

Ghana-China Migration Corridor

Co-Investigators

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Research Context

The China-Ghana migration corridor is characterised by the flow of migrants in both directions (i.e. from Ghana to China and from China to Ghana). However, it is Chinese migration to Ghana and other African countries that has generated much interest in the South-South migration literature. Although the migration of Chinese to Africa dates back to the 1960s, it has increased tremendously in the last two decades. Indeed, many Chinese have, in recent years, been moving to Ghana and other African countries. Figures on Chinese migrants in Ghana are, however, largely unreliable as some Chinese migrants enter Ghana clandestinely through the porous borders with other neighbouring countries (e.g Togo and Burkina Faso) or as tourists and then overstay their visas. Recent estimates suggest that the Chinese migrant population in Ghana is between 10,000 and 30,000. Chinese migrants largely work in the informal sector of the Ghanaian economy where they are largely involved in the following sectors: infrastructure (construction), mining, commerce (trading), hospitality, and agriculture. At the same time, since 1990s, a large number of Africans, including Ghanaians have been migrating to China for the purpose of studies, trade and tourism. Ghanaian migrants in China mostly stay in Guangzhou and Yiwu for business and trade, although data on them is scarce.

While the level of migration between China and Ghana is relatively small in terms of absolute numbers, its impact is very significant due to the level of parallel Chinese investment in infrastructure projects and in private business. Moreover, it reflects a much longer term and wider trend of investment and south-south migration from China to Africa. While the focus of the literature on Chinese migration into Africa has been on formal sector government-to-government projects, especially large-scale construction projects, the Ghana-China corridor is a good example of irregular migration into informal sectors in both directions. The corridor provides a good example of Chinese migration that is not connected to government-related projects but rather involves informal, middle/small scale investment and engagement in petty trading by establishing networks with Ghanaian traders, despite the fact that this is not allowed under Ghanaian law. The research along this corridor will focus on how Chinese investments are stimulating the economy of Ghana as well as on how the resulting trade is leading to new patterns of migration of Ghanaian traders to the Guangzhou and Yiwu regions of China, displacing old forms of inequalities. It will also explore the differential patterns and impacts of migration, employment, and money flows on gender inequalities.

Work Packages

WP1: Gender inequality and South-South Migration (SSM)

WP3: Poverty and income inequalities.

WP6: Resource flows: finance, trade and knowledge.

Research Questions

1. How does gender inequality influence and change migration opportunities and outcomes along the China-Ghana migration corridor?
2. To what extent and in what ways do poverty and income inequalities create and constrain opportunities for migration along the China-Ghana corridor?
3. How does migration along the Ghana-China corridor contribute to poverty and inequality among migrants, host communities and families left behind?
4. What accounts for the changes in the nature and level of resource flows (i.e. investments, remittances, skills) between China and Ghana?
5. What are the impacts of resource flows on inequality and socio-economic development in Ghana and China?

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