light, people who flee or are wealthy sometimes refuse to come home or show off their wealth because of jealous relatives or people who may attack them spiritually.

In the light of these fears, many migrants often resolve to stay longer or permanently in the south to avoid these calamities. These concerns are akin to similar findings amongst the Sissala of northern Ghana. According to Grindal (2003), many Sissala youth flee to the city out of fear for their lives. This is because they have witnessed many deaths that have purportedly been attributed to witchcraft in the village. People are scared to return home because elders and uneducated persons back home do not want to see that they are better off in life than they are. In the same vein, people in the study area explain that sheer envy or even the public display of wealth could expose one to spiritual attack in order to derail his/her progress.

While the claims of witchcraft cannot be scientifically proven, Lobnibe (2008) contends that many migrant Dagara farmers in southern Ghana, for instance, often have cults to protect their farms. They protect themselves from witches or certain persons who have the power to destroy an entire farm or have the ability to spiritually remove crop stalks from the farm of their neighbour on to their own. All these claims and fears of the informants about witchcraft lend credence to the fact that the phenomenon is real and pervasive. The claims also reflect what has become part of people's culture or cognitive landscapes over time. Many people are hesitant to discuss matters related to the existence of witchcraft. But one of my interlocutors disclosed, when I probed further about any recent incident of the sort, that:

“... Just last week Thursday or so, there was a case like that at the chief's palace. One man from Dua; the victim was even the junior brother. He had to confess that it was really true he wanted to kill him and I was there to hear. The case involved somebody and the younger brother. The younger brother happens to be a watchman and the elder brother is a farmer. So it was like the elder brother bewitched the younger brother. He was plagued with ailments, heart problems, and from hospital to hospital, and suffering all over. The younger brother went to consult a native doctor who was more powerful and he was able to pinpoint the senior brother as the cause of all his suffering. So he reported the senior brother to the chief and was summoned to the palace. When they asked the senior brother, he confessed that he was responsible and that he had given his soul to a tree. In order to reverse the spell they will have to make a sacrifice. He actually said it there. So you see; they went and did the sacrifice. They wanted to beat him, and chief said no they should allow him to go and instead of beating him, they should sacrifice for that thing to end. But according to him, he had already destroyed the liver, and a whole lot. These are all spiritual, so if it happened that this younger brother was able to consult the native doctor before this revelation on that day, you will see that he would have escaped knowing very well that if I should stay somebody will kill me. So these are some of the issues.”²³

Essentially, being a family relation is not enough to escape the wrath of witchcraft. By being a member of the community, one is exposed to witchcraft. These observations are not peculiar to the study area alone but other parts of northern Ghana. Although people were a bit reluctant to discuss the phenomenon and its role in influencing outmigration, perhaps due to fear or their partial belief in Christianity, Abdul-Korah (2006), relying on several accounts of witchcraft reveals that the belief and fear of being bewitched was an important push factor that was causing the Dagara of the Upper West Region to migrate to southern Ghana.

What is apparent in the Bongo District is that incidents of people fleeing because of witchcraft are not uncommon. These beliefs, acting in tandem with other socio-cultural factors like forced marriage, elopement, female genital mutilation (FGM) and widowhood rites have from a socio-cultural perspective also played a part in dictating migration in the study area. In all, these factors enumerated may act in their own right, depending on the context to influence migration in the Bongo area. Nevertheless, it is worthy to note that these factors do not act in isolation. What is important is that, the networks that evolve often reduce risks and provides easy access to jobs and hence making migration attractive as in the case of the study area.

In relating the findings to the concepts of ‘travelling models’ as well as ‘cultures of migration’ as discursive space, different understandings of migration in the study area can be discerned. The people’s rationality of the forced migration, which had over time evolved into a voluntary labour migration, has become a process for transiting into urbanity or modernity and negotiating a place in the social strata of the community. Like in the case of migrant returnees of Kollo in southern Burkina Faso; migration, remittances and the acts of showing off has become a medium to stake a claim for recognition in the society while maintaining cordiality with relations in the home community (Hahn, 2007). The continuous ‘translation’ of voluntary migration in response to societal expectations, such as these, has shaped migrants and their valuations of both the source and destination areas.

The experiences of migrants contribute to changing the perceptions and social contexts (changing values, poverty and food insecurity situation) thereby setting up a culture of migration in the society. Migration has over time become a medium for self-actualisation or improving one’s life in the study area. The phenomenon has become a necessary means to societal recognition. Hence, aside from economic gains, migration is a culture that encompasses a call to: agency, identification, staking claims and fulfilling expectations in

life. These societal understandings of migration further bring into perspective the question of the extent to which environmental risks and resource scarcity dictate migration in rural communities of the study area and often advanced as the case in northern Ghana.

But having established that migration has become integral in the society, it will be interesting for the purposes of the research to find out which section of the population and sex are migrating in the study area? An overview of persons involved in migration will serve as a starting point to delve into the migration decision-making process and preferred places of destination of people from the area.

6.4 Who is Involved in the Migration Phenomenon?

The categories of persons involved in migration out of the study area did not deviate much from the observations of migration dynamics often associated with rural areas of developing countries. The phenomenon involves persons across the various ages and sex. What seems to be the general consensus in the area is that migration is an all year round activity. But the phenomenon is more pronounced when schools are on vacation, and in the dry season when the farm work is done and there is little or no meaningful economic activity in the area.

The youth and middle-aged persons of both sexes are the most involved in outmigration. The common practice in the communities is that many students from basic and high schools in the area travel during vacations to work or visit family relations irrespective of the season. They travel to urban centres in southern Ghana during vacation to work as bartenders, dishwashers, street vendors, or head porters (*kayayei*). The motive is normally to get money for school fees and to buy items for school when the term resumes.

Many youth see migration as a source of enlightenment and to help their parents in terms of paying for school fees and items for school. Elderly people in the area sometimes feel they have the responsibility to stay home and take care of the family. Others are of conviction that they are not physically fit to do the kind of jobs available to migrants in the south. So they are normally reluctant or do not have the urge to migrate. They rather allow the youth or encourage children to migrate and work to supplement family income.

“It is usually the youth that travel more than the old because when you are grown like that sometimes what work will you do again? But it is the young girls that always travel here and there to go and work. Yes it is true, because as a landlord sometimes when you have more than six children to take care of, who are in junior and senior high school and all the rest, it is not easy. You need to provide them with all this kind of school uniform and all the things needed for schooling. If you realize that you are not doing any work; and as at now the goats and sheep that you are rearing are not productive. Even sometimes when you raise the animals, they come and steal them. Yes they will come and steal them.

So what will you do? So sometimes you have to allow the children to also move out. When they go and work like their colleagues, they will get something and bring back. When they come back, they can also at least buy something for themselves. Because school fees and buying them things for schooling and all that are very costly for we parents to always bear having about six or more children. So the children have to be allowed to move out.”⁴¹

With the need to supplement family income, most youth and middle-aged persons mostly within the ages of 10 and late 30 years are often encouraged to migrate. The issue of the dominant sex involved in outmigration was the most contentious during the research. Whereas many alluded to male dominance in migration, others on the hand were emphatic about the increasing female migration in the area.

It is important to bring into perspective that migration in northern Ghana was hitherto a male activity. So during the colonial and immediate post-colonial times, women only migrated as accompanying spouses. Hence it was unusual for a woman in northern Ghana to independently embark on labour migration to the south without a guardian. Indeed for a single young woman who was found living independently in southern Ghana, she was “likely to be branded a ‘prostitute’ and treated as such” (Grier, 1992: 322). This is against the background that in the urban cores of the south “quite a few women finance their life by having relationships with prosperous (mostly married) men (*sugar daddies*)” (Meier, 2003: 67). The urban environment in general is conceived as hostile and marked by stress and economic hardship. The perception is that female migrants lack the tenacity to go through the hardship that often characterise the urban environment. As a result, they will most likely have to engage in nefarious or ‘immoral’ activities in order to survive in the city.

In the light of the divergent views, it is acknowledged that whereas male domination used to be the status quo in some years past, female outmigration in the district had gathered momentum and was even perhaps more pronounced than the males.

“[...] yes, but looking at it, well I can say the females, they normally go more than the males. Yes, the males travel, but the female normally go more than them. Because the jobs down-south, the men they will not agree to do them. Some jobs like washing bowls, going to work under a certain woman and they will be sending you here and there, no man will want to do such jobs. Because in the south; may be a woman like my mother wants servants, she won’t pick a boy or a man, she will rather pick a lady.”⁴²

These opinions were also shared by members of a focus group interview in the Soe community of Bongo. During the group interview, members particularly stressed that female migration was on the ascendancy in recent times. The reasons advanced for this trend being

⁴¹ Participant, Focus Group Interview, Bongo-Soe, 11th September, 2012, duration: 1hr: 13mins.

⁴² Nana, Bongo, Age: 40 years, 26th September, 2012, duration: 43mins.

that while it is relatively easier to get a job in the city as a woman in comparison with the males, women in general are more industrious and compassionate than men and hence the tendency for them to do any work just to be able to cater for their children.

The general views, as can be drawn from the interviews, give the impression that many females are now also migrating independently of men. But the decision to embark on a sojourn is often not entirely an individual one. Neoclassical economic theories have at the micro level emphasised the rational economic decisions of the individual as vital to the migration process. This perspective may seem to be reflective of the situation in the study area. However, the overarching support of the family is crucial as the motive for the movement amongst other reasons is often to improve household welfare.

6.5 Migration Decision-Making

The decision to migrate is very much hinged on the socio-economic conditions prevailing that initially served to precipitate the movement. For many of the young people in the various communities of the study area, it is revealed that parents or family relations sometimes take the decision for them to move. But on the whole, majority of the migrants reported that they took the decision to migrate themselves (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Percentage Distribution of Migration Decision-Making

Decision to Migrate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Myself	83	82.18
Mother	1	0.99
Father	2	1.98
Both Parents	4	3.96
Friends	7	6.93
Other	4	3.96
Total	101	100

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

People may move based on their own convictions. However, the decision for most of these persons to migrate is often decided or encouraged by the family (mostly by the parents). Bringing into perspective the unfavourable economic conditions people face in the study area, the agency of people at coping with the conditions comes into play through the migration they undertake. Moreover, travelling to the south of the country to work and support the upkeep of the family, as a child, is a culturally valued venture in the Frafra society. Apart from the new experiences, one is seen as hardworking and responsible when he/she is able to travel and work to bring money and other resources to help the family.

Over all, the consent of parents or family is often crucial before migration is undertaken irrespective of the personal convictions an individual may have. The goodwill of parents is necessary if one expects to have good luck or succeed in his/her new environment. Migration, apart from the cultural significance, is also an alternative source of income to address the economic hardship in the area. Thus parents sometimes even help fund the transportation cost of migrants. On the whole, almost all the respondents who reported they have had migration experience indicated they financed their own cost of travel (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Who Financed the Cost of Travel?

Means of finance	Frequency	Percentage
Self-financing of transport	96	90.20
Transport paid by parents	6	5.88
Sneaked into a cargo truck unnoticed	2	1.96
Other (Borrowed, stole, friends, etc.)	2	1.96
Total	102	100

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

For those who cannot or are unable to fund their travel, they sometimes steal or borrow monies from friends or sell available livestock in the house to fund their trips. In many instances also, some youth sometimes dodge or escape against the will of their parents.

“They (*young migrants*) decide first to move. When they decide to move it depends on if they have the resources to be able to move. Sometimes they don’t even tell the parents depending on whom the parent is. Some parents don’t agree, so they will hide from telling such parents. But some parents too willingly encourage you. So when you are about to move you tell them that I have taken the decision to go down-south but I don’t have the lorry fare. Then they will say okay take this and that (*money*). So it depends. But mostly, they take the decision and some of them only tell parents when they need help from them.”²³

Normally when parents realise that their children have dodged and left for the south, all they normally do is to call on phone and advise them on being careful and not joining bad company. Parents try to counsel them on how to lead their lives at their destination. The issue of people dodging or running away to the south is not peculiar to only youth, but also married women, young couple or people fleeing from perceived danger of witchcraft or unfavourable cultural practice. These kinds of persons sometimes also migrate to avoid or relieve themselves of these pressures.

Related to the foregoing is the issue of child trafficking. Child trafficking is a common and pervasive phenomenon in the area. Every year there are cases where people come to recruit children from the various communities in the area to go and work in southern Ghana. The

persons normally involved in recruiting children are familiar members of the community who come and promise parents about the prospect of making money and good living when they go with the children to work in southern Ghana. Some children even dodge and go back to the south even after they have been rescued and brought back home.

“[...] they come in the name of taking them to give them jobs. They mostly look for those who have failed from school. When they are taking you, they will tell the parents that they are going to give your child some work to do. Because the child is here doing nothing. They will give examples that last year we took some people there and every month the person was sending the mother 1 to 3 million cedis. Because the child is at home and they are catering for him/her, if they feel that if the child is allowed to go down-south to work he/she will be able to send some money home then they are eager to release them. The people who always come are people they know. So they say, this woman is from this house and she is going to take my daughter to give her some job. So they easily give out. It is not easy to identify if this person is actually trafficking until the victims get their way back home and then they say that when they took us there they did this and that to us. So it is not always easy.”⁴⁰

Trafficking of children has been bit of an elusive phenomenon in the study area. This is because of the practice of child fostering which is common in many traditional African societies. The practice involves children being raised by family relations or friends other than biological parents. With the persons involved in trafficking being mostly known persons from the community who are now residing elsewhere, it is often difficult to determine whether the children are being trafficked until they come and narrate their ordeal. According to officials at Human Trafficking Unit of the Regional Headquarters of the Ghana Police Service (UER), children are trafficked to southern Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo to engage in all sorts of activities including domestic work and farm hands. However, the unit in conjunction with UNICEF and other relevant stakeholders like the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection are working closely to check the phenomenon in the region. In spite of efforts at stemming the trafficking of children, the phenomenon is still elusive and ongoing in the study area and other rural areas in the region.

Over the years, what has become a normal characteristic or feature of migration in the most communities of northern Ghana is that the majority of people move mainly towards destinations in the south of the country. Others also move to neighbouring towns and villages as well as to Burkina Faso, Togo and Ivory Coast. Information normally on how receptive and good a place is in terms of job opportunities, migrant networks and general living conditions is very important in the choice of destination. Since colonial times, certain towns in the south of the country have appeared to be important places of destination for migrants from northern Ghana.

6.6 Places of Destination

As a background, it is important to highlight that the pattern of movement from the study area and most parts of northern Ghana during the colonial and early post-colonial times was often mainly towards rural areas, mining towns and cocoa plantations in the south of the country. Migration to the south was initially through forced recruitment with the collusion of chiefs and headsmen. However, the voluntary migration of persons gathered pace with people's participation in the waged labour economy, new experiences and social prestige that came with migrating to the south.

Once the voluntary migration had set in motion, the combined deprivation of investment funds to northern Ghana, by both colonial and post-colonial governments, meant the further widening of the development gap between northern and southern Ghana (Songsore, 2011). The north-south development gap therefore created an imbalance such that voluntary migration was always towards the more attractive south of the country. Many migrants still move to farming communities of the Brong Ahafo and Western Regions in the south of the country to engage in agriculture. But the majority of migrants now move to the urban areas or major cities in southern Ghana to engage in waged labour. The major places of destination for migrants from the study area are mainly in the cities of Accra and Kumasi (Fig 6.3).

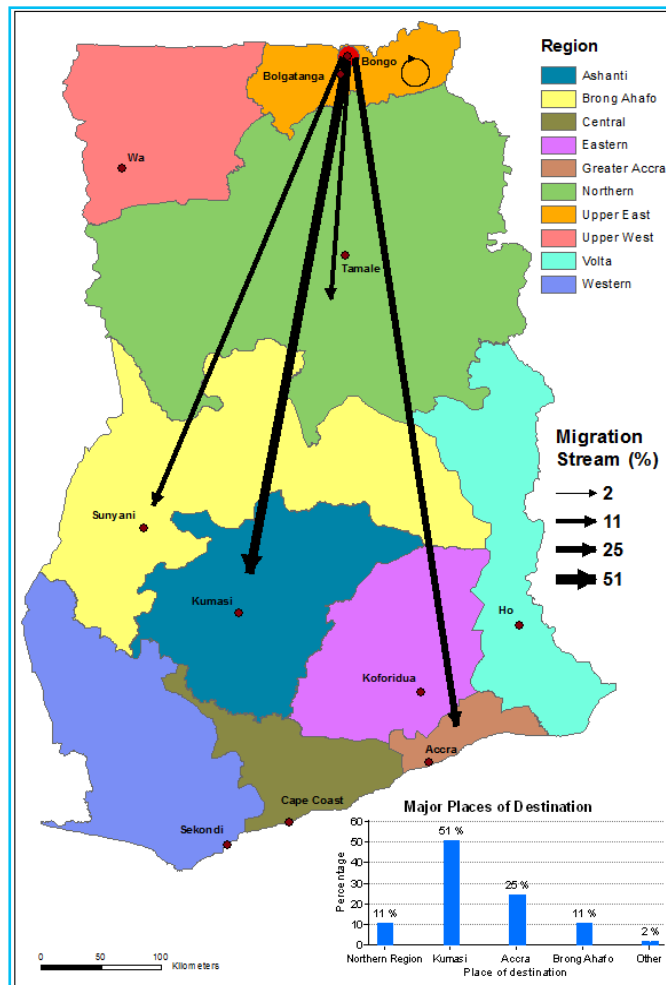


Figure 6.2: Major Places of Destination

Source: Composed with field survey data (2012/2013)

As shown in Fig 6.2, a little more than half (51%) of the respondents with migration experience indicated that they travelled to Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. The capital city of Accra is also a converging destination for most of the migrants. However, Kumasi has since time immemorial been a known and preferred destination of migrants across the country because of the advantages it presents to migrants.

The role of return migrants in passing on good stories and experiences of places they have settled or worked in ‘Kumasi’ cannot be discounted in stimulating the desire to move in the communities. Information about the abundance of food, job opportunities and general good living conditions are often exemplified by the bicycles, mattresses, iron roofing sheets, boom blasters and other personal effects that are often brought along by returnees. The information and relative improvement in the status and welfare of migrant households normally diffuse in the various communities. This in a way stimulates the interest of people in the communities to migrate to Kumasi. It is in the light of the city’s relative popularity as a favourite

destination that has led to people who have migrated to the south of the country often proverbially said to have gone to ‘Kumasi’ or the ‘bush’.



Figure 6.3: Kumasi Bus Ticket Office at the Bongo Main Lorry Station

Source: Author's own photo, 2012/2013

The city of Kumasi, apart from its historical importance as the capital of the Ashanti Kingdom, is also a commercial and nodal town endowed with social amenities. In view of its strategic location in the middle of the country, the major transport routes and roads from northern Ghana and other parts of the country converge and pass through the city. Many other people move into the city to trade and thereby making it a brisk commercial town. In view of these activities, many of the migrants from northern Ghana see the opportunities in the numerous jobs and the potential to engage in the economic activities, which can generate quick income for them and hence flock into the city.

Accra as the capital city, on the other hand, is an administrative and financial hub. The unskilled job opportunities that abound in the city also serve to attract migrants. In addition, networks and hometown associations of Frafra migrants from the Bongo and other Gurune speaking communities of the UER abound in Kumasi and Accra. These associations and networks often help migrants to settle and find jobs once they arrive and hence their attraction. The Brong Ahafo Region in the middle belt of the country is also a major destination area. This part of the country is particularly noted to have vast fertile land and ‘good’ rains. So many Frafra farmers from the Bongo area and other parts of northern Ghana flock into the remote areas of the region to farm. The remote areas of this region are particularly noted for the concentration of Dagara migrant farmers from the Upper West

Region of northern Ghana. These migrant farmers farm and send the food crops harvested home to support the family or sell as additional income for the family.

From the research, what appears to be the normal pattern of migration in the study area and northern Ghana is thus the movement of people towards destinations in the south of the country. A new pattern of migration has, however, emerged in recent times. This observed trend which is increasingly gathering momentum in the district involves the migration of people, mostly middle-aged women, to the farming areas of rural communities in the Northern Region and imperceptibly to other areas within the Upper East and West Regions like Bawku and Wa respectively. This emerging pattern of migration, which is increasingly becoming popular in most rural areas of the UER, is further elaborated in the following discussion below.

6.7 New Wave of Migration

In contrast to the north-south migration of people, which is the dominant pattern of migration in the study area, a new migration trend has emerged in recent times. The increasing movement of middle-aged and elderly women to *Dagongo*⁴³ is gaining prominence in the area and other parts of the UER. Although males also migrate to the region, the women are engaged more in this new trend. They migrate to rural communities like Diare, Pisigu, Yagaba and Kubore in the Northern Region to work as farm labour. Migrants engage in the harvesting and processing of millet, maize, groundnuts and beans in these areas. Others also pick and collect Shea nuts for processing into butter or selling for additional income. The journey to *Dagongo* is done between August and October during the harvesting season after the heavy rains in July-August and the major weeding of the food crops is completed.

“As at now, people move out more especially to Dagongo. They go there to harvest groundnuts, maize and millet; they uproot groundnuts for the owners. After working as labourers, they get money as well as groundnuts, maize and other foodstuffs to come back home.”⁴⁴

“The males think they are the breadwinners as household heads. Mostly because of this traditional belief of being the head of the house, most of them don’t travel. But almost all the houses; say this time, if you go you will see all the women out. Most of them are in Dagongo. In December like this if you stand here, you will see big cars coming back with them and their food. So the old women, they go there more. With the males, some of them go there to farm, harvest and come back. The women; when they come back they just sell the food. Instead of them to keep the food and feed, they sell and leave small for consumption.”⁴⁵

⁴³ *Dagongo* is a terminology describing town and villages in Dagbon (Northern Region of Ghana) in Gurune.

⁴⁴ Mma Apoka, Trader, Bongo-Atombisko, Age: 57 years, 10th September, 2012, duration: 32mins.

⁴⁵ Justine, Pastor, Bongo-Adaborobisi, Age: 37 years, 8th October, 2012, duration: 41mins.

The male counterparts go there in search of land to farm and come back. Others sometimes stay longer or permanently to engage in farming after they are able to acquire land at their place of destination in the Northern Region. The migrant women on the other hand normally return in early October with truckloads of bags of food including millet, maize and groundnuts as remuneration for the labour offered. The grains brought back to these areas serve as buffer to the major crop harvest of the farming season. Some of the grains are mostly sold for additional income to support the household. The emerging trend of migration to the rural areas of northern Ghana to work as farm hands seems to be catching up in almost all the rural communities of the study area.

Bawku as both a border and commercial town also attracts people from the area. The township of Bawku and its environs share border with the commercial border town of Sankassi in Togo. This has made Bawku a brisk business centre. Additionally, the area records a large production of onions and watermelons through irrigation farming. Because of these opportunities, people from the study area of Bongo and other parts of the UER move into the Bawku area to trade in grains, livestock and also farm. In spite of the close proximity, the migration of people into the Bawku area is not as momentous as the migration stream to rural areas in the Northern Region. This is because of the conflict and insecurity situation in the area. But the migration to these rural areas can be seen to provide some respite or leeway to the waning prospects of earning a job in southern Ghana to most especially middle-aged women. Interestingly, the migration to Bawku and other rural areas of the Northern Region does not seem to attract the youth. The youth in the various communities of the study area are more rather inclined to migrate to enjoy the pleasures and ‘bright lights’ of the city than these rural areas.

Aside from the persistent outmigration of people from the district, some level of in-migration can also be observed. The influx of people into the study area of Bongo is, however, not pronounced as compared to the level of outmigration. In-migration into the area is relatively imperceptible. This notwithstanding, it is important to note that in-migrants influence the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the people in the study area.

6.8 In-Migration and Return Migration into the Bongo Area

The in-migrants in the study area are very few and mainly concentrated in the Bongo Township. They are visible and comprise mainly of teachers, nurses, police and other government workers who are working in the district. Interestingly, some of these in-migrants

sometimes come into the study area to work, albeit reluctantly, as persons on some form of disciplinary transfer. This is because most people think that towns and communities in northern Ghana are relatively deprived with no access to social amenities. As a result, most of these government workers are often reluctant to come. If they come at all, they do not even stay in the district. Many of them commute from Bolgatanga (the regional capital) to work in the study area every day. So it is common to see many people riding motorbikes and office vehicles heading towards Bolgatanga in the evening after work.

Conspicuous amongst the in-migrants in the district are petty traders and Ashantis from southern Ghana. They do not move into area because of any perceived environmental risks or there is generally a historical precedence. These migrants move in just to engage in selling and operating alcoholic joints in the area. But yet again they are just an insignificant number of them in the Bongo Township alone. Other persons who come into the study area are those crossing to the border side of Burkina Faso to trade in the commercial town of Yelwongo. Additionally, there is a frequency of people from the neighbouring Burkina Faso villages crossing into the Bongo side to access healthcare at the district hospital. Apparently, not many people migrate into the Bongo area. So many reasons have been advanced to explain the imperceptible in-migration into the district. First of all, the area is not endowed in terms social amenities. Stimulating and vibrant economic opportunities that may serve to attract people into the area are also lacking. Moreover, in-migrants complain that the people in the area are not very receptive to in-migrants or non-natives. Some of them lament that they have in many instances been subjected to all sorts of abuse from some of the locals. One of the Ashanti in-migrants from the south who was operating a drinking spot narrated his experience that:

“[...] the time I started this (drinking spot) I was having problems with the local boys. Especially because I’m a stranger, I did not find it easy. [...] sometimes they will just say this one is Ashanti. So if he gets money he will send it to his hometown. So they normally will come and cause problems. At times, when it gets to evening time and I cook like this and I’m inside, before I realise the food is gone. Some people will just come and take it away. And when I ask why they do that, there is no explanation but just envy. If I listen to some of them, they say that at first they did not allow strangers to be here. In this district, it was difficult for strangers to be coming here to stay. So it has become part of their nature not to receive strangers. But the chief has interest in the strangers (in-migrants) coming to live in the area. So when issues like this get to him, he often advice them that they shouldn’t be doing that.”⁴⁶

The Ashanti petty traders and drinking spot operators indicated that it was frustrating and depressing to stay or start a business in the study area. For them, apart from the occasional abuse from the locals, the area does not have a good market base to start a business because

⁴⁶ Agota, Ashanti In-migrant, Bongo, Age: 36 years, 6th September, 2012, duration: 56mins.

of the high levels of poverty. The booming market centre across the Ghana-Burkina Faso border at Yelwongo, however, attracts people to the district who travel to trade in especially livestock. For the business minded in-migrants who may want to settle permanently in the study area to engage in any long lasting economic venture, the frustrations they experience serve as a discouraging factor for other in-migrants to come. But through the efforts of the traditional authorities in the area people are changing their attitudes towards in-migrants. The numerous government workers flocking into the district are gradually attracting people to come and settle in the area. An interesting development, which is good for the economic growth in the area, is the expansion of residential settlements from the regional capital of Bolgatanga into the jurisdiction of the Bongo District around Yorogo. The residential expansion is giving the area an urban appeal, which is attracting people from within the regional capital of Bolgatanga to stay within the precincts of the study area.

Some migrants from the area also return in the wet season to farm or during the Christmas and *Azambeni* festival to reunite with family and community members. These migrants often return with some money and personal properties like bicycles, crockery and sewing machines as well as iron roofing sheets to improve household welfare. Apart from the remittances, migrants have become agents of change in their rural communities. The social remittances in terms of new ideas, tastes and lifestyles contribute to social transformation in the area. Also, the good past experiences of migrant and work life in the south as well as the success stories of other community members have been internalised and become part of the value system in the Bongo society. Migration having become reified and part of the cultural value system in the district can be seen to have heightened the resolve by most people to also have the migration experience.

This tendency to migrate out of the area is moreover sustained by the viable social safety net that the migrant networks that have evolved provide for potential migrants. These social networks provide support and reduce the costs and risks that often come with migrating out of the home community to a new area. These considerations in tandem with the drive for people to achieve success are cultures of migration that have inevitably become part of the societal dynamics of the district. To this end, migration in the wake of environmental risks has evolved to become somewhat of a functional prerequisite of the society and hence its persistence over time in the Bongo District.

6.9 Summary and Conclusion

The effects of environmental change stressors on livelihoods have undermined agriculture in the study area. Whereas the role of declining agricultural productivity in contributing to migration in the study area cannot be discounted, the research shows that there is not enough evidence to suggest that environmental change directly accounts for migration of people as ‘environmental maximalists’ or climate determinists may want to state as the situation in northern Ghana. Of course environmental change effects have undermined agrarian rural livelihoods, but also of importance is the lag in governmental efforts to reduce poverty, bridge the north-south development gap as well as improve coping systems in the area. The effects of environmental risks may serve as background factors to migration, but historical antecedents and changing socio-cultural constellations serve to sustain these movements over the years. The role of mediators or actors (migrants and people) in the translation or transfer of ideas, experiences and information has instituted enduring cultures of migration for a long time in the study area.

In making sense of the changing perceptions and motivations for migration, therefore, it is recalled that forced migration as a model of labour recruitment was hitherto introduced by colonial forces to draw cheap labour from the then Northern Territories for colonial mercantilism. However, forced migration can be seen to have undergone massive ‘translation’ with the subsequent voluntary migration of persons to the south of the country without any conscious formal ‘institutional’ inducement. The initial forced recruitment of people and contributory role of Mossi merchants have been appropriated or reterritorialized in the wake of seemingly unstable agrarian livelihoods in the area over the years. Aside from the more established north-south migration pattern, an emerging trend is the surge in the seasonal migration of particularly middle-aged and elderly women to rural areas of the Northern Region to work as farm hands or access fertile farmlands for cultivation.

The research has pointed to the persistent changing cultural constellations and values in the study area. With these cultural dynamics and aspirations, people are motivated to venture into the frontiers of urbanity and the accompanying modernity in the south of the country. A person’s migration to the urban centres of southern Ghana may mark the transition into ‘modernity’. Nonetheless, it also marks the basis for societal recognition or transition into adulthood. The constant negotiations, translations and changing societal values in the migration process also reflect cultures of migration and hence its persistence in the area. In the light of this background, the environmental risk imperative does not suffice as a sufficient

or more conclusive explanation to the persistent outmigration of people in the study area of Bongo. The effects of climatic variability and environmental risks as primary causes of migration are thus remote or contextual variables.

More importantly, research has drawn attention to the fact that environmental changes and human mobility have always been part of societies and human development in Africa. It is thus unsatisfactory, if not misleading, to narrowly focus on environmental risks as primary causes of outmigration in northern Ghana. Environmental change and the associated effects may therefore be true of the situation in the study area and as such people migrating as a coping strategy. But the same can be said of migration being an enduring theme in the area. Migration in the Bongo area and for that matter northern Ghana is thus an integral part of the social and economic lives of the people rather than a spontaneous or ‘knee-jerk’ response to environmental risks.

Aside from the suggestion that migrants (return and in-migrants), as mediators may have contributed to persistent outmigration in the Bongo District, they can also be seen as agents of development. The effects of migration in the area have both been positive and negative. The next chapter examines the varying effects of migration and the contribution of the phenomenon to development and socio-cultural transformation in the study area.

Chapter Seven

Migration, Development and Social Transformation

7.1 Introduction

The general migration discourses have evoked intense discussions around the migration-development nexus. The acclaimed attention to migration-development discussions derives from the sustained emigration of people from developing countries in Africa, Asia and South America to developed countries (Castles and Miller, 2009). In spite of ‘backwash effects’, which often seem to exacerbate poverty and the loss of human capital (Newland, 2003), the contribution of migration to development and social transformation in the source areas of developing countries has been phenomenal. Migrants as agents of change have facilitated social transformation and development with the remittances (social and cash) that they normally send or bring along to their home communities (Martin, 2007; Scheffran, Marmer and Sow, 2012).

Whereas brain drain has been a bane to economic development in Ghana, remittances from migrants abroad has been an important source of foreign exchange that is believed to exceed official development assistance in the country (Manuh, 2006; Quartey, 2006). This emphasises the crucial role of remittances in contributing to the economic development of the country. But in revisiting Sen’s (1999) perspectives on development, it is reckoned that development encompasses the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. As such development is understood as poverty alleviation, gender equality, and social wellbeing amongst others. Following his thoughts on human capability, Sen argues that development should enhance the ability of humans to lead fulfilling lives and have the absolute freedom to make choices that they so much value (Ibid.).

From these convictions, income (cash remittances) will play an important role in facilitating the real freedoms that people may enjoy in their bid to lead quality lives. However, Sen in his argumentation is of the opinion that income alone cannot be a sufficient basis to measure the quality of life of people but the extent to which people have the freedom or capacity to control their lives (Sen, 1999; De Haas, 2007b). It will suffice to therefore say that the question of migrant remittances in Ghana should not only focus on the impact of cash remittances at improving household welfare and development. There is also the need to dwell on the different ways in which the new ideas, knowledge and perceptions that have been translated by migrants as mediators in the migration process negatively or positively

transform communities, and how the phenomenon has evolved over time. That is to bring to light the multifaceted ways in which migration affects household members, communities and societies of origin.

The focus of migration and development in Ghana has always been on the impact of remittances from abroad. This notwithstanding, empirical evidence also point to the important role that internal migrant remittances play in improving the welfare of rural households in northern Ghana (Pickbourn, 2011; Adaawen and Owusu, 2013). At the same time, migration in northern Ghana as observed in the Bongo area illustrates the conflicting negotiations, the changing interrelationships and new identities that evolve in the migration process. This emphasises the need to discuss the contribution of migration to the general development and social transformation of the area. It also calls for an analysis of how the space of dynamic interactions within the migration process shapes the changing perceptions of migrants and people left behind in the home communities.

In line with the foregoing background, this chapter is organised as follows: the first section examines migration and remittances as a measure of success in the communities and the role of migrants in community development. This is followed in the second section by an analysis of migration and socio-cultural transformation in the Bongo area with emphasis on how migration contributes to the modification of certain socio-cultural practices. In the third section, the chapter examines the varying effects of migration on rural households in the district. Particularly, the issues of loss of farm labour, cash remittances in improving household welfare and reproductive change in relation to migration are examined. The varying perceptions of people on migration are highlighted in the fourth section. This section specifically engages and analyses how the intersubjective constructions and perceptions of people contribute to sustaining or discouraging the persistent outmigration in the study area. The last section concludes with a summary and discussion of the main findings. Having given a background and outline of the chapter above, the discussion commences with the question of migration, remittances and development as part of the first section.

7.2 Migration, Remittances and Development

The issue of migrant remittances and the important contribution of migrants to development have widely been acknowledged. Apart from the foreign exchange and development finance that remittances from abroad provide to economies of developing countries, scientific research has also highlighted the significant contribution of internal migrant remittances to improving household welfare in rural areas. The section below delves into migration and remittances in the study area of Bongo.

7.2.1 Migrant Remittances as a Measure of Success and Self-Actualisation

Remittances (cash) have become an important ‘litmus’ or proxy to determining how successful an individual’s sojourn has been in the various communities of the study area. Although rational choice may seem to give impetus for an individual to migrate in the area, the socio-cultural values and altruism on the need to improve the wellbeing of the family cannot be overlooked in the migration decision-making process. Perhaps influenced by ‘altruistic motives’ and the prevailing traditional customs that normally ensure responsibility towards the family as explained by Solimano (2003); migrants are often predisposed to remit to improve the wellbeing of relations or families at home. The cash and food remittances that migrants send to family members back at home are vital to household sustenance in the study area. An informant noted that:

“[...] if the person migrates and turns out to be a success, then you will see that there will be inflow of resources into the family. The person will come with remittances. He or she will definitely come home and build. Mostly, that is what happens; they will come home and build new structures for the community or household. Then the household lifestyle will change because they now have somebody down-south who is sending them something every month.”²⁶

The money and food remittances often serve as buffer to the food shortage that families or households sometimes face in the communities. Migrant remittances in a way also serve to maintain one’s relationship and identity with the family or lineage in the Bongo society. Perhaps guided by the traditional saying that “the hand that gives never lacks”, remittances also guarantees continuous blessings and goodwill from the family and parents if one is to succeed or accumulate more wealth in his/her sojourn. A migrant who is able to remember relations at home and send remittances is considered as ‘well-cultured’ or has ‘home sense’ (well socialised or mannered). Being able to raise a ‘well-cultured’ child is not only a source of pride but also a fulfilment to parents in many societies.

As noted in chapter five, intergenerational conflict, dissent, or the fear of being bewitched may be the cause of migration in some instances. However, the building of a room and the subsequent remittance to maintain it may serve as silent arbitration of the conflict. It also serves an assurance or hope of the person's return one day; although in reality the person might not even show up or only when the funeral is brought back home after death. A more general conviction amongst the people is guided by the Frafra proverb that "although the cow may go or live in the bush, its head eventually ends in the fire or cooking pot" (Amenga-Etego, 2011: 88). That is to wit: although an individual may sojourn to anywhere in the world, the person will normally return home no matter what. It is often then in the interest of persons to try to put up a 'structure' in order to lay their heads in case they return or come home in case of any emergency.

Also, putting up rooms in the paternal family house in the Frafra society signifies one's commitment to the entire house or lineage and ensures recognition in the family and community. According to Cassiman (2008: 22), building a room or more for one's self or family within the family house in the area "secures one's power in the clan and assures one's hierarchical status in the line of generations." Aside from the prestige, the ability to build a room with corrugated iron roofing sheets does not only signify an end to one's struggle with the leaks that often come with the thatch roofing and deterioration in the rainy season, but also emphasises one's own success as a migrant. The rectangular-styled rooms, which have gradually taken over the circular-shaped mud structures, are also a physical manifestation of one's partaking in the 'modernized' but 'hostile' urban environment in the south.

In spite of these socio-cultural expectations, most informants contend that the incomes of some of the migrants are not enough to come back and build a house. This is because of the relatively unskilled and low income earning jobs that most of these migrants do when they migrate to southern Ghana. Like the exploitative labour manoeuvres of colonial capitalism according to Helps (1951, cited in Songsore, 2011: 75), migrants are sometimes also exploited and as a result often make less money in relation to the labour supplied. The income accrued is only often enough to mend rooms after the rainy season and to cater for petty household expenditures like buying food, provisions or medical care. An informant explained during an interview that:

“There’s no instance whereby someone travels and come, and let’s say for instance he builds something like a big cement house. Maybe he comes to buy a cow or provides money for ploughing the farm and all these things. But with the kind of work we do when we travel, what kind of money or what amount will you get from it to come and buy this kind of house? You may be able to help the family through; let’s say little money to buy foodstuffs when there are shortages and all that. The money we (*migrants*) get may be able to only maintain the family or may be to help ourselves. It can only cater for foodstuffs and petty household expenditure.”⁴⁸

A migrant’s sojourn away from home does not always signify a loss of identity with relations or the source community. The occasional visits and remittances are enough to sustain the relationship or sense of belonging to the family or home community. These efforts are often legitimised by the expectations of relations left behind who expect migrants to help or send money when the need arises, or host any family who arrives in the city from the community. In relation to these social expectations, Hahn (2007) similarly observes in Kollo (Burkina Faso) that for migrants who settled in Kumasi and have Ghanaian nationalities as well as English education, they still maintain their identities as people from Kollo through occasional visits with their children. These migrants are considered as integral members of the household although they may have settled in Ghana or Abidjan. It is in this sense the Kollo people pride themselves that their village extends beyond its confines and much more populous than that which is discernible to the eye (Ibid.). The social expectations, negotiations and resolve to maintain ties with relations and the home community ensure these kinds of commitments in terms of remittances and occasional visits to the study area.

Remittances may be a yardstick to measure a migrant’s success or to maintain relations with family and community. Also, it is highlighted that migration is vital to improving household welfare and social transformation in the district. Yet, the issue of ‘backwash effects’ of migration on household sustenance cannot be overlooked. It is therefore imperative to examine the impacts of migration on rural households or families. A much more analysis of the diverse ways in which remittances affect households will be important for the ongoing discussion.

7.2.2 Effects of Migration on Rural Households in the Bongo Area

As noted earlier, migration has had varying impacts on community development and household welfare in the Bongo District. At a more general level, the research acknowledges the importance of migrant remittances. But the effect of migration on household demographic dynamics in the study area is far more revealing.

From the household survey (Table 7.1), about 18 percent of people reported that migration had improved household income and food. Less than 5 percent indicated that the phenomenon had led to a decline in pressure of the number of people on limited food and resources at the disposal of the family. However, a significant majority of the respondents complained about the shortage of farm labour due to outmigration.

Table 7.1: Effects of Outmigration on the Household

Effect on Household	Percentage
Shortage of farm labour	71.57
Improved income and food (Remittances)	17.65
Reduction in the number of dependants on food and resources	3.92
Brought problems in the family	2.94
Other	3.92
Total	100

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

The situation of shortage of farm labour is much more revealing when it is recognised that household agricultural production in the rural communities is essentially labour intensive. But with agriculture basically on a small-scale level for family consumption, how does the migration of some family members therefore affect production? The section below discusses the effect of labour migration on household agricultural production in the study area.

Scarcity of Farm Labour

Farming in most communities of the study area depends mostly on the use of simple farm implements like the hoe and bullock plough. In this sense, farming activities are highly dependent on labour and resources from family members. But the sentiments of people in the area point to the fact that migration has brought changes in the household structure and hence shortages in farm labour. A farmer reiterated, for example, in an interview that:

“I have been farming with only family members. If you even bring labour to help, you need to pay the person; you need to cook food for the person. In doing that you will be using the food you have been managing in the household to cater for the person who has come to help you on the farm. There is no need to ask anyone to come and help you. So we do the farming alone as a household.”⁴⁷

The practice of seeking assistance from neighbours, relations or organising communal weeding from labour groups puts a further strain on the food and meagre resources that is often at the disposal of the household. The commercialisation of organised weeding into ‘by-day labour’⁴⁸ in most rural communities has led to the near disappearance of labour groups or communal labour (Yaro, Teye and Bawakyillino, 2014). Normally the field owner who

⁴⁷ Agambire, Bongo-Balungu, Male, Age: 47 years, 23rd September, 2012, duration: 47mins.

⁴⁸ ‘by-day labour’ refers to hired labour being paid according to work done in a day.

organises the weeding is obliged to also provide food, millet beer (*pito*) and grains to these labour parties or groups (Eguavoen, 2008). But in view of the financial constraints that most households are confronted with, labour for farming activities is now highly reliant on household labour mostly from wives, children and other close relations in the compound.

For any effective agricultural production therefore, adequate supply of labour normally from family or household members is often crucial. Meanwhile, a look at migration dynamics in the study area gives the impression of a phenomenon that tends to be selective of the strong and economically active persons. This situation normally leaves behind not only female-headed households but also aged grandparents and children. These persons are often incapable of coping with the strenuous nature of agricultural work and activities that is typical of rural northern Ghana. The shortage in labour supply and changes in the household structure is compounded also by the increase in the momentum of female outmigration in recent times. The complaint, as highlighted by an informant during the research, is that:

“[...] the energetic people are always leaving. At times the young men in the house all leave and it will be left with the old people alone who cannot do much. They can't do the farming that the strong people will do in the house. They can't do everything the young people would have done for the old lady in the house. But if they are down there (*southern Ghana*) and there is nobody left and they don't have the money to send home, then the family will suffer. Health wise, the old ladies when they get sick, there is nobody there to take them to the health centre. There is nobody there to look after them. They face a lot of problems. But immediately they start getting something, they will get a way of surviving. With money, you can always get new plans put in place to survive.”²⁶

The movement is such that, most people migrate in dry season when there is little or no farming activity. However, many of the migrants (especially males) sometimes stay longer or permanently in the destination areas of the south. This has resulted in the increase of female-headed households with mostly aged grandparents and children in the area. Notwithstanding the fact that some of the women left behind would normally have to deal with the responsibility of doing all the farm work with the children, they often have limited access to land and other resources.

As a patriarchal society, women have usufruct to certain lands by virtue of the marriage to their husbands or through their firstborn sons. As a result, most women in the area are unable to effectively engage in agricultural production (Apusigah, 2009). The absence of husbands also raises issues relating to sexuality. By the traditional customs, it is an abomination for any wife to engage in any sexual activity outside of the marital setup. Female spouses are therefore expected to stay faithful until the return of their husbands. But most women out of sex starvation and economic hardship often engage in extramarital sexual activities that often

come with sanctions that threaten marital stability. Similarly, the long stays also have demographic effects on reproductive behaviour. People who engage in seasonal migration end up staying longer or permanently due to varying societal pressures. Some of the underlying societal pressures that tend to keep people at destination areas and the effect on household reproduction are highlighted in the following section.

Long Stays, Societal Pressure and Changes in Fertility

Normally, people may stay longer because they have found a permanent job or feel settled in the destination areas. Others are reluctant to return home because of the fear of failure or out of shame. This is because some migrants sometimes feel disappointed that they have migrated to southern Ghana for a long time to work and have not been able to send any remittances, acquire any property or income. Migrant returnees pointed out during interviews that:

“Yes, there are so many problems because I returned with nothing. As my wife was expecting something, she was very disappointed with me. Because of this, it affected our feeding and survival. Obviously my travelling had changed the household because I left only my wife and children. So sometimes people mock at me that I travelled down to the south and came back with nothing. If I had not travelled, it would have been better. But we always make fun of it. I don’t take the mocking seriously and bother my head over it.”³⁴

“[...] it is true because if you come back and you don’t have enough money, you can’t take part in social activities. May be where there are social gatherings or when your friends go to enjoy themselves; something like outing you can’t go with them because you don’t have money on you. At times you can’t invite or tell them: let us also go out, because you don’t have money to go out with them. You can’t go out with your wife and do other things. These kinds of embarrassments greatly affect your life. So you sometimes just want to stay in your house and mind your business.”⁴⁴

A migrant returning without any money, foodstuffs, clothes or gifts for the family is perceived as a failure in the community. Normally, people’s expectation of a migrant is that “presents are to be brought home too: a piece of wax printed cloth for the mother; shoes, a bag or clothes for the wife, western commodities for friends and relatives and foodstuffs from the southern regions to be shared with those who remained at home. Coming home empty-handed or broke is considered blameworthy and indicates one is a failure in the eyes of those who remained behind” (Cassiman, 2008: 18). But for those who muster courage to return, they often become ‘objects’ of mockery and gossip in the village. The psychological effect of this feeling of failure due to the public ridicule is enormous. Some migrants are able to endure the public ridicule and laugh it off. Others also resort to excessive alcohol intake or leading secluded lives where they avoid places of potential public gossip or ridicule such as community meetings or social gatherings.

Migrants who sometimes feel they are failures practically refuse to return when they hear that contemporaries who stayed back home are doing far better than them. Sentiments such as these have probably been crystallised by Lobnibe (2005: 576) in his study of Dagara migrants that the “failure to acquire a bicycle and other targeted items during migration often compels the worker to stay in southern Ghana longer than originally planned, and he may even abandon his family for fear of being ridiculed upon return.” These observations underscore the self-conflict within migrants in their quest to meet social expectations. The ‘discursive space’ of migration emphasises that the phenomenon is not some form of patterned action but characterised by divergent interests and expectations of actors (Hahn, 2007). The contrasting interests and expectations play out in evaluating whether migration has been successful or not. The initial interest and anxiety to succeed in response to social expectations or to avoid some of the social forms of approval illustrates the enduring cultures of migration in the study area.

For persons who have such anxieties of being branded a failure by society and as a result stay longer or permanently, the only window of opportunity for return to the home community is only when they are seriously sick and about dying. For others, they eventually return when they die and their *degro* (dirt) from the grave in the south is brought back for rituals and reburial at home. But for persons who travel for a long time and they do not know their whereabouts, a funeral is always performed after efforts to trace them prove futile.

Demographically, the long or permanent stays can be seen to partly contribute to fertility decline in the study area. Interestingly, respondents in the study area were split in indicating the role of migration in influencing fertility decline. On the one hand, half of the respondents affirmed that the migration of one or either of the spouses or long stays had affected their reproductive behaviour or delayed marriage and hence the decline in childbirth. Others were however of the view that migration did not in any way affect their reproductive behaviour (see Fig 7.1).

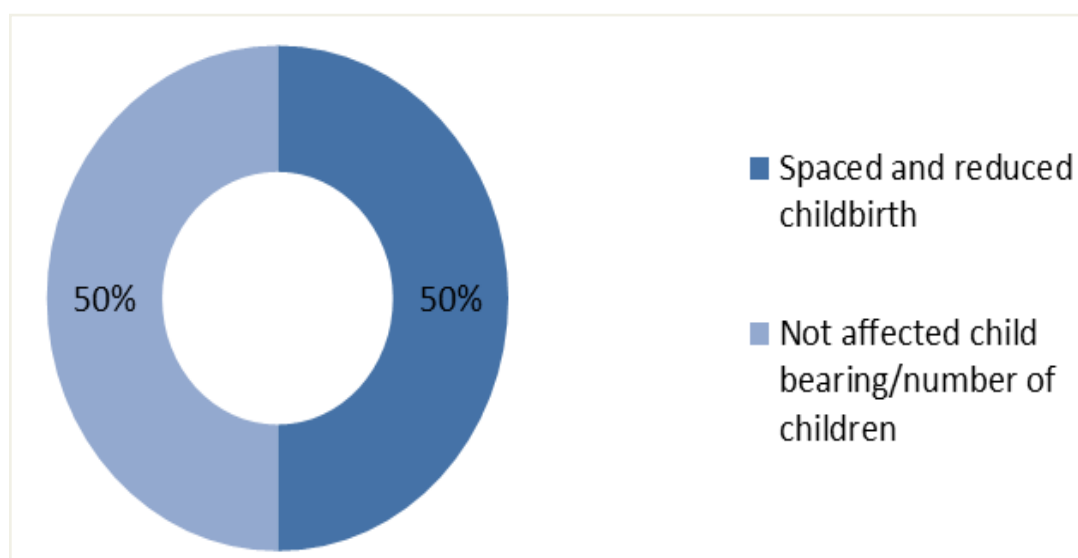


Figure 7.1: Migration Effect on Reproductive Behaviour
Field Survey (2012/2013)

Notwithstanding the split with regard to the effect of migration on reproductive behaviour, there has generally been a fertility transition in northern Ghana with significant decline in total fertility rates (TFR) over the years. Admittedly, it is difficult to adequately determine the total number children per household in a typical traditional African household setup and more so the extent to which migration plays a part in fertility decline. But at a more general level, the survey from the study area suggests a decline in the average total number of children per household in the Bongo District. Many people reported as having an average of 1-4 numbers of children within the marital set up (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Number of Children per household

Number of Children	Percentage
1-2	29.41
3-4	38.24
5+	32.35
Total	100

Source: Field Survey (2013/2013)

The decline in total fertility rate, as in the average number of children per woman in her childbearing years in the study area, reflects the observed fertility transition in northern Ghana as captured by the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (ICF Macro, 2010). However, this fertility transition does not correlate with the level of contraceptive use in the area (Ibid.). Indeed improvement in healthcare and supervised delivery and as such a decline in infant mortality in the area may have contributed to the observed fertility transition

(DISCAP, 2005). But a host of demographic-economic factors and more importantly persistent outmigration seems to provide sufficient explanation to the lack of correlation between fertility decline and contraceptive use in the study area of Bongo District (Adaawen, 2015).

The discussion so far suggests that the impact of migration on individuals and households in the study area are diverse. The variation in impact influences how people construct or perceive migration in the area. Nonetheless, social change, education and globalisation can be seen to have influenced people's perceptions of what is considered modern or better ways of doing things. This also brings into focus the 'discursive space' or the complex dynamic web of social interactions and reciprocal expectations embedded in the interstitial space of the migration process. It further brings into light the extent to which migrants contribute to development and social transformation in the area.

But taking into consideration that most of the migrants normally engage in menial and low income earning economic activities, it is important to find out to what extent they contribute or influence the socio-economic dynamics in the study area? Therefore, delving into how migration contributes to community development will serve as an entry into the analysis of its role in transforming socio-cultural practices in the area.

7.2.3 Community Development and Knowledge Transfer

As agents of development, the importance of migrants' contribution to the infrastructural development and urban appeal of the Bongo area cannot be underestimated. The relatively few 'successful' migrants, business and highly educated persons from the Bongo area who are working elsewhere outside of the district have built some cement and compound-shaped single room apartments, as well as self-contained apartments and shops. These buildings are perceived as 'modern' and conspicuous mostly in the Bongo Township. The infrastructure attracts in-migrants and government workers to settle in the area. In-migrants who have settled in the area have also put up shops and beer bars (pubs), which have in a way also stimulated economic activities in the area. Migrant and hometown associations like BONABOTO⁴⁹ have initiated community development projects to augment scarce social amenities like potable water, health and education in the district.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ BONABOTO is an acronym for the association of Frafra citizens of Bongo, Nabdum, Bolgatanga and Tongo.

⁵⁰ <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/regional/artikel.php?ID=194658>, accessed 21.03.2014

“[...] if you look at most of the buildings around, they have been built by people who mostly are not resident here at the moment. They are people who are somewhere in the country or out of the country and they are sending remittances. Most of the houses here that you see; like the big houses that people are renting, their landlords are not around. An example is ‘Teachers Palace 1’ and another is ‘Teachers Palace 2’. Both houses have been built by people who are living and working in southern Ghana. There is one here called ‘Aroweka Yire’; the owner is a businessman who moves up and down. So most of the compound houses (*cement single room apartments*) that you see people renting, they are mostly owned by migrants or businessmen who moved out and came back or some who are just resident down there but came and constructed them.”⁵¹

Generally, infrastructural development may be good for the urban appeal and overall expansion of the district. However, the construction of buildings to some extent also influences agricultural land use and dynamics in the area. Normally, migrants have the tendency to purchase lands in their home communities with their incomes. But since most migrants often prefer waged labour outside of the home community, lands acquired are most often used for purposes like building, insurance or prestige other than farming. It is important to note that construction may not entirely be dependent on migrant income. However, finance from migrant income is an important component in putting up a building or room. It is thus a common sight to see rooms constructed from earth or cement being combined with iron roofing sheets either within the main house or separated entirely on adjoining family farm plots.

The experiences and skills of migrants have also been central to enhancing agricultural livelihoods in the district. This was particularly evident in the Adaboya community of the study area. A migrant returnee and farmer (Baba Issah) from the community had introduced a new technique of doing irrigation farming by drawing water from a river through the use of interconnected empty cans onto a plot. The skill or new knowledge of doing this type of irrigation, and the subsequent transfer to the community was acquired during his long sojourn and stay in many rural farming areas of southern Ghana. By this method, Baba Issah is able to grow vegetables, including plantain, cassava and bananas, which mostly thrive in the moist deciduous forests of southern Ghana.

It was, however, suggested strongly that Baba Issah’s irrigation intervention in the Adaboya community was an isolated case. In particular, people expressed their reservations as to whether migrants bring anything tangible or contribute any new ideas to the communities. It was widely argued that one could not readily pinpoint any significant contribution that migrants have brought to enhance agricultural production or facilitate any skilled training. The basis for these convictions was that, the kind of jobs these migrants do in southern Ghana

⁵¹ Asaah, Male Teacher, Bongo-Central, Age: 41 years, 26th September, 2012, duration: 1hr 12mins.

does not equip them with the necessary skills or expertise by which they can pass on to people in their respective rural communities.

“[...] I don’t think they (*migrants*) bring new knowledge. They don’t bring new knowledge because those who have been there, they don’t even have an idea to farm. You see they don’t even like the activity of farming. If it was that they would go to the villages of the cocoa farming areas to get lands there to farm and bring techniques home, then it is fine. But they rather go to the south to do menial jobs for a living. The ladies also go to wash dishes and work in the beer bars as prostitutes. So when they come home, it is a different profession altogether.”²³

For most people therefore, migrants do not really bring or transfer any new knowledge in terms of skills or new techniques they have learnt as a result of their sojourn to the south. In the light of these divergent views, a follow up was made to the Adaboya community where Baba Issah was purported to have introduced his new farming technique he learnt from the south. In an interview with him, he disclosed that:

“I got my experience from those areas that I went to in the south. So I came back and replicated everything. What I did was; I started this irrigation technique by creating some holes around with water cans. I linked the small holes to the river. The water passes through the small holes that I have created and then I will now fetch it through the water cans and irrigate my cassava, banana, and cocoyam crops and vegetables. That is what I have been doing. I initially started with a small area and realised that things were good so I expanded it. Through this people are now coming from different places to buy from me. Now, word about my work has started spreading and people are also doing it.”⁵²

This new technique of drawing water from the river to do dry season irrigation farming is not entirely new to the Adaboya community, but as a form of social remittance it had improved agriculture in terms of growing vegetables and crops that only thrive and are peculiar to the rainy and moist deciduous forest areas of southern Ghana (Fig 7.2).



Figure 7.2: Irrigated Cassava, Vegetables and Plantain Farm in Adaboya-Bongo

Source: Author’s own photo (2012)

⁵² Baba Issah, migrant returnee/farmer, Adaboya, Age: 40 years, 11th October, 2012, duration: 46mins.

The case of Baba Issah as a migrant returning with a new technique of irrigation to the community is akin to similar findings of shallow groundwater irrigation in the Atankwidi water catchment also in the region. Schraven (2010: 110) reports, for example, that the start of shallow groundwater irrigation in the Atankwidi catchment area came from knowledge acquired from labour migration stays in the south of Ghana. In the case of the Bongo area, the knowledge acquired during the migration process and its subsequent transfer has revolutionised agriculture and challenged other farmers into small-scale irrigation and gardening in the community. Apart from the institutionalised drip irrigation introduced by the World Vision International NGO in the Dua community and the Veia Irrigation Dam project, the new form of irrigation in Adaboya has relatively provided the potential for improvement in food and incomes of people engaged in dry season farming in these communities.

The example above emphasises the fact that migrants as mediators within the ‘discursive space’ of the migration process can transfer new ideas and technologies back to the source communities. Baba Issah, after having learnt irrigation farming in the south, have in the absence of pump machines to draw water from the riverbed been able to modify it to suit the local setting. The form of irrigation he experienced depended mainly on mechanical pump machines. But through his own ‘translation’ of what he experienced or learnt, he adapted it by using interconnected empty cans. These cans facilitated the flow of water onto the plot to irrigate his crops, which would rather only thrive in the wet climate that suits their cultivation in the moist semi-deciduous forest in south of the country. Although this may be described as an agricultural innovation of some sort, adapting the new ideas or imported technology to suit the local setting is what Merry (2006: 39) would conceptualize as *Vernacularization* or more explicitly as ‘reterritorialisation’ by Rottenburg, Behrends and Park (2014). It stresses also the fact that mediators as carriers of ideas can change or appropriate the travelling token according to their understandings and experiences to suit the problem space.

A travelling idea, according to Rottenburg, Behrends and Park (2014), may change into something different from its original form at the new site. This notwithstanding, there are instances where appropriation may happen at the new site without necessarily changing the ‘token’ entirely. In the case of the Adaboya community, while the method of using pump machines to draw water to irrigate crops may have been appropriated or adapted through the use of empty cans to suit the lack of sophisticated pumping machines in the community, the idea of irrigation as a method of farming had not changed. This may highlight the role of migrants as agents of development and socio-economic transformation in the study area of

Bongo. But, the complementary contribution of the relatively few in-migrants in the district is also worth discussing.

Mostly the government and public sector workers who form the majority of in-migrants in the study area serve to improve the formal service sector. Other in-migrants have also established shops, pubs and are engaged in other economic activities in the area. The businesses they set up further stimulate economic activities in the area. Some of the in-migrants also counsel the youth on how to lead 'descent' lives and also provide the locals with some skills training and financial support. Some of the in-migrants interviewed indicated that:

“[...] I do educate the young ones. If I see a young girl and boys coming in to barber their hair, I talk to them; and mostly some do change. Actually I counselled some of the youth and they are now in the teacher training colleges. I was talking to one girl and fortunately one boy came in to barber and indicated, look at me I am still a small boy but I am in the teacher training college. These are some of the people I say I'm proud about because I talked to them and they listened to me. I will never be jealous of him being a teacher and I'm a barber. Because may be he has heeded to my advice that is what has probably sent him there. In addition, since I came here I have trained some boys. As at now they are on their own and have their own barbering shops. Some have gone to the south of the country and have also opened their own shops and are making a living. They are independent and also taking care of other people. So mostly I can say my being here has influenced some of the youth.”⁵³

In spite of the hostilities that some of the in-migrants sometimes experience from locals in the study area, they nonetheless assist some of the locals as much as possible in order to better their lives. For youths who often want to leave for southern Ghana, some of the in-migrants sometimes advise them to rather stay and work instead of going after non-existent jobs or joining bad company in the south of the country. Apart from the contribution of in-migrants in stimulating the economic activities and development of the study area, they also impart knowledge and skills to the people.

When the contributions of in-migrants as mediators are examined, their way of living and tolerance to harassment sometimes influences the locals to change their mind-set and be more receptive to non-natives. In spite of these contributions, most of the locals still view in-migrants in a negative light. A widespread view amongst people in the area is that the in-migrants have converted many of the people in the area to Christianity and changed their mind-set about things in the society. As a result, some of the people in the communities have abandoned the gods and now see certain customary practices as primitive, ungodly and not good. In-migrants who are into petty trading are also accused of selling fake goods and

⁵³ Sammy, in-migrant, Bongo-Tingre, Age: 30 years, 26th September, 2012, duration: 30mins.

exploiting locals to take monies to their hometowns in the south. Sentiments of this nature are perhaps captured in the interview excerpt below:

“Normally when these people come, they influence the communities. They preach the word of God and deceive our people to follow them and leave the worship of the gods. Others too bring us fake goods to sell to us like wax prints. These in-migrants and even the return-migrants bring different lifestyles and you see them dressed with their trousers dropping off the buttocks. This is not good.”²⁴

Christianity, having been introduced to the Navrongo and Bongo areas by White Fathers in 1906 (Der, 1980), is seen as an imported or foreign religion. The widespread belief amongst traditional worshippers in the area is that the infiltration of Christianity has destabilised the hitherto harmonious relationship that existed between the society and the gods. The spread of Christianity, which was often interlaced with western education by missionaries at the time, had orchestrated a gap between the so-called enlightened persons and customs. Amenga-Etego (2011: 87) explains that people who converted and received western education often “looked down on the others as ‘primitive’, uncivilised, local, underdeveloped and sometimes, evil. The ultimate desire was often a disassociation from the community and its traditional practices.” Against this background, some of the in-migrants preaching the gospel in the study area are seen as the cause of people’s disregard to the gods and social disorder, misfortune and hardship in recent times.

In spite of these reservations, the activities of migrants (out- and in-migrants) have contributed immensely to community development in the various communities of the study area. In addition to the cash and food that migrants sometimes return with to their communities, they also come with what Levitt (1998) aptly captures as social remittances: where ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital flow from receiving to sending communities. The new lifestyles, way of dressing, tastes and perception of things migrants imbibe at the places of destinations influences the social fabric and as such migration in the communities.

More importantly, it is posited that human interactions with structures can both transform and reproduce social structures. Normally human actions may be geared towards a particular end but may also inadvertently result in outcomes that feedback and transform the social system (Giddens, 1984). In this vein, migration in the Bongo area may be influenced by individual rational choice motivations. However migration in the area can be seen to have undergone *indigenization* (Merry, 2006) where it has assumed new meanings and understandings in relation to the culture and values of the area, and hence its persistence.

With migration having evolved as part of the social organisation of the people, the phenomenon can be seen to have contributed immensely to the social transformation of the study area. By social transformation it encompasses the extent to which migration has negatively or positively affected socio-cultural practices, values and customs in rural communities of the study area. It also emphasises how these transformations have facilitated changing lifestyles and perceptions of people, which in a way also serve to sustain the persistent migration of people. In relation to these attitudinal or behavioural changes, it is important to recognise the pioneering role of migrants as mediators in the transfer or translation of these changes in the source communities. The following section thus examines migration and social transformation within the context of the study area. This will involve an analysis of how migration has facilitated the transfer of certain practices and the subsequent influence on certain socio-cultural practices and customs on the one hand, and the changes in behaviour and lifestyles in the area, on the other.

7.3 Migration and Social Transformation in the Bongo Area

Globalisation in all its manifestations have enhanced population movements across the world and accelerated the diffusion of information, technology, ideas and knowledge across different areas (Castles and Miller, 2009). As the transfer of information has become far more enhanced, ideas of what is perceived as modern and new ways of doing things also travel from one place to the other. Whereas these travelling ideas often undergo translations involving negotiations between actors with different interests and hence may change in the process, migrants as mediators also subjectively modify them in the process (Merry, 2006).

General social change; facilitated by education, Christianity and institutional interventions may have contributed immensely to social transformation in the Bongo area. This notwithstanding, the role of migration in contributing to social transformation cannot be relegated. The new experiences that migrants often internalise at the destination areas have contributed to societal transformation and changes in some socio-cultural practices in the area. Furthermore, the contrasting interests of various actors and changing understandings of normative societal values have served to redefine and sustain the migration phenomenon in the various communities. The following section below therefore examines the contribution of migration to changes in certain socio-cultural practices in the Bongo area.

7.3.1 Changing Socio-Cultural Practices and Transformations

Normally, migrants tend to adopt certain attitudes, dress differently, acquire new knowledge and begin to have reservations about some of the customs in the communities of origin. This has not only influenced the culture, values and customs of the area, but also served to entice or discourage others from migrating. Diverse views have been expressed about the effect of migration on cultural practices and customs in the study area. The majority of people are of the view that migration has positively influenced some of the cultural practices and values in the Bongo area over the years. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents in the survey alluded to migration positively impacting the socio-cultural dynamics while 20 percent indicated the influence was negative (Fig 7.3).

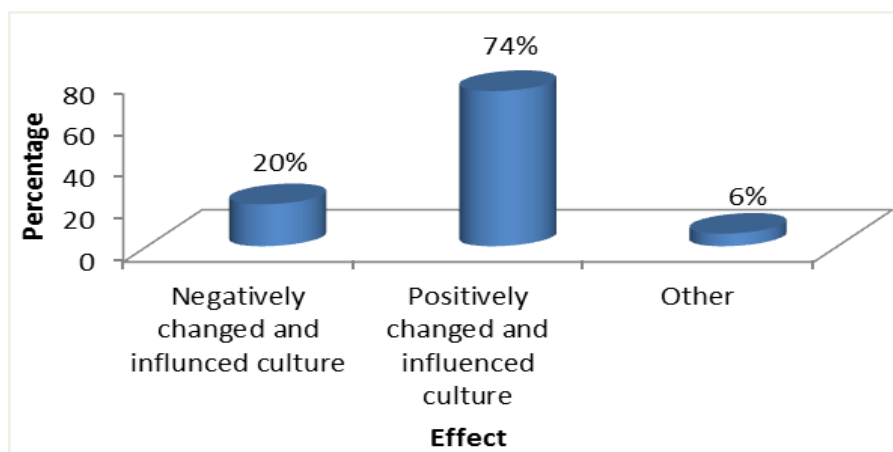


Figure 7.3: Effect of Migration on Cultural Practices and Customs

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

Normally, after encountering and internalising these new experiences, migrants tend to change or shun the cultural practices in the source communities as outmoded. This has sometimes produced negative and positive consequences in the source communities of the study area. Two examples of socio-cultural practices are examined below to illustrate how migration has partly influenced them in the study area.

One of the notable cultural practices that have partly been influenced by migration is the practice of giving tribal marks. Although the practice is common across many societies of Ghana, the patterns and intensity of the marks known as *yagamwea*⁵⁴ amongst people from Bongo and other Frafra communities are unique and well known. The practice involves creating patterns of tribal marks all over the face of the victim with sharp objects. It is important to reckon that some tribal marks are sometimes mainly for medicinal purposes and

⁵⁴*yagamwea* refers to unique patterns of tribal marks normally created on the face of Bongo and most Frafra communities for identification purposes.

can be on any part of the body (Irving, 2007). However, the significance of this practice in northern Ghana as revealed during the research was purposely for identification. Tribal marks were often given because of the activities of slave raiders during pre-colonial and colonial times. By being able to identify a tribe's man via the marks according to informants, members that were taken captives stood the chance of being saved or freed from the slave captors.

In this sense, the patterned marks that was important at the time is still the commonest way of identifying Frafra from the Bongo area and other adjoining societies. But the practice most often disfigures the face of the victims. This has often been the source of psychological discomfort and trauma, as many people tend to mock them wherever they find themselves. It also facilitates the spread of diseases as the same unsterilized instrument is often used for the act thereby endangering the health of the people. The practice has, however, declined in the area in contemporary times. People expressed their disgust during interviews at the giving of tribal marks and also the health implications the practice poses to people.

“[...] many things have changed because, at first when you give birth to a child, you have to give some marks known as yagamwea. It was mainly just for identification. With people travelling to southern Ghana to experience life and different cultures, now people have come to realise that it is not necessary. Also people always make fun of those who have these marks on their face when they travel to different places, especially those in the south. It is not a good practice because the mockery alone makes people feel bad about it. They don't do it again. Aside that, there is a regulation here that when you do it and they get you, you are going to prison. The Frafra chiefs, including the Upper East Regional house of chiefs and BONABOTO came together to institute that regulation. These people in consultation with the government and judiciary instituted this measure that it will be unlawful if you practice it again.”⁴⁴

“[...] that aspect of the culture is not good. You will realise that they use the same sharp instrument to give a good number of people the same marks. Assuming, you are infested with a disease and they use it on another person, you will see that the person is likely to get the disease. So in that aspect is not good. And quite apart from that one too, the blood; there is much blood oozing from the person. If the person is not lucky he can lose a lot of blood and even collapse. As a result of that he can pass away. So it is not good.”⁵⁵

The practice of giving tribal marks is not only peculiar to the study area. It is common amongst most societies across Ghana. But the patterns and reasons for the marks vary from one place to the other. The intensity of the patterns is much more in the area and other Frafra communities. In spite of the legislation instituted by all chiefs in the area in collaboration with BONABOTO to arrest and imprison persons who perform the act, people who get to travel out of the area to southern Ghana frown upon the practice.

⁵⁵ Fred, Male, civil servant, Namoo, Age: 30 years, 19th October, 2012, duration: 36mins.

Moreover, the mockery and psychological discomfort migrants endure wherever they find themselves has sort of triggered an awareness to resist the continuous disfigurement of people despite its cultural significance in the Frafra society. Normally, people after the exposure to new lifestyles that are perceived as modern, coupled with increasing levels of education and knowledge about the health implications of giving tribal marks tend to resist the practice. The practice is now seen as primitive and does not conform to this era of social change where slave raids are no more existent.

In the same vein, the transfer of perceived modern ways of performing funeral rites in the area has had negative implications for people. The significance of funerals lie in the fact that they are performed for deceased family members to transit to the ancestral or spiritual world and hence an important aspect of social life in many communities across the country. But the funeral rites vary from one society to the other. A typical traditional funeral amongst the Frafra and most communities in northern Ghana involve a series of complex and solemn traditional rites (Smith, 1987).

The expenditure on the items involved is often comparatively less costly as compared to the lavish 'modern' funerals especially amongst the Akans of southern Ghana. A typical feature in estimating the cost of a funeral in Ashanti, according to Arhin (1994: 317), involves providing "a meal – rice, yams, sandwiches, beef, mutton and chicken in soup or fried – for friends who have come a long way to attend the funeral or stay overnight." However, the ability to perform a 'lavish' funeral comes with social prestige, recognition and sometimes, financial profits through the donations that people often make in most of these societies.

But the adaption or infiltration of new modern ways of performing funerals akin to expensive funeral activities in the south has been a source of financial burden to the people in the study area. Although general economic hardship may partly explain the financial limitations, the research reveals that expensive or lavish funerals, which were more associated with the southern Akan societies, may have been transferred through migration to rural communities in the study area and parts of northern Ghana. The uncommon practices of printing obituaries, stylish coffins, the customised printing of black and red funeral cloths and T-shirts, and packaging of food in take-away packs for people have now become a common occurrence.

“[...] funeral performance has changed. Even traditional funeral, when you go there you see modern things taking place. You now see obituaries, take-away packs, preparation of food to serve people; you see funeral announcement posters and other things about the funeral. Then you even have record dance playing loud music for people to dance. Those days, it was just the wake keeping night. They will come and the ceremony is solemn and quiet. It will get to a point they will do their rites and then start the

local drumming. The following day they will do their war dance if the deceased is an elderly person. Afterwards, they take the person to the burial grounds and come back. There is no eating, especially, if it is a burial funeral. If it is not even a burial funeral the eating will be inside and it would be served to only people who have come from afar, mostly in-laws. It was a sign of service but there was no much food there at that time. There was no record dance and announcements on radio and televisions. Those things were not there but they are now part of our funerals.”²⁶

The ability to organise a ‘lavish’ and ‘modern’ funeral in recent times is seen as some form of prestige and honour to the family of the deceased. By being able to provide so many animals for the preparation of food, the abundance of alcohol for people to drink and music to dance during the funeral is a measure of wealth and success that will be talked about for a long time. Ironically, in the southern parts of the country funerals have been commercialised such that financial donations have become an important source of generating revenue for the deceased’s family (Arhin, 1994). However people in the study area explain that this new trend of lavish funerals tend serve as a financial drain to most families. At the same time, people in the face of food scarcity and poverty in the communities have reconceptualised the funerals in the localities as ‘feeding spaces’ and avenues to drink alcohol.

The funeral house or ceremony has become a ‘feeding space’ instead of a ‘mourning space’. Funerals have become spaces where people grab the opportunity to feast, drink and take home some of the food as much as they can to compensate for food shortages in the household. The record dance that they often play at the funeral houses in the night does not only provide the platform to enjoy western music but also a means for the returnee migrants to showcase their association with the outside world through the new modern dance moves and clothes. These funeral grounds were often also ‘marriage markets’ where potential spouses identified their partners, places of gossip and solidarity in the society. But the record dance normally played in the night at funerals has facilitated the rise of immorality in terms of sexual activities and reckless alcoholic intake and fighting amongst the youth in the area.

This new trend has not only exacerbated the moral decadence in the area, but has put pressure on poor families. A consequence of this is the piling up of unperformed funerals as old as more than ten years in many of the communities. Nonetheless, people attribute the non-performance and piling up of funerals to mainly unresolved family disputes, poverty and general economic hardship in the area. Many other people did not mince words about the fact that the lavish funerals were alien in the area. Although Christianity and social change may have contributed to this recent trend, the conviction is that the perceived modern ways of performing funerals, which were peculiar to southern societies, have been transferred to the

area through migration. This has gradually seen the incursion of elements of expensive and lavish funerals into the study area.

Aside from changes in some of the socio-cultural practices, migrants also return with certain lifestyles that are perceived as strange and non-conforming to the norms in the study area. These changes in behavioural patterns have often been the source of friction and threats to social order. The following section brings into perspective the role of migration in influencing attitudinal and behavioural change in the study area of Bongo.

7.3.2 Migration and Changing Lifestyles

The perceived changes in some of the socio-cultural practices in the communities of the study area may to some extent be seen in a positive light. However some of the new experiences, lifestyles and attitudinal change that migrants return with have their negative consequences. This is against the background that some of the migrants come back to their home communities and try to apply certain experiences with implications for social order.

“People actually travel and adopt certain lifestyles that we don’t like. They travel and think that the Ashantis do not pay cows as bride price and as such they want to adopt that life here which is not also good. They come back to do that but we don’t agree. Because in the tradition, it is there that when you marry somebody’s daughter you pay. Everybody gives birth to the daughter with the expectation that when she gets married you will get something to feed. So when they come and they are behaving that way, we don’t agree.”³⁴

Marriage is an important institution that every person in the Frafra society is expected to enter after puberty. With migration having been institutionalised in the face of general economic hardship in the area, the idea of who is a better and well established suitor has been reconceptualised to mean migrants who often have the economic power to pay the bride price. So for many persons, who may have experienced that bride price payment in southern Ghana is different from what pertains in their localities, there is always a hesitation to commit huge amounts to paying about three to four cows and other accompanying items. So for parents who often want to benefit from the marriage of their daughters, they find it difficult to understand why persons who are perceived as better off in terms of being able to afford the bride price payments want to twist the customs because they think things are not done as in southern Ghana.

In analysing the situation in relation to ‘travelling models’, it can be inferred that the rationalities of migrants as potential suitors and parents of would-be spouses are divergent. The rationality of male migrants is primarily to travel to gain experience and to work to accumulate income to come and support the family. On the other hand, the communities and

potential in-laws see them as persons who are well established and have the economic power to deal with their social and financial expectations of paying bride price in full. Migration has, apart from the quest for economic opportunities, been seen to assume a new meaning as a way to accumulate money to be able deal with the social demand of bride price payment. The new meanings and value attached to migration is exemplified by Bourdieu's (1984) assertion that 'habitus' is dynamic and changes in relation to context and time. The influence of social structures, in this case 'field' as posited by Bourdieu, have in relation to their varying capital changed and shaped the 'habitus' or meanings people have attached to migration over the years in the study area.

Secondly, in drawing on 'cultures of migration', the predisposition to engage in labour migration in order to accumulate and gain the necessary experience to come back and marry signifies a culture that is embedded in the society. The more favoured returnee migrant as a potential spouse lends credence to a culture of migration where people will want to travel purposely in order to meet these social expectations in contrast to environmental risks as primary push factors. Although some of the migrants sometimes return with new ideas and appreciation of issues which often serve to question socially accepted practices, others come back frustrated or as social misfits in the society by indulging in the smoking of marijuana, stealing and other social vices.

“[...] mostly majority of them, you have never seen them smoking or drinking, and they come back being drunkards, wee smokers and with hairstyles you will not even understand. Some of them are God fearing. But when they travel and come, they tend to beat parents. They sometimes come with absolutely nothing.”²³

For most of the people, migrating out of the community is freedom and independence from strict social norms, pressure and control from community elders and parents. Formal law enforcement agencies may serve to check unlawful behaviour; but the urban setting for migrants is a neutral ground or 'no man's land'. But these urban centres are spaces represents spaces for crossing social boundaries and social mobility. They deem areas as spaces to enjoy the freedom and to do whatever they want without recourse to normative community behaviour or traditional norms. At the same time, the freedom and independence in an urban environment where economic hardship and hustling is the order of the day also comes with its consequences. This perceived relief from the shackles of community social control often also expose migrants to bad company and the tendency to engage in nefarious activities to survive. As a result, some of the migrants return and become misfits in the society.

With the females who travel with the hope of securing work, they are often confronted with the realities of unemployment, economic hardship and stress in the city. Many of the young female migrants who work mostly as head porters in the south are often exploited as well as harassed physically and verbally (Adaawen and Jørgensen, 2012). They are often also confronted with poor housing, healthcare and sanitary conditions. Migration to the south may seem to offer migrants the freedom from social control and facilitate social mobility; however, some of the females are also often the objects of sexual abuse by male counterparts. In order to cope with economic hardship in the cities, some end up engaging in commercial sex to make ends meet. Others on the hand engage in sexual relationships with wealthy men (mostly married) known as ‘sugar daddies’ in the urban centres to earn a living (Meier, 2003). The promiscuous lifestyles of some of the migrants often expose them to strange diseases and pregnancies that they sometimes do not even know the men responsible. A medical nurse recounted an instance where a young female who had just returned from the south reported sick after which a series of tests revealed that she was pregnant:

“[...] in the process of running the tests, we went and called the mother. So we interrogated her and we realised that she was carrying it (pregnancy) from down there (*southern Ghana*). When she went there, things did not go well for her so she had to sleep around with men. So these are some of the things that they can come back with. She practically went out there to get money to buy some things and ended up getting herself pregnant.”⁴⁷

“I think migration is bad. Some of my colleagues went there (*Accra*) and got influenced by bad friends. For the females, some went there and they got pregnant. The boys too, some turned into drunkards, womanizers and wee smokers. Those who got pregnant could not continue school. Some do not even know the fathers of their children. For others, they come to give birth in the house and place the burden on their ageing parents which is not the best.”⁵⁶

The exposure to these socio-economic conditions, sexual and reproductive health risks by young migrants also has implications for the welfare of parents and households who send their children to the southern Ghana to work as some form of investment. The majority of young women who cannot bear the burden of taking care of their children resort to migrating back to the south to engage in menial jobs. Mohammed and Apusigah (2005), in their study of migration in the study area, explain that generally women in the Bongo area are often confronted with the problem of educating, feeding and offering medical care to their children. This is because most men are unable to provide adequate support or care for the family with migration seen as the panacea to these problems. In times like this, the responsibility of care for these children left behind is normally shelved to grandparents.

⁵⁶ Assibi, petty trader, Gorogo, Age: 23 years, 20th July, 2012, duration: 27mins.

“Travelling has so many problems. They (*young women*) travel and leave behind the children and they always cry and worry us and we can’t do anything about it. Normally, when they come back from school they cry because they are hungry and we often don’t have anything to give them. Besides, they lack parental care, which is very important for their upbringing. Because of this lack, the children sometimes ridicule us because they lack the respect for the elderly as their parents did not stay to teach them manners. So if something is done to put these people (*young women*) in some trade, it will help.”⁵⁷

As a result of persistent outmigration, many elderly grandparents are often left to fend for themselves and their grandchildren. Many of these children become malnourished, do not get education or engage in child labour. Although allowing children to work in the area is seen as part of the socialisation process, the trend has implications for their health and education as well as their general wellbeing. Moreover, leaving children under the care of grandparents is a source of burden to them. Considering the weak state and marginalisation of women in relation to gender in northern Ghana, there is often no prospect of improvement in their welfare in the absence and support of their husbands or sons.

The research shows that the ability to acquire socially desired items such as bicycles, modern clothes or perform modern funerals has become a measure of success and social accomplishment. New parameters for defining success and crossing socially constructed boundaries in the societal setup have been redefined within the interstitial spaces of the migration process. Hence a failure to attain these accomplishments after migration may mean a failure or missed opportunity to fully encounter what is perceived as modernity. These changing social constellations of migration is perhaps stressed by De Bruijn (2007: 110) that “mobility, ‘strings of people’ and spatiality have been pushing people into new relations, redefining their feelings of belonging and their identities. This has created new social forms and cultural, social and economic pluralities, informed by the interpretation of the societies migrants have left behind, by those societies where they have arrived, and, finally, by those ‘on the road’.” Having been re-territorialised in relation to the social expectations, the existing institutions and mediators can be seen to be acting to sustain and build a culture of migration in the study area. That is, a culture of migration where outmigration or the experience has become part of the value system and a measure of self-actualisation or success in the society.

⁵⁷ Mma Atampoka, Balungu, Age: 77 years, 27th August, 2012, duration: 29mins.

Persons who may often want to seize the opportunity of meeting these redefined social expectations that cannot be met in their localities will be predisposed to migrate. This notwithstanding, the predisposition for actual migration or whether a person endorses the persistent migration of people in the district depends on the individual's perceptions or the subjective digestion of information received. People are unequivocal that migration is good. Many others, on the other hand, bemoan the adverse effects and hence the need to tackle the continuous exodus of people in the area. To this end, the next section approaches and analytically discusses the varying perceptions of people on migration and how these perceptions perpetuate or discourage more movements in the study area.

7.4 Perceptions of Migration in Bongo

The outcomes and people's experiences with migration to a greater extent influence individual perceptions of the phenomenon. How migration is 'translated' and the meanings that people make of migration information influences their perceptions. Due to 'backwash effects' of migration on source areas, some scholars have been critical about the perceived benefits of migration (Wood, 1982). Generally, people who have either had good experiences or probably received good accounts of job opportunities, money and food will perceive migration differently from others whose migration experiences have generally been bad. Migration in rural communities of the study area has become a socially institutionalised procedure by which one must experience in a lifetime. This notwithstanding, people have expressed divergent opinions about how they perceive the migration phenomenon in general.

Migration amongst the majority of people in the study area is perceived as a good and beneficial venture. As part of the household survey, more than 50 percent of the respondents were affirmative about the fact that migration was good in contrast to about 34 percent who said the phenomenon was bad (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: People's Views on Migration in the Bongo District

Views	Percentage
Good	58.82
Bad	33.61
Not sure/don't know	7.56

Source: Field Survey (2012/2013)

In spite of the general perception that migration was good and beneficial, people expressed their reservations about the role of migration in the development of the area. These reservations derive from convictions amongst people that the socio-economic conditions in

southern Ghana have changed in relation to the economic hardship and persistent energy crises the country is facing. Consequently, people are taking advantage of the pro-poor social interventions and programmes like the ‘Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) strategy’, ‘Youth in Agriculture’, ‘Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP)’ social grants, and ‘World Vision Bongo Area Development (ADP)’ programmes (Al-Hassan and Poulton, 2009; SADA, 2010).

Aside from the need to take care of ageing parents and family, migrant returnees explain that they came back because conditions were not as good as they were made to believe before embarking on their journeys. The occurrences of misinformation are not resigned only to recent migrations. This was the case during colonial times when people were recruited or forcibly sent to work in the south amidst exploitation. Songsore (2011) notes that there were instances where illegal recruiters were also ‘carting’ people alongside colonial recruiters from Wa and Bolgatanga to areas they had no knowledge or under what conditions they were going work in the south of the country. The expectations of migrants and information people normally have about good conditions in southern Ghana are sometimes not reliable or reflective of the reality on the ground. An informant recounted that:

“I travelled to Bagu in the Ashanti Region. I went there with the expectation that I will get a job to bring something home to feed the family. But I realised that the job was not encouraging. It was not favourable for me there. So I just struggled and got something small and came back and joined my wife. People gave me information that the place was good and there were jobs. But when I got there, I realised that the place wasn’t that good as said. I did not want to venture to another place again. I just decided to leave because I cannot be at a place where there are no better jobs. Besides, before my departure my wife had just given birth. So my thoughts were always on my wife and child. So I just took a bold decision to return home to my wife and family. For even a month after arrival at the new place, I had not even made up to 20-40 Ghana cedis. So I decided to come home.”²⁴

Rottenburg (1996) reiterates that the tendency for an idea or token to be adapted or considered as a model worth imitating depends on the *aura* around it. He explains that this *aura* is what makes it attractive or appealing to people and as such worth imitation or consideration. Following this explanation, the responses amongst people in the study area suggest that migration to the south has lost its attraction. The *aura* that used to surround migration to southern Ghana as a sure means to social mobility and crossing social boundaries is gradually fading with the bad experiences and stories that people send or come back with into the various communities. This has seen some of the people indicating that they will not migrate to the south again or encourage someone to go.

“I went to experience how life was like in southern Ghana and also to witness how farming was done there. But when I got there I realised that even farming there was more tedious than here. This is because when you farm here, the little you harvest is economical. However, when you farm in the south the cost of transporting the food is expensive. So at the end of the day, you might get the food alright but you will incur great cost which is not economical. I realised that it was not beneficial staying there. So I decided to come home. Because you go there with high expectations only to get there and realise that it is not as you thought. So I think migration is bad. I sincerely think people are wasting their time and energy in working in the south. I think the youth should always stay home and work. It is more beneficial than going to waste in Kumasi.”³⁴

“Migration is not good because you sometimes travel down south and your children and wife will be here suffering to feed. So sometimes when you think of them, it encourages you to stay and rather be serious with your farm work to feed your family. When you go there, their food is delicious. So when you come back it is difficult to eat your food again. You think your own food is not delicious again. [...] migration also affects the village because if you are not around your wife or children may be sick or need food. So they will eventually be a burden to members of the community. Because community members may have to help or support them at their expense or inconvenience.”²⁴

The bad experiences, social change and economic hardship across the country are making people have reservations about the prospects of succeeding or getting the much appreciated experience in southern Ghana through migration. These reservations have been heightened by the activities of migrants who have become miscreants in the society. Apart from the hardship that some migrants face when they travel to the south, some engage in nefarious activities in their bid to survive. Others have come back to their communities with behaviours or attitudes that are in contrast to normative patterns of social behaviour. In spite of these reservations and changing mind-set of the people, outmigration is nonetheless still persistent in many communities in the study area and across northern Ghana. The efforts of government, institutions and NGOs through pro-poor interventions may have improved the socio-economic wellbeing of people in the study area. However, enduring cultures of migration driven by socio-cultural motivations to experience urbanity and modernity have served to sustain migration in the study area.

7.5 Summary and Conclusion

The analysis of the effects of migration points to the fact that migration in the study area of Bongo have in no uncertain terms contributed to social transformation and community development in the study. The role of migrants as mediators in the transfer and translation of new ideas in the area has seen the transformation of certain socio-cultural practices and beliefs in the area. But it is at the same time shown that the adaption or importation of certain ways of doing things seems to threaten the harmony and social order in the society. This is because some of the lifestyles that migrants imbibe in their sojourns sometimes do not conform to normative patterns of social behaviour in the area. Nonetheless, the cash and social remittances are vital to household welfare and community development. The migrant

remittances have been important to household provisioning and in times of economic shocks. Also, farming techniques acquired from migration experience have been instrumental in the revolution of dry season farming in communities like Adaboya, Dua, Kunkua and Vea.

In spite of the contribution of migrants to household welfare and relative community development, the persistent exodus of people has also had demographic consequences in terms of changes in household structure and shortage of labour in the communities. This is particularly glaring when you take into account that the selective migration of males is high in the area. This has seen the transformation of households to mostly female-headed ones comprising mainly of children and aged grandparents.

But increasingly also, the loss of farm labour to migration has remained a major challenge. Increasing commercialisation of communal labour groups or parties has given way to 'by day' farming which is increasingly taking root in rural communities. The labour groups, which hitherto provided important labour supply for agriculture based purely on the cultural tenets of reciprocity, has seen poor households unable to afford their services. The increasing momentum in female migration has compounded these challenges where the burden of household agricultural production and childcare has been shifted to aged grandparents. All these challenges seem to mask the relative impact of migrant remittances in improving household welfare in the study area.

In the wake of the seemingly changing socio-economic conditions in the country, however, people are beginning to have different perceptions about the relevance of undertaking migration to the south of the country. There is an observable growing disinterest in outmigration amongst the population in the Bongo area with many branding the phenomenon as bad. The abundant economic opportunities and the experience that people so much crave to have are often not the reality on the ground. This has perhaps stimulated the increasing shift in the migration pattern to the rural areas of the Northern Region and adjacent Bawku East and West Districts of the Upper East Region as highlighted in the chapter five of this thesis.

Despite the growing disinterest amongst people, outmigration is still persistent in across communities in the study area. The established culture of migration to the south has become part of the social setup of the area. Migration has over time become an institutionalised path to self-actualisation and a transit to the frontiers of urbanity and modernity in the south where most of the towns are mostly urban. The prospect of economic opportunities is important in

stimulating migration. But the societal value attached to a migration experience explains the seeming persistence in spite of the harsh economic conditions and waning economic opportunities that has made the sojourn to the south of the county an unpleasant experience in recent times.

The mutual expectations of migrants, society and those left behind also highlights the divergent interests, tensions and anxieties that often characterise the migration process. This is often the case with migrants who by these expectations are deemed failures in terms of their inability to accumulate enough resources during migration or are unable to meet the expectations of those left behind. The shifts in cultural valuations, and the contrasting interests and negotiations between actors in the migration process signify the cultures of migration prevailing in the study area. These evolving cultures of migration have contributed to the social transformation, migrant network expansion and the subsequent perpetuation of migration in the study area.

Having brought to light the interrelationship between migration, development and social transformation in the study area, it is imperative to recap the main findings discussed in this research work by way of a summary. A recap of the main findings will provide the basis to make conclusions in relation to the research objectives and questions. The next chapter is therefore dedicated to a summary of the findings, discussions as well as conclusions and recommendations in relation to migration, poverty reduction and development in northern Ghana with reference to the study area of Bongo District.

Chapter Eight

Summary and Conclusion

8.1 Summary

The focus of this research is on the question of an unambiguous interrelationship between climate change impact on livelihoods, agricultural productivity and migration. It also brings into focus the role of migration in social transformation, development and population dynamics in northern Ghana with the Bongo District as the study area. Against this background, the research drew attention to the fact that migration was an enduring theme in northern Ghana. It is further highlighted that the phenomenon is influenced by a plethora of complex interwoven socio-cultural and economic factors, and not necessarily the environmental imperative that is often advanced as the case. The analysis of migration, in this sense, is in relation to the influences of historical antecedents and socio-cultural perspectives within the context of environmental change in the study area. Analysing migration in this way is in view of widespread concerns raised by recent scholarship about the environmental change question in explaining migratory movements in especially the Sahel of West Africa.

The research elaborates that the migration of people in the Bongo area has been ongoing since time immemorial. Consequently, the phenomenon has with time become part of the lived experiences and the social organisation of the people. The changing perceptions, discursive negotiations of varying actors or mediators and the new identities that evolve reflects the enduring cultures of migration that serve to perpetuate the phenomenon in the area. Since the decentralisation of governmental structures and the proliferation of public sector work departments in the district, the area has also witnessed some level of in-migration mostly of government workers into the district. Traders from the south of the country also come into the area to engage in petty trading and other small-scale economic activities. But in the face of the relatively rural nature of the study area, coupled with limited economic opportunities and lack of social amenities, it is reckoned that the in-migration of people is significantly lower in comparison with the levels of outmigration.

This notwithstanding, the findings suggest environmental risks in the study area as undoubtedly a major challenge to sustainable rural livelihoods and wellbeing of the people. Aside from the fact that the Bongo area by virtue of its location in the semi-arid Savannah Ecological Zone is exposed to risks associated with the environment, rainfall variability is a daunting challenge to farmers. More importantly, the shift in the cropping calendar as a result

of changes in the onset of rainfall had also affected agricultural productivity. In addition to these challenges, issues of land scarcity, declining soil fertility, as well as deteriorating irrigation infrastructure and institutional failure have contributed in accelerating the decline in agricultural productivity. Indeed, official yield estimates of the major staples by the Ministry of Food and Agricultural points to a consistent decline in yields over the years. In consequence, people's ability to command enough food bundles as part of their entitlement has been undermined due to these challenges that confront them. These circumstances have exacerbated the poverty and food insecurity situation, and as such the vulnerability context of people in the area.

Despite the seeming decline in agricultural productivity over the years, available historical data on rainfall in the area and other climatic models suggest that rainfall variability and environmental stress have generally been characteristic phenomena of the area and hence not new occurrences. Nonetheless, people in the various rural communities have alluded to the seeming changes in the rainfall pattern and the environment. Highly variable seasonal rainfall and intra-seasonal long dry spells have with time become part of their cognitive landscapes. The divergent views as to the cause of environmental changes, the delay in the onset of the rainfall and variability reflect the socio-cultural worldview, perceptions and understanding of the people. The local cultural discourses or narratives on the environment and weather in the study area have over time become part of the mental models of people on climate change. This has, to a greater extent, shaped the models of blame regarding the cause of environmental risks and the kind of interventions that have been instituted to address them.

The activities of people in the destruction of forest vegetation and unfavourable farming practices in aggravating environmental deterioration were widely acknowledged. Yet, many other people were also emphatic about the fact that moral transgression and the lack of respect for customs are the causes of the perceived changes in the climate (in terms of rainfall variability) and the declining agricultural productivity in the area. While perceived spiritual or moral explanation to misfortune has often attracted ad hoc socio-cultural measures in that light, the interventions given to 'official risks' by government and aid agencies can be seen to be associated with the scientific models of blame. These relate to scientific explanations or drivers of climate and environmental change (destruction of forest vegetation, accumulation of greenhouse gases, and changes in climatic and atmospheric systems as well as bush burning).

At the household level, the research highlights that the economic motivation to migrate in order to accrue income so as to address challenges associated with poverty and food scarcity was also important. The cash and social remittances that migrants send or bring along have brought some level of ‘development’ and social transformation in the area. The research shows that migrant remittances have relatively improved household welfare in rural communities. But the longer duration of stay by most migrants have had implications for the wellbeing of families and also brought changes in the demographic structure of the households. The unintended long stays of some migrants have resulted in aged grandparents having to contend with engaging in stressful agricultural activities and solely taking care of grandchildren in the absence of parents. Apart from the burden of childcare, the absence of economically active persons has also affected the availability of household labour to engage in meaningful agricultural or economic activities in the area.

On the positive side, the long stay of married migrant partners in destination areas and in response to agricultural adversity has contributed to a fertility transition; where there has been a consistent decline in total fertility rates in northern Ghana. The fertility decline has in a way contributed to reducing pressure on limited family food and resources. Also, migrant remittances (food and cash) have proven vital to household sustenance. The food remittances served as buffer to the perennial food shortage during the dry season. On the other hand, cash remittances were used for household maintenance, hiring labour and input for agricultural production.

Furthermore, migrants have been instrumental in the development and social transformation of the area. The influx of public sector government workers and traders operating small-scale businesses has contributed to the urban and economic spark in the district. Some of the in-migrants have established income making ventures and stimulated economic activities in the study area. Also, the activities of traders passing through the area to the nearby big border commercial market at Yelwongo in Burkina Faso have complemented and stimulated economic activities. In addition to these activities, migrant and hometown associations like BONABOTO have in diverse ways also contributed to infrastructural development, provision of social amenities and education in the area.

The transfer of certain socio-cultural practices has triggered a renewed commitment to abandoning some cultural practices that are considered outmoded and derails developmental efforts in the area. Nonetheless, the inculcation of certain customs and lifestyles that are

supposedly new to the area is found to be eroding social solidarity amongst the people. On the positive side, the transmission of new ideas, information about new places and opportunities as well as migrant networks has contributed to the persistent migration of people. A matter of concern that was, however, raised is related to the fact that the kind of jobs and relatively lower incomes that migrants sometimes earn did not significantly bring development or facilitated any transfer of skilled knowledge in the area.

From the research, many people perceive outmigration to the south as good. However, there is a growing disaffection and disinterest in migration to the south of the country amongst people in the study area. This stems from the general economic hardship and social change in the country that has made the prospect of economic empowerment and the much needed experience in a sojourn to the south untenable. Not only are people unable to cope with hardship in the urban centres of the south, but most come back frustrated or become misfits in the society.

With regard to power relations, the interstitial space of the migration process has become a 'discursive space' for negotiations or restructuring the field of hierarchical or asymmetrical power relations and for people to cross socially constructed boundaries. That is to say, the migration process has become an arena for negotiating power, staking claims in the family and societal recognition. It is also a means to economic empowerment and flight from perceived witchcraft or misfortune. These changing socio-cultural constellations within the context of environmental risks are self-enforcing factors that have set up a culture of persistent migration in the area. Aside from the crucial role of migrants as mediators in 'translating' migration as a travelling idea, they are also important agents of development and social transformation in the various communities.

8.2 Discussion and Conclusions

Although the effects of environmental risks on livelihoods and economic motivations cannot be entirely disregarded in the explanation of migration dynamics in the study area, the phenomenon can be seen to be embedded in the social setup of the area. The research thus suggests that environmental risks and population movements may have generally characterised the way of life of the people. But historical antecedents, coupled with complex multi-causal socio-cultural factors and other discursive processes provide a better explanation to outmigration in northern Ghana.

Secondly, the relatively insignificant in-migration of people from other parts of the country is compounded by perceptions of northern Ghana as being underdeveloped and plagued with high levels of poverty, lack of social amenities and with limited economic opportunities. Acknowledging that colonial governmental policies may have nurtured and established the north-south development divide and perceptions, political commitment to the accelerated development of northern Ghana as a way to enticing people to stay or also move up north has not been encouraging. The use of northern Ghana as an area for disciplinary transfer of public sector workers by certain governmental institutions does not give a good image of the place. It perpetuates age-old misconceptions of the area as a place for suffering or ‘atonement’ for any misbehaviour of a sort in public sector work circles.

Moreover, the environmental conditions and lack of appropriate social interventions aimed at poverty reduction in northern Ghana have resigned the people to agrarian livelihoods that are vulnerable to environmental risks. These culminating issues, coupled with accusations and perception of locals in certain areas as not being receptive, have been dissuasive in actually baiting or enticing people to willingly migrate to work in the area or do business except for the ‘handful’ of Ashanti petty traders who sometimes actually settle in some remote communities in the area.

Furthermore, it is observed that despite the acknowledged developmental challenge of persistent outmigration of people and the associated effects in both northern and southern Ghana, there is no comprehensive migration policy regarding issues and management of migration at the national level. This has partly led to increasing loss of human capital in most communities of northern Ghana. The influx of migrants from northern Ghana and other parts of the country continue to exacerbate the problem of high urban unemployment and slum conditions in the major cities of the south. While the ongoing consultative process for the formulation of a national migration policy may be long overdue considering the intensity of migration dynamics in the country, the focus of policy-makers has always been on the multiplier effect of remittances from migrants abroad which have been observed to exceed official development assistance in Ghana. The relegation of the issue of the exodus of people from northern Ghana as a cause and outcome of uneven development has served to exacerbate the north-south development disparity. This, in itself, has been a basis for the perception amongst people in northern Ghana that an encounter with ‘modernity’ or the prospect of liberating one’s self from the ‘shackles’ of poverty is by migrating to the south (‘bush’/Kumasi).

On the question of the relationship between climatic and environmental change impacts and migration, therefore, it is fairly safe to assert that environmental factors may be contextual in influencing migration. However, it will suffice to stress that the migration phenomenon is inalienably part of the economic and social structure of rural communities in contrast to it being a 'knee-jerk' response to environmental risks. Thus, the overemphasis of environmental risk factors and natural resource scarcity as the primary cause of migration in northern Ghana may be somewhat insufficient and unsustainable. This is because migration is rooted in the minds of people and hence will continue to be persistent irrespective of the environmental, climatic and agricultural situation in the area. Also, the movement of in-migrants into northern Ghana is not environmentally induced. Although some migrants from other regions move into the area to work, the majority who are mostly Ashantis from the south temporarily come in to basically engage in petty trading.

From these empirical insights, the following suggestions and policy considerations can therefore be made. Some of these suggestions may however not deviate much from those of other scholars and policies in the area.

The issue of migration in northern Ghana should be an important area of focus as part of the ongoing consultation underway for the formulation of a national migration policy. Having identified outmigration as depriving northern Ghana of its intellectual and general human resource base and its associated effects, a more pragmatic implementation of strategies at managing the exodus of economically active persons should be a major priority area. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Migration (IMCM) of the Ministry of Interior charged with formulating the national migration policy should institute or establish a special desk at the ministry to focus on migration issues specifically related to northern Ghana.

This special department should be resourced to stimulate extensive scientific research into the underlying causes and dynamics of migration in northern Ghana with a view to aligning problems in the area that seem to precipitate persistent movement with the national developmental agenda. On the one hand, this will make for the needed attention to addressing the north-south development gap, poverty and challenges that have plagued northern Ghana. On the other hand, it will facilitate the concerted implementation of strategic policies aimed at managing the exodus of people that seem to reap northern Ghana of its human resource base and further exacerbating the developmental gap. Also, the provision of certain social

infrastructure often perceived as ‘modern’ will gradually change the mentality of youth who will want to migrate to enjoy the ‘bright lights’ of the city.

In relation to environmental risks and the associated effects on agrarian livelihoods in the area, there is the need for sustained efforts at sensitising the people on the effects of climate change, harnessing agricultural innovation, resource and environmental management in northern Ghana. The government and NGOs, through MOFA, have facilitated the introduction of improved and early maturing seed varieties and other agronomic practices aimed at improving agricultural productivity. Taking into account the delay in the onset of the rains and the seasonal dry spells, people should be encouraged to eschew religious and cultural sentiments as the basis for the perceived changes in the rainfall pattern and agricultural adversity. Alternatively, traditional rainmakers and authorities could be brought in to collaborate with meteorological service in forecasting and disseminating seasonal rainfall information to local farmers in order to enhance their agricultural production. By this, people should be encouraged to be more pragmatic in their farming approaches by shifting the cropping calendar along with the shift in the onset of the rains to increase productivity.

With northern Ghana endowed with a vast and flat land, the area has the potential of being the ‘food basket’ of the country. A more political commitment to facilitating modernised agriculture through the massive rehabilitation of dams, provision of adequate but subsidised agricultural inputs and ready market for crop produce is crucial to stemming the declining crop yields over the years. Thus liaising and sourcing funds from donor agencies and funding facilities such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA)⁵⁸ facility and WASCAL project to sanction scientific research into identifying best adaptation strategies and agronomic practices for improving agricultural productivity can help improve the food insecurity situation and livelihoods in northern Ghana. If many people are engaged in the greater part of the dry season and can actually make ‘good’ incomes from dry season farming and also access basic social amenities, people would not be motivated to migrate to the south. But even if migration is ingrained in the psyche of the people, such that they will still want to migrate just to experience the south, the motivation to stay longer or permanently will wane as there is now the potential to make much income, enjoy social amenities and encounter perceived ‘modernity’ back home.

⁵⁸National Appropriate Mitigation Actions facility was jointly established by the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and the UK’s Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) during the 2012 climate change negotiations in Doha. The facility aims at funding climate protection projects and countries that show commitment at tackling climate change.

Furthermore, there is the need to tap into local knowledge and also engage traditional authorities in environmental and resource management in communities. What is undoubtedly a major problem in the study area is environmental deterioration due to the loss of vegetative cover. Human activities in the form of unfavourable farming practices, the expansion of farm plots and the need for fuel wood has seen the continuous burning of bushes and destruction of forest cover. Afforestation projects like the government initiated SADA (Savannah Accelerated Development Authority) afforestation programme and the Green Bongo Project funded by Green Climate Fund (GCF) have all been implemented in the study area with relative success. But the role of traditional authorities, local knowledge, traditional coping strategies and agricultural innovation have over the years been crucial to environmental and resource management, and coping with environmental risks in the rural communities. Taking into cognisance that traditional authorities like *tendaamba* and chiefs still wield so much power in local political governance, their recognition and lead role in environmental governance will prove vital to tackling environmental change and risks to livelihoods in the study area.

More importantly, long term social interventions at tackling the climate and environmental change impacts in northern Ghana should focus more on the rural poor who are often the most vulnerable with the aim of scaling up to other social groups. A policy focus on gender disparities with attention to the economic empowerment of women as important ‘caregivers’ or actors in household provisioning will stem gender inequality and also ensure improvement in household welfare. The SADA strategy basically aims at increasing incomes of poor people and transforming northern Ghana as a resilient economic zone. The strategy envisions a forested and green north as a means to improving agriculture, promoting economic growth and sustainable development by intercropping staple crops with economic trees. Hence apart from the afforestation and development agenda of SADA, the implementation of governmental programmes such as the youth in agriculture module and other social programmes should be vigorously monitored in order to achieve the intended impact and transformation in the rural areas of the northern savannah.

The role of NGOs and CBOs in the provision of credit facilities to especially women, skills training to diversify livelihoods and sources of income, and provision of agricultural inputs (especially for those who migrate to the rural areas of the Northern Region to farm and work as farm hands) could also be complementary to the efforts of governments at minimising the impact of climate and environmental change on agrarian livelihoods. Governmental

interventions in consultation with traditional authorities and landowners in granting temporal unrestricted access to fertile land for migrants who move to the rural areas of the Northern Region will go a long way to improve livelihoods. A land tenure arrangement like *tutorat*,⁵⁹ which is a common type of land arrangement between traditional landowners in Nigeria and their Beninese migrant workers, when considered could prove vital in the access to land for farming.

Lastly, a limitation of this research is the inability to conduct field research in the destination areas of migrants in southern Ghana and other rural areas of the Northern Region. As an area for further research therefore, extensive scientific research of migrants of northern Ghanaian origins will highlight the changing perceptions, challenges, and coping strategies at their places of destination. With migrants identified as important agents of development in source communities, a particular research focus on the northern migrant elite working outside of the area will highlight their perceptions of migration, developmental and environmental challenges. Their views and expertise as key actors from the area will prove invaluable at working more progressively towards poverty reduction, social transformation and development in northern Ghana.

⁵⁹ The *tutorat* form of tenure where migrant are granted access to fertile land for farming after working for landlords for some period of time. These arrangement is normally embedded in the local moral economy where migrants work for landlords for a period of time in order to access land (Le Meur, 2006: 882).

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