Some Benefits of Migrants’ Return Visits to Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores some of the benefits associated with expatriates’ temporary return visits to Ghana. These return trips to one’s place of origin or birth, commonly referred to as ‘visiting friends and relatives’ (VFR) tourism, represent one of the major outcomes of the migration–tourism nexus. The benefits assessed in this study relate to donations, expenditures and investments made in Ghana by these visiting expatriates. Using two datasets derived from newspaper content analyses on donations made in Ghana by visiting non-resident Ghanaians, and the other a questionnaire interview schedule organised in the United Kingdom for resident Ghanaians on their expenditure and investment outlays during their most recent visit, a number of pertinent issues are investigated. Some of these issues relate to the quantity, timing and beneficiaries of donations, as well as their spatial distribution and their potential for poverty alleviation. Copyright © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

The emotional attachment of immigrants to their countries of birth has fostered a continued sense of loyalty and belonging.

This has been accompanied by certain obligations towards the development of these ‘source’ or generating regions.

In a number of these migrant-generating countries, contributions from expatriate communities overseas comprise a very important resource for development. These contributions have included financial remittances, technology and skills transfer, material and equipment donations. Countries as diverse as the Philippines, Egypt, Mexico and Indonesia have formal structures to oversee the facilitation of proper arrangements for employment of their citizens abroad. In the same vein, these structures ensure that part of the earnings accruing to these expatriates are remitted back home through formal procedures. These remittances have helped the respective governments to pursue national development agendas.

Another very significant dimension to this emotional attachment of expatriate communities to their birthplace is the return visitation of migrants to friends and relatives for the purposes of re-establishing old ties and re-affirming blood relationships. These are referred to in the text as ‘visiting friends and relatives’ (VFR) tourism. The current importance of the sector has been achieved in spite of initial skepticism about its viability (Braunlich and Nadkarni, 1995). Current expectations are that certain African countries could become major destinations for VFR tourists due to the large number of their people who have migrated to other continents (Wyllie, 1990; King, 1994).

Ghana has frequently been cited as one of the leading potential markets for VFR tourism in Africa because of her unique role in the transatlantic slave trade that shipped millions of Africans into slavery in the New World (Government of Ghana, 1996). In addition to the slave trade, relatively contemporary migrations out of Ghana have had a history dating back to

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the pre-colonial period when people from certain coastal fishing communities established fishing bases along the coastal regions of West Africa. Later on, these fishing activities were extended to other coastal regions of Central and Southern Africa.

In the immediate post-independence era, emigration from Ghana was mainly for education and other skills training, shipping, trading and foreign service postings. According to the Government of Ghana (1995), most of these movements were to the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries, and this was because of colonial links and ease of communication. Some of these migrations were also to a number of European countries that had bilateral agreements with Ghana on the free movement of citizens, such as the former West Germany. Other migrants were also engaged as public servants in a number of newly independent African countries such as Gambia, Botswana and Sierra Leone.

Economic decline since the mid-1960s and the political and economic instabilities that followed this period resulted in a drastic change in the magnitude and intensity of emigration from the country. At first, there was a steady small flow of professionals to other African countries, but as a result of worsening political and economic conditions at the beginning of the 1980s, substantial emigration of all categories of labour – skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled – to other parts of Africa, especially Nigeria, was experienced (Government of Ghana, 1995). Migration became one of the basic survival strategies adopted by individuals and families to enable them to cope with difficult socio-economic and political conditions (Manu, 2001).

While emigration to other parts of Africa has slackened in recent years, due to poor economic performance, movements to non-African destinations, especially in the industrialised world, have continued unabated. In the absence of reliable figures, a number of estimates have been made. Peil (1995), for example, reckoned that at least a fifth of Ghanaians resided abroad in the early 1990s, while Asiedu (2001), using anecdotal evidence, suggested that presently close to a fifth of Ghanaians live outside the country.

Contributions in cash and in kind from these expatriates, if properly accessed and utilised, could constitute a formidable resource base for national development. The Central Bank of Ghana’s statistics on private inward transfers from these migrants rose from 263 million United States dollars (US$) in 1995 to about US$ 753 million in 2001 (Bank of Ghana, 2003). This represents a three-fold increase over a period of six years, and these transfers have outstripped official bilateral aid to Ghana in recent times. The enhancement of these contributions could be increased if more was known about them (e.g. the nature and characteristics of these contributors/donors, the type of donations, the source and recipient regions of these donations, as well as the social and economic sectors that benefit). The temporal variations associated with the donations could also provide useful insights into the dynamics characterising the receipt of these benefits. This is what the first part of the study reported in this paper attempts to accomplish, by analysing existing data on past donations and contributions from Ghana’s expatriate communities during their return trips to Ghana. Another aspect of the study uses cross-sectional data on Ghanaians resident in the UK who visited Ghana in the past five years, to investigate their socio-economic and travelling characteristics, as well as their investment and expenditure outlays while on the visit. It is hoped that this knowledge base will help policy-makers in their efforts to make expatriate Ghanaians play a more beneficial role in the country’s national development.

THE MIGRATION–TOURISM NEXUS

Like most widely-employed multidisciplinary concepts, the definition of tourism has attracted a lot of scholarly attention. It constitutes one end of a broad leisure spectrum. It is an extreme form of recreation that is distinguished by the relatively long lengths of stay away from home and the relatively large distances travelled (Pearce, 1989). Tourism, therefore, may be regarded generally as consisting of temporary movements of people to destinations outside their normal places of work or residence for recreational purposes (Mathieson and Wall, 1995). Like tourism, migration has also been variously defined. It is generally taken to represent long-term movements of population across the boundary of an areal unit. It is thus differentiated from shorter term moves of tourists, seasonal workers, commuters and nomads.
International migration of skilled persons in particular has assumed increasing importance lately as a result of globalisation and the explosive growth in information and communication technologies. Harris (1997) argued that these movements are inevitable in an integrating world economy that is increasingly characterised by widening inequalities between rich and poor nations. This argument affirms the thesis that international labour migration is in part a function of uneven development caused by capitalism, and that the high level of technological development attained by industrialised countries confer on their people and workers a high level of per capita income, which attracts migrant labour from less developed countries (Ajibewa and Akinrinade, 2003).

While some amount of mobility is obviously necessary if developing countries are to integrate into the global economy, and derive some of the benefits that may ultimately enhance their economic growth, a large outflow of skilled persons, often trained with scarce resources, poses the threat of a ‘brain drain’ which can adversely impact local growth and development (Findlay, 2002; Bhorat et al., 2002).

While the symbiotic links between migration and tourism have long historical antecedents, contemporary changes in global production and consumption landscapes have led to the intensification of such movements. Williams and Hall (2000) discussed some of these changes in the following terms: firstly, increased labour market volatility and its attendant job insecurity have fuelled labour mobility, both sectorally and spatially. This geographical dispersion creates avenues for VFR trips. Secondly, globalisation of labour markets for both skilled and unskilled labour has intensified global networks for interaction of family and friends. Thirdly, the greying of populations in the developed world has affected their working lives and retirement practices, and this has led to the increase in the potential pool of retirement migrants and the financial wherewithal for pursuing tourist activities.

The interface between tourism and permanent migration produces certain salient outcomes for development that are worth noting (Williams and Hall, 2000). Certain kinds of labour migrate to perform services for tourists, especially in places where rapid expansion in mass tourism has outstripped local labour capacity and supply. Furthermore, certain consumption activities in destination areas, for example, second-home owning, are linked to the system of migration. Again, holiday travel may also be used to learn more about future possibilities for migration. Migration could also be a lifestyle choice, being, for example, a means to increase leisure opportunities. Finally, and perhaps most important for the purpose of this paper, return visits to places of origin by permanent or semi-permanent migrants can be a source of tourist income for migrant-sending regions.

Benefits associated with these movements are diverse. With particular reference to developing countries, Lowell and Findlay (2002) have indicated that there are three major feedback effects of skilled emigration. Firstly, migrants bring back the skills and work experience acquired during their stay overseas, and this can help boost productivity. Secondly, expatriates who remain overseas remit much-needed foreign currencies for national development; and thirdly, technology and knowledge transfer contribute to increasing productivity and economic development in developing counties. While a significant body of research has been undertaken on these kinds of linkages, there have been relatively few studies of the development impacts associated with the temporary return visits of migrants to their regions of origin. One exception would be King and Gamage’s (1994) study of migrants revisiting their homeland in Sri Lanka.

A number of localised and subregional studies have been conducted in Ghana on the impact of return migrants on the development of their home areas. Some of the most noteworthy contributions include those by Anarfi (1990) and the Government of Ghana (1995). It is clear from these studies that most of the development impacts have been spearheaded by ethnic, hometown and old school associations that have been formed in destination areas. These associations solicit and gather financial and other resources, either from their own members or other sympathetic bodies and individuals, for the purposes of carrying out development activities in their home areas. These studies stress the important role of clan, family and lineage associations in contributing towards the welfare of migrants’ relatives back home. The associations also provide links for facilitating the subsequent migration of
relatives by helping to provide shelter, food, and assisting them to secure jobs on arrival.

Most existing studies on migrant return trips to Ghana have largely ignored the touristic elements associated with these visits. This study attempts to fill this gap by providing additional information on visitors, their trip characteristics, and expenditure and investment outlays.

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that the impact of the nexus could be far-reaching, shaping both tourism and migration in several ways. VFR tourism, which seems to be one of the most highly recognised outcomes of this nexus, represents one of the limited options for the development of peripheral regions as they continue to lose their human capital to their more prosperous counterparts elsewhere. The notion that migration is a form of human capital investment as espoused by Sjaastad (1962) and Schwartz (1976) becomes very relevant here. What is not yet clear, especially in the Ghanaian context, is whether the various remittances, donations, other transfers, expenditures and image boosters to countries can adequately compensate for the loss of labour, especially very skilled migrants (Grey, 1995). Key questions that need more detailed analysis are: has migration become a significant source of capital investment (financial and otherwise), and to what extent does it compensate for the brain drain that Ghana is experiencing?

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Two data-sets have been employed to analyse the benefits accruing to Ghana as a result of expatriates’ return visits. These are, firstly, donations (i.e. cash, materials, equipment) that have been made to various bodies and institutions by visiting non-resident Ghanaians, as reported in Ghana’s two leading daily newspapers, the Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times, in 2001 and 2002. The author analysed newspaper stories of donations to establish, among other issues, the sources and types of donations, the nature of donors, the recipients of these donations, and their geographical locations and the timing of donations. The two newspapers were chosen because they offer the widest geographical coverage of events in the country, as reflected by the size of their editorial and the distribution of their readership. Inevitably, there remains some bias in the reporting of this information in favour of the more urbanised parts of the country. The relative ease of accessibility to these major information sources may help explain this potential bias relative to peripheral regions.

The research itself was conducted at the journals and newspapers section of the main library of the University of Ghana, the Balme Library, and lasted for about two and a half months. Summarising this information was done with the help of two teaching assistants of the Department of Geography and Resource Development of the University. As the newspaper stories were not restricted to any specific sections of the newspapers, the exercise involved thorough reading of the newspapers in order that the survey was as detailed and comprehensive as possible.

The second data-set was a micro-level data-set obtained using a questionnaire interview schedule. This survey was conducted at the premises of the consular section of the Ghana High Commission in London, UK, from February to April 2000. The respondents were chosen from UK-based Ghanaians who had travelled to Ghana during the last five years and were visiting the High Commission to seek consular and other services. It was found appropriate to place a time limit on the period of last visit, in order to ensure that respondents were able to recollect important events that occurred during the trip. Visits more than five years ago were thought to be too distant for accurate recall and therefore inappropriate for the purposes of this study.

The specific data collection method employed was as follows: Ghanaian visitors to the premises of the consular section were asked about their last visit to Ghana. Those who had been there in the last five years and were prepared to be interviewed on issues relating to this visit were selected for interview. The condition was that one person was to be selected every hour for interview. On average, a maximum of four persons were interviewed on each interview day. The procedure made room for refusals, with replacements being sought immediately. Almost invariably, a respondent was found within the stipulated hourly time period. The administration of the questionnaire took two forms. While some were self-administered by those who felt they could provide the required responses on the questionnaire, others needed the assistance of the researcher in giving responses.
In all, 122 visitors responded fully to the invitation to provide information at the premises of the High Commission. Because of strict time schedules, 28 others opted to complete the questionnaire at home. Of these, 25 mailed back the completed versions. This brought the total number of completed questionnaires to 147.

Questions sought information on personal profile of respondents – age, educational attainment, sex, marital status, household size, average income, length of stay in the UK, and other background information relating to the respondent’s hometown in Ghana, the usual place of residence while visiting Ghana and the regions in which these places are located. Other information sought related to their travel characteristics – trip frequency and timing, length of stay, size of travel party, motivations and purposes of travel, impressions about destination, and other related issues. In addition, information was also sought on respondents’ expenditures and investments during their stay in Ghana.

This second data-set was analysed to provide information on: (a) personal and trip characteristics of return migrants; (b) expenditure and investment outlays during the visit.

While helping to ascertain the major characteristics of return expatriates, the micro-data also provide useful insights for the development of appropriate marketing strategies for the sustained growth of VFR tourism.

MIGRANT DONATIONS REPORTED IN GHANAIAN NEWSPAPERS

In terms of newspaper coverage of donations, the *Daily Graphic* ran a total of 114 news items over the study period, which is 71% of the total, with 29% from the *Ghanaian Times*. This result is a reflection of the status of the *Daily Graphic* as the leading daily newspaper in Ghana in terms of size of readership and coverage of events.

The donations were largely made up of cash, surgical supplies, assorted drugs, vehicles, motor-bikes and bicycles, computers, books and other educational materials, clothing and food items. An attempt has been made to group these donations under the major socio-economic sectors to which they were destined. In this respect, the health sector attracted the highest number of donations, accounting for 37% of the total. It was followed closely by the education sector (34%), while donations to socially and physically handicapped institutions accounted for 17%. Socially and physically handicapped institutions include those for street children and orphans. The remaining beneficiary sectors included religious institutions and a stadium disaster relief fund (this fund was established to raise money for the families of the dead and also for the upkeep of injured spectators at a football match played at the Accra Sports Stadium in May 2001).

Individual philanthropists provided close to a third (31.6%) of all the donations, while groups and associations made up the remaining 68.4%. These groups and associations were usually home-town and old-school based, and their proliferation and involvement in development activities has been widely recognised (Adepoju, 1983; Government of Ghana, 1995).

Donations came from 17 countries during the period. The US topped the list with over 40% of the donations. This was followed by the UK and Germany with 13.2% each, the Netherlands and Canada following with 8.8% and 5.0% respectively. Other countries on the list include Italy, France, Sweden, Japan, Israel and Australia, in that order. The list is not unexpected and seems to reflect the number of Ghanaians domiciled in these countries. However, the difference between the figures for the US and the UK as indicated above appears to be wider than expected.

The major underlying objective that appears to govern donations is to help alleviate poverty. It is clear from this, therefore, that the destination of these donations is very critical in assessing how effectively this objective is being achieved. Based on current poverty indicators for Ghana, the expectation here is that a significant proportion of these donations would be meant for the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions of the country: where poverty is more extreme. But based on the information available in Table 1, this was not the case. Rather, the reverse was what the results revealed. The relatively wealthier Greater Accra, Ashanti, Eastern and Central regions received most of the donations (65.2%). On the other hand, the three peripheral regions of northern Ghana together received only 4.2% of the donations. On the basis of the above, therefore, one can say with some degree of certainty that the donations benefited the three northern regions only very marginally.
It is most unlikely that these benefits ‘trickled down’ sufficiently to help poverty alleviation in the most impoverished regions.

Another very significant way of determining the effectiveness of these donations in poverty alleviation is to find out the actual localities where these benefits were destined. To be able to undertake this task, the study distinguished five types of destination area. These were metropolitan areas, other urban areas (that is, non-metropolitan urban areas), rural areas, entire regions, and national effects.

Using this framework, it can be seen that the metropolitan areas of Accra-Tema, Kumasi, Sekondi Takoradi and Tamale received close to 26% of these donations while the remaining urban areas were provided with about 27% of these items. Interestingly, rural areas received more than a third of donations. On the surface, it appears that this is a very positive development when viewed against the background of the high incidence of rural poverty that is prevalent in these areas. However, when linked to the previous discussion on the regional distribution of these benefits, it appears doubtful whether the most deprived and highly marginalised rural areas, especially those found in northern Ghana, benefited much. It is most likely that the major beneficiaries were the rural areas in the south and the relatively more developed ‘core’ regions of the country. This view is supported by the fact that most emigrants who distributed these benefits were from the southern part of the country, especially Ashanti, Greater Accra, Volta, Western and Eastern regions (Government of Ghana, 1995) and may seem to be ‘favouring’ their own local areas. National institutions were also well represented on the list (Table 2).

Figure 1 clearly shows that most donations were made during specific periods of the year. As expected, peak periods for donations coincided with the major festive periods of Christmas, Easter and the summer when a lot of migrants were attracted back to Ghana on holiday. Donations were therefore largely concentrated in the months of January, April, May, August and September.

**MIGRANT INTERVIEW DATA**

**Socio-economic and Travel Characteristics of Respondents**

This section deals with responses gathered through the interviews conducted at the consular section of the Ghana High Commission in UK.

Most respondents were males (69.8%), aged between 30 and 49 years, had tertiary level education, enjoyed incomes between £10,000 and £20,000, and most of them had lived in the UK for more than seven years. These characteristics indicate that, generally, respondents were middle-aged, well-educated, enjoyed medium

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Table 1. Regional distribution of benefits by newspaper coverage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Ghanaian Times</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Daily Graphic</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Accra</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashanti</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brong Ahafo</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volta</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper East</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper West</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationala</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*National institutions like the Ghana Prisons Service.
incomes, and had been long-time stayers in the UK. The analysis also indicated that more than a third of respondents (38.4%) originated from the Ashanti region, corroborating existing knowledge on emigration rates among Ghanaian political regions. Greater Accra region followed with 17.0%, then Eastern region (14.3%) and Central region (12.5%). By contrast there were very few migrants from the three northern regions. These patterns were repeated when respondents were asked about places visited while in Ghana. Close to 68% mentioned Accra/Tema (representing the Greater Accra region) and Kumasi in the Ashanti region (18.8%). The above figures strengthen the already-held view that most of the benefits accruing from tourism do not diffuse to the poorer peripheral regions. This finding also supports the view that tourism development in developing countries is generally concentrated in the major centres of socio-economic and political influence, and that few benefits diffuse into ‘non-core’ and peripheral areas (Oppermann, 1992).

Against this backdrop, however, peripherality is increasingly becoming a strong factor in determining tourist visitations to a number of destinations (Blomgren and Sorensen, 1998). This is because peripheral areas provide attractions that are exotic and unique from those available at traditional and conventional sites. These attractions are likely to appeal to discerning visitors, for as Cooper and others have espoused, tourist visitations are usually based on more than one single travel motivation (Cooper et al., 1993). Therefore if tourism stakeholders in Northern Ghana are able to plan and market these rare attractions more effectively, the current low visitor levels could be reversed and this could engender increased benefits to these areas.

The analysis also showed that over 80% of respondents indicated that their primary reason for undertaking the trip was to visit friends and relatives. Business and conference travel accounted for 8.0% of travel motivations, whilst other leisure and holiday motivations followed with 6.3% of responses. The importance of seeing friends and relatives during these visits therefore cannot be downplayed. On the specific

Table 2. Local areas receiving benefits (2001–2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Number received</th>
<th>% involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan areas</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other urban areas</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural areas</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire region</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 1. Monthly distribution of donations, 2001–2002.

activities that they pursued during the visit, 35.7% stated that they attended the funeral of relatives, 21.4% visited to see family members and to take a rest, 14.3% attended family and school reunion gatherings, while 11.6% visited Ghana primarily to oversee the implementation of ongoing housing projects in which they were involved.

**Expenditure and Investment Profiles of Migrants**

Table 3 provides the average expenditure of migrants on various items associated with their travel and stay in Ghana. The overall scale of expenditure is high, especially relative to average living costs in Ghana, and shows the potential impact of this form of migrant financial transfer for local development. The issue of the extent to which the funds benefited the local economy was difficult to research. The cost of the air ticket was the single most expensive item on the list. Unexpectedly, however, over 57% stated that they travelled with Ghana Airways. This is despite the numerous criticisms levelled against the airline for poor service delivery, and suggests that the Ghanaian travel industry may be benefiting quite a lot from these visits relative to competing foreign airlines. In addition, migrants reported using many local products and services, especially food and drink. During return visits they often bought meals for their extended family to celebrate their temporary return. This expenditure behaviour generated appreciable multiplier effects, especially in the agricultural, transportation and handicraft sectors in migrant origin areas in Ghana and in the national economy in general. Migrants reported making multiple visits to local banks, exchange bureaux, restaurants and chopbars during their Ghanaian VFR trips. These visits immediately helped create and sustain local businesses and markets and also generated revenue and employment for local people. Table 3 also provides evidence of considerable expenditure on community development projects and diverse social commitments (such as funeral expenses). Without the external input of migrants there seems little doubt that funds for these activities would be limited. Events such as funerals and hospitalisation might result in a greater debt burden in the poorest households were it not for migrant funds.

Two major forms of investment in ongoing projects were also identified: housing development and business operations. The importance of these investments to expatriate Ghanaian communities cannot be over-emphasised. Diko and Tipple (1992) found that many Ghanaians see migration as the only means to finance such ‘expensive’ projects, while Peil (1995) noted that ongoing construction of a house in Ghana is an important reason for delaying the return home by many migrants. The World Bank also acknowledges that housing development constitutes the dominant area that attracts most investment from the Ghanaian expatriate community (Government of Ghana, 1995). The problems associated with inadequate rental housing, and the prestige associated with home-ownership, both in rural and urban settings, have resulted in a situation in which emigrants give priority to the acquisition of residential properties (Government of Ghana, 1995). On average, it was found that emigrants had invested an equivalent of about £1965 in housing developments during their last visit to Ghana. This finding corroborates the view that housing development constitutes the dominant investment sector for expatriate Ghanaians.

In the case of business investments, the average figure stood at about £1210. Business investments were mostly made in the establishment of communication centres, sale of mobile phones and the establishment and operation of motor vehicle spare-part shops. According to investors, these establishments created jobs and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Average expenditure (UK£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air ticket</td>
<td>785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation within Ghana</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial accommodation</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and entertainment for oneself</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and entertainment for friends</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and relatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other incidentals (e.g. contributions to community development fund, funeral expenses, etc.)</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average total cost of trip</strong></td>
<td><strong>2769</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Average migrant expenditure on some major items.
generated revenue for national development through the payment of taxes and other charges. These benefits undoubtedly contribute towards poverty alleviation in the country.

The impacts of such expenditures and investments in national development have generally been assessed using indicators such as the level of foreign exchange earnings and the corresponding alleviation of balance of payment constraints. Other indicators that have been used indirectly to assess these impacts include the extent of income generation in the host community through multiplier effects of tourism spending. Increased use of local resources to service incoming tourists in the destination area allows for increased linkages between the productive sectors of the economy, leading ultimately to growth generation or multiplier effects.

Unfortunately, data limitations did not allow the researcher to make reliable estimates of total foreign exchange earnings from the survey, but what is evident is that migrant communities abroad, through temporary return visits to family and friends, produce substantial financial flows to their economy of origin. Usually these flows are additional to regular remittances sent during the migrant’s absence abroad, yet seldom have the scale of these additional resources been measured or evaluated. Anecdotal evidence suggests that using the mean values of VFR trip expenditures derived from the field survey in the UK would probably have led to an overvaluation of earnings.

Another limitation in the assessment of these impacts is the study’s inability to provide estimates on variables such as the extent of leakages of VFR tourist expenditure and investment, and indirect and induced spending levels. This is because the survey was carried out in the UK. This information is needed to estimate the multiplier effects of this spending (Mathieson and Wall, 1995: 65). Future studies need to recognize these limitations and work towards overcoming them. This would facilitate better evaluation of the impacts of these migrant visits, and also provide a useful basis for comparative analysis with other similar destinations.

CONCLUSION

The study’s main focus has been to examine the benefits accruing from return visits of Ghanian expatriates. An attempt has been made to find out how these visits have influenced Ghana’s development process, especially in terms of contributions to socio-economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Some major outcomes of these analyses are worth noting. First, analyses of donations revealed that in spite of spatial inequalities in the distributions of these items, Ghana has benefited from them appreciably. Individuals, communities and institutions have received donations of cash, drugs, materials and equipment that have helped in the sustenance of their operations. The sectors that have derived most benefit – health, education and institutions for the socially and physically handicapped – also happen to be the most financially and materially hard-pressed in the country. Migrant funds have therefore aided poverty alleviation in the recipient regions.

Secondly, the various socio-economic and travelling characteristics identified in the questionnaire survey among expatriates Ghanaians could serve as an input in defining appropriate market segments for attracting more inbound VFR travellers. An equally important outcome of this analysis is the significant expenditure and investment outlays made by these tourists. The multiplier effects of such spending are likely to be sustainable, as leakages out of most economic systems through VFR visits have generally been low compared with other forms of tourism. This is because of the extensive use of local resources and services. It is regrettable that the ‘trickle-down’ effects to Ghana’s poorer rural areas in the north have been so small, while the benefits seem to have been greatest in the already more prosperous areas of the country. Ghana is not unusual in experiencing this inequity (McCormick and Walba, 2004). However, with effective marketing of resources, it is likely that many more visiting Ghanaians may be attracted to these areas as tourists.

Finally, acknowledgement of the potential role of overseas-based Ghanaians in national development is overdue. The Government of Ghana has in recent years been organising homecoming visits for overseas-based Ghanaians to deliberate on issues of mutual concern and to seek their views on a wide range of development issues. Furthermore, to reduce the over-dependence on foreign expertise in the provision of certain vital services, the government is compiling a register
on the professional background and working experiences of Ghanaians residing overseas. The government has planned to tap into this reservoir of technical expertise when the need arises. If it becomes effective, this policy is likely to lead to reduced leakage of financial resources through repatriations by foreign experts who are engaged to provide certain services in Ghana. The above examples are supportive of the widely held view that ‘brain drain’ may not necessarily be entirely detrimental to the growth and development of source regions. Instead, migrant-generating regions may be partially compensated through the financial investment and expert advice associated with migrants’ temporary return visits. With increasing globalisation, nations facing the development dilemmas associated with skilled emigration (Lowell, 2002) should re-design their policies to enhance the benefits associated with emigration, for example, by fostering expatriate networks dedicated to helping areas of origin (Bhorat et al., 2002). It appears that to some extent the basis for such diasporic networks already exists in the Ghanaian case and could be strengthened to good effect.

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