

# **Socio-economic status of international return migrants to the Berekum Municipality of Ghana**

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## **Introduction**

In the past, migration has generally been seen as reflecting the failure of development; or worse, as contributing to a vicious cycle in which poverty in the migration source country was reinforced. However, there is now a growing recognition that migration, both internal and international, can offer an important route out of poverty for many people from developing countries (Black, King & Tiemoko, 2003). Rather than a vicious cycle, migration is increasingly seen as part of a virtuous interaction in which development is enhanced, not only in the destination country but also in the sending country (Weinstein, 2001).

People migrate in search of a better life, new job or education opportunities and/or as a result of political and economic changes, crises and wars. For various reasons some of them return to their country of origin, and especially the highly skilled can stimulate or support knowledge-based economic development. The return migration of highly skilled can thus contribute to reverse the negative effects of what has been discussed as brain drain, especially in developing and newly industrializing countries (Iredale & Guo, 2001, Hunger, 2004). The arguments used are, for example, the role of remittances and repatriated savings in overcoming capital constraints (Ilahi, 1999; Mesnard, 2004) and the accumulation of human capital (e.g. business skills and ideas) through exposure to the host country's market economy environment (McCormick & Wahba, 2001; Dustmann & Kirchkamp, 2002). The role of return migration as a

development tool has increasingly been attracting the attention of policy-makers and others in both the migration and development domains (IOM, 2008). It is now widely recognized that the return of migrants possessing different skills can contribute substantially to home-country development through their considerable human, financial and other resources (IOM, 2008).

Although it is generally recognized that international migration and development are closely interconnected (Fischer, Martin & Straubhaar, 1997), yet the understanding of their relationship remains limited (Appleyard, 1992; Papademetriou & Martin, 1991). This is because both are highly dynamic and complex processes (Appleyard, 1992; Papademetriou & Martin, 1991). Massey et al. (1993) opined that the problem is also partly due to the fact that the theoretical base for understanding these forces remains weak. Meanwhile, the need to develop a thorough understanding of the migration-development linkage is very essential, particularly in an era characterized by increasing human mobility. Developing a sound policy on return migrants in particular will require a good knowledge of return migration including a deeper understanding of their socio-economic implications after their return.

It is well established that migration is selective (Lee, 1966). In general, it is believed that migrants are positively selected, namely, they are more advantaged and/or more able than non-migrants to pursue opportunities and to overcome intervening obstacles of migration. Though researchers believe that return migration is also selective there is no consensus on how and the extent to which it is selective (Gmelch, 1980; Lee, 1984). To unravel the uncertainties surrounding this topic, this paper attempts to investigate the socioeconomic status of return migrants resident in the Berekum Municipality. Based on the objective of this study, it is hypothesized that there is no significant differences in the socio-economic status of returnees prior to and after migration.

## **Conceptual and theoretical perspectives**

Migration may be defined as a temporary or permanent change in the usual place of residence across space in a given time period. It has time dimensions which are often used to classify migrants. International return migration, which is the focus of this paper, refers to the act of a person returning to his or her country of citizenship after having been international migrant in another country and who is intending to stay in his/her own country for at least one year (United Nations Statistics Division, 1998; IOM, 2004). Within the framework of this paper, however, a return migrant is depicted as any person who had returned to Berekum Municipality in the course of the last five years after having been an international migrant in another country for a minimum period of five years. The essence of this time frame is to allow for comparability of findings in different historical and environmental settings and to enable the returnees recount their migratory experiences without serious memory lapses.

In the 1970's, the theories on return migration viewed the returnee as a migrant who returned home because of a failed migration experience that did not accomplish the desired outcome (Cassarino, 2004). For instance, the neoclassical migration model viewed the return decisions of migrants as the outcome of a failed migration experience which did not yield the expected benefits. In other words, in a neoclassical stance, return migration exclusively involves labour migrants who miscalculated the costs of migration due to imperfect information before departure and who did not reap the benefits of higher earnings. Return occurs as a consequence of their failed experiences abroad or because their human capital was not rewarded as expected.

However, the focus shifted by the 1990's. Return then was understood as a successful experience abroad where the migrant accomplished the goals of higher income and the accumulation of savings while remitting part of their income to the household; acquisition of

higher education, skills, and foreign work experience; as well as the accumulation of social capital in the form of networks, values and attitudes (Cassarino, 2004). From the perspective of the new economics model, international migration and return is viewed as a calculated strategy that aims to mitigate credit market imperfections at origin in which migration serves to accumulate sufficient savings to provide the capital, or at least the collateral required to obtain a credit for investment at home, in particular in business activities. Once they have achieved the target level of savings, migrants return to their home countries (Stark, 1991; Mesnard, 2004). Out and return migration of Ghanaians can therefore be situated in the context of the new economics of labour migration. A household could sponsor its member to migrate abroad to work and earn some income and to acquire property. The income obtained through the migration could be used to support the household income.

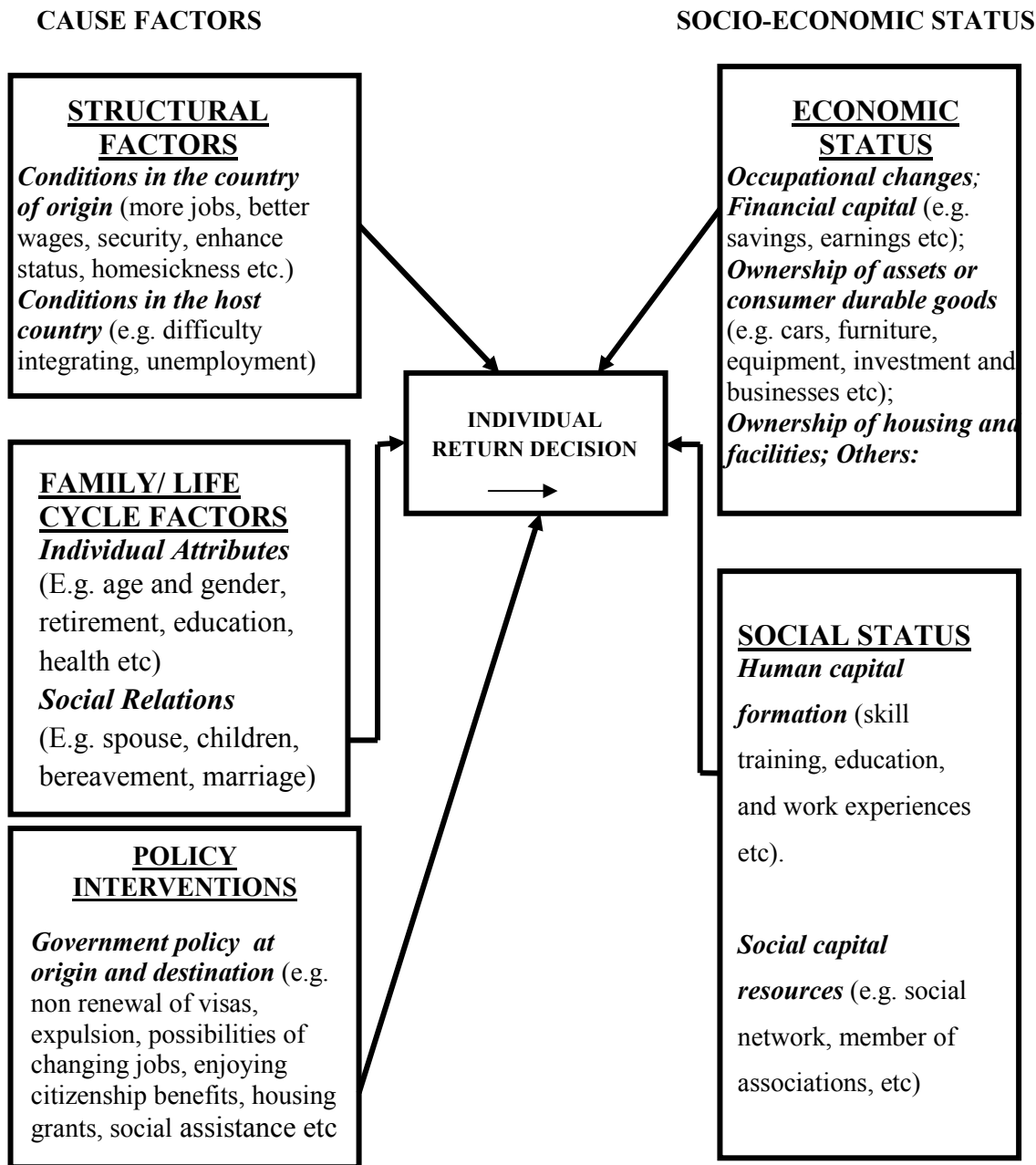
One of the most debated issues has been that of human capital gains for emigration countries through the return of migrants (Ammassari & Black, 2001; Hunger, 2004). The human capital model of socioeconomic attainment views, migration as a form of investment whereby the individual initiates a geographical move with the expectation of drawing net cumulative gains over his/her working life (Wilson, 1985). Brain gain generally denotes expatriates returning from abroad with highly skilled technical or intellectual expertise, which creates a positive outcome because they often bring back skills and/or norms (Ardovino & Brown, 2008). Brain gain usually has a positive connotation in the literature because migrants can potentially bring back skills and/or norms and implement them in their home society. Gmelch (1980) has distinguished two perspectives from which this question may be measured or approached. On the one hand, the actual social and economic status of returnees can be examined, looking at employment and housing, participation in associations, their earnings and savings, and

ownership of capital assets. On the other hand, the return migrants own perceptions can be measured based on their degree of “satisfaction” or “dissatisfaction” after the migration experience.

### **Conceptual framework**

This study adapts the cause-effect model developed by King (2000). As it has already been observed, there is no one single holistic theory that explains international migration (Kritz et al., 1981; Portes & Borocz, 1989; Massey et al., 1993). The two key effects of return migration according to the cause-effect model relate to the human capital accumulated abroad through education, training and gain on-the-job skills and the financial capital that is channeled into the home region through remittances and savings. Even though the various propositions advanced in the cause-effect framework were found insightful, variables regarding the socio-economic implications of return migration were not included.

In this regard, some variables which the original model did not include as part of its analysis were added and these included assets and consumer durables goods and the human, social and financial capitals accumulated abroad (Figure 1). As shown in Figure 1, the section labeled ‘socio-economic status’ explained most of the variables which are required for this paper and are broadly categorized into economic and social factors. Within the context of this paper, assets and consumer durables goods include all the wealth and property acquired by returnees abroad and after their return. Ownership of housing and facilities deals with the type of houses the returnees are living in and their occupancy status. Also, the savings accumulated during their stay abroad and their earnings after return represent the returnee’s financial capital. The human capital of the returnees is composed of the formal education, work experience as well as skills



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework on return migration**

Source: Adapted from King (2000) and Black et al (2003)

and know-how acquired. Social capital of the returnee includes all the personal and professional relationships or associations both at the origin and at the destination. Occupational changes on the other hand involve issues regarding their occupational outcomes after their return. That is,

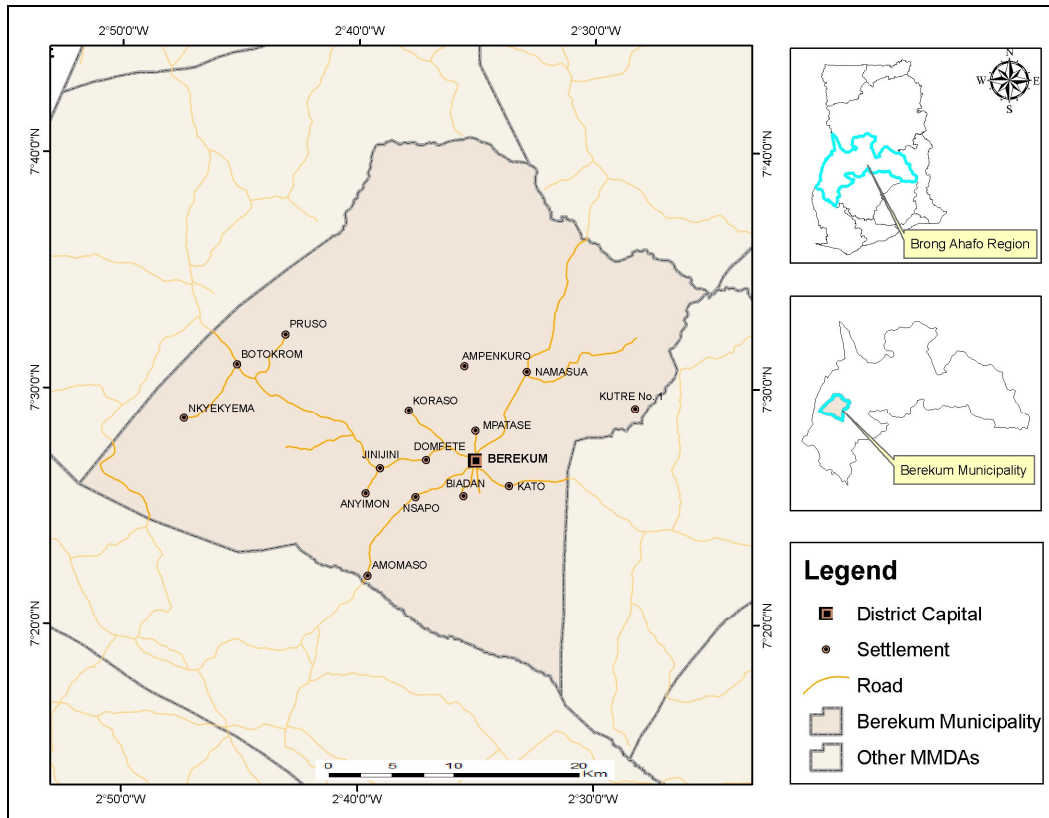
whether their occupational status has improved or worsened after the return (issues of occupational mobility and fluidity). For instance, it is possible for a returnee to move from a production service occupation into trading or agricultural related occupation.

### **Study area**

Geographically, the Berekum Municipality is located in the Western part of the Brong-Ahafo Region in Ghana. It lies between latitude  $7^{\circ} 5'$  South and  $8.00^{\circ}$  North and longitudes  $2^{\circ} 25'$  East and  $2^{\circ} 50'$  West. The Municipality shares boundaries with the Wenchi Municipality and the Jaman Municipality to the Northeast and Northwest respectively, the Dormaa Municipality to the South and the Sunyani Municipality to the East (Figure 2).

Berekum Municipality lies in the semi-equatorial climatic zone which has mean annual rainfall between 124cm and 175cm, mean monthly temperatures ranging between  $23^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $33^{\circ}\text{C}$  with the lowest around August and the highest being observed around March and April. Relative humidity is high averaging between 75 and 80 percent during the rainy seasons and 70 and 80 percent during the dry seasons of the year which is ideal for luxurious vegetative growth. The population of the Berekum Municipality for the periods 1984 and 2000 were 78,604 and 93,235 respectively. This gives an annual growth rate of 3.3% between 1984 and 2000. According to the 2000 population and housing census, about 51.4 percent of the total population were females while 48.6 per cent were males, giving a sex ratio of 94.4% males to 100 females.

There are four main highways in the Municipality. These include the asphalt road from Sunyani through the Berekum Township to Dormaa Ahenkro to Cote d'Ivoire, Berekum-Drobo-Sampa highway that also leads to Cote d'Ivoire and the Berekum-Seikwa road. Financial



**Figure 2: A Map of the Berekum Municipality**

Source: GIS unit of the Department of Geography and Regional Planning, UCC

institutions in the Municipality include Ghana Commercial Bank, Agricultural Development Bank, Societe Generale-Social Security Bank and other Rural Banks. There are 74 public and private Junior High schools, eight Senior High schools/Technical Schools, one Teacher Training College and one Nursing Training College. The Municipal health service comprises the Ministry of Health, Mission and Private Hospitals and the community sector. Statistics from a Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire in 2003 showed that the Berekum Municipality recorded the highest access to Health Facilities in the Brong Ahafo Region.

The dominant economic activity in the Berekum Municipality is agriculture (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). It employs about 57 percent of the working population. Aside



agricultural activities, the people are engaged in non agricultural occupations such as trading, small and large scale businesses, service related occupations, artisan and a few are into construction and manufacturing. The Berekum Municipality's close proximity to Cote d'Ivoire is another remarkable feature which promotes economic and commercial activities between the Municipality and Cote d'Ivoire.

Berekum has been selected for the study because it is described as the most recent area noted for international migration (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 1999). In the Berekum Municipality in particular, international migration is generally considered as an integral part of livelihood and advancement strategies for most families (Berekum Municipal Assembly, 2007).

### **Data and methods**

The main data for the study was purely quantitative derived from a survey involving 120 return migrants from the Berekum Municipality. It included all persons aged 18 years and above who had ever travelled abroad. The instrument used covered socio-demographic characteristics, assets, human, financial and social capitals acquired and assessment of socio-economic status prior to and after migration. The total number of return migrants found in the Berekum Municipality was 204. This was based on a list compiled during a reconnaissance survey through the snowballing approach. Out of the 204 returnees identified, 120 of them were selected using the sample size calculator developed by the Creative Research Systems of the American Marketing Association (AMA) in 2007. At a confidence level of 95%, which is the most widely used in the social sciences, and a confidence interval of five the total population of 204 returnees were keyed into the software and the result was 120.

The fieldwork took place between March and April 2011. This was carried out through home and workplace visits based on the names and addresses collected during the reconnaissance survey. As it is with most research works, this particular study was not without challenges. One of the challenges encountered during the field work had to do with spatial extent of the Municipality. This was further exacerbated by the fact that for the most part it had to be covered by foot. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 16 was employed to process and analyze the data. Specifically, descriptive as well as inferential statistical techniques such as chi-square were employed for the analysis.

## **Results**

### **Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

This section provides information on the socio-demographic profile of respondents such as sex, age, marital status, educational level, religious affiliation and main occupation (Table 1). The rationale is to identify the socio-demographic characteristics of the returnees. The data indicate that the respondents were mostly male returnees (83%), who were young (68 per cent were 20-39 years) and were married (50%). This is consistent with other findings by Anarfi, Kwankye, Ababio and Tiemoko (2003) who opined that most return migrants to Ghana were young and were in their active ages who could be useful for the socio-economic development of the country. The fact that half of the respondents were married was expected in view of the observation that a large proportion (68%) of them were aged 20-39 years, the age at which it is considered ideal for people to marry (Anarfi et al., 2003). The analysis, however, seems to be at odds with what the literature holds that single persons are more likely than married people to migrate (Brydon,1992). It further appears to contradict what Zlotnik (2003) and Twum-Baah

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of return migrants**

Background characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	99	82.5
Female	22	17.5
<b>Age</b>		
20-29	40	33.3
30-39	41	34.2
40-49	26	21.7
50+	13	10.8
<b>Marital status</b>		
Never married	44	35.8
Married	59	50.0
Separated	14	11.7
Widowed	3.0	2.5
<b>Highest level of education</b>		
Primary School	8.0	6.7
Junior high/Middle Sch.	36	30.0
Senior High/Tech./Voc.	50	41.7
Tertiary	26	21.7
<b>Religious affiliation</b>		
Traditional	4.0	3.3
Christianity	109	90.8
Islam	6.0	5.0
Others	1.0	0.8
<b>Current occupation</b>		
Public/civil servants	13	10.8
Trading	43	35.9
Artisan	28	23.3
Farming	14	11.7
Unemployed	16	13.3
Others	6.0	5.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

(2005) opined that feminized migration is increasing in Africa as a result of higher levels of education for women and changing social norms. The disparity in the male- female ratio could,

however, be explained by what Anarfi et al. (1999) had observed that as custom requires, most females prefer to stay behind while their male partners emigrate and remit home.

The results further showed that a higher proportion (42%) of the returnees had attained senior high/vocational/technical education, while about a quarter had tertiary level education. The respondents were mostly Christians (91%) which is consistent with the results from the 2000 Population and Housing Census report of Ghana which indicated that majority of Ghanaians were Christians (69%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). The results suggest that more than half (59.3%) of the return migrants in the Berekum Municipality were more likely to be traders or artisans.

#### **Socio-economic status of return migrants**

Migration has been considered as one of the avenues for improving upon the socio-economic conditions of individuals and families in areas that are poorly endowed with resources (Anarfi et al., 1999). Data were gathered on ownership of assets and consumer durables goods, human capital formation, financial capital they have accumulated abroad and ownership of housing.

#### **Educational level prior to departure and after return by sex**

Most studies involving international migration and human capital formation of migrants had been very contradictory. While some studies had revealed a positive association between the two, others found no significant relationship between them. The results in Table 2 indicates that before departure, about six out of ten (66.2%) of the respondents had junior high school education followed by those with senior high school education (53.9%). Regarding the respondents with junior high education, 42.4% were males while 23.8% were females. Of those with senior high education, 25.3% were males while 28.6% were females. After their return, the

**Table 2: Educational level prior to departure and after return by sex**

Education	Before departure			After return		
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Primary	7.1	14.3	8.3	4.0	12.6	7.2
JHS/MS	42.4	23.8	39.2	33.0	21.0	32.1
SHS/Tech	25.3	28.6	25.8	8.1	26.0	9.8
Diploma	17.1	23.8	18.3	23.3	20.8	24.1
First degree	8.1	9.5	8.4	16.4	10.3	16.8
Masters	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.2	9.3	8.2
PHD	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

results revealed that some of the return migrants had acquired additional degrees and qualifications. For instance, whereas none of the respondents had master's degrees before departure, the results showed that about 15.2% males and 9.2% females acquired their masters' degrees after their return and the number of returnees with their first degrees and diplomas increased phenomenally. That is, those with their first degrees rose from 17.6% to 26.7% and those with their diplomas rose from 40.9% to 44.1% after the return.

Comparing the current data with that of the period before departure, it is clear that the educational level of some of the returnees had improved significantly even though a large proportion of them (54%) still returned with junior high education. In fact, the present evidence partially supports studies by Anarfi et al. (2003) and Sjenitzer (2002) whose findings reported a positive association between international migration and higher education where a substantial proportion of the return migrants acquired additional qualifications and degrees upon their

return. The current findings have also reflected national demographics where a higher proportion of males than females attained higher education (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002).

### **Skills acquired prior to departure and after return by sex**

Migration optimists are of the view that migrants through international migration bring back critical skills and experiences which are useful for the developing world. Within the context of this thesis, skills refer to any formal or informal capacity enhancing endeavour that is specifically geared toward the acquisition of expertise in a particular vocation or profession. Such skills acquisition could cover broad areas including artistic skills (e.g. designing, tailoring and sculpture); specialized technical skills (e.g. construction and metal work); skills in social work (e.g. laundry, child care, aged care, cleaning, and home management); industrial skills (e.g. processing and packaging) as well as entrepreneurial and managerial skills (e.g. investment, marketing and hotel management) most of these skills are often acquired through on the job training.

As part of a measure of the respondents' human capital formation, they were asked to indicate whether they had acquired any skills in Ghana prior to their departure and also whether they had some skills training abroad. Results from the survey showed that about 82% of the respondents said they did not acquire any skills before departure while after their return, a higher proportion (84%) said they had acquired some skills while abroad. With regards to the type of skills acquired, Table 3 revealed that the dominant skills acquired before departure was artisan (98.2%) such as carpentry, dressmaking and hairdressing; while after their return, the results revealed that over 80% of the respondents were equipped with specialized technical skills such as construction and metal works followed by entrepreneurial and managerial skills (46.2%). Out of those with technical skills training, 52% were males while 29% were females and of those

**Table 3: Skills acquired prior to departure and after return by sex**

Specific skills	Before departure			After return		
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Artistic skills	50.7	47.5	49.4	12.0	11.8	12.0
Technical skills	23.9	25.0	24.1	51.8	28.9	44.0
Entrepreneurial & Managerial skills	16.2	17.0	16.7	25.3	20.9	31.0
Social work	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.3	21.8	3.0
Industrial skills	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4	15.7	8.0
Others	9.2	10.5	9.8	1.2	0.9	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

with entrepreneurial and managerial skills, 25.3% were males while 21% were females. The fact that males were numerous among those who gained technical and entrepreneurial skills was expected because jobs involving construction and other related occupations are often regarded as male oriented occupations because they require a lot of human brawn and risks taking.

The results further showed that some of the respondents had acquired additional skills training after their return such as social work (29.1%) and industrial skills (18.1%). Among the respondents who said they had skills in social work, 7.3% were males while 21.8% were females and of those with industrial skills training, 2.4% were males while 15.7% were females. This was further expected because jobs involving home management, packaging, child and aged care and the like are more or less regarded as feminine related occupations. The above revelations are consistent with what Thomas-Hope (1999) and Taylor (1976) have observed in their study sample where most of the return migrants surveyed gained additional skills and capacities.

## Savings and amount saved towards return

It is believed that after years of work and savings, many migrants return with sizable amounts of capital (Black & Ammassari, 2001). To assess the respondents' financial situation, they were asked to indicate whether they were able to save some money for their return and if they did the amount saved. Table 4 showed that a higher proportion (83.2%) of the return migrants said they were able to save some money while 17% reported that they could not save for their return. This evidence supports what Appleyard (1962), Gmelch (1980) have observed that migrants who live and work abroad are able to save money which they transfer to the home country upon return. Regarding those respondents who said they could not save for their return might fall under a category of returnees which Cerase (1974) described as failure return migrants

**Table 4: Savings and amount saved towards return**

Made savings	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	100	83.2
No	20	16.8
Total	120	100
Amount saved		
Less than 1000 Ghana cedis	7.0	5.8
1000-4900 Ghana cedis	22	18.3
5000-10000 Ghana cedis	20	16.6
Above 10000 Ghana cedis	71	59.2
Total	100	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

who miscalculated the cost and benefits of the migration project and whose human capital was not rewarded enough and therefore were compelled to return home. Concerning the amount



saved, the results showed that more than half (59.2%) of the return migrants brought home above 10,000 Ghana cedis, followed by 18.3 percent who said they brought home between 1000-4900 Ghana cedis.

### **Financial status prior to departure and after return**

The respondents were asked to compare their financial situation before departure to that of the present situation. Results in Table 5 showed that before migration, six out of ten said their financial situation was poor while 27% reported that their financial situation was better. Regarding their financial situation after the return, majority (85%) reported that their financial situation had improved while 15.1% said otherwise. This evidence finds credence in what Rhoades (1980) has indicated that many returning migrants are well off by local standards and may even rival the purchasing power of local elites.

**Table 5: Financial status prior to departure and after return**

Status	Before departure		After return	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Better	32	26.7	102	84.9
Poor	88	64.3	18	15.1
Total	120	100.0	120	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

### **Occupational status prior to departure and after return by sex**

Issues regarding the returnees' occupational mobility were equally examined. Respondents were asked to indicate the type of occupations they were engaged in before migration and after their return. Using the Ghana statistical Service (2002) classification of occupations, the analysis in Table 6 indicates that before migration, 47.5% males as against 57% females were unemployed followed by 22.2% males and 19.0% females who were artisans. After

their return home, the results revealed that over 38% males as against 23.8% females were traders, and the number of unemployed before departure comprising 47.5% males and 57% females declined appreciably to 12.1% males and 19.0% females. The number of respondents who were engaged in farming activities before departure also appreciated significantly after their return, that is, from 6.1% at departure to about 29.1% after their return (Table 6). The above evidence finds credence in the observation made by Arif and Irfan (1997) who found that migrants on return were able to move out of production service occupations into business and agricultural occupations and that their advancement was largely due to their experience abroad. This finding has shown that, the occupational status of the return migrants have improved as most of them after the return became own account workers.

**Table 6: Occupational status prior to departure and after return by sex**

Occupation	Before departure			After return		
	male (%)	female (%)	Total (%)	male (%)	female (%)	Total (%)
Trading	10.1	1.0	8.3	38.4	23.8	35.8
Artisan	22.2	19.0	21.7	24.2	19.0	23.4
Public/civil	12.1	20.0	13.6	10.1	14.3	10.8
Farming	5.1	1.0	4.2	10.1	19.0	11.7
Unemployment	47.5	57.0	49.2	12.1	19.0	13.3
Others	3.0	2.0	3.0	5.1	2.0	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

## Ownership of consumer durable goods prior to departure and after return

It has been indicated that, migrants after years of hard work and savings are able to acquire consumer durable goods and other property after their return (Black, King & Tiemoko, 2003). In the present study, respondents were asked to indicate the type of household assets and consumer durables goods acquired prior to their departure and after their return (Table 7). From

**Table 7: Ownership of household assets prior to departure and after return**

Item	Frequency	Before departure (%)	After return (%)
Working television	235	25.5	74.4
Refrigerator/freezer	149	24.2	75.8
Computer/laptop	22	18.2	81.8
Washing machine	33	6.1	93.9
Electric/gas stove	91	16.5	83.5
Room furniture	140	31.4	68.6
Bed & foam mattress	194	27.3	72.7
Working camera	100	15	85
Video deck/DVD	179	20.8	79.2
Electric iron/fan	353	21.2	78.8
Private car	63	6.3	93.7
Commercial vehicle	63	7.9	92.1
Motor bike	36	30.6	69.4
Tractor	8	-	100
Provision store	25	4.0	96
Hardware shop	15	6.7	93.3
Savings account	209	22.5	77.5
Shares	5514	10.4	89.6
Cooking utensils	249	17.8	82.2
Grinding mill	8	-	100
Others	327	7.6	92.4

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

the results, it was observed that a higher proportion of their assets were acquired after their return to Ghana. For instance, among respondents who said they had working televisions, about 74.4% were purchased after their return while a few (26%) were bought before their departure. Among respondents who indicated that they had purchased private cars, 94% were acquired after their return while only 6.3% were bought prior to their departure. Also, with respect to respondents who said they had set up hardware shops, the results showed that over 90% were set up after their return. The present findings are consistent with the observation made by Black, King and Tiemoko (2003) among Ghanaian and Ivorian returnees where a significant proportion of the respondents were able to purchase certain key assets after their return such as cars, refrigerators, furniture, telephones, computers or houses.

#### **Type of dwelling place prior to departure and after return**

The dwelling place of individuals is sometimes used as an indicator of the person's status. In view of this, the respondents were asked to indicate the type of houses they were staying in before migration and after their return. Table 8 revealed that before departure a significant proportion (68%) were living in compound houses (an enclosed area with a group of buildings often owned by members of the same family) followed by apartments/flats (17%). This suggests that the commonest dwelling place of the respondents before departure was compound houses-a traditional housing unit found everywhere in Ghana. The results also showed that 48% of the return migrants were living in separate houses (bungalows) followed by those staying in compound houses (21%). The analysis further indicated that 18% of the respondents were living in apartments/flats after their return. The results depict an improvement in the dwelling places of the respondents.

**Table 8: Type of dwelling place prior to departure and after return**

Types of dwelling	Before departure		After return	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Individual villa	8	6.7	10	8.3
Apartment/Flat	20	16.7	21	17.5
Compound House	81	67.5	25	20.8
Bungalow	8	6.7	57	47.5
Semi-detached	0	0.0	5.0	4.2
Others	3	2.5	2.0	1.7
Total	120	100.0	120	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

### **Occupancy status prior to departure and after return**

According to Tiemoko (2003), one of the motives for migration among some migrants is to accumulate capital for housing. For instance, a study by Tiemoko (2003) on African migrants living in London and Paris confirms this when migrants repeatedly mentioned that the main condition for returning would be to have a house in the country of origin. The present study (Table 9) revealed that before migration more than half (52%) of the respondents were living in rent-free houses followed by those who were renting (38.3%). After their return, a large proportion (68.3%) owned houses. The present finding supports studies by Gmelch (1980) among returning Yugoslav workers and returning Philipinos where housing or the purchase of a building plot for a house was the most common form of investment.

**Table 9: Occupancy status prior to departure and after return**

Occupancy status	Before departure		After return	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Owned	4.0	3.3	82	68.3
Rented	46	38.3	11	9.2
Perching	2.0	1.7	1.0	0.8
Rent-free house	62	51.7	19	15.8
Gov't. house	5.0	4.2	5.0	4.2
Others	1.0	0.8	2.0	1.7
Total	120	100.0	120	100.0

Source: Field work, 2011

#### **Length of stay abroad and asset-holding status of returnees**

It has been indicated that returnees with optimal stays abroad, long enough will have a higher asset holding status than those with very short stays (Bovenkerk, 1974; Dustman, 2001). Within the context of this study, shorter stays migrants were those who resided abroad below 10 years, while longer stays migrants were those returnees who stayed abroad for a period of 10 years or more. To unravel this claim, a chi-square test for the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between duration of stay abroad and asset-holding status of returnees indicated a significant relationship between length of stay abroad and asset status of return migrants (Table 10). This implies that return migrants' assets status can be predicted or explained in terms of their length of stay abroad. This is also confirmed in Table 11 which showed that return migrants with the longest duration of stay abroad had the highest asset status. For instance, respondents who stayed overseas for 15 years and above, 100% of them were found

**Table 10: Results of chi-square test**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.156	6	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	34.437	6	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.962	1	0.000
No of Valid Cases	120		

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

to have had an improved asset-holdings status after their return followed by those who stayed between 10-14 years (94.4%). This evidence goes to confirm the observation made by King (1986) and Dustman (2001). It is obvious from Table 11 that, respondents with the shortest length of stay (5-9 years) had the least asset-holding status at return.

**Table 11: Duration of stay abroad by asset holding status of respondents**

Rating of asset status	Duration (in yrs)			Total (%)
	5-9 (%)	10-14(%)	15+ (%)	
Improved	80	94.4	100.0	84.2
Remained unchanged	12.2	0.0	0.0	9.2
Diminished	7.8	5.6	0.0	6.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	90	18	12	120

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

### Assessment of socio-economic status

The respondents were asked to compare their overall socio-economic status after their return with the period before migration. The analysis in Table 12 indicated that, a large proportion (78%) said that their socio- economic status had improved after return, 13.3% said their socio-economic status had remained unchanged while 9.2% reported a diminished socio-

economic status. Overall, the analysis of the socio-economic status of the returnees mimics an upward adjustment in their living conditions resulting from migration abroad.

**Table 12: Assessment of socio-economic status**

Living standard	Frequency	Percentage
Improved	93	77.5
Remained unchanged	16	13.3
Diminished	11	9.2
Total	120	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

### **Discussion and conclusions**

The study examines the socio-economic status of return migrants in Ghana using the Berekum Municipality as case study. The study has shown that about 83% of the returnees were males who were mostly young (20-39 years) and were married (50%) and a significant proportion of them (36%) were engaged in trading or business activities. The analysis has established that some of the return migrants obtained additional degrees and qualifications abroad. For instance, none of the respondent before departure had a master's degree while after their return, the results showed that about 15.2% males as against 9.3% females returned with masters' degrees and the number of respondents who held diplomas and first degrees before departure also rose significantly (Table 2). It was however observed that, males return migrants had higher educational level than their female counterparts which was consistent with national demographics where males generally have higher education than females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002).

In terms of skills acquisition, the results have established that most of the respondents (84%) acquired some skills overseas and the dominant skills were specialized technical skills



(81%) such as Construction and metal work. This implies that those return migrants possessing different skills and higher degrees can stimulate or support a knowledge-based economic development in the country. Even the less skilled returnees, the very fact that they have gained an international exposure and worked in a foreign country could as well be useful to the socio-economic development of the nation if they are properly reintegrated into the country's labour market.

The results further revealed that most (83.2%) of the returnees were able to save money for their return and more than half (59.2%) saved and brought home above GHC 10,000.00. Concerning their overall financial situation, about 85% reported that their financial status after return had improved. Regarding their occupational status, the results have shown that over 60% of the respondents ventured into trading or business activities and the number of unemployed before departure consisting 48% males and 57% females declined significantly to 12.1% males and 19.0% females after their return. In fact, the implication is that some of the returnees would be able to expand their businesses or launch new ones and employ others from the Municipality thereby reducing unemployment in the area. Meanwhile, it is also expected that those respondents whose migration experiences did not yield the expected benefits (failed) are likely to compete with non-migrants for job opportunities in the Municipality.

As regard asset acquisition, 91% reported that they brought home consumer durable goods such as TV sets, refrigerators, cars, commercial vehicles, businesses, and shares. With respect to issues concerning housing, it was observed that over 40% of the returnees were living in bungalows after their return, and a large proportion (68.3%) owned houses. Almost eight out of ten (79%) of the returnees reported that their dwelling places were improved after their return. Results from a chi-square test of the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between

duration of stay abroad and the asset-holding status of returnees showed a significant relationship between length of stay abroad and asset holding status of return migrants. Overall, the analysis from the entire study showed an upward adjustment in the socio-economic status of the return migrants resulting from migration. Even though the improved socio-economic status of the respondents is significant, it, however, has the propensity of producing income differentials between migrants and non-migrants households in the Municipality. The likely effect of such income disparity is that it might serve as an incentive for others (non-migrants) to also migrate abroad thereby impeding the fight against the already high brain drain in the country.

In conclusion, the study has shown that international migration and return in the Berekum Municipality represent one of the avenues for improving the socio-economic conditions of migrants. As revealed from the study, some of the returnees had acquired additional academic qualifications, foreign work experiences, and some skills overseas which are useful for their personal advancement and the socio-economic development of the country. More so, a higher percentage of the returnees were able to save money for their return home and a significant number of them admitted that their financial status had improved compared to the period before departure. As observed from the analyzes, international migration can no longer be viewed absolutely as a drain on sending countries but one of the key survival strategies for extricating out of poverty.

### **Policy recommendations**

In line with the main findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for improving practice on international migration and return in Ghana and for further research:

1. Government and all stakeholders involved in migration management such as IOM should through a multi-sectorial approach develop and implement comprehensive reintegration

programmes (such as post-arrival information and counseling and labour market reinsertion) to facilitate optimum utilization of returnees' skills, savings, and experiences for the benefit of both return migrants and society.

2. Government should pursue or continue to pursue policies that will attract skilled Ghanaian nationals in the diaspora to return home. This is important because some returnees as revealed by the present study represent a key potential for the socio-economic advancement of the country. Policies such as modernization of the country's investment climate, access to credit facilities and job creation are but a few that could be pursued or reinforced.
3. Moreover, future research regarding the socio-economic status of Ghanaian returnees should be replicated in other cities of the country in order to draw comparative analysis and generalization for the whole country. Meanwhile, more detailed research could be carried out on each of the identified element that contributed to the improvement of the socio-economic status of returnees (human, financial and social capitals). This will help determine the relative importance of each of the capitals acquired.

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