

TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE RETURN OF WEST AFRICAN TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANTS: WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

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Abstract: In this paper sustainability of return of transnational migrants originating from West Africa and the influence of their financial, social and human capital transfers upon return is explored. Return migration is not an end in itself and changes with the expansion and deepening of the globalisation process. As further understanding of the process develops, focus is shifting from the migrant's presence at origin to include the returnee's social networks and his or her contribution to the development process at origin.

Financial, social and human capital transfers from transnational migrants have the potential to impact on the development process of countries of origin on various levels of society. However in order to maximize this potential in a sustainable manner appropriate policies must be formulated, implemented and assessed.

Using existing data this paper explores the sustainable return of transnational migrants originating from West Africa, with particular emphasis on Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire and the impact of their transfer of financial, social and human capital on the development process, further analysing the data for implications for policy.

Keywords: *migration, return migration, social networks, remittances, development impacts, West Africa*

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Background

One commonly cited benefit of migration for sending countries is the return of migrants (with its human capital implications), as well as the financial and social capital and savings they may take back with them. It is argued that these benefits vary significantly depending on the level of analysis applied and on which critical factors are considered, including the volume of return migration, characteristics of migrants, degree and direction of selectivity, types of migration, reasons for return, and situation existing in the countries involved in the migration (Ammassari and Black 2001).

Well over a century ago Raveinstein (1885) observed that every migration stream generates a counter-stream which suggests that return migration is taken for granted with any migration. This may explain the initial silence over the issue in the literature until the global economic crisis of 1973 (Ammassari and Black 2001). Not unexpectedly, non-nationals became targets of discrimination in many European countries faced with economic crises. Since then about three generations of migration studies focusing on the subject of return can be traced from the literature. In a sense, they follow the historical development of the emergence of nation states in Africa, insurgency and counter-insurgency that characterised many of them soon after, and the new attempts at strengthening democracy in these countries as part of the globalisation process.

Lee (1966) was right when he argued in the sixties that some migrants return because they have acquired need attributes at destinations, which promise to be advantageous at origins. More skilled hands were needed in the new nation states that had emerged and the people referred to as "been-tos" in Ghana occupied special places in the scheme of things.

Historical and cultural linkages reinforced the continuation of migrations from the so-called emigration areas to the immigration areas during the second generation. Mabogunje (1970) captured this development from the perspective of a general migration system involving a mutual relationship between a centre (immigrant countries) and a periphery (emigration countries). Uncertainty about conditions at origin areas meant that emigrants took pains to establish social networks, which could be exploited to either facilitate return migration or stabilise stay after return to origin.

In the natural sequence of things, the third generation of studies on contemporary international migration is still evolving (Ammassari and Black 2001), and is caught up in the globalisation milieu. Within this context, areas of origin and of destination are linked together in

transnational spaces by migrants who acquire social capital cutting across boundaries (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; ECA 1996). Return migration is a central part of the ongoing migration process in this development, implying that it is no longer seen as the closure of the migration cycle, but rather as one of many steps within a continued movement (King, 2000).

It is this aspect of the contemporary form of international migration that has made it one of the thornier issues in international relations, especially since the beginning of the 1990s. It was a major theme of the G7 summit of the major industrialised countries held in London in July 1991 (Teitelbaum and Weiner 1995). The Economic Commission for Africa (1996) observed that the prominence given to international migration is likely to continue well into this century because migration is a manifestation of a new worldview, a result of the extension and deepening of a globalisation process that is steadily expanding from the economic domain to culture, the arts, and societal value systems.

From a focus on the migrant's presence at origin it has become increasingly important to put return migration in a larger context, as a result of which focus is increasingly being geared towards social networks and professional contacts of the returnee. The concept of return and its sustainability gained increased attention among refugee and migration policy makers during the 1990s (Black and Gent, 2004). Return is increasingly seen as having implications for communities of origin and the broader development process rather than influencing just the individual. The potential impact of financial capital on the development of the sending household, local community and country is recognised but has not been given much attention in policy making as developing countries have focused mainly on the transfer of human capital upon return.

Most West African countries experienced a net loss of population between 1995 and 2000 (Black, 2004), a fact particularly true in countries such as Ghana and Nigeria where a transition from net immigration to net emigration has taken place. However, only recently has substantial return been feasible in many West African countries as the political and economic climate has changed. This paper aims to explore the options for sustainable return and the potential effect of financial, social and human capital transfers on the development process in West Africa. Suggestions for policy implications to facilitate these options will be addressed.

Sustainability of Return

The sustainability of return migration is closely linked to reasons for return and return must be voluntary in order to be considered sustainable (Black and Gent, 2004). However, when considering sustainability of return it is important to distinguish between forced migrants and economic migrants. Most literature is concerned with the sustainable return of refugees to rebuild and reconstruct their community and country of origin. However, some factors discussed in the literature also apply to the return and reintegration of economic migrants.

To determine if return is sustainable or not it is important to define sustainable return. Different definitions are often used depending on the context in which return migration occurs. Sustainability of return will first be considered on the individual and household levels and later on the wider community level.

Definitions

The most basic and narrow definition used, which appears to be more relevant to the voluntary, economic migrant, simply involves the absence of re-migration after return to origin (Gent and Black, 2005). However, this definition must allow for some re-migration as every country experiences some level of migration. In particular when professional migrants return and maintain professional and social networks abroad they can be considered sustainable returnees although they continue travelling abroad (Black and King, 2004). Valuing and maintaining social networks and contacts abroad could have a positive effect on the development of the wider community. This is shown in a study on Ghanaian and Ivorian returnees who continued valuing professional contacts and other social networks they made abroad after return to origin (Ammassari, 2004).

An alternative definition considers the socio-economic factors the returnee is faced with upon return (Gent and Black, 2005). These factors include availability of employment and housing and access to basic services. Gent and Black (2005) suggest that return can be considered sustainable if the returnee is able to survive without any external inputs, although many returnees, largely those related to conflict, are still dependent on aid and remittance from abroad. A third alternative definition focuses on the rights of the returnee and includes rights to public and social services, to property and freedom of movement. This suggests that return can be sustainable even if the returnee uses the right to move and re-migrate.

To expand the definition of sustainability of returnees to the wider community, sustainability of livelihoods may be considered. As suggested in Black and Gent (2004) the livelihood of a community can be regarded as sustainable if it is not dependent on external input or is sensitive to external shocks. This suggests a self-contained society, which is rarely seen today in a world where links and networks are extended across borders. A definition of sustainable return in today's globally interlinked society must consider what Black and King (2004) refer to as transnationalism, where the ability to return and re-migrate is emphasized. Although the return of a transnational is only temporary it can strengthen the links between the emigrant and the home community in a way which can promote development. Transnationalism could therefore be considered a form of return in itself as stable permanent return has become less relevant (Black and King, 2004).

This lack of relevance is evident in the West African context. In a recent study Black et. al. (2003) observed that a majority of returnees in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire reported that their return was permanent. About two thirds of all less-skilled returnees in Ghana had reported their return being permanent, however over half of them also claimed that they planned to re-emigrate (Table 1). The elite on the other hand showed little interest in re-emigrating. In Cote d'Ivoire the most important factor for re-emigration was the opportunity to work and develop a business abroad. In Ghana on the other hand more returnees had claimed they had no choice but to return. About half of this group were planning to re-emigrate although they initially described their return as permanent.

Table 1: Permanency of return amongst surveyed migrants

Return	Ghana Less-skilled	C. Ivoire Less-skilled	Ghana Elite	C. Ivoire Elite
Permanent	116 (76%)	84 (56%)	126 (83%)	124 (83%)
Temporary	28 (18%)	51 (34%)	21 (14%)	18 (12%)
Come-and-go	8 (5%)	12 (8%)	4 (3%)	8 (5%)
Plan to re-emigrate	88 (58%)	77 (51%)	17 (11%)	19 (13%)
Total	152 (100%)	150 (100%)	152 (100%)	150 (100%)

Source: Black et. al. (2003:10)

According to Black and Gent (2004) migrants often wish to return home, particularly if the initial migration was forced. However, if the migrant has lived abroad for a long period of

time the receiving area can eventually be considered home. This is particularly true if the migrant faces many barriers to return to origin. These barriers may include reduced economic opportunities, complicated relationships with non-migrants and frustration over business climate and corruption (Gent and Black, 2005). If the returnee maintains social and economic networks abroad and has the ability to re-migrate temporarily some of these barriers could be partly overcome. The economic opportunities that might not be available at origin could be accessed through transnational networks across borders.

Although many factors may influence the sustainability of return, research has shown that the most important factors are voluntariness of return and the environment at origin (Gent and Black, 2005). If return is not voluntary the returnee is more likely to re-migrate and it is less likely to lead to poverty reduction. Return is also more likely to be sustainable if there are social and economic opportunities and political freedom in the environment of origin. Policies have the ability to affect these important factors by encouraging voluntary return and influencing the economic and social environment to make return an attractive option.

Sources of Data

This paper is basically a review of the literature with emphasis on West Africa. It is supported with empirical evidence using data on return migration and the influence of financial, social and human capital on the sending household, local community and country of migrants originating in the West African region. Much of the data used come from a study undertaken in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in 2002 (Black et. al. 2003). The study focused on both elite and less-skilled returnees originating from both countries. Selection of countries for the study was based on a desire to focus on two sending countries in the region with different development histories, institutions and culture. For historic, linguistic and other reasons migrants originating from Ghana mainly migrated to the U.K., while migrants from Cote d'Ivoire ended up in France. However, an increase of migration to the U.S. was evident in both countries.

The study was conducted in three different stages with the first stage involving collection of pre-existing data. During the second stage the main survey of the study was carried out with a sample of 302 elite returnees and 302 returnees who were considered less-skilled. The survey was carried out by partner researchers in each country in collaboration with researchers at the University of Sussex. This survey explored the practice of migration, returnees' involvement in

different kinds of capital transfers (and how this capital was used) and barriers and opportunities for returnees to be involved in development of their home community. In the third phase in-depth interviews were conducted with returnees at origin and potential returnees in London and Paris. However, it is important to mention that since the total number of returnees is not known the survey is not a representative sample.

Other important sources of empirical evidence include but are not limited to Docquier and Marfouk's (2005) data on international migration by educational attainment, Kakbi et. al. (2004) study on the economic impact of Netherlands-based Ghanaian migrants on rural Ashanti which included open-ended interviews in villages and towns in the Ashanti Region and Orozco's (2005) data on Ghanaian diasporas, development and transnational integration.

Characteristics of Return Migrants

Demographic characteristics of returnees including gender, age and marital status are important to consider when analysing transnational return. According to Black et. al., (2003) the basic migration experience does not seem to differ greatly between men and women, in the case of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Men and women spend similar amount of time abroad and are equally likely to work and join associations while away. However, some differences are apparent and include choice of destination, amount of remittance sent home and attendance of school abroad (Black et. al., 2003). Ghanaian women are more likely than their male counterparts to migrate to the U.K.; however destinations of Ghanaian males tend to be more diversified. Women are slightly less likely to send remittances home and are much less likely to attend school when abroad.

Transnational migration seems to involve mainly the younger part of the population. According to the 1984 Census about 60 percent of emigrants from Ghana were between 15 and 34 years old (Adeku, 1995). However, the age at first emigration has declined over time, particularly among the elite as they are often eager to get the most of their higher education abroad (Ammassari, 2004).

Upon return over half of the migrants participating in the survey of less-skilled and elite migrants in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire were between ages 30 and 49. This suggests that a majority of returnees are still economically active and may have an impact on development. The age of return tends to differ among gender and level of skill. In general less-skilled returnees are older

than their elite counterparts upon return; this is particularly evident among females. Reporting on the same data Anarfi et. al. (2004) observed that a majority of the migrants returning to Ghana were married. Among the elite 81% were married or engaged in cohabitation upon return. For the less-skilled this proportion was slightly lower, about 71%. However, a larger proportion of females than males tend to be unmarried upon return regardless of level of skill.

Influence of Transnational Return

The influence of return migration on origin and its potential to affect the development process depend on what the returnee brings back in terms of financial, social and human capital. The impact of these capital transfers on various levels of West African societies will be explored in this section with particular reference to financial capital transfers in the form of remittances. However, it should be noted that all three forms of capital are closely interlinked and are often impossible to disentangle and separate.

Impact of financial capital transfers

The economic linkage between migrants and their homes is very important and could contribute greatly to the development process. Apart from remittances to families at home these linkages include the consumption of goods and services and capital investments in the form of property, businesses and charitable donations to the home community (Orozco, 2005).

Globally, remittances from international migrants are substantial and could have a major impact on the economies of developing countries. It is important to recognize the enormous influence it could therefore have on the development process and the alleviation of poverty. It has been estimated that the global flow of remittance to developing countries nearly matches development assistance and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the developing world (Black et. al., 2003) and has reached a level of \$72.3 billion, as estimated by the IMF. This number excludes remittance transferred through informal channels. According to Sander (2003) remittances surpassed the level of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) already in 1995. Today, remittance is the most stable and fastest growing capital flow to developing countries. In the past decade alone the flow of remittances has doubled in value and outgrown the rate of migration (Sander, 2003).

The level of remittance varies among developing regions. Latin America and the Caribbean receive about 30% of global remittances sent to developing countries, while Sub-Saharan Africa is only estimated to receive 5% (Sander, 2003). However, figures for Africa may be particularly distorted due to underreporting and lack of data on about two thirds of this region. It is also possible that a larger proportion of remittance to Sub-Saharan Africa is transferred through informal channels and therefore not included in official figures (Black and King, 2004). It could be argued that remittance has a larger direct influence on poverty when flowing through informal channels.

Remittances could have a major impact on poor countries' economy in various ways. According to the Central Bank of Ghana remittances from transnational migrants to Ghana were estimated at \$1.2 billion in 2004 (Addison, 2004). However, this money probably only represented half of the amount sent from Ghanaians' abroad as a large amount of remittance to Ghana is transferred through informal channels. A recent study in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire suggests that as much as 40% of remittances are transferred informally (Black and King, 2004).

The volume of remittances alone affects Ghana's \$20 billion economy as it is an important source of foreign exchange and a significant share of the country's income. According to Orozco (2005) transnational remittances represent an amount ten times greater than Ghana's GDP per capita. The distributive nature of remittances gives rural areas and women increased access to needed capital. In Ghana 40% of remittances are dispersed to areas outside of Accra and the Ashanti Region (Orozco, 2005). Remittances also tend to have important effect on national savings and play a crucial role in macro-economic stability. Moreover, remittance is a part of a wider global economic integration which has deepened through the globalisation process. Nevertheless, remittances from abroad should not automatically be considered net addition to national income as outflows to emigrants abroad partly counter this inflow.

The formation of a group of transnational migrants within a diaspora fosters a certain level of engagement with the homeland. Remittance from diasporas is the most direct and fastest growing form of engagement (Orozco, 2005). This engagement has an impact on the home country at various levels. The economic impact of remittance is closely linked to potential development. Compared to other diasporas such as Latino migrants in the U.S. or South East Asians in Japan, Singapore or Hong Kong, West African diasporas tend to send increasing amounts of money over time (Orozco, 2005). This is particularly true among Ghanaian diasporas

abroad and Nigerian diasporas in the U.S. It suggests that West African diasporas maintain transnational commitment to a life in two separate homes. Interviews with Ghanaian migrants in the U.S. support this suggestion as a majority imply that their stay is not permanent and that they are planning to return. Many migrants also build homes in Ghana to reassure their return.

On the household level remittances could have a direct effect on people's livelihoods and result in increased living standards. For many poor households remittances may be a major source of income and function as insurance against external shocks (Waddington, n.d.). Some people, often older parents, even rely on remittance for everyday survival. However, although remittance could be used as insurance if saved or invested it is a rather insecure source of income and households could fall back into poverty the moment the remittance flow stops (Kakbi et. al., 2004). Waddington (n.d.) has noted that migrants remit mainly to ensure survival of the family, sustain livelihoods at home and to improve social status. A recent study showed that over 80% of those who had sent remittance to Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire did so mainly to meet subsistence needs of their families (Black and King, 2004).

Migration of a family member does not automatically result in improved living conditions in the household at home. The volume and frequency of remittance depend on a number of factors including the time spent abroad, legal status of the migrant and the relationship between the migrant and his or her family (Kakbi et. al., 2004). According to Tiemoko (2004) the family play an important role in the migration process. Family is among the three most popular reasons for return to Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. One third of all returnees, including both the less-skilled and the elite, returned for either family or work related reasons (Black et. al., 2003). The influence of the family seems to have a particularly positive effect on the volume of savings and nature of investment by migrants.

In general Ghanaians spend longer time abroad than Ivorians. Over half of all less-skilled Ivorians have spent less than five years abroad and almost half of all Ghanaian elite migrants have spent over 15 years away (Black et. al., 2003). Overall, the transfer of financial capital was greater to Ghana than to Cote d'Ivoire among both less-skilled and elite returnees, although all people surveyed had sent remittance from abroad and returned with savings. About 42% of Ghanaians, including both the less-skilled and the elite, sent frequent remittances home. Among Ivorians abroad only 31% of the less-skilled and 11% of the elite had done so (Black et. al., 2003). Overall, the evidence seem to suggest that time spent abroad and the relation with family

at home does impact the level of remittances and other financial capital transferred. However, a possible link between remittance sent and the home country's economic situation still remains to be explored.

The influence of remittances depends not only on the volume and frequency of remittances as discussed above but also on the way in which remittances are used. In general, remittances flow from relatively richer to relatively poorer households and from children to parents. An estimated average of about 80% of remittance is used for consumption on the individual and household level (Sander, 2003). Although benefits seem concentrated to the household level the extended community can benefit through 'spill over' effects.

An increase in consumption and individual or household investment is likely to boost the economy of the local community and cause such 'spill over' effects. Many migrants abroad invest in businesses at home or other development related activities, or support the family to do so. This is particularly evident among the less-skilled Ghanaian migrants, as 56% returned to self-employment, compared with only 32% in Cote d'Ivoire (Black et. al., 2003). Most of these returnees also employed other workers in their businesses, which were largely concentrated in the retail and service sectors. Examples of such businesses in Ghana include communication centres, commercial transportation and trade of second hand goods (Kakbi et. al., 2004). Some of these businesses proved to have a significant impact on local employment and development. It can be argued that these businesses also influence the development of the local community as they provide essential services.

Transnational migrants contribute directly to programs for the development of the local home community, either through collaboration with other migrants or individually. As shown in Kakbi's study (2004) such projects can include provision of hospital equipment and contribution to the electrification of the hometown. In the end, the success and sustainability of development initiatives funded by migrants depends on the value of the contribution and the assertiveness of the local leaders.

Impact of social capital transfers

The concept of social capital is difficult to define in quantitative terms and therefore problematic to measure (Black et. al., 2003). It is consequently difficult to determine to what extent this form of capital influence the development process. Although difficult to measure it

seems clear that different forms of social capital could have substantial impact on development of origin when migrants return. Attendance and support at social gatherings, maintenance of social networks and professional contacts abroad upon return and engagement of returnees in hometown associations are a few ways in which social capital can be transferred from returnees and impact development.

A significant amount of migrants' and returnees' time, effort and money is often spent on social gatherings such as weddings and funerals, the purpose of which is to improve social status and build social networks. These events are important for the extension of social capital between the migrant and the family and community at home. Kakbi et. al., (2004) note that the nature and importance of funerals in parts of Ghana has shifted in recent years becoming more of a way to meet other people.

Acquisition of social capital abroad through social networks and professional contacts help in development of businesses and professional activities back home (Ammassari, 2004). The transfer of social capital from abroad, in particular from elite returnees often brings together two different worlds as new world views are frequently evolved through the migration and globalisation process. These transnational concepts transferred from migrants to people back home influence not only the professional life of the migrant but also family, relatives, friends and sometimes whole communities back home. The notion of transnational social spaces in which social capital is transferred is argued to function as a bridge between two separate international places. According to Faist (2000) social and symbolic ties are necessary in order to mobilise financial and human capital. A transnational life may be a strategy of survival or improvement of life where migration and return is neither definite nor permanent.

Engagement of returnees in hometown associations could also enhance transfer of social capital gained abroad. Many migrants surveyed from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire had been members of associations abroad, mainly hometown associations, which often play a role in the development process of the local community. About 61% of elite returnees reported to have been engaged in associations while abroad, compared to 43% of the less-skilled (Black et. al., 2003). However, there is some evidence that the less-skilled gained social capital from the association since in most cases other members were of higher qualifications. Other returnees reported to have set up community based organisations and a few numbers were members of philanthropic organisations specifically focusing on development activities.

Frequency of contact with family whilst abroad could strengthen ties between the migrant and his or her family and therefore increase importance of social capital transfers. It has been observed that a majority of migrants originating from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have regular contact with their family at home (Tiemoko, 2004). However, less-skilled migrants are far more likely to be in regular contact with their family at home than are the elite.

Apart from sending remittances migrants abroad connect with their home country and family through visits, telecommunication and purchasing of goods from their home country, and Ghanaians are no exception. Orozco (2005) points out that over half of all Ghanaians abroad visit Ghana once a year or more. These frequent visits are one of the highest among diasporas, only matched by Nigeria. Ghanaians living in the U.K and the U.S visit Ghana more frequently compared to those living in Germany, however, visits from Germany tend to last longer. A similar trend is apparent also in frequency and length of phone calls from migrants abroad. Ghanaians in the U.K and the U.S tend to call home more often while calls from Germany are likely to last longer. He concludes that nearly all Ghanaians abroad buy Ghanaian-produced goods, mainly spices and seafood. It must be explained that these ties with home facilitate the eventual and successful return of migrants, and determine greatly the type and success of investment returnees establish.

Impact of human capital transfers

Recently, the effect of human capital on the development process has been a major topic of concern for governments in many developing countries. The main focus has been on the departure, the so called 'brain drain', and possible return of the highly skilled. However, although human capital gains focus on elite returnees, return of knowledge, ideas, work skills and experience of the less-skilled should also be recognised.

The Black et. al. (2003) study found that almost 70% of all surveyed less-skilled returnees from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire reported to have studied abroad. For elite returnees this number was close to 90% (Table 2). This suggests that although elite returnees gain more human capital abroad in terms of education (higher levels of education in particular) the less-skilled have larger potential than often recognised to contribute to development upon return.

Table 2: Human capital gained by surveyed migrants

Human capital gained	Less-skilled	Elite
Studied abroad	206 (68%)	265 (88%)
Attended higher level of education than at home	94 (31%)	239 (79%)
Worked abroad	242 (80%)	258 (85%)
Reported gaining work experience	184 (61%)	254 (84%)

Source: Black et. al. (2003:8).

One finding where results for Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire differed notably was on the higher level of education attained abroad among the elite. On average Ivorians went abroad with a higher level of education than did Ghanaians. Among Ghanaians the higher level of education attained from abroad usually involved a Masters degree after finishing undergraduate studies at home. Ivorians on the other hand tended to leave with a Masters degree to obtain a Doctorate abroad (Ammassari, 2004).

The level of educational attainment of emigrants has shifted since 1990 in both Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. A shift from a large proportion of emigrants being less educated to medium and well educated is evident in both countries, but it is more significant in the case of Ghana. In 1990 about half of all emigrants in Ghana were considered to have low level of education when departed. This proportion had decreased to 25% by 2000 (Docquier and Marfouk 2005). The largest increase was apparent among emigrants with medium level education, although the proportion of highly educated emigrants also increased substantially during the time period. It can be argued that the increased focus on limiting the departure of the highly skilled and encouragement of their return can be justified by these findings. However, the development potential of emigrants with medium level education upon return should not be underestimated and needs to be addressed.

The percentage of returnees reported to have worked abroad was similar for both groups and both countries, however a much larger proportion of the elites claimed to have gained work experience abroad (Black et. al., 2003). Ammassari (2004) points out that human capital transfers from elite returnees have the potential to positively affect the workplace upon return. However, the extent of impact mainly depends on three conditions including accumulation of some knowledge and experience abroad, usefulness of things learnt abroad in the home context and desire and ability to apply human capital gained abroad. In the case of Ghana and Cote

d'Ivoire all three conditions were apparent as almost all returnees surveyed reported that they had gained experience abroad that they had tried to apply at the workplace upon return. Returnees stated that although faced with difficulties upon return they felt they had made significant contributions to development both in the public and private sector (Ammassari, 2004).

There seems to have been a shift in the impact of Ghanaian and Ivorian elite returnees on public and private development over time. Earlier migrants who returned during the independence period were faced with opportunities in the public sector and were usually anxious to take on leadership roles at home. For many it was considered a duty to return and contribute to the development of their country of origin (Ammassari, 2004). However, more recent returnees seem to have been faced with more difficulties upon return and less opportunities in the formal sector. The younger elite migrants also have a different concept of life that has evolved through economic difficulties and the process of globalisation. Therefore these returnees have had larger impact on development in the private sphere.

Recent evidence from Ghana shows that migration also has an important impact on human capital formation at home. Migration affects the level of education at home on two different levels (Kakbi et al, 2004). The direct financial support through remittance from migrants abroad helps families to send more children to school. Contact with migrants abroad could also help to change attitudes towards education and increase the importance given to the education of one's child.

From the literature reviewed and empirical evidence studied transnational return migration has many positive influences on the sending household and local community in West Africa. However, to fully utilize transnational return and use it as a development tool, for which it has potential to be, appropriate policies have to be developed and applied.

Pro-poor Policy Alternatives

Migration is viewed as an important livelihood strategy for many poor people across the West African sub-region (Black, 2004). It is seen as a way for poor people to diversify their sources of income. For migrants who are better off, 'pull' factors in the destination area are more likely to affect their choice of migration than 'push' factors at origin. A country study of Ghana (Anarfi et. al., 1999) showed that the very poor are more likely than the moderately poor and the

non-poor to migrate. However, upon return to origin the moderately poor have the greatest ability to alleviate poverty. Although the relationship between migration and poverty may not be clear-cut, the potential of migration to be pro-poor should be addressed in related policies.

Pro-poor migration policies will maximise the benefits of migration for poor people and work to reduce risks involved in the migration process (Black, 2004). Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) have been used to implement national pro-poor policies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries need to focus on policies with positive effect on 'pro-poor growth' and as a result of this need the relationship between economic policies and poverty reduction has been explored (UNDP, 2002). Unfortunately, migration has received little attention in PRSPs in most of Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the effect of migration on poor peoples' livelihoods has been recognised in PRSPs in some West African countries, particularly in Cape Verde, Mali and Niger (Black, 2004).

In many West African countries policy initiatives in the field of transnational migration have focused on limiting departure of skilled migrants and encouraging those abroad to return. This was seen as the most effective way to reverse the 'brain drain' and mobilise resources of migrants for development in the home country (Ammassari and Black 2001). However, according to Black and Gent (2004) most programmes designed to encourage return of skilled migrants have been ineffective and have had little impact on poverty. This is evident in the study by Black et. al. (2003) which found government initiatives influencing return insignificant. Only a small group of Ghanaian elite returnees reported to have benefited from government programs upon return. It was found that people were generally unaware of the existence of government policies on the issue. Instead, more flexible programmes have recently been developed focusing on positive effects of diasporas abroad. UNDP's Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) program and IOM's Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) are examples of such programmes.

Diasporas abroad engage in a range of economic practices in their home country. It is important to identify what economic practices constitute remittance and investment to evaluate their significance and impact on development for policy implications (Orozco, 2005). In the words of Orozco (2005:39) "although remittances have an impact on poverty, that is, they keep people out of poverty, remittances per se do not get you out of poverty". The relationship between remittance and development is not fully understood and national policies dealing

directly with remittances from abroad are largely missing. Orozco (2005) suggests that structural reforms regarding inequality and specific policies for integration and financial democratisation of sending and receiving households are necessary to help utilise the full impact of remittance on poverty. The policy agenda must be set to identify certain dynamics. Orozco (2005) suggests that a commission on remittance and development should be established. To maximise positive impacts of migrant investments and savings from the diaspora, bank institutions should offer special favourable interest rates or lines of credit for investment (Orozco, 2005).

Ghana and Nigeria have extended dual citizenships to migrants living in diasporas abroad in order to facilitate and encourage return. A similar effort within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) would provide the opportunity for members to gain residence, employment and other rights in other ECOWAS countries (Black, 2004). Recently, West African governments have also increased their efforts to strengthen relations with diaspora communities and associations. A Non-Resident Ghanaians Secretariat (NRGS) was established in 2003 to encourage return of migrants to Ghana and Homecoming Summits have been organised by the government since 2001 (Black, 2004).

The context in which return occurs impacts upon the returnee's contribution to the development process. A returnee is unlikely to contribute much to development unless some form of capital has been accumulated abroad. Moreover, conditions to efficiently use the capital accumulated must be available in the country of return. The issue for policy makers lies in the identification of contexts that are favourable for investment of resources upon return, but also recognition of the type of capital that can best contribute to development in specific circumstances (Ammassari and Black, 2001). There has been much effort to encourage the return of human capital. However, as mentioned above, there has been relatively little investigation into how financial capital in the form of remittance and investment is transferred upon return. The development potential of financial capital should be prioritised in the policy agenda.

It is important that policies adjust to changing patterns of migration. As discussed above return migration is not an end in itself since focus has shifted away from the migrant's presence at origin. Social networks and the migrant's contribution to development at origin have become increasingly important in promoting sustainable return. This is reflected in recent programmes such as the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS), which is seeking to provide education across borders through newsletters, CD-ROMs and the internet (Black, 2004).

Summary and Recommendations

In this paper a brief literature review on the sustainability of return and the implications of financial, social and human capital has been presented with a particular focus on the West African region. It has been recognised that sustainable return is not an end in itself and is constantly evolving alongside the globalisation process. The potential of financial, social and human capital was also identified as an important development tool for sending households, local communities and countries of origin. Options available for sustainable return and development in the West African region are embedded in the policy alternatives discussed above and include but are not limited to:

- Encouraging and implementing voluntary return programmes, particularly in the case of countries with recent conflicts
- Influencing the economic and social environment to make return an attractive option
- Establishing a commission focusing on remittance and development
- Encouraging bank institutions to create special favourable interest rates or lines of credit for investment to maximise positive impacts of migrant investments and savings from the diaspora
- Extending dual citizenships to all West Africans abroad to make return favourable and easy
- Extending Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) policies to enhance the ability of members to attain employment
- Emphasising migration in PRSPs in all West African countries
- Focusing on the importance of financial capital transfers as well as human capital to promote sustainability
- Creating close social and financial links with diasporas abroad

Possible alternatives to sustainable return and development have been highlighted here in a pro-poor context, the aim of which is to further extend the understanding of the complex relationship between migration, return and development within the globalisation milieu.

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