

# Unveiling local opportunities and challenges in Return Migration and Development nexus: The case of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

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## Introduction

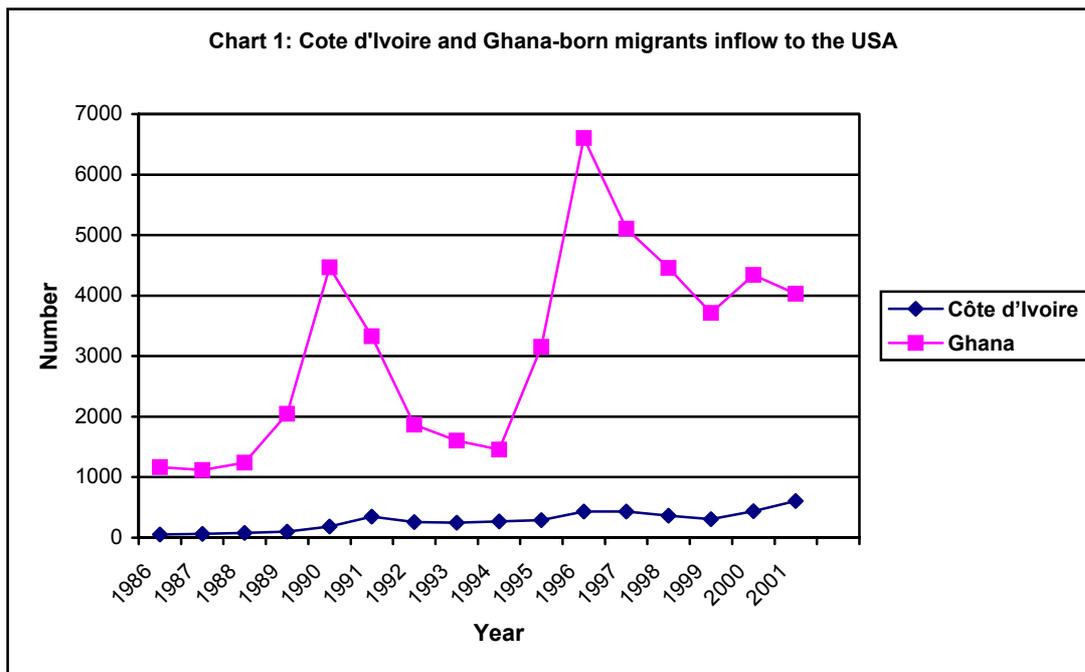
International migration has increased over the last few decades in such a way that Castle (2000) talked about the age of migration. Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire nationals follow this trend. Migration from these two countries has evolved over the time. Although there is a lack of accurate and up-dated information on migration, available data indicate that international migration from these countries is increasing and being transformed. International mobility and migratory movements from and to these countries are increasingly diversified in its forms, motives and destination (table 1-3.). Migration from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire challenges various barriers such as language and distance as the former colonial power are any more the sole or final destination of new migration flow. For instance Ivorians constitute an important share of the francophone Diaspora in the London (Stayan 2003, Koser 2003) whilst Ghanaians number thousands in the Netherlands and Germany. Available data from the African Development Bank (2004) indicates that Ghana has ceased to be a country of immigration and is now a major sending country (net migration rate was -0.1 per thousand in 2001) and Cote d'Ivoire's net migration rate decreasing from 5 to 0.7 per thousand inhabitants in 2001. With violent conflicts Cote d'Ivoire and in the region and the increasing demand for qualified persons in developed countries, the trend of emigration will increase.

Return migration is also part of the migratory movement between Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana and the rest of the world despite a scarcity of literature on this. In some cases, these returns are forced – as in the case of deportation- and in others; they predominantly involved the return of professionals, students who have completed their studies, retired and many others. The living standards Measurement survey in the two countries indicates that about 10 to 12 percent of the return migrants were international return migrants. The majority of them returned from the West African Countries (Litchfield and Waddington 2002). Unlike emigration, there is no compelling evidence that return migration is picking up or indeed is drying up. This is largely related to the dearth of data on return migration and the development of transnationalism.

Increasing migrations from the two countries should not however dwarf the reality of immobility. As Carling (2001) rightly pointed out despite the increasing focus of migration and mobility, the largest proportion of the population is non-migrant. One should rather talk of the age of immobility since migration is far from being the norm and international migration is not an available or an accessible option to many persons especially the poor.

Increasing migration in the age of immobility and in the context of economic and political crisis brings migration and return high in development agenda. How could migration and return be beneficial to those who, for different motives have not moved or those individuals who now are back to their country of origin?

Using data from a survey of 604 returnees in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire and information from the interviews with migrants, the paper analyses opportunities, challenges, and constraints related to intercontinental migration's impact on economic development of the two countries. The paper contains four sections: Section one deals with methodological considerations and a descriptive account of the samples, whilst the second section presents a brief background of the cases study. Employment, business and investments opportunities are the focus of the fourth section. Concluding remark followed the analysis of micro and macro challenges.



## 1. Methodological remarks

### 1.1 Opportunities and challenges in return migrations

Economic development in these two countries and in Africa at large is impeded by many factors. With regards to the development of business, being they small, medium or large, financing has been single out as the major constraints (Aryeetey 1999). Aryeetey found that over half of the enterprises faced financing problems as a result of inadequate policy framework, inadequate financial mechanism and incentive and inadequate institutional support. Such context may provide an opportunity for investment (starting a business) from the financial premium generated through migration. On the other hand, the development of business requires an adequate financing mechanism and a more business friendly environment.

Return migrants could also have other comparative advantages. Because they originate from the country, they could have that 'inside' knowledge necessary for such business environment and the ability to foresee obstacles. They certainly benefit from social capital and networks that may be crucial in the less formal and more interpersonal relation business environment. As one respondent said '*abroad you know your rights but here at home you need personal relations and networking to get things done*' (An Ghanaian Elite businessman).

The impacts of migration on socio-economic development are not free of challenges. In the very process of mobility and migration adversely effect on the way migrants perceive and live the different dimension of local environment. Return migrants well may lose track of the reality. It is therefore important to understand the challenges and barriers in this relationship between return migration and development. Analytically this would mean looking at the different paths through which migration could foster development. These are transfer and adequate use of capital acquired abroad. Using the framework of the Transrede project, this study considers three forms of capital: financial, human and social. We will specifically look

at employment situation and job market, business development and its environment and social factors.

The term opportunity here is from the perspective of the return migrants. It is argued that migration and return provide migrants with resources useful in the host country. On the other hand the context and migrants characteristic may hamper or constrain the use of the opportunities.

### ***1.2 Data and approach.***

The transnational migration, return and Development (transrede) project of the Sussex Centre for Migration Research at the University of Sussex provides data for this paper. The Transrede project through a micro-meso approach studied the relations between intercontinental migration, return and socio-economic development of the countries of origin. Through a survey of 604 return migrants in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire equally distributed between less skilled and highly skilled (élite) individual and over forty interviews with migrants in Paris and London (the potential returnees) the project investigates the gains, transfer and use of three forms of capital: financial, human and social capital. Due to the lack of database for a more representative and probability sample, snowball technique was used to constitute the sample of the survey. This means difference between and with the samples may not necessarily reflect those in the population at large.

The data comes from the survey of return migrants and interview with migrants and return migrants, and not from non-migrants. It might be one-sided story -as the views of non-migrants are not presented - and the data certainly have some amounts of subjectivity and perception from interviewees. This however does not invalidate the finding for migration, after all, entails a lot of subjectivity and perception of self and others.

Of the 604 respondents 304 were interviewed in Ghana and 300 in Cote d'Ivoire. The less skilled samples had more female respondents (28 per cent) than the elite ones (15 and 19 percent in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana respectively). Ivorian returnees were younger than the Ghanaian returnees (median ages 34 and 44 years). With regard to the time spent abroad, Ghanaian returnees stayed longer abroad than the Ivorian did. More than half of the Ghanaian elites spent over ten years abroad compared to 6 years for the Ivorians.

## **2 Background Information: Similarity and difference**

The two countries constituting the cases for this study are similar and yet different in many ways. The two countries share a long border, an important ethnic group (the Akan) and the same agro-climatic zones. They went through a similar pattern of social and political dynamic with Ghana experiencing the change (political, economic or social first the Cote d'Ivoire). Their economies rely heavily on cash crops thus on the vagary of the international market of commodity.

Their economic vulnerability is worsened by various socio-political crisis they went through that effect on their production system. Ghana went through a political and economic crisis in the period mid 1960 to mid 1980s while Ivorian economic crisis started toward the mid 1980s and the political crisis started in the 1990s. The length and depth of the crisis but also the socio-economic development policies of the two countries may explain difference their economic performance and their degree development (Table 4): Ghana GDP per capita in 2001 is less

than half the one recorded in Côte d'Ivoire. Even though Ghana has a better human development index and received more financial flow from abroad it lag behind in term of foreign direct investment.

### **3. Socio-economic opportunities for migrants.**

#### ***3. 1. Skills gain, employment and business opportunities.***

Ivorian and Ghanaian returnees acquired skills through their international migration. Most of them studied abroad and a substantial proportion acquire additional qualification. The most dominant skill gained however was work experience. Even when their hold unskilled or menial job, the very fact of working in a different environment and sometimes in a different business culture was seen as a valuable input in their knowledge and skills.

The less skilled migrants' experience and skills are also very important. Many of them were convinced that they have acquired not only important skills but also useful ones when reflecting on their work after return (Sjenitzer 2002). Ammassari (2004ab) found similar result among the elites.

These acquired human skills are projected and assessed in the labour and business environment of the country of origin. Return migration is constructed as a web of perception and expectations of the lives in the home countries. It is thus not surprising that over six in ten returnees (64%) expected feasible employment and business opportunities in Ghana or Côte d'Ivoire. Such expectation is related to the perceived economic structure and opportunities in the country of origin but also to their newly acquired human capital. Eight in ten elite for instance expected that they could easily utilise what they have learnt while 68 percent thought their international migration experience would be very useful.

Return migration encompasses number of reasons. Although social, family and economic reasons very often intertwine, economic reasons were important to the return of Ivorians and Ghanaians interviewed. As many as 44 per cent of the Ghanaians elite returned because of employment opportunities and nearly 29 per cent of the less skilled returned for the same reason or because of business opportunity. Although Ivorian returnees were less attracted by direct employment or business opportunities than Ghanaians, it is worth noting that 28 and 33 percent of the elite and less-skilled Ivorians respectively returned because of the employment opportunities (Tiemoko 2004).

An economic and employment opportunity at home may be related to the difficulty of the labour market in the host country. When migrant reach ceiling glace in the labour market they may assess resources in their home country. Migrants integration in the labour market has not been easy especially those with an entrepreneurial skills. Hence about 7 percent of all elites returnees had difficulties in finding a job in their host countries.

Employment and business opportunities for returnees are not just perception for many of the returnees have effectively used them as indicated in their employment status (Table 5). However there were unemployed persons amongst the less skilled, looking for a better employment opportunity.

### **3.2 Business development**

The home country offers to some migrants a very positive business environment. Some migrants even think that an investment in the country of origin has a better return than the one abroad and such investment requires affordable starting capital. This is clear from the statement of the a 35-year-old Ghanaian banker in London who said:

*'I have significant investment in property in Ghana...I don't invest there because I am Ghanaian, I invest because I the return is better'.*

Business opportunities and the institutional framework look more attractive in Ghana as compared to Cote d'Ivoire as shown by the proportion of business owners among the returnees. In total over 55 percent and 32 percent of Ghanaian and Ivorians respectively have established their small business. Among the elite 15.3 and 33.0 percent of the Ivorians and Ghanaians are self-employed and nearly all of them are employers. Most of the self-employed returnees have registered their business (68.9 percent in Côte d'Ivoire and 63 percent in Ghana). This is important as it shows that most of these businesses are not informal and thus providing income to the local and national authorities through taxation. Some of the differences in the number of businesspersons between Ghanaians and Ivorians may be related to other factor such as the education curricula and employment of opportunities and migration history in the two countries.

Many of these small businesses venture are set prior or within a year of return. This is particularly true for Ghanaian (62.3 percent). The analysis of the type of business established by the returnee shows a variety of sectors even though personal service and retails dominate the less skills group while banking, insurances and communication technology are the main business sector of the Ghanaian elite. A part from few cases of communication centre and agro-business less skilled return migrants predominantly venture in existing economic sector. This is consistent with the findings in other contexts (Black et al 2003). In Kumassi areas, Kabbi *et al.* 1 (2004) note that migrants and their families invested in farms when they were reluctant to start a non-agricultural business.

The impact of small business by returnees goes beyond its positive impact on tax and to create employment. In the two countries many of the self-employed are employers contributing to the reduction of unemployment. An Ivorian in Paris who has been sending money for different economic activities said: *'I sent money to a friend to get a driving license and another to pay her studies'.* Another Ivorian migrant explains *'for our mother I set up a maquis [restaurant] so that she can generate some income and feed the others... I did the same for my wife's family'.*

### **3.3 Financial aspect of return.**

Remittances are the key linkages in the migration and development nexus. They constitute important benefits for migrants sending countries and for migrants' families. The importance of the remittances especially in the context of declining Foreign Direct investment and the increasing need for skilled labour has become a dilemma in the migration dialogue. The return of migrants would bring most needed skills to the home countries but at the same it may effect on the volume and frequency of financial transfer.

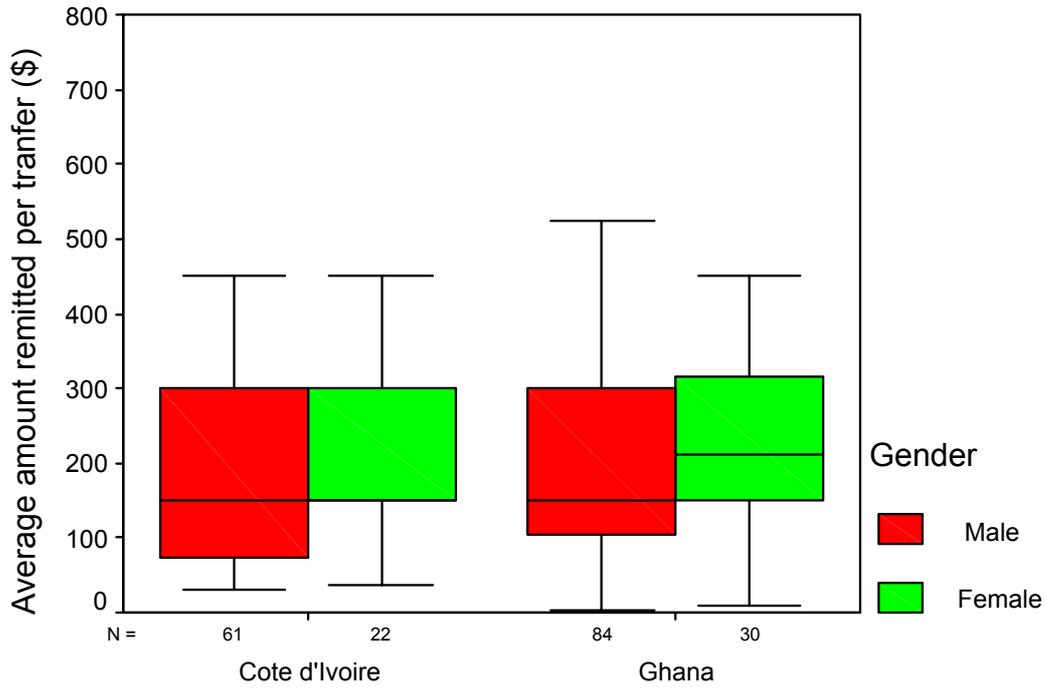
The majority of migrants remitted whilst abroad. Among the returnees interviewed 182 elite and 197 less-skilled migrants reported remitting whilst abroad. Less skilled migrants were more likely to have sent remittances than the elite.

The volatility of remittance and the form of the transfer are of matter of concern of many countries and bodies interested in migration and remittances. Ghanaian and Ivorians sample indicate that most of the remitters sent money regularly but the less skilled migrants were the most regular remitters. Similarly these remittances were predominantly (3 and 65 percent respectively of the elite and less skilled remitters) sent through formal channels. The use of formal channels is positively related to the frequency of the remittances (Black et al. 2003).

Analysing Ghanaian and Ivorian migrants' remittances behaviours, we (Black et al. 2003) found that they supported altruism, and co-insurances hypothesis. Migrants from poor families (measured as father in a lower occupation category) were most likely to remit. Economic migrants, married migrants and migrants from a relatively poor family background (i.e. their fathers were farmers or worked in elementary occupations) were found more likely to remit regularly (at least once a year) but remitted low amount. By contrast emigrants from rich family background, those of returned permanently and women were more likely to remit higher amount.

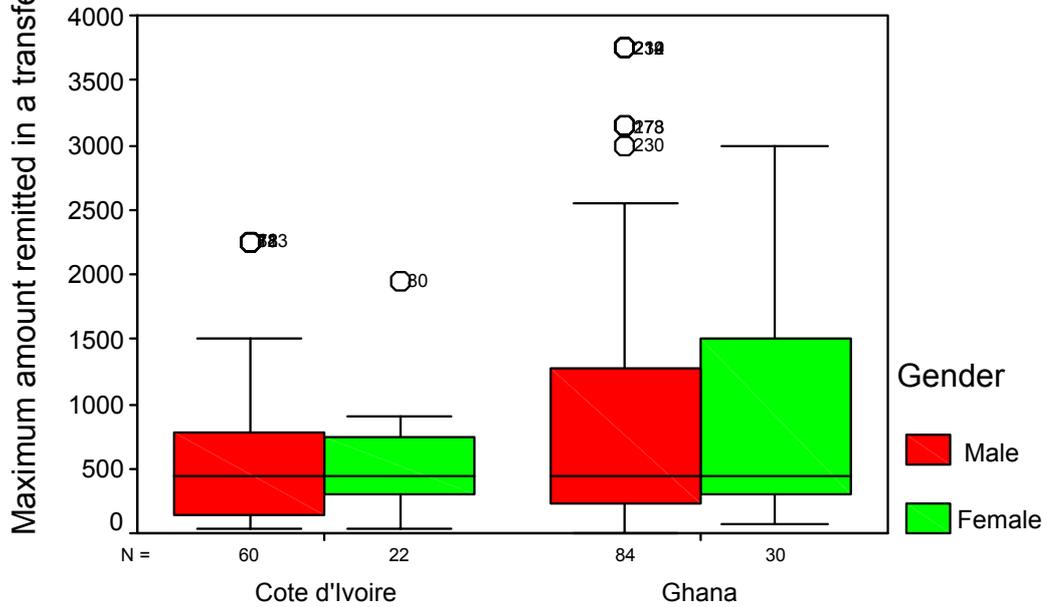
'This suggests that although there may be a particular group of potential migrants who are moving abroad with a wealth accumulation strategy that is linked to some kind of inter-generational contract with older relatives, this has not necessarily allowed this group of migrants to 'catch up' in terms of income or savings with more wealthy migrants who remit less frequently. ' (Black *et al.* 2003:22).

### Remittances per Country and Gender(\$)



Country

### Maximum Amount Ever Remitted in a single tranfer (\$)



Country

Saving brought back is another important financial aspect with a potential impact on the local economy. It might even be more important than remittances because the migrants are most likely to manage the funds unlike in the case of remittances.

In the cash economy environment with very limited loan opportunities, having savings constitutes a massive asset. As expected many returnees accumulated savings abroad. Ghanaians were more likely to have accumulated savings than Ivorians and they had larger savings too. As many as 89 and 91 percent respectively of Ghanaians elite and non-elite accumulated savings whilst abroad. The figures for the Ivorian samples were 54 and 73 percent.

The use of saving and remittances would indicate how migration affects the local economy. If these financial benefits were invested in business or on locally produced goods, migrations would directly boost local production. The analysis of Migrants' expenditures items and consumption patterns contribute to understanding migration impact on local economy. The major expenditure items upon return mentioned in the survey were housing (46.4%), durable goods (35.8%) electronic goods (31.1%) providing support to relatives (27.8%) and investment (27.5%). This means in Côte d'Ivoire the way returnees spend their earnings could affect both the local economy and imported goods. It is worth noting that transfers to relatives would contribute to income poverty alleviation. There is little difference with regard to country of origin and gender of the respondent. In terms of proportion women were less likely to have invested in business than men while Ivorians spent a large proportion on electronic goods.

Many returnees were of the opinion that their consumption patterns differed from their colleagues who have not migrated. They said they spent more on leisure, vacation, food and the education of their children as compared to non-migrants. This consumption pattern is different from non-migrants' despite the fact that one in three respondents has a higher income than a non-migrant in a similar position among the elites skilled and half of them have a lower income than abroad.

#### **4. Constraints: From micro to macro obstacles**

Local context could act as an enabling or constraining factor to employment and business development. Labour market and the development of small business are shaped by local context. With regards to the development of enterprises four key areas were identified: initial capital, work force, legal framework and marketing their production. As expected starting capital was a major problem among Ivorian entrepreneurs 54 percent mentioned it as a crucial problem while in Ghana only one in ten entrepreneurs conceded that capital was a problem. Legal framework was an important constraining factor in Côte d'Ivoire and less so in Ghana.

With regards to the labour markets, finding skilled collaborators though a problem for some returnees is not ranked as a crucial problem. This is certainly because not only many enterprises do not require highly skilled labour but also an increasing number of graduates are on the labour market.

##### ***4.1 Family constraints.***

An important characteristic of the economic sector in West Africa is its embeddings in the social and cultural framework. This embedding explains to some large extent the prevalence of non-structured and family business (see. Igué 2004). Family members and relatives play a

crucial role in the economic behaviour and business venture of migration (Tiemoko 2004; Black et al 2003). While abroad migrants send remittances to their relatives either for maintenance or for business and investment. The success of such investment depends in many cases on the managerial skills of the receiving relatives. The two samples indicate that family members and relatives manage over 90 percent of the projects -mainly housing and small business -. One in ten such venture failed but this does not tell the whole story. As shown in the following quote from the potential returnees, a success might very well hide a failure.

The story of Mrs A, a 30 year-old Ivorian in Paris shows the complexity and the different paths of migrants' investment. Mrs A who has a successful restaurant business running in Abidjan said:

*'... with the help of my partner here I sent over \$9000 to my brother who is a student to buy cars and set a taxi business. I didn't want to buy the car from here and my brother told me it would be cheaper there. But you know what happens. He bought only two very old vehicles and misused the remaining fund through entertainments. Unsurprisingly the two cars had major mechanical problems after few months... the whole thing collapsed.... Now I am trying to do another business with my ex husband, the father of my son. I trust him and I hope for the child sake he will manage well the fund... But you never know, people change and I had many situations like that.'*

#### **4.2 Macro constraints.**

Migrants also face challenges at macro level some of which are not new. These challenges may impinge on the enthusiasm and motivation of the returnees. On the other hand one could expect migrants to be up to the challenges given their experience abroad.

Our findings suggest that return migrants face challenges and constraints at different levels and at their workplace. The main recognised problem was institutional: the ways the service works. In both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire returnees complained about the infrastructure and the ways the different services function.

At workplace, they mentioned having difficulties with working method and attitude. One in then said having difficulties with the socio-political and legal environment. Many of those working were less than satisfied with the organisational culture of their workplace.

Returnees contended that the way they worked was different from their colleagues who have not lived abroad. They argued that non-migrants' commitment to work, their work ethic and professionalism were less than those of returnees. These differences hamper partnership in business development or bringing about change in the workplace. Many returnees said facing challenges and tensions in their attempts to introduce change and new practices. These tensions take different forms: Sabotage, apathy, discussion and carelessness in task execution.

They reckon migrants who stay abroad fear their integration. As an élite returnee clearly puts it: *'it is their entry on an economic level, which is difficult. It is a cash economy and for most of us living there [abroad] we lived on credit, you can get a mortgage, and a loan... you can get a credit card... Ghana requires you to put cash down, you buy a car with cash, even if you were renting you had to put one, two, three years rental down'*. An Ivorian in Paris who has explored the possibility of return and reintegration through visit and holiday confirmed these constrains: He said *' I would like to return home to put my talents at the disposal of my country but to do so I need to have enough savings. ... The problem is that I don't have*

*enough money and that raises the problems of funding. The bank there [in Cote d'Ivoire] do not lend money, practically they do lend any money at all to people who have not got any guarantee and that makes it very difficult to obtain even a small loan'*

Other constraints are relating to the perceived gaps in business culture and practice of the returnees and the non migrants but also corruption and interference from the local authorities as the following two quotes suggest:

*'I came back and got associated with a friend, a local businessperson. Since we met we decide to set up a small firm, but since I have been away for so long, ... my perception of the local situation was no longer valid...The way we approach things, the way we do business, we manage a business is different, it is totally different. In short my partnership did not work'* (46-year-old Ivorian returnee from the USA).

*'...As soon as you arrive with a potentially successful project the local authorities want to be involved, primarily to make money and then also to control the initiative. ...So unless you involve them they will create serious difficulties and hamper your work.'* (An Ivorian businessman in Paris)

The problem is not just institutional or at macro level as the individual migrants may have their own responsibility in the success or failure of their investment. This complexity of factors clearly transpires in the following quote from a Ghanaian in London reflecting on the question of the sustainability of business development in Ghana. *'...After one or two years most of them will lose their money or fail in business. The business environment back home is not easy and there are many problems there, legal and social system. Some of them [returnees] want to improve their living standard quickly so they don't reinvest their profit in business'* (Ghanaian male in London.)

## **Conclusion**

Migration is effecting on the much-needed resource for the socio-economic development of the sending countries. Even though emigration is increasing return migration occurs. The case studies of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana show that migration provide an economic development opportunities for the sending countries through the development, transfer and use of financial, social and human capital. Through migrations Ivorian and Ghanaians acquire skills and most importantly work experience that could contribute to positive changes in their home economy. Remittances and savings accumulated abroad contribute in various ways to the alleviating income poverty through support to the families and the creation of employment.

The positive impact of migration on the economy could be far reaching were challenging and obstacles well understood and alleviated. Business and work environments in these two countries do at time constitute substantial challenges that could impinge on the development potential of return migration.

The paper also finds that these opportunities and challenges are context specific and they may differ for different group of migrants. It is therefore crucial that different stakeholders join effort to collect details data on return migrations.

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## Annexes

Table 1 Migrants inflow to Germany, Netherlands, UK And USA (1995-2001)

Country	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Côte d'Ivoire	324	458	461	404	343	481	694
Ghana	7,049	10,941	8,742	8,247	9,130	8,015	7,000

Source: Migration information Source

Table 2: Stock of Ivorian and Ghanaian Migrants in the Netherlands

Country	1996	1998	2000	2001
Côte d'Ivoire	3,953	2,890	3,136	312
Ghana	69,564	68,457	113,526	111,998

Source: Migration information Source

Table 3: Stock of Ivorian and Ghanaian Migrants in the Netherlands

Country	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Côte d'Ivoire	213	211	229	256	288	312	385
Ghana	9424	9591	10010	10441	10679	10998	11282

Source: Migration information Source

Table 4a: Human development indicator of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

Indicator	Côte d'Ivoire	Ghana
GDP per capita (US\$)	634	269
Human Development Index		
1975	0.380	0.444
1985	0.422	0.485
1990	0.420	0.515
1995	0.405	0.537
2001	0.396	0.567
Population Below \$1 a day 1990-2201	12.3	44.8
Imported Goods and Services (as % GDP)		
1990	27	26
2001	32	70
ODA received net total (million US\$) 2001	187.0	651.8
ODA per capita 2001		11.6
ODA as % GDP 1990		6.4
ODA as % GDP 2001		1.8
Net Foreign Investment as % of GDP		
1990	0.4	0.3
2001	2.4	1.7

Source: UNDP 2003

Table 4a :Net financial Flows

Country	Total (millions of US\$)	ODA as % Total	FDI as % Total
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	<i>Average</i>		<i>average</i>		<i>average</i>	
	<i>1991-2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1991-2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>1991-2000</i>	<i>2001</i>
Cote d'Ivoire	730.9	143.9	111.3	130.3	8.1	53.3
Ghana	770.0	613.8	82.9	106.2	7.9	2.2
Africa	23.644.9	20.140.3	85.9	80.5	13.6	22.0

Source: ADB External Sector economic indicator table 10

Table 5: Distribution of the sample by Occupation status

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Less-skilled</i>		<i>Elite*</i>	
	<i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>	<i>Ghana</i>
Unemployed	13	8		
Student	6	1		
Housekeeping	1	3		
Work with family		1		
Retired	1	2		
Selfemployed without employee	9	10	8	8
Self-employed with employee	23	46	10	32
Employee	47	30	82	60
Total	100 (n=150)	100 (n=152)	100 (n=150)	100 (n=152)

\*: The elite survey covered solely individual in employment.

Source: Field survey, 2001

Table 6. Use of remittances

<i>Use of remittances</i>	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Côte</i>	<i>Côte</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>less-skilled</i>	<i>elite</i>	<i>d'Ivoire less skilled</i>	<i>d'Ivoire elite</i>	
Parents' and siblings' subsistence	101 (87%)	84 (75%)	67 (80%)	59 (84%)	311 (81%)
Spouse and children's subsistence	43 (37%)	9 (8%)	25 (30%)	10 (14%)	87 (23%)
Savings	40 (34%)	5 (4%)	9 (11%)	1 (1%)	55 (14%)
Building a house	5 (4%)	29 (26%)	19 (23%)	2 (3%)	55 (14%)

Source: Field survey, 2001