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## Understanding migration trends and livelihood vulnerability: A case study from Ghana

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### Abstract

In West Africa, agriculture employs the majority of the rural population with increasing pressure related to climate change and its compounding impacts on livelihood. Due to these pressures, scholars have observed increasing streams of circular migration resulting in translocally organised networks between rural and urban regions. While previous research has investigated the dichotomous nature of rural-to-urban migration, our study understands migration and mobility from the research perspective of translocality. Migration of this nature can support rural households through the provision of remittances and knowledge transfer in regards to adaptation measures to reduce the impact of climatic changes. To understand the relationship between different patterns of migration motivated by climate change and household livelihood vulnerability, we estimate the livelihood vulnerability index to understand the three components of sensitivity, exposure and adaptive capacity. For our sensitivity component, we include climate data from the region in addition to household-level indicators. Then, we explore the causal effect of different patterns of migration and characteristics of the migrant on household vulnerability scores as well as other indicators related to household well-being (e.g. women’s empowerment) using matching methods. Our case study focuses on 572 randomly sampled households and contains information on 3094 individual household members from Ghana’s rural Northern and Eastern Regions, which represent two of the country’s most important agricultural regions. Within our sample, over 53% indicate farming as their most important economic activity. Over 63% have noticed environmental changes within the last 10 years and more than 96% see farming negatively affected by these changes. In total, over 75% of the households have migrants, mainly migrating to Greater Accra and Ghana’s Northern and Eastern Regions. We distinguish between several types of migration patterns and hypothesise that households with longer-term migrants will be less vulnerable, specifically with higher adaptive capacity and lower sensitivity scores, e.g. through knowledge transfer and monetary, as well as in-kind remittances. Further, we hypothesise that the effect of migration on household vulnerability is stronger for younger migrants. Our findings will have implications for internal migration policy and its role as an important livelihood diversification strategy in the face of climate change.

**Keywords:** Adaptive capacity, exposure, translocality, vulnerability