

# Youth mobility webinar – responses to audience questions from Dorte Thorsen

1. *How influential is the family (extended or immediate) in push adolescent girls and boys into migration?*

The influence of family on adolescents' pathways depends on the society, the normality of mobility and migration, the socio-economic standing of the family, notions surrounding work, education and socialisations and contingencies, such as loss of work, illness and death, schooling opportunities, etc. Gender differences also shape mobilities, so the 'push' or reluctance to let adolescent sons and daughters migrate may not be the same for boys and girls. The leeway adolescents have for migrating or staying against the preference of parents vary across societies and across families. Finally, the family is not a single entity - different family members may have different views on adolescents' migration, this may be even more pronounced within extended families and within multi-local families. So, the extent of families' influence on adolescents' mobility is really an empirical question.

2. *Families invest more in female migration in Ethiopia than the male migration due to higher returns; what is the experience in west Africa in terms of family's support for gendered migration?*

I addressed this question briefly in the webinar but I would like to add that family support and the need for support varies depending on which type of migration we are talking about. Among the youngest youth, mobility is usually over short distances requiring little money for the transportation and often relatives or people from their village or region will accommodate them. Parents may support them with a small sum of money. Gender differences will depend on the views on appropriate behaviour of boys and girls. The returns to this type of mobility for work are relatively small in economic terms but important in social terms as the adolescents learn to work, save and contribute to the family in small and symbolic ways.

Intra-continental and transnational migration is perceived to have a higher economic return but is also much more costly, regardless of whether the migration is regular or irregular. Migrants are older youth who might have saved up money for their journey themselves, or the family comes together in different ways to raise money for the journey. Studies of transnational migration from Ghana and Senegal, in the same research programme that Adamnesh was part of, showed that if parents invested in migration via irregular routes they supported male youth, because the journey was seen to be too harsh and too risky in terms of sexual and gender based violence for young women. However, families had begun to support female youth using schemes and routes of legal migration.

3. *In the Horn (and especially Ethiopia) migration "brokers" often play a big role in the dynamics of youth migration, influencing family decisions and investments. Is this also the case in West Africa? Have any of the researchers looked into the economic dynamics of migrant brokers? And especially the transitions into trafficking? ( as in the Libya route, etc)*

Intermediaries are just as common in West Africa. In collaboration with the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium, studies of migration brokerage in Ghana were carried out by the Centre for Migration Studies at the University of Ghana and by researchers at the University Assane Seck in Ziguinchor, see <http://www.migratingoutofpoverty.org/themes/migration-industry>. You could also look at Charles Piot's work on the US visa lottery, brokers and migration in Togo.

*4. To what extend have remittances been affected by the pandemic?*

It is too early to say. The latest remittance data from reputable sources like the World Bank date back to 2018-2019. There are indications of a fall in remittances due to transnational migrants losing their jobs temporarily or more long term as Adamnesh mentioned in relation to Ethiopian migrants in the Gulf countries. The situation is similar for West African migrants in Europe. Moreover, border closures have resulted in migrants getting stuck on the overland routes, or they have been pushed onto irregular routes because the regular routes were closed.

*5. Is the desirability of formal work for youth changing, and how that is affected by and affects migration? My research in North Shewa (just south of Dr Adamnesh) found high mobility among rural state employees, although they are assumed to have 'good' jobs.  
Sarah Howard, University of Birmingham*

For West Africa (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal more precisely) the desire for formal work is probably unchanged, but so is the likelihood of entering formal work. The labour market for formal jobs is small and the level of education among the majority of rural youth is a huge disadvantage compared to urban youth.

*6. West Africa is said to be experiencing the "youth bulge" with unmatched job opportunities. The result of this is the frequent youth mobility both within and outside the region. Most national governments has advanced policies to tackle the problem. What are the governments not doing well because youth migration outside the Region keeps increasing?*

Is it a problem for West African states (or any other region for that sake) that youth move outside their region? For a while literature on the migration-development nexus hailed remittances as the way forward. States have sought different ways of harnessing remittances for collective purposes and even when remittances are used primarily to support family consumption and possibly family enterprises, they allow states to refrain from providing basic social protection. I can see a problem though, if youth migrants are subjected to abuse and exploitation or if they prefer to remain in their home country. It is a question of states offering viable opportunities and protection for youth to achieve what they would like to achieve, and to listen to youth to appreciate the full range of objectives and goals they have in mind, in an inclusive way.

*7. what are your suggestions of how to move to more youth centred approaches?*

Listen to youth but remember to include the voices of different categories of youth, not only the well-educated and well-spoken.

8. *Having conducted ethnographic research on youth internal mobility to Accra, I see how social relations matter in migration & livelihood opportunities. How do social relations matter in different ways for different type of youths (e.g. socio-economic background, age, gender) along the mobility journey? Any thoughts on social network analysis as a method in this research this context?*

The different ways that social relations matter across age, gender, class, religion, ethnicity and in different places cannot be generalised but needs to be backed up by situated evidence. Network analysis has its place but if done rigorously it will take some time and whether it is valuable to spend that time at the expense of studying other aspects of youth mobilities will depend on your research question.

9. *Mainly for Dorte: Do you have examples from your research of youths returning to rural areas, and in that case what acquired skills they then make use of when returning, to make a living?*

Addressed in the webinar. I would like to add that some of the skills and social status attained in the city may be dismissed by adults but greatly appreciated among the peer group. This is just as important as making a living. Youth-centred approaches may indeed remind us of the full spectrum of interests, ideas and concerns that youth have.

10. *Is youth mobility in West Africa different from Central Africa? How does youth mobility feeds into human trafficking when things go wrong?*

It is difficult to generalise to the level of comparing West and Central Africa. Different national, regional and transnational mobility flows and labour markets set the parameters for which types of mobility are the most common for female and male youth, for youth of different ages, for youth with more or less education, for youth coming from more or less wealthy families, etc. Human trafficking does happen but it is also a notion used for migration involving brokers to cross borders (smugglers?) and to find work (employment agencies?). Youth are sometimes tricked and cheated, but brokers also have reputations to protect and they may facilitate new employment, help in case of abuse, etc. I suggest that it would be equally important to ask the question: How does the notion of human trafficking feed into youth mobility (how is it used) when things go wrong? See for example Nicola Mai's work on Nigerian sex workers in Europe.