

**THE RURAL BIAS OF FIRST GENERATION RURAL-URBAN
MIGRANTS : EVIDENCE FROM KENYA MIGRATION STUDIES***

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INTRODUCTION

There is overwhelming evidence in sub-Saharan Africa that rural-urban migrants do not break links with their rural origins. The migrants are "men of two worlds" (Houghton, 1960) co-existing in two geographically separated households - one rural, the other urban. African rural-urban migration has persisted since the colonial period primarily because of the "urban bias" of the development process (Lipton, 1977) which confers many advantages to urban areas. The process has created "morselized households" (Kuznets, 1976) which tend to develop support systems at the polarised locales of migration, but which constitutes one family so divided by the process. Rural-urban migration is a direct outcome of economic disequilibrium which characterizes dual economies consisting of the modern sector which provides wage employment and the traditional subsistence sector in which the majority of population lives.

Kenyan rural-urban migration exemplifies the sub-Saharan African case evolving from the country's colonial history. The modern sector of Kenya's economy evolved in the former "White Highlands" where a modern agricultural economy and a few small towns constituted the centre which was constantly dependent upon a large reservoir of cheap labour from the underdeveloped periphery, made up of the so-called African Reserves. An urban primacy emerged in Kenya as the capital city of Nairobi amassed everything that represents development, with Mombasa at the Kenyan Coast becoming the gateway to international trade. Given the inadequacy of census data to provide dependable information about rural-urban migration, analysis of the process in Kenya has generally depended upon survey data which have been generated by a small number of migration or migration-centred studies.

This paper attempts to demonstrate that Kenya's "urban bias" of development has resulted in temporary rural-urban migration which necessitates migrants "rural bias" in terms of their orientation, subsequent moves and their ultimate return to the permanent domicile. It consists of three sections : the first describes the configuration of development and the resulted migration in Kenya, placing their relationship in the context of Zelinsky's (1971) theoretical framework ; section two presents evidence of migrants' rural bias ; and the third section concludes the study.

DEVELOPMENT CONFIGURATION AND MIGRATION IN KENYA

Theoretical Framework :

Zelinsky (1971) formulated the "hypothesis of mobility transition" which explains the links between modernisation and demographic transitions in five phases. Sub-Saharan African countries are theoretically in the second phase, the early transitional phase, during which the centre/periphery differentiation commences and incipient industrialisation occurs, triggering both rural-urban and rural-rural migration as well as circulation, (Pryor, 1975). Zelinsky's formulation has one major appeal, namely its inclusion of the totality of population dynamics in the demographic transition rather than the vital transition (fertility and mortality dynamics) with which demographers have been preoccupied. But it has been criticised for failing to take cognizance of the international capitalist system which influences various forms of mobility ; for over-simplifying internal migration whose various components include temporary, seasonal, return and circular mobility ; and for assuming an unrealistic neat meshing of modernisation, demographic or mobility transitions (Pryor, 1982 : 26). Yet the basic ideas in Zelinsky's theory are applicable to the African mobility transition, and certainly to Kenya's.

The demographic situation in Kenya may simply be described as follows. The country's experiences rapid population growth due to high fertility in the face of fast declining mortality. This demographic momentum results in a youthful population who are highly migratory, the most dominant form of migration being rural-rural, although rural-urban migration is the most conspicuous.

Unlike many African countries which were protectorates or indirectly ruled during the colonial period, Kenya was a colony par excellence in which governance of the people was direct and regimented. The Kenyan migrant labour system is rooted in the procurement initially of conscripted labour and the creation of conditions that made voluntary out-migration imperative. For instance, the imposition of taxation of adult men demanded that they migrate elsewhere as target workers to earn income and pay their own taxes as well as those of their close relatives who remained at home to take care of other activities while they (migrants) were away. The

circularity of migration can be appreciated from the following statement :

"Under the migrant arrangement, the worker migrated temporarily to the site of production and sold his labour power for a period of time, then returned to his homeland for rest or agricultural work before migrating again. The worker's family remained at home, shouldering most of the burden of land cultivation"
(Stichter, 1982 : 27).

The main sites of production in the initial stages of labour migration were the European commercial farms. This process of rural-rural migration was the first step to a stepwise migration of which rural-urban migration became the second step. It is an important colonial legacy that has remained important and that has recently raised concern for sustaining rural-urban balance (Kenya, 1986). The concern for the rest of the century is to strike a better balance which is necessary for the coexistence of rural and urban development.

Temporary circulation was an explicit policy of the colonial government which required that migrants only stay at their destination for as long as their labour was needed, and that they return to their origins at the end of their contracts. Their rural bias was, therefore, obligatory. While in their places of work, migrants were not to be visited by their spouses, children or any other relatives and friends. This condition explains the emergence and continued existence of morselized households or "one family, two households" (Weisner, 1972). Since migrants were aware of their transient urban residence, they would not be expected to consolidate their grip of urban life through investments and the like. Moreover, they earned such meagre wages that were only spent in survival strategies by their rural-based households. The situation existed until independence when the phasing out of colonial strictures relaxed rules of migrant labour, letting loose the flood of rural-urban migrants to urban unemployment, fuelled by expected higher urban incomes (Todaro, 1976).

The conceptual framework of the colonial era has not changed drastically in the independence era. In a rural-urban survey carried out in 1968-71, Rempel (1978) found that urban migrants do not break ties with their rural origins. Urban migrants seem to have developed important linkages with their rural origins where their "origin-specific capital" (property and close relatives and friends) is found. They visit their rural homes periodically, are in turn visited by their rural relatives or friends, spend their leave to their rural

homes, remit part of their earnings to and receive remittances from their rural homes, and prepare for easy re-entry into the home economy on their retirement or loss of employment.

Although rural bias as conceptualized above applies to the rural orientation of migrant labour to both urban destinations and the agricultural sector in rural areas, it is more noticeable among rural-urban migrants. Rural-rural migrants are yet one step preceding the next stage of migration which could be rural-urban or return rural-rural migration. But even rural-rural migrants to the agricultural wage sector exhibit rural bias. Evidence adduced from the previous studies shows the inevitability of the return of first-generation migrants to their rural origins.

PREVIOUS WORK ON MIGRATION BASED ON AVAILABLE DATA :

The Kenyan internal migration system has been studied at both macro and micro levels. At the former level, use has been made of census data to explain inter-regional migration and its patterns. Thus, the 1962 census data were used in a pioneering study of migration in the country which placed emphasis on land-population relationships in colonial Kenya (Ominde, 1968) ; the 1969 census data were analysed to provide insights into the phenomenon during the first six years of Kenya's independence (Rempel, 1977) ; and the 1979 census data permitted detailed analysis of lifetime migration (Beskok, 1981) and both lifetime and recent migration (Oucho, 1983). Although these studies portray migration at macro level, they are deficient in explaining micro level perspectives and do not capture determinants and consequences of migration. These deficiencies have been remedied by migration surveys which have provided useful data for interpreting migration at the household level. In this exercise, surveys of rural-urban migration have dominated the scene.

A consistent finding in Kenyan migration surveys has been that urban migrants are transient and maintain strong links with their origins to which eventually they expect to return. While resident in urban areas, migrants receive their relatives and friends in their temporary abode as short-term visitors or new migrants whom the earlier migrants have to support until they are established to be left on their own. This finding cuts across all the disciplines that partake of out-migration from rural parts of Kenya.

Research on the rural bias of migrants has been limited to the first generation urban migrants. In the first survey of rural-urban migrants in Kenya carried out in 1968-1971, it was found that rural-urban migration does not represent a break with rural areas (Rempel, 1978). In a subsequent work based on additional data, it is noted that urban-rural tie takes different forms and suggest that urban migrants are expected to return to their homes at the end of migration (Rempel, 1981 : 137-139). It was from the first survey that Todaro, Rempel's colleague, was able to develop his famous labour migration model (Todaro, 1969) from which a major work ensued (Todaro, 1976). As interest in the subject grew, especially with respect to the consequences of rural-urban migration, anthropologists began to dominate the scene. Weisner's (1972) concept of "one family, two households" found roots from his effort to study migrant Luhya (a migratory ethnic group from Western Kenya) in Nairobi. Another study of Luhya sub-tribes was made in separate studies by Ross (1973) and Mook (1976 ; 1978). A special issue of **African Urban Studies** (edited by Ferraro, 1978) on Nairobi, Kenya's capital, provides valuable perspectives of urban migrants' survival strategies in the city as well as their heavy bias in diverse ways to their rural home places. The latest study in this genre was carried out in important out-migration districts in Western Kenya, tracing out-migrants specifically to Nairobi and the regional (the third largest Kenyan) town of Kisumu in that out-migration area (Oucho and Mukras, 1983). The intention of this work was to gain insights into long distance and short distance moves respectively and their implications for rural development.

Emphasis on migration and migrants from Western Kenya is presumably due to some sound reasons. First, the region has the highest proportion of migrants in any Kenyan town or in any mode of the agricultural wage sector. Two ethnic groups (the Luo and the Luhya) from this region are among the most migratory of Kenyan peoples, the other two (the Kikuyu and the Kamba) living in the proximity of Nairobi. The Kikuyu unlike the two ethnic groups in Western Kenya, have been more involved in land colonisation, particularly in the former "White Highlands" following the transfer of land from the British Government to the Kenya Government in the years immediately preceding and following Kenya's independence in 1963. Second, much of the region was outside the orbit of the "Scheduled Areas" (the area restricted to white settlement in colonial Kenya) and stagnated due to its reliance on subsistence agriculture and other forms of traditional economy. Only cheap labour was procured from the region to serve in the modern sector ; and it is only since independence that the region has experienced an economic "take-off" as rural development programmes continue to be implemented there. Third, migrants from Western Kenya, unlike others from other

parts of the country, exhibit rural bias at individual, household and community levels. It is not surprising, therefore, that studies on urban-rural links have been based on migrants from Western Kenya. For example, in a comparative study of the Hausa living in Ibadan and the Luo of Kenya in Kampala (Uganda) it was found that :

"Luo are simultaneously involved in both a rural and an urban economic system : they run farms through wives and relatives and also have urban wage employment. Most Hausa have their economic relations centrally located in Ibadan and have a higher proportion actually born in the city".
(Parkin, 19:126).

A study of the Ibo of Nigeria, the Luo and Luhya of Kenya and others found that these ethnic communities had formed ethnic associations not only to look after the interests of new urban migrants, but also to foster development in their home places (Southall, 1975). These studies are concerned with first-generation urban migrants who were asked to explain their ambivalent behaviour during their migratory life. The paradox that exists is that although the urban bias in economic development has generated rural-urban migration, it has stimulated the rural bias of urban migrants in several ways. This study desists from speculating on second and subsequent generations of urban migrants (including urban natives) who have not been covered in previous surveys.

EVIDENCE OF URBAN MIGRANTS' RURAL BIAS

Previous survey research on rural-urban migration in Africa has concentrated on first-generation migrants who are generally migrants interviewed while resident at their destinations. Studies on migrants' children (urban born or second-generation migrants) are almost non-existent in the continent. A rare example is a study of Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, which covered urban migrants and urban natives and which indicates that 41 percent of urban natives expected to retire in Abidjan and 28 percent in any other town in the country, i.e. 69 percent expect to remain urbanites (Gibbal, 1974). A survey of first-generation migrants in Kenya's third town shows that 50.2 percent expected eventually to leave the town compared with only 15.8 percent expecting to stay until retirement (Oucho, 1986:216). Finally, a study of such migrants in Kenya's first and third towns respectively suggests that urban migrants make decisive arrangements for return to their rural homes in a

variety of ways (Oucho and Mukras, 1983). Several Nigerian migration studies (including that of and cited by Adepoju, 1986) provide similar evidence. Indeed, the rural bias of urban migrants is an African phenomenon which requires carefully designed study in order to ascertain its implications for rural development now being advocated by African governments. The Kenyan case, here used as an example in the African scene, considers four main indices of rural bias : the rural "origin-specific capital", urban migrants' periodic home visits, reciprocity of urban-rural and rural-urban transfers at both household and community level, and migrants' conspicuous investment in their home communities.

Origin-specific Capital in Rural Areas

The concept of "location-specific capital" was introduced by DaVanzo and Morrison (1982:4) to denote any or all of the factors that "tie" a person to a particular place and that fix him to rather than make him move from the place. This conceptual model may apply to situations where migrants are either permanent or weigh their "capital" at the current location vis-a-vis that elsewhere. It may not apply to the African situation where capital in a large majority of cases exists at the rural homes. The concept of "origin-specific capital" is therefore used to describe capital located at migrants' permanent domicile while they are transient at the places of in-migration ; such capital includes property e.g. land, parents and the family.

Land Ownership

The land tenure system of primogeniture apportions land to sons in a family, whether migrant or non-migrant, and confers on them responsibility as heads of household. Complete lack of land ownership induces adult males to purchase land elsewhere to which they would migrate without necessarily severing ties with their relatives. In Kenya, two studies reported that about 36.3 percent of urban migrants owned land (Oucho, 1986:213) and a majority of urban migrants from Western Kenya depended heavily on their rural farms (Moock, 1978). Migrants anticipating landlessness in the near future or wishing to own more land bought land in the former white-settled areas to hold their grip of land ; a case in point is the Nyanza sugarbelt on the border of Nyanza and Rift Valley provinces north-east of Kisumu town where many urban migrants purchased land on which they have established their second homes. On retirement, such migrants expect to live in the farms they purchase rather than return to their original rural homes. The sugarbelt will in the near future be part of metropolitan Kisumu.

Parents and the Family

Another important aspect of rural capital is parents and the family. The two are important assets of social networks which migrants maintain with non-migrants. Evidence of such networks is the exchange of visits between migrants and non-migrants, especially between spouses, children and parents and other members of both the nuclear family and the extended family (Moock, 1978:27).

In Kenya, the importance of family networks has been shown by two burial disputes between widows of the deceased and the deceased's brothers as well as clan members. The first is the dispute between the late Mburu's second wife who wanted her husband buried in a farm he had purchased in Rift Valley province and Mburu's brother who wanted him buried in his ancestral home in Central Province. The high court's verdict : Mburu was buried at his ancestral home. The second dispute was between Otieno's widow who wanted him buried in a farm near Nairobi and his brother and clansmen who wanted him buried at his ancestral home in Siaya district of Nyanza province, some 400 kilometres west of Nairobi. The high court's verdict, which was ratified by the Court of Appeal, was that Otieno be buried in his ancestral home (Daily Nation, 1987). One thing was common to both cases : they were mixed marriages between a Kikuyu man and a Luhya woman and a Luo man and a Kikuyu woman respectively. In both cases the verdict was biased to ancestral home in conformity with customary rather than common law, which required that a man be buried where his ancestors had customarily been buried. While debate on the subject remains inconclusive in many authoritative circles, the rule of thumb is that migrants have to be buried in their ancestral homes to which they would have returned had they done so permanently before dying. Preliminary results of an on-going research of social welfare organisations in Kenya have shown that urban migrants' pooled resources are transferred to rural areas for communal development (Mukras and Oucho, 1984 ; Mukras, et al. 1985).

Identification with Home-place and Participation in Home-based Activities

Urban migrants generally identify with their rural homes and participate in home based activities in a number of ways. These take place at both household and community levels. Table 1 explains a variety of activities in which migrants participate both to identify with and to prepare for eventual retirement in their communities. The first two activities, which largely overlap, account for about 81 percent of all important contribution

migrants' pooled transfers make toward developing their rural communities in a country where self-help (harambee) fund-raising through established social welfare organisations had readily supplemented government efforts in rural development. A study of social welfare organisations in a district in Western Kenya indicated that eight such organisations mobilised over Kshs. 30 million per year for rural development (Mukras, et al., 1985:419). Yet the table shows that remittances at the household level are insignificant ; this is so only in so far as communal activities are contrasted with household affairs. The picture at the household level provides a clearer perspective of the importance of remittances (Table 2). The criss-crossing of remittance flows is observed ; even in the case of the study, data are lacking only because no consideration was made of remittances from urban wage earners' origins. A substantial proportion of remittances flows from urban to rural areas where both migrants, parents and spouses are the main recipients. Remittances are sent to rural areas primarily for supporting family or friends and other aspects of household consumption. But the "intended use" of remittances does not necessarily amount to the "actual use". There exists networks of actual uses which in some cases include also the remitter sharing the remittances with other users (Standing, 1984:274-5). The argument that urban-rural remittances are spent mainly in consumption (Rempel and Lobdell, 1978 ; Knowles and Anker, 1981) has been countered by the opposing view that they are spent in "conspicuous investment" (Adepoju, 1983). The latter has much appeal given that investment opportunities hardly exist in rural parts of many sub-Saharan African countries to which remittances could be directed.

Urban Migrants' Retirement Plans

Most of the working urban migrants prepare for retiring in their home places by undertaking different home-based activities. Table 3 reports both intended and accomplished plans to this end.

Table 1 - Activities out-migrants participated in to maintain contacts with the community identified for retirement

Main Activity	Repondents	
	Number	percent
Regular participation in self-help activities	120	48.6
Participation in social welfare activities	79	32.0
Making regular visits to the place	22	8.9
Making regular remittance of money/goods to family members	15	6.1
Participation in sports and fiesta	2	0.8
Others	9	3.6
Total	247	100.0

Source : J.O. Oucho and M.S. Mukras (1983)

Table 2 - Some features of remittances based on previous studies in Kenya, 1971 - 1982

Feature of remittance	Study	by	author(s)
	Johnson and Whitelaw (1974)	Knowles and Anker (1977)	Oucho and Mukras (1983)
Direction of flow	unidirectional (urban-rural)	Reciprocal urban rural	Reciprocal urban rural
Percent of income remitted	20.7	u-r = 50.0 r-r = 28.3 u-u = 15.0 r-u = 6.3	u-r=73.3 r-u=26.7
Recipients by rela- tionship to remitter	n.a.		
Spouse		30.7	37.4
Parents		33.9	38.4
Children		8.7	5.0
Siblings		11.0	7.7
Others		n s	11.5
Purpose of remittances	n.a.		
School fees		12.1	10.6
Paying off debts		1.7	34.0
Farm maintenance		3.6	21.8
Supporting family/ friends		96.2	64.7
Others		n.a.	32.4

Source : Compiled from the studies cited (see references)

Notes : n a = not applicable

n s = not stated

Table 3 - Activities undertaken by urban migrants in preparation for retirement in their home-places

Activity	Intended n = 427	Accomplished n = 427
Building a modern house or improving existing one	65.4	43.5
Buying farmland	25.6	15.7
Securing tractor and other farming equipment	0.8	2.6

Note : 1 Total percentages do not add upto 100 because of incomplete response

Source : J.O. Oucho and M.S. Mukras (1983)

The building or improvement of rural housing is an important preparatory measure, followed by land purchase in addition to land owned before out-migration took place. These undertakings explain the importance migrants attach to origin-specific capital.

CONCLUSION

Rural out-migration and rural development efforts represent interesting paradoxes in African development. Appreciation of how migration facilitates or cripples rural development is still lacking in many African countries. Students of African spatial demography and development studies at large need to emulate the valuable efforts already made in Nigeria (Odimuko and Riddell, 1979; Makinwa, 1981; Adepoju, 1976; 1986) and Botswana (Lucas, 1985 ; Lucas and Stark, 1985), to mention a few insightful cases, to investigate the whole dynamics of migration and rural development.

The Kenyan case epitomizes the situation in much of sub-Saharan Africa where rural-urban migration at present represents serious challenges in the future. Districts in the Lake Victoria Basin, currently the major net out-migration area, are threatened by a large stream of return migrants (the current urban migrants who exhibit rural bias as already discussed) expecting

to be rehabilitated back home. The unknown quantity in rural-urban migration today is the second generation or subsequent generations of urban migrants i.e. the children and grandchildren of first generation urban migrants. Will they be biased toward the urban areas with which they are most familiar or the rural areas to which they have some cultural ties ?

Urban migrants' rural bias as discussed in this paper touches on issues that go beyond the scope of studying migration. It spans other provinces of demography and other social sciences which partake of studying migration and development. Future studies need to be more multidisciplinary and to cover multidimensional issues than previous studies have been. Now that national fertility and contraceptive prevalence surveys as well as health surveys (which cover morbidity and mortality) have been carried out in many parts of the world including African countries, the immediate future should be devoted, first, to national migration surveys and, later, to comprehensive demographic surveys. Although Caldwell's (1977) "inter-generational wealth flow" theory had fertility underpinnings, it fits well into Zelinsky's (1971) "hypothesis of mobility transition" from which this empirical study on Kenya finds theoretical support.

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