

**MIGRATION AND VOTING PATTERNS: EXPLORING THE LINKAGES IN  
TWO MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN GHANA  
(Draft)**

**By  
Mariama Awumbila  
Centre for Migration Studies  
University of Ghana  
Legon**

**And**

**Samuel Agyei-Mensah  
Dept of Geography and Resource Development  
University of Ghana  
Legon**

Paper Submitted to the Population Association of America Conference to be held in  
Detroit, USA, April 30 –May 2, 2009

## **Abstract**

Internal migration is bringing about not only increases in Ghana's urban population, but also increases in migrant proportions in urban communities. In their destination communities migrants contribute to socio economic development and form a critical mass which may be harnessed for development. As a result, increasingly many political parties are making electoral fortunes in some migrant-dominated communities. Yet despite the growing importance of migration, the impact of mobility and migration processes on voting behaviour and patterns has received scant attention. Using census data, the paper analyses trends in the composition and growth of two migrant communities in the Greater Accra Region, Nima and Ashaiman and links these trends to voting behavior and patterns in the two communities. It examines the link between location, space and political orientation and recommends the need to examine the spatial context of voting patterns and the role that migration plays in determining its outcome.

## **Introduction**

Migration is an enduring theme of human history and is considered one of the defining global issues of the twenty-first century, as more and more people are on the move today than at any other point in human history. Available data points to increasing international and internal migration in Ghana, making migration a critical issue for Ghana's development. Internal migration in Ghana in particular has fuelled population movements into urban areas with the attendant human and socio-economic consequences.

Migration is thus bringing about not only increases in Ghana's urban population, but also increases in migrant proportions in urban communities. Data from the 2000 population and Housing census indicates increasing proportions of migrant communities in urban areas of Ghana. In their destination communities migrants contribute to socio economic development of their communities and form a critical mass which may be harnessed for development. As a result, increasingly many political parties are making electoral fortunes in some migrant-dominated communities. In Ghana many migrant-dominated communities in urban areas are perceived to consistently vote for particular political parties which are popular in their areas of origin. For instance in Ghana, there has been a historical tendency of the Ashanti and Volta regions to vote for an Akan/Ashanti – or Ewe-led/based political parties. A study by Asante (2006) shows that in the 2004 elections in Ghana, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) got overwhelming support from the

Mampong-Asokore constituency that has a higher concentration of indigenous Ashantis and other Akan groups. The NDC also drew disproportionate support and votes from the Ejura-Sekyedumase constituency that has a large concentration of non-Akan immigrants.

Yet despite the growing importance of migration, little attention has been paid to how migration influences voting behavior and voting patterns in Ghana. Several studies have been undertaken on electoral behaviour of people often focusing on individual characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, economic status, education etc. However the impact of mobility and migration processes on voting behaviour and patterns has received scant attention. Questions such as why migrants and non migrants with similar socio-economic backgrounds and characteristics choose different political parties in elections, and whether these differences in political attitudes can be explained on the basis of different residential environments, as well as how destination communities influence voting behavior of migrants have scarcely received any focus.

## **Objectives**

The paper aims at:

- Analysing trends in the composition and growth of two migrant communities in the Greater Accra Region, Nima and Ashaiman
- Examining the role of migration in the growth of these urban communities and its relationships with voting behavior and voting patterns in the two communities
- Analyses why certain parties appeal more to voters who have moved frequently or who are predisposed to frequent migration.
- Attempts an explanation of these spatial patterns and the linkages between location, space and political orientation.
- Assesses the implications for national development.

## **Methodology**

The paper uses mainly census data from the Ghana Statistical Service as well as election results from the Ghana Electoral Commission, from the 2000, 2004 and 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections to analyse trends in the composition and growth of the two migrant communities and links these trends to voting behavior and patterns in the two communities. It also employs a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews and case studies of ten men and women migrants in each of the two communities to provide further insights into the issues.

## **Socio- Demographic Profile of Study Communities**

Ghana is a multi-ethnic country of around 20 million people which is administratively divided into ten regions. The four main ethno-regional groups, comprising together around 86.0% of the population, are Akan, Ewe, Ga-Dangme, and Mole-Dagbani. Data from the 2000 Population and Housing census (GSS, 2005) shows that all the regions have a sizeable number of migrants or people considered to be 'strangers' in their region. For example the Upper East and West regions have up to 25% of other non-indigenous ethnic groups while the Greater Accra Region, the national capital has only 29.7% Ga-Dangbe, the indigenous ethnic group of the region .

The two study communities, Nima and Ashaiman are both located in the Greater Accra Region. Census data (GSS, 2005) shows that despite this location its populations are dominated by other ethnic groups other than the indigenous Ga-Dangbe groups

Ashaiman is currently the capital of the newly created Ashaiman municipality. The population of Ashaiman grew rapidly and faster than the national average, from 2,624 in 1960 to 22,549 in 1970 to 50,918 in 1984, to 150,312 in 2000, making it the second largest settlement in the Greater Accra Region. Its rapid population growth over the years has been directly connected to the construction of the port city of Tema in the early 1950s when migrants who had moved to Accra and Tema in search of jobs were attracted to Ashaiman because of the availability of relatively cheap accommodation. To meet this

demand for housing, land owners erected cheap housing units without any commensurate development in their infrastructure, such as roads, schools, clinics, potable water supply and toilets. A study by Kwedwo (2006) revealed three types of movement to Ashaiman, namely rural to Ashaiman; urban to Ashaiman and Tema to Ashaiman. The major reason for movement to Ashaiman was said to be for accommodation purposes. The town is considered one of the poorest in the Greater Accra Region as it is unplanned, neglected to some extent and under-resourced. It can therefore, best be described as a sprawl (Ibis, 2003). The town is said to accommodate about two-thirds of the entire work force of industrial area of Tema with most of them being traders, artisans, cobblers, mechanics (Ibis, 2003).

Ashaiman is made up of multi-ethnic groups from the various regions of the country, most of whom migrated to Ashaiman from the rural areas of Ghana in search of jobs in the urban areas of Accra and Tema. The 2000 population and Housing census indicates that Ashaiman is dominated by migrants with majority (31.0%) being Ewes, followed by Akan (30.2%). The Ga-Dangme, the indigenous ethnic group, makes up 21.1%. The population of migrants from the three northern regions (ie, Grumah, Mole-Dagbon, Grusi and Mande) together formed (13.2%) of Ashaiman's population as seen in Table one, thus confirming Kwedwo (2006) assertion that all the ethnic groups in the country are well represented in Ashaiman community.

**Table one Major Ethnic Groups in Ashaiman and Nima, 2000**

Locality	Akan	Ga-Dangme	Ewe	Guan	Gurma	Mole-Dagbon	Grusi	Mande	Other	Total
Ashaiman	41,579 (30.2)	29,069 (21.1)	42,678 (31.0)	4,991 (3.6)	974 (0.7)	13,036 (9.5)	3,337 (2.4)	922 (0.6)	1,249 (0.9)	137,835 (100.0)
Nima	13,758 (24.6)	6,591 (11.8)	9,077 (16.3)	3,827 (6.8)	3,780 (6.8)	8,976 (16.1)	3,106 (5.6)	2,536 (4.5)	4,179 (7.5)	55,830 (100.0)

Source: GSS, 2000 PHC

Nima, the second study area, is said to have been founded by Fulani nomads in 1931. During the Second World War, an American Military base was established in the north-

east of Nima that caused an upsurge in the influx of the population into the community due to the job opportunities which the base offered for cooks, stewards and labourers. The movement of people into Nima reached its peak after the war when the servicemen returned home from campaigns in Asia and were discharged. Most of them settled in Nima because the rents were low and there was plenty of land available for building (Yankson, 2000). It is also a migrant-dominated community made up of people from the three northern regions as well as others from the sub-region of West Africa, notably Wangaras, Zambramas who are mostly traders, Hausas and Fulanis who are also mostly butchers and herdsmen. The population of Nima has grown from 29,797 in 1960 to 52,270 in 1970, to 69,004 in 2000. Between 1970 and 1984 the rate of growth declined probably due to the Aliens Compliance Order passed by the government in 1970 which affected most of the inhabitants in Nima who were mainly migrants from neighbouring West African countries.

Like Ashaiman, Nima is also a multi-ethnic area, with habitats from different and diverse ethnic groups. Most of them have migrated from the rural areas of Ghana in search of job in the urban areas of Accra. Table one shows that the Akan is the single most dominant ethnic group (24.6%) in Nima, followed by Ewe (16.3%) and Mole-Dagbon (16.1%). However, when the four northern ethnic groups (ie. Gurma, Mole-Dagbon, Grusi and Mande) are combined, they form the majority (33.0%) of Nima's population. Nima is known for her slum conditions; sanitary conditions are very poor coupled with poor ventilation in most households due to congestion. Basic household facilities like toilets, bathrooms and kitchens are inadequate. Drainage is poor and waste management facilities are inadequate. (Yankson, 2000).

### **Explaining the Spatial Variations in Voting Patterns: The Migrant Factor**

An examination of the spatial differences in voting patterns since 2000 shows that the National Democratic Party (NDC) has dominated the two study areas, both of which are migrant dominant areas. Several factors have accounted for these voting patterns in the

Migrant communities of Ashaiman and Ayawaso East Constituencies. These have included, issues of Ethnicity, and the Migrant/Stranger factor.

The migrant/stranger factor was especially identified as an important factor for explaining voting behaviour and patterns. In-depth interviews with migrants from the three northern regions in Nima indicated that there was the strong perception that the National Democratic Party (NDC) had undertaken many development activities in their communities, both in their areas of origin and destinations and that their concerns had been better addressed under the NDC government. They also believe that the NDC's policies identified more with their religion, islam.

The 'Aliens Compliance Order' instituted in 1970 under the regime of Dr. K.A. Busia's Progressive Party (an off shoot of NPP), leading to the mass expulsion of aliens from the West African sub region, most of whom lacked valid residence permits (Songsore, 2003), was especially identified as a key underlying factor. This act has continued to be used by other parties against successive offshoots of the Progressive Party in Zongo/Strangers' quarters in most urban areas in Ghana (Asante, 2006).

## **CONCLUSION**

These preliminary results indicate that although the voting patterns of area of origin may be important in influencing the choice of particular candidates, it is the influence of the local environment of area of destination that plays a more important role. Whether migrants have basic amenities such as water, electricity, good roads etc plays an important determining factor. These are important and may help explain why certain parties appeal more to voters who have moved frequently or who are predisposed to frequent migration. For a holistic understanding of voting patterns, it is important to examine the spatial context of voting patterns and the role that migration plays in determining its outcome.

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