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## RETURN MIGRATION PATTERNS AND CHARACTERISTICS IN **RURAL COMMUNITIES** OF NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA REGION: **IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY**



**Andrew G. Onokerhoraye**

This Policy Paper is supported by the *Think Tank Initiative Programme* initiated and managed by the *International Development and Research Centre (IDRC)*

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## **PREFACE**

This policy research paper is part of the on-going research of the *Centre for Population and Environmental Development (CPED)* on the research theme titled *Growth with Equity* in the current strategic plan (2010-2014) of the Centre. There is no doubt that the distinction between permanent and temporary migration is key for understanding many aspects of immigrant behaviour in their area of destination. A major channel through which migration can influence rural development is return migration. A recent literature on international migration focusing on migrants' occupational change upon return has highlighted the propensity of returnees to become self-employed upon return. Indeed, with a working experience outside their original hometown, return migrants are likely to bring back accumulated human, social and financial capital that can enable them to start their own business upon return and benefit their village of origin. As mentioned above, research on return migration in China remains limited despite a mounting interest on the issue. This is of major importance in the context of internal migration in Nigeria because the perception and behaviour of migrants in their destination localities in relation to their areas of origin has implications for the economy and development of the areas to which they migrate just as it has similar implications for their area of origin. This attempts to examine the role of return migration in selected rural communities of the Niger Delta region that has been characterized by a high level of internal migration following petroleum exploitation and frequent violence that has characterized the region over the past three decades. The paper explores the return migrants' post-return occupational choice behaviours in their communities compared with the traditional occupations that characterize their communities.

We are particularly grateful to the *Think Tank Initiative* for the support to CPED which has enabled the Centre to carry out the study that led to this policy paper.

## INTRODUCTION

Although considerable research on migration has been carried out in West Africa during the last four decades, a considerable proportion of the studies have been on inter-regional and international migration patterns. There is no doubt that research on internal migration and its impact on the development of source communities has somewhat been eclipsed by the twin debate on international migration. Nonetheless, following the renewed interest on this issue fostered by the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) literature (Stark and Bloom, 1985), there is a mounting agreement on the channels through which internal migration can actually contribute to rural development. Migration can be viewed as a strategy for rural households to diversify income sources so as to reduce risks and smooth their income (Ellis, 1998). In this context, remittances sent by migrants to their rural families are expected to help securing income and alleviating poverty in rural areas.

The limited research on internal migration, especially in Nigeria has focused largely on rural-urban migration or at best rural-rural migration. Less attention has been paid to return migration by migrants to their areas of origin. This can be explained perhaps by the fact that much of the theoretical and empirical literature on the economics of migration views

migrations as permanent. This is a convenient assumption and facilitates analysis in many areas, like immigrant behaviour, and the impact of migration on residents' outcomes (Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008). The assumption that migration is permanent can result in misleading conclusions about the nature and consequences of migration. For example, it is well known that migration is selective and if this factor is not taken into consideration it could lead to wrong conclusions about economic performance of entry cohorts. As pointed out by Borjas (1985, 1987) immigrants may be non-randomly drawn from the skill distribution in their source areas, and that this has important implications for studying immigrants' earnings assimilation. Furthermore, out-migration may again be selective which in turn may have important consequences for the estimation of performance of immigrants (Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008).

Another reason why the assumption that migration is permanent can create analytical problems is that assuming permanency neglects an important source of variation explaining heterogeneity in behaviour across immigrants. For instance, when studying human capital investment of individuals and its derivatives, such as improved income level, the literature usually neglects macro conditions, as these are the same for all agents in a particular country. However, when

considering immigrants, and if migrations are temporary, this assumption is not valid because current decisions of immigrants who plan to return to their home countries will be based not only on immediate and future circumstances in the economy of the destination area, but also on expected future returns in the source area of the migrant. Both these reasons add considerable complexity to modelling the behaviour of immigrants, and introduce differences in behaviour between immigrants and residents or indigenes who are otherwise identical, as well as between immigrants of different origin but with different migration durations (Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008).

There is no doubt that the distinction between permanent and temporary migration is key for understanding many aspects of immigrant behaviour in their area of destination. A major channel through which migration can influence rural development is return migration. A recent literature on international migration focusing on migrants' occupational change upon return has highlighted the propensity of returnees to become self-employed upon return. Indeed, with a working experience outside their original hometown, return migrants are likely to bring back accumulated human, social and financial capital that can enable them to start their own business upon return and benefit their village of origin. As mentioned above, research

on return migration in China remains limited despite a mounting interest on the issue. This is of major importance in the context of internal migration in Nigeria because the perception and behaviour of migrants in their destination localities in relation to their areas of origin has implications for the economy and development of the areas to which they migrate just as it has similar implications for their area of origin. This attempts to examine the role of return migration in selected rural communities of the Niger Delta region that has been characterized by a high level of internal migration following petroleum exploitation and frequent violence that has characterized the region over the past three decades. The paper explores the return migrants' post-return occupational choice behaviours in their communities compared with the traditional occupations that characterize their communities. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The first section reviews the major theoretical perspectives on return migration while the second outlines the methodology of the study. The third section presents the findings of the study with respect to return migrants and their role in their home community areas. The policy issues emanating from the findings are discussed in section four while concluding remarks are given in the final section.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Three theoretical perspectives on return migration provide this study's conceptual framework. The first is the neoclassical perspective that has been used to explain return migration processes in general and those of skilled migrants in particular (Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008). According to neoclassical migration theory, the migration process is motivated by wage differentials between origin and destination countries. The attraction to higher wages in destination countries causes migrants to extend the length of their stay abroad in an effort to maximize their wages. Within this framework, return migration is seen as a consequence of failure (Borjas, 1989). In other words, assuming that there are no changes in wages at the origin or destination countries, migrants will only return to their places of origin if they fail to derive the expected benefits of higher earnings abroad (Constant and Massey, 2002; Cassarino, 2004; Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008).

Although neoclassical migration theory does not clearly predict lower human capital characteristics among returning migrants, it does suggest that they are negatively selected in terms of the endowments needed for success in the labour force. There is scattered evidence associated with neoclassical explanations of the causes and

consequences of return migration. Among returning African immigrants, anecdotal evidence suggests that some returning migrants may have had very little success while living outside their communities of origin. For example, Carling (2004) identifies a group of returning Cape Verdean migrants he refers to as "empty-handed returnees" who returned looking no better off than they were before they migrated (Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008). However, he further points out that not all returning Cape Verdean migrants fall into this category.

The second theory of return migration is provided by the New Economics of Labour Migration theory (NELM) which conceptualizes return migration as part of a defined plan conceived by migrants before their departure from their communities or countries of origin. As expatiated by Galor and Stark (1990), the original plan of migrants involves the eventual remigration to their home communities or countries after accumulating resources in their areas of destination. Consequently, potential returning migrants are highly motivated to gain additional skills and increase their savings while away from home, since these resources are expected to make them more productive in their home communities or countries of origin after they return (Cassarino, 2004). In terms of employment outcomes, it is obvious that the NELM is likely to predict a greater probability of



employment among returning migrants than non-migrants insofar as returning migrants may have acquired more skills and more marketable educational credentials while living outside their community or other countries.

As pointed out by Thomas (2008), recent studies increasingly show some support for the NELM theory in their analyses of the socioeconomic outcomes of returning emigrants. For example, in some African countries there is evidence pointing to a greater level of entrepreneurship among returning migrants that may be associated to savings accumulated abroad (Ammassari, 2004). Thus, the return of emigrants to their home countries with the resources they acquired abroad can be considered to be the ideal end of the international migration cycle. Few empirical studies have systematically investigated whether the NELM theory can be used to explain the labour force outcomes of skilled African migrants after they return (Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008). Structural theories of the return migration of skilled migrants offer a different perspective on the return migration process (Cassarino, 2004). They emphasize the importance of the home country's socioeconomic and political context as important factors that affect the ability of returning migrants to utilize the skills they acquired abroad (Diatta and Mbow, 1999). Structural theories do not consider the decision to return as being

associated with a successful or failed migration experience, but rather focus on the ability of return migrants to be productive after arriving. They emphasize the “reality” of the home economy (Cassarino, 2004) and stress the importance of local contextual factors, *e.g.*, economic development as factors necessary to the successful integration into the local economy. In short, structural theories argue that the ability of returning migrants to utilize their skills and resources after they return largely depends on the operation of background factors specific to the areas and countries that they return to. As with the other two theories, the migration literature contains no empirical studies that extensively examine structural perspectives on return migration within the context of migration in African countries (Kevin J. A. Thomas, 2008). The key question that arises from these frameworks in the context of the returnee migrants to rural areas of the Niger Delta region is what are the characteristics of return migration and the implications for rural development of the region?

## METHODOLOGY

### *Study area*

This study was based largely on data collected from the field. It is therefore important to give details of the field survey activities that generated the data used in this study. The sample size of any study depends to a large extent on three key factors: The degree of accuracy required;

the extent of variation in the population under investigation with regards to key characteristics of the study and the size of the population under investigation. The sample size also needs to be sufficiently large to allow for meaningful analysis bearing in mind the objective of the study. Delta State is divided into three Senatorial Districts and these provided the initial basis for the sample selection process for this study. The twenty-five Local Government Areas (LGAs) within the Delta State are distributed almost equally among the three Senatorial Districts. Consequently, the list of LGAs in each Senatorial District was compiled. From that list a table of random numbers was used to select three LGAs from each Senatorial District. In each randomly selected LGA the list of rural communities with a population of less than 20,000 was pooled together in an *Excel File* and sorted out alphabetically within each LGA. It is this frame that provided the basis for the selection of rural communities. The selection of two communities in each LGA was carried out also by simple random sampling using a table of random numbers. Thus a total of 18 communities were selected for the survey.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

The pre-testing of the questionnaires/survey instruments was carried out within the framework of the survey design. This ensured that all components of the surveys including the identification of wards, housing

units, households, as well as the selection process of households and the administration of the survey instruments were tested. This facilitated the appropriate modifications to the survey instruments and methodology before the commencement of field surveys. The pre-testing took place in one LGA, which was not in the sample for this study. The results of the pilot test from the different pilot rural communities were used to further refine the survey instruments. The pilot test also gave some idea of the timing for the household surveys and the necessary logistics. After the first round of pre-testing of the instruments and the appropriate modifications made, the second round of field-testing was carried out with the training of enumerators. Training supervisors and enumerators for the administration of the survey instruments was crucial to the success and quality of the survey. The training programme of supervisors and enumerators took place in the capital of Delta State, Asaba. The enumerators were recruited from the different sampled LGAs. The duration of training was five days including the second round of field testing. They were trained in survey techniques, the objectives of this survey, methods of soliciting cooperation and maintaining rapport and the content of the questionnaire.

A field survey manual is a document containing the survey design and the

procedures to be adopted in selecting the samples and completing the questionnaires. In this study the supervisor and enumerator's manual served as the main training instruments. They were distributed to all supervisors and enumerators as a guide to the conduct of the field survey activities. Twenty-seven Supervisors and Interviewers (15 males and 12 females) carried out the survey activities under the overall direction of the Project Director. Fieldwork progress varied. Initially interviewers encountered a series of problems including poor cooperation, and outright refusal by the respondents. Few questionnaires were completed during the first week. The timely intervention by the Project Director, supervisors and local leaders was very helpful; in the process, the interviewers also became familiar with the communities and acquired more experience on the best way to interact with the villagers. After the first week, the research team reviewed problems and compared experiences; on the spot checks and supervision were intensified to enhance the quality of the fieldwork. The Survey lasted three months and, on average, 250 questionnaires were completed for each village. The average performance of 1-2 completed questionnaires per interviewer per day varied between communities and interviewers. Overall, the level of cooperation achieved was high judged by the few refusals and non-response. However, the non-response rate was

high for questions that tax respondents' memory. The high non-response for the question on income is understood particularly among farmers that do not keep records of their financial transactions.

The completed questionnaires were edited; the coding took three months. The household record form obtained data on the characteristics of all members of the households: age, sex, education, occupation, migration status, ethnicity and marital status. The out-migration schedule sought information on all members of the household currently living outside the community: their age, education, occupation and marital status at time of departure and during the survey, and nature of links with 'home'. Similarly, the return migration form solicits information on the characteristics of returnees at time of return, as well as current occupation. The main body of the questionnaire sought information on employment and migration history of household heads, links with home place, membership of associations and future migration plans. In addition to household questionnaire administration in each of the sampled communities, other surveys were carried out including key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, participant observations and focus group discussions. These later surveys and data collection processes were carried out by the Supervisors and the Project Director. Data analysis methods of the study reflected the

qualitative and quantitative data collected as outlined above. Broadly, the analysis of the data collected entailed historical analysis, content analysis, descriptive statistical analysis and multivariate statistical techniques.

Participation by the key stakeholders is one of the key principles, which governed the collection of data. Key informant interviews were conducted among selected members of the key stakeholders within the eighteen target communities on issues relating to migration and remittances and the impact of such remittances on the community. The principle of anonymity was assured in these key informant interviews. Consequently, key informant interviews were conducted with community leaders, religious leaders, teachers and the youth. The issues discussed include age of return, reasons for out-migration, reasons for return from migration, impact of returnee migrants on the communities, etc. Focus group discussions were also carried out in the eighteen target communities with various groups including community leaders, teachers, men, women and the youth. Trained facilitators conducted the focus group discussions. The guidelines for the focus group discussion reflected the whole range of issues related to remittances by indigenes of the communities that migrated to other areas within and outside the country and their effects on their families and the community at large.

### ***Data analysis***

Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed as soon as they were collected. The field assistants wrote reports on their observations on the social and economic situation in the villages particularly with reference to in-migration. Focus group moderators also reported on conclusions arrived at in the focus group discussions. They did so through the transcription and documentation of all the recorded discussions held in the villages. This was followed by a more systematic presentation of the findings in which the views, opinions and consensus reached especially with the participants were codified and analysed. A significant proportion of the quantitative data collected as well as some documentary statistical data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods. First frequency tables reflecting trends and patterns were produced for the different communities. Secondly the relationships among the variables/indicators of child migration were analysed as they relate to differences among the communities.

## **THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF RETURN MIGRATION IN THE TARGET RURAL COMMUNITIES**

The phenomenon of return migration and the role of returnee migrants in the

development of the home community remains a relatively unexplored area. The apparent neglect of this phenomenon results in part from the use of census data for the analysis of migration. This, in effect, obscures the incidence of return migration, which surveys designed for this purpose can appropriately tap (Adepoju, 1977). It is indicated in the literature that the migration experiences of (successful) returnees usually enhance their social status, and if economically successful, they can become agents of change in productive activities, organization, and management and - as potential local opinion leaders - can foster social change and development (Mabogunje, 1972).

The questionnaire survey of households in the target communities included questions on the phenomenon of return migration. Information was solicited from the household heads about the members of their respective households who had lived outside the survey communities permanently or temporarily for more than six months and had since returned to stay permanently in their community focusing on issues such as: their education, age and marital status on return and the nature of the links returnee migrants maintained while they were away from their communities. However, by the nature of the survey design, the information is confined to returnees who were still living in the surveyed communities at the time of the interviews. Again, only

members of non-migrant households, that is, the people normally resident in the communities were included in this aspect of the survey. As is the case of out-migration phenomenon, this approach would invariably miss out returnees who had since left the villages either alone or with the whole family members.

The central objective of the survey is on the characteristic of the returnees at the time of the survey. These characteristics are then compared for various streams and place of residence during the migration career of the returnees. Information was collected on selected characteristics of returnees and of the migration at the time of departure. These include the time of departure and the main reasons that prompted the initial out-migration, occupation at time of departure and relocation at the destination.

Table 1 shows that just over 10 per cent of the returnee migrants left the communities before 1970 that is more than forty years ago. The Table shows that the returnee migrants that left their communities between 1970 and 1989 is 17.7 per cent. Furthermore, the returnee migrants that moved out of their communities between 1980 and 1989 is 36.7 while those who moved out between 1990 and 1999 is 23.1 per cent. Finally, only about 12 per cent are those that moved out of their communities in the year 2000 and after.

**Table 1:** Distribution of returnee migrant household members according to the timing of Out-migration

<b>Community</b>	<b>Before 1970</b>	<b>1970-1979</b>	<b>1980-1989</b>	<b>1990-1999</b>	<b>2000 and after</b>
<b>Average</b>	10.8	17.7	36.7	23.1	11.7
Abbi	0.0	13.8	28.4	57.8	0.0
Enhwe	5.9	15.8	44.6	28.7	5.0
Emevor	0.0	27.1	41.1	30.2	1.6
Obiaruku	3.0	9.9	56.4	26.7	4.0
Ayakoromo	0.9	13.6	61.8	21.8	1.8
Ekpan	0.0	19.7	48.3	27.9	4.1
Ekakpamre	17.5	28.9	6.2	2.1	45.4
Umunede	40.2	14.1	15.2	22.8	7.6
Orogun	6.1	12.2	62.2	13.4	6.1
Ekuku Agbor	45.0	12.5	15.0	0.0	27.5
Amukpe	0.0	26.0	38.5	28.1	7.3
Illa	14.6	12.4	27.0	14.6	31.5
Aladja	1.1	35.6	21.8	40.2	1.1
Ashaka	27.8	11.1	22.2	23.1	15.7
Olomoro	1.0	21.0	27.0	40.0	11.0
Koko	17.0	15.9	27.3	15.9	23.9
Ogulagha	0.9	12.1	84.5	2.6	0.0
Mosogar	18.9	17.0	21.7	17.0	25.5

Source: Author's Survey, 2006/2008

Table 1 further shows that there are remarkable variations among the communities in terms of the proportion of returnee migrants that migrated during the different decades. For example while 45 and 40 per cent of the returnee migrants in Ekuku Agbor and Umunede moved out before 1970 respectively, there were no returnee migrants in Abbi, Emevor, Ekpan, Amukpe that out-migrated during the same period. Similarly while over 57 per cent of the returnee migrants from Abbi community moved between 1990 and 1999, less than 3 per cent of the returnee

migrants in Ekakpamre, Ekuku Agbor, and Ogulagha out-migrated during the same period. These patterns of out-migration of the return-migrants can be related to the history and development of the communities, the youthful composition of the population there and the effects of mass education, which inadvertently prepares the youths for out-migration. Generally a larger proportion of out-migrants are inhabitants of communities where the level of socio-economic development is poorer compared with those of other communities.

**Table 2:** Percentage distribution of return-migrant household members according to period of absence

<b>Community</b>	<b>1-4 years</b>	<b>5-9 years</b>	<b>10-19 years</b>	<b>20-39 years</b>	<b>40 years and more</b>
<b>Average</b>	23.1	25.1	25.4	19.6	6.8
Abbi	32.1	30.9	18.1	15.0	4.9
Enhwe	10.9	30.8	39.8	15.8	3.1
Emevor	25.4	30.0	24.1	16.6	4.0
Obiaruku	24.0	34.0	17.5	23.5	1.0
Ayakoromo	5.0	10.7	60.5	22.7	5.4
Ekpan	9.4	40.2	37.6	47.0	11.3
Ekakpamre	7.5	19.0	22.1	28.9	5.4
Umunede	42.2	20.0	13.8	17.7	6.3
Orogun	12.1	21.7	45.4	15.4	4.2
Ekuku Agbor	2.5	25.2	31.7	30.0	11.5
Amukpe	36.0	31.0	15.6	11.7	5.7
Illa	32.3	30.0	16.7	20.0	3.4
Aladja	49.4	16.7	23.0	24.1	0.0
Ashaka	6.5	18.2	31.5	25.4	18.4
Olomoro	17.8	19.1	43.0	30.8	19.1
Koko	32.1	30.0	18.0	17.0	0.9
Ogulagha	35.9	29.0	15.9	13.3	5.9
Mosogar	35.0	31.0	19.5	14.5	0.5

Source: Author's Survey, 2006/2008

Table 2, which reflects another dimension of the period of absence of the returnee migrants from their communities shows that a larger proportion of them were out of their communities for a period of between 10 and 19 years before they returned. Those who were away for a period of 20-39 years, which was about 33 per cent, follow this category. The proportion of returnee migrants who were away for less than 10 years constituted about 23 percent while those who were away for 40 years and more constituted 4.8 per cent. There are also notable variations among the communities in terms of the period of absence by return-migrants from their communities. The period of

absence from their communities by returnee migrants reflects their socio-economic conditions in their area of destinations. The nature of the socio-economic situation in their home communities was also a factor that influenced their period of absence. Many of the returnee migrants indicated during discussions with them that it was not advisable to return to their communities when they do not have any resources to sustain their stay back home. Others pointed out that they returned to their communities because things have improved and there are increased opportunities for income generation compared to what they were before they left. Thus communities where socio-

economic development have improved remarkably in recent years have been able to attract their out-migrated inhabitants to return home compared

with those where socio-economic conditions have not changed significantly.

**Table 3:** Percentage distribution of returnee migrant household members according to their age of departure

Community	Under 15 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30 years and above
<b>Average</b>	0.3	37.3	29.9	23.4	7.6
Abbi	0.0	88.5	1.8	0.9	8.8
Enhwe	0.0	47.1	14.7	8.8	26.5
Emevor	0.8	29.0	4.0	65.3	0.8
Obiaruku	0.0	22.0	21.0	53.0	3.0
Ayakoromo	0.0	78.2	16.4	3.6	1.8
Ekpan	0.0	12.8	4.1	75.0	7.4
Ekakpamre	1.0	46.4	46.4	4.1	1.0
Umunede	0.0	39.4	36.4	2.0	19.2
Orogun	0.0	45.5	8.1	19.2	27.3
Ekuku Agbor	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Amukpe	0.0	57.0	15.1	24.7	2.2
Illa	0.0	35.5	60.2	0.0	2.2
Aladja	1.1	10.5	2.1	62.1	24.2
Ashaka	0.0	50.0	17.6	32.4	0.0
Olomoro	1.6	18.1	66.9	4.7	7.1
Koko	0.0	58.0	31.8	5.7	1.1
Ogulagha	0.9	21.4	61.5	0.0	8.5
Mosogar	0.0	32.1	26.4	39.6	0.0

Source: Author's Survey, 2006/2008

With respect to the age at migration of the returnee migrants, Table 3 indicates that on the average the vast majority of the returnee migrants moved from their communities between the age of 15 and 24 years. Although there were some differences in the proportion of out-migrants in the different age categories, Table 3 shows that in most communities most of the return migrants out-migrated when they were in the age group 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29 years. The findings confirm the well known fact that migration from rural communities in Nigeria is largely characterized by young

people who seek opportunities for education and livelihood largely in urban areas. Such out-migration tends to be higher in communities negatively affected by oil exploration because there are limited opportunities for employment and other economic activities.

Table 4 shows the educational qualifications of the returnee migrants and it indicates that a greater proportion of them (47.8 %) had less than primary education while a significant proportion (33.5 %) had only full primary education. A relatively high proportion



(11.4 %) of the returnee migrants had some form of secondary education. Table 4 indicates further that some communities such as Enhwe, Abbi, Aladja and Mosogar had a significant proportion of the returnee migrants possess junior secondary or secondary education. Generally a large proportion of the people who out-migrate from rural communities claim that the desire for further education beyond the educational facilities in their home communities is a major factor influencing their decision to migrate. But invariably most of such migrants rarely have the opportunity for further education when they get to their destination. This explains why a significant proportion of the returnee migrants remain without improving their education level beyond what it was at the time of their migration. However, discussions with the returnees migrants indicates that some of them did improve on their educational level during their period of absence from their communities. This educational advancement contributed to their socio-economic status which facilitated their decision to return home to build decent houses and contribute to the development of their communities.

Table 5 shows that farming is still the main occupation of the returnee migrants at the time of the survey. As indicated in Table 5, over 60 per cent of the returnees are farmers while about 25 per cent are traders. The dominance of farming as the

major occupation of the returnee migrants is largely explained by the impact of the structural adjustment programme of the 1980s coupled with the globalisation phenomenon which has affected migrants to urban areas. Many returnee migrants came back home because they consider it better to farm in their villages where family land is available to them rather than hang on in the urban centres where employment opportunities declined considerably as a result of deregulation and the massive reduction of public sector employment. At the same time the prices of farm products in the national and international markets improved considerably and many of the returnees were actually encouraged to go back home to engage in farming activities as a means of livelihood. The same factors also account for the proportion of the returnee migrants who are engaged in trading activities. With increased socio-economic activities in some of the rural communities some of the returnee migrants who came back with some savings decided to invest in trading activities. Some of the returnee migrants were also engaged in teaching, clerical and other professional activities as 7.4 per cent of the returnees were engaged in such employment activities. This shows that some of the returnee migrants do acquire some new skills when they migrate outside their communities.

**Table 4:** Percentage distribution of returnee migrant household members according to educational Status on return

<b>Community</b>	<b>Less than primary</b>	<b>Full Primary School</b>	<b>Modern junior Secondary school</b>	<b>Secondary and above</b>
<b>Average</b>	47.8	33.5	11.4	7.4
Abbi	28.0	31.5	20.2	20.2
Enhwe	41.5	4.7	47.0	6.8
Emevor	38.8	44.0	14.7	2.5
Obiaruku	57.1	42.1	0.6	0.2
Ayakoromo	54.6	40.2	4.1	1.2
Ekpan	65.4	24.1	10.5	0.0
Ekakpamre	49.8	36.5	6.8	6.8
Umunede	57.6	27.6	8.4	6.5
Orogun	43.7	41.0	6.1	9.2
Ekuku Agbor	48.9	41.6	9.0	0.5
Amukpe	17.7	56.1	6.6	19.5
Illa	63.2	27.0	7.2	2.6
Aladja	23.2	42.5	24.8	9.6
Ashaka	60.6	26.1	8.7	4.6
Olomoro	81.8	9.6	8.6	0.0
Koko	47.8	39.9	12.0	0.3
Ogulagha	41.5	35.1	12.0	11.3
Mosogar	47.6	0.3	21.1	31.1

Source: Author's Survey, 2006/2008

**Table 5:** Percentage distribution of returnee migrant household members according to occupation on return

Community	Farming/1 abourer	Trading	Clerical teaching and professiona l	Student/ apprentice	Services	Unemployed
<b>Average</b>	60.2	25.6	7.4	5.4	1.5	0.8
Abbi	84.5	13.8	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0
Enhwe	81.2	8.9	8.9	1.0	0.0	0.0
Emevor	49.6	37.2	8.5	1.6	3.1	0.0
Obiaruku	54.5	31.7	10.9	2.0	1.0	0.0
Ayakoromo	80.0	17.3	1.8	0.9	0.0	0.9
Ekpan	71.8	26.2	1.3	0.7	0.0	0.0
Ekakpamre	25.8	61.9	5.2	4.1	3.1	1.0
Umunede	94.6	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Orogun	72.2	20.6	2.1	5.2	0.0	0.0
Ekuku Agbor	2.5	8.3	37.5	45.0	6.7	0.0
Amukpe	72.9	14.6	2.1	10.4	0.0	1.0
Illa	28.1	52.1	14.6	5.2	0.0	0.0
Aladja	97.7	2.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ashaka	56.5	43.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.2
Olomoro	79.6	16.5	3.9	0.0	0.0	2.3
Koko	42.0	28.4	8.0	8.0	13.6	0.0
Ogulagha	66.4	32.8	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mosogar	30.8	36.4	23.4	9.3	0.0	0.0

Source: Author's Survey, 2006/2008

Table 6 presents the findings from the survey with respect to the reasons, which prompted returnee migrants to move from their communities. It shows that the desire for employment opportunities or other means of livelihood is the dominant reason ((38.9%). This is followed by the search for education, which constituted (23.7%). The returnee migrants in this category were mainly those who were in search of secondary and post-secondary school facilities. Closely related to those who left their

communities in search of education are those who moved away to learn a trade mainly as apprentices (11.1%). Table 6 also shows that a considerable proportion (20.0%) of the returnee migrants left their home communities as a result of change in employment while about 6.3 per cent left as a result of change of the need to join their husbands or relations.

**Table 6:** Percentage distribution of returnee migrant household members according to reasons for out-migration

Community	Education	Look for work	Change of job	To learn a trade	Join husband or relation	Not stated
<b>Average</b>	23.7	38.9	20.0	11.1	6.3	0.3
Abbi	37.5	34.6	7.7	20.2	0.0	0.0
Enhwe	36.1	39.5	10.1	12.6	1.7	0.0
Emevor	9.3	35.2	39.8	11.1	4.6	0.8
Obiaruku	18.1	35.4	29.1	10.2	7.1	0.0
Ayakoromo	12.2	53.1	31.6	3.1	0.0	0.0
Ekpan	9.2	42.9	41.8	4.1	2.0	0.0
Ekakpamre	28.7	57.4	5.0	5.0	4.0	1.0
Umunede	37.1	45.4	1.0	11.3	5.2	0.0
Orogun	18.5	40.7	34.3	4.6	1.9	0.0
Ekuku	20.2	49.5	15.2	10.1	5.1	0.0
Agbor	23.7	33.0	28.9	8.2	6.2	0.0
Amukpe	13.0	56.0	19.0	7.0	5.0	0.0
Illa	29.0	26.0	13.0	18.0	14.0	1.1
Aladja	28.3	27.3	14.1	17.2	13.1	0.0
Ashaka	27.0	23.5	5.2	22.6	21.7	1.6
Olomoro	31.4	30.5	11.0	16.1	11.0	0.0
Koko	21.2	37.4	34.3	5.1	2.0	0.9
Ogulgaha	31.6	30.5	12.0	15.3	10.8	0.0
Mosogar						

Source: Author's Survey, 2006/2008

These findings reflect the socio-economic situation in the target communities at the time the returnee migrants left for other places, largely rural areas. Since the vast proportion of the migrant population in the rural communities comprise youth of between 15 and 29 years as noted earlier, the desire for education is an important factor just as the search for employment is also a significant push factor. Differences among the communities in terms of the proportions of the returnee migrants that left in search of education, employment or change the type of job they were doing can be explained by the patterns of socio-economic development in the target communities. The target communities were at the different levels of socio-economic development during the time of out-migration by the returnee migrants. The communities less developed in terms of the availability of social, infrastructure and employment opportunities have a higher proportion of their out-migrants who eventually returned had a greater proportion of their returnee out-migrants leaving the communities in search of education and employment compared with those in comparatively advanced communities.

**Table 7:** Percentage distribution of returnee migrant household members according to the place of out-migration

Community	Village	Small town	Big town	State capital	Lagos or Abuja
<b>Average</b>	33.4	32.4	18.3	12.5	3.4
Abbi	43.1	46.6	10.3	0.0	0.0
Enhwe	18.6	44.1	28.4	7.8	1.0
Emevor	19.4	31.0	37.2	9.3	3.1
Obiaruku	27.7	41.6	13.9	11.9	5.0
Ayakoromo	17.3	51.8	26.4	3.6	.9
Ekpan	12.1	46.3	24.8	12.8	4.0
Ekakpamre	2.1	13.4	19.6	42.3	22.7
Umunede	50.0	28.3	13.0	5.4	3.3
Orogun	20.2	48.9	14.9	11.7	4.3
Ekuku Agbor	61.7	6.7	3.3	10.0	18.3
Amukpe	30.5	24.2	20.0	24.2	1.1
Illa	16.0	34.6	33.7	9.9	5.8
Aladja	20.7	25.3	52.9	1.1	0.0
Ashaka	23.1	33.3	5.6	20.4	17.6
Olomoro	39.8	35.0	10.7	13.6	1.0
Koko	47.0	19.3	18.2	10.2	5.2
Ogulagha	54.8	40.0	5.2	0.0	0.0
Mosogar	10.5	21.9	20.0	34.3	13.3

Source: Author's Survey, 2006/2008

Table 7 indicates that a higher proportion of the returnee migrants (33.4%) to the survey communities moved to other villages, which suggests that they were basically rural-rural migrants. Out-migration to small towns constitute about 32.4 per cent of the return migrants while movement to larger towns constitute about 18.3 per cent. Out-migration to the state capital, Asaba, by the returnee migrants constitute about 12.5 per cent while about 3 per cent of the returnee migrants went to Lagos or Abuja. Although there are variations among the survey communities in terms of the destination of out-migration by the return migrants, the basic pattern is that the majority moved to rural

settlements and smaller towns, which shows the rural-rural trend in the out-migration process in the target communities. In the Niger Delta region, rural settlements with opportunities for education and farming constitute significant centres of attraction for in-migrants from other areas, especially those that are negatively affected by petroleum exploitation.

An analysis of the distances of the destinations to which the returnee migrants moved to during their out-migration shows that most of the returnee migrants in the target communities migrated to distances of within 50 kilometres from their

communities. It was found that 45 per cent of the returnee migrants moved to areas within 30 kilometres while 24.8 per cent out-migrated to localities of between 30 and 50 kilometres from their communities. On the other hand less than 20 per cent of the return-migrants moved to localities, which are over 100 kilometres from their communities. This confirms the point made earlier that most rural-rural migrants move to distances nearer to their home communities compared to the more enterprising rural-urban migrants. There are remarkable variations in the distances of the destinations of return-migrants from the different surveyed communities. In Ekpan, Abbi, Obiaruku, Ekakpamre, Ekuku Agbor, Amukpe and Mosogar communities, over 60 per cent of the returnee migrants originally travelled to distances of less than 50 kilometres while in Enhwe community the proportion in the same category is less than 40 per cent. In most of the other communities, the majority of the out-migrants moved to localities within 50 kilometres of their home communities. The distance factor is related to the destination of the migration. Migrants attracted to small villages travel over short distances; those who migrate to small towns are mostly medium-distance migrants while migrants attracted to the larger urban centres covered much longer distances.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

The findings of this survey indicate that the target rural communities are characterised by a significant number of returnee migrants; a significant proportion of them moved away from their communities for between 10 and 29 years in search of employment and education; the absence of basic infrastructure and social services also 'pushed' many inhabitants the vast proportion of the returnee migrants left their communities when they were between the age of 15 and 29 years; while a significant proportion of the returnee migrants had junior secondary, secondary and post secondary education, the vast proportion of them had only primary or less than primary education although a large proportion of them indicated that the desire for education motivated their migration; farming activities is the dominant occupation of the vast proportion of the returnee migrants; the vast proportion of the returnee migrants moved to urban centres of various sizes although rural areas also attracted a significant proportion; and the vast proportion of the returnee migrants moved to localities within 100 kilometres of their home communities. Key informant

interviews with the returnees indicate that the vast proportion of them pointed out that they returned because there have been considerable improvements in the provision of social and infrastructure facilities in their home communities. The returnees indicated that if their communities had these facilities at the time they migrated, there would have been no reasons to move away to other localities. This explains why there were a higher proportion of returnee migrants in communities that are fairly developed in terms of the availability of social and infrastructure facilities as well as increased income generating opportunities. These findings have implications for rural development policies in the Niger Delta region in general and Delta State in particular where the vast proportions of the population live in rural communities.

The fundamental policy challenge that must be addressed to reduce out-migration from poor rural communities as well as encourage those who migrated to other areas to return is to promote the emergence of secondary urban centres in different parts of the state. One major implications of the migration patterns from rural areas in Delta State is that the uneven distribution of reasonably large urban centres in the state pushes young rural inhabitants who would have loved to remain in their communities to migrate to other localities, which further contributes to the development

problems of these rather isolated rural areas. Closely associated with the uneven distribution of large urban centres in Delta State is the absence of medium -size or secondary towns in most parts of the state. Medium-size towns are defined as those with a population of between 20,000 and 100,000. The contemporary settlement pattern in the Delta State indicates that few urban areas dominate the landscape in terms of the provision of urban-based services at the expense of the other areas which are generally far from the centres. This situation reflects an evidence of the broader problem of uneven distribution of economic opportunities among the people and communities in the state. The absence of medium size towns in the urban system of the state has made it difficult for the development of commercial facilities in many parts of the state especially in the wetland areas and this has encouraged increased out-migration. Furthermore, it has placed a large burden upon the few urban areas for the supply of certain essential social and public services, which are not provided economically in such small settlements. Since most of the inhabitants in the rural areas, especially those located far away from the few urban areas may not be able to commute regularly to these urban centres, this suggests that such facilities are altogether denied to the people in the rural areas. The response of the people is to migrate to urban areas and those who have migrated find it difficult to return to their communities once they

realise that basic social facilities are still not available.

It is clear from the analysis of the role which the absence of settlements with basic facilities play in encouraging out-migration and preventing return migration that an important aspect of rural development in Delta State is the articulation and implementation of a settlement size distribution development policy which promotes the equitable distribution of secondary urban centres in the rural communities of the state. A settlement size distribution policy should be articulated and promoted in the state so that localities, which at present do not have settlements capable of delivering social and economic facilities and services can have the opportunity of the mergence of such centres in their locality. It is important to outline key policy issues relating to the selection of central locations and growth centres, which would form the basis of the development of a balanced settlement system in the state and thereby encourage out-migrants to return to their communities while also preventing younger ones from moving away.

The selection of central locations and growth centres must be based on the analysis of the economic and socio-cultural assets of the existing settlements in the state. They should be towns villages already established with some economic base and political character. They must have access to labour supply

suitable for training for the tasks of development. In other words, the primary criterion for selecting these central locations and growth centres should be potential economic viability, that is, locational advantages of efficient and long run operation for specified kinds of economic activities. The spatial framework provided by the top levels of the settlement hierarchy in the state can then be used to develop a series of intermediate towns in different parts of the state. Such towns of at least 5,000 inhabitants will provide services for the rural dwellers. The rationale for developing medium-size towns in the rural areas is provided by the concepts of the range of a good and threshold population implied in the geographers well-known central place theory. The concept of the range of a good suggests that rural service centres accessible to a group of villages are necessary in many parts of the Delta State, especially in those local government areas where there are very few medium-size towns. This will reduce the long distances, which many rural dwellers now travel to obtain some essential services. Similarly, the concept of threshold population suggests the need to build up the population and purchasing power of the selected intermediate settlements so as to make them viable central places. This will make the provision of adequate services an economic feasibility.

The optimal selection of centres of various grades will have to balance



immediate need against growth potential, and will require clear definition and weighing of the factors indicating potential. But more than this, a decision will be needed on how far between the extremes of concentration and dispersal, attention should be focused. The consideration of the above economic political and spatial factors suggests that the present twenty five Local Government Area structure in Delta State provides a useful basis for the selection of the state's central locations and growth centres. In each of the LGAs particularly those where there are few or no medium size towns, a number of settlements could be selected for development as central locations or growth centres. The settlements to be developed could be selected on the basis of an analysis of their social, economic, political and locational assets. For instance, the selected settlements should have a reasonable number of people because it is easier to attract people to a settlement, which already has a significant number of inhabitants than that, which has only a few dwellers. Furthermore, the settlements selected should have certain social and economic functions, for example, rural periodic markets or schools and postal agencies. In addition, the settlements should be located in areas accessible to the existing transport network especially motorable roads. From the list of ranked settlements on the basis of their functional structure at least five settlements should be selected in each

LGA for development as central locations and growth centres.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although migration, through out human history, have played a significant role in shaping individuals life and well-being as well as regions socio-economic development, little attempts have been made by policy makers in a developing country such as Nigeria to integrate migration issues into development policies. Attempts to promote equitable development that incorporates the challenge of development in rural areas of Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta region must recognize the role of migration patterns in the rural development process. Migration reallocates household labour associated with productive and reproductive activities. In the areas of origin, it reduces labour for food production and increases the work burden of men and women, depending on who is left behind. As a result, in depressed regions such as the Niger Delta from where large numbers of people are migrating, the rural contexts are changing quite rapidly. State and non-state actors in Nigeria have a major role to play in promoting greater investment in agriculture and supporting the adoption of sound policies that address the root causes of rural out-migration and create viable options for rural people to consider migration as an alternative and not a last resort. Policies should also attempt to counterbalance the negative effects of

migration, such as social dislocation, agricultural labour shortages, or rapid deterioration in the provision of social services. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is in dire need of rural development strategies that will discourage the inhabitants of rural areas

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- from out-migrating as well as encourage those that left the rural areas for various reasons to return and contribute to the development of the region if peace in the Niger Delta region is to be sustained.
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