# Citizenship, Belonging and Crisis-Induced Returns of Ghanaian Migrants from Côte d'Ivoire

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The socio-economic embeddedness of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) foreign nationals and migrants in Côte d'Ivoire has been amply described. Despite previous episodes of political violence and the somewhat recent anti-immigrant policies, Côte d'Ivoire has served and will continue to serve as a haven for foreign-born populations of ECOWAS nationals and Ivorian-born descendants of foreigners. This paper draws on the notion of citizenship and belonging, and qualitative data gathered through interviews to explore the experiences of returned Ghanaian migrants who were victimized and trapped in a conflict situation in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011. All interviews were transcribed fully, and the reflexive thematic coding and analysis technique was employed to analyze the qualitative data. The findings show that despite playing a passive role as perpetrators of the violence, Ghanaian migrants experienced harassment, intimidation and physical attacks, which in turn contributed to traumatic feelings beyond the crisis period. While the notion of citizenship and belonging facilitated migrants' easy entry to Ghana upon return, they had to navigate multiple challenges, including hostile attitudes of militants, rebels and vigilante groups at border checkpoints, extortion of cash and other material possessions. Re-integration and resettlement were further exacerbated due to their experiences. These findings have important implications for emergency responses to situations of migrants being caught up in crisis.

Keywords: political violence, migrants, re-integration, experiences, Côte d'Ivoire

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## INTRODUCTION

For several years, Côte d'Ivoire served as a centre of attraction for migrants and foreign non-citizens, particularly those from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) community and elsewhere. The country has been described as the "first immigration country of West Africa", and a primary destination for labor migrants and displaced populations (Fargues and Rango, 2020; UNDESA, 2020). Protracted conflicts in neighboring countries such as Mali and Liberia, and elsewhere within the sub-Region have also meant that economic migrants, as well as individuals and families fleeing violence and instability have found Côte d'Ivoire as one popular destination (Allouche and Mohammed, 2014; Marc et al., 2015). Fundamentally, the high economic growth rates experienced in the post-independence era mainly through the production of cash crops such as cocoa and coffee have made Côte d'Ivoire a country of large-scale immigration (Ajayi et al., 2009; Solhjell et al., 2019; Sabas et al., 2020). Nevertheless, austerity measures implemented throughout the 1980s in the country led to socio-economic challenges, key among them being the closure of businesses, and public sector downsizing, which led to unemployment among the Ivorian political elite and graduates (Zongo, 2006). It has been argued that the crisis which erupted in the 2000s was largely underpinned by the economic recession experienced in the 1980s and 1990s which by implication overturned previous migrant-friendly policies in Côte d'Ivoire.

In light of concerns around migration, belonging and identity, the 1990s electoral upheavals and tensions, facilitated a national discourse around what it meant to be a real Ivorian citizen, and the deep fissures in Ivorian society resulted in binary categorization of citizens on the one hand, and non-citizens on the other, as well as between the Muslim and the Christian communities (NDI, 2013). In the late 1990s, foreigners made up around 26% of Côte d'Ivoire's population, with the greater share originating from Burkina Faso (Kress, 2006). Nevertheless, the government-sanctioned anti-immigrant policy implemented throughout the mid-1990s and early 2000s onwards led to a decline in the immigrant population. Despite previous episodes of a positive net migration rate (generally between 2 and 5 migrants/1,000 population) since the 1950s, state-sanctioned anti-immigrant measures have meant that the net rate of migration in 2017, for example, was estimated to be 0 migrants/1,000 population (IOM, 2009a, 2009b; CIA, 2017). It is fundamentally clear that policies and practices around citizenship and nationality in the Ivorian context have tended to promote migrant unfriendly practices, thus restricting the freedoms and rights of migrants. In this connection, Romano (2015) asserts that the notion of belonging and citizenship in the Ivorian context, since the 2000s, has been conflated with politicization of identity, economic austerity, and outbreak of violence that is often, but not always, targeted at foreign nationals (particularly African foreign non-citizens) and those perceived as non-Ivorian citizens in the country.

Notwithstanding previous political violence and state-sanctioned anti-immigrant measures, Côte d'Ivoire still serves as the principal destination for

foreign-born populations of ECOWAS nationals and Ivorian-born descendants of foreigners. For example, in 2012 the country hosted 2.4 million ECOWAS nationals, following post-electoral violence which implicated migrants (Awumbila et al., 2013). The immigrant population (excluding refugees) in Côte d'Ivoire stood at 2.2 million in 2015, accounting for approximately nine percent of the country's population (UNDESA, 2015; UNDP, 2016). Although the immigrant population in Côte d'Ivoire might have decreased over the years, the country has served and would continue to serve as an important destination, particularly for citizens of other ECOWAS member states residing in the country. This raises fundamental questions about the socio-economic embeddedness of migrants in the Ivorian society, and what implications this might have for future crises, should they occur.

This paper draws on qualitative data gathered through one of the six case studies in the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) research project – Côte d'Ivoire at a crossroads: Socio-economic development implications of crisis-induced returns to Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Liberia (see also Pailey et al, 2017). The project focused on improving the capacity of states and other stakeholders to assist and provide protection to migrants who find themselves in countries affected by crisis, as well as addressing the long-term implications that result from such crisis situations. The paper sheds light on the experiences of returned Ghanaian migrants who were victimized and trapped in conflict situations in Côte d'Ivoire during the periods 2002–2003 and 2010–2011. First, it becomes evident through the qualitative interviews that the notions of citizenship and nationality played no role in ensuring migrants' belongingness to Ivorian society in the context of the politico-economic challenges that generated the episodes of conflict in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011.

Although Ghanaian migrants were not directly seen as perpetrators of the violence, they became victims of the conflict, with many experiencing harassment, intimidation and physical attacks, which in turn contributed to traumatic feelings beyond the crisis period. While the notion of citizenship and nationality facilitated easy entry to Ghana upon return, migrants had to negotiate multiple challenges including hostile attitudes of rebels and vigilante groups at border checkpoints, extortion of cash and other material possessions, which in turn exacerbated their experiences of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Again, citizenship and belonging played a minor role in facilitating the re-integration and resettlement of some return migrants, especially those with weak social ties. On the whole, this paper contributes substantially to the literature on the vulnerabilities of migrants caught up in crisis situations and to policies and emergency responses to address the situation of migrants caught up in crisis situations.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: The next part provides a conceptualization of citizenship, nationality and belonging as the framework to understanding the experiences of migrants during the conflict situation and upon return. Next, we outline the methodology including the research design, research participants and methods of data collection, and analysis of the data. The penultimate

section presents the findings and discussion of the research which leads to the conclusion as well as some reflections on policy implications.

## CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CITIZENSHIP, NATIONALITY AND BELONGING

In social and political discourses, citizenship and nationality are sometimes used interchangeably, even though the two concepts do not exactly mean the same thing. As Hartnell (2006: 342) notes, while "nationality" and "citizenship" both capture fundamental aspects of the content and meaning of "belonging", they are different. Hartnell (2006) and Mammadova (2020) posit that nationality is the legalistic term that connotes the linkage between an individual and a state, whereas citizenship refers to "full membership" in a political community. Citizenship has further been conceptualized as membership of a self-governing political community, bringing with it rights and obligations for both the citizen and their community (Stanford University, 2017; Prabhat, 2018). Healy (2019) however, notes that having a sense of belonging whilst being rejected and alienated can be frustrating. Other scholars perceive citizenship as a mechanism of distinction between migrants and non-migrants based on associations with place, origin, and national community (Bauder, 2007; Van den Brink and Kochenov, 2019).

When related to international migration, Bauböck (2006) and Neumayer (2006) argue that citizenship from an international perspective acts as a sorting device that allocates human populations to sovereign countries and in the process helps to sort the desirable from the undesirable immigrants through the granting of visas, and it also acts as an established second gate that immigrants have to pass through in order to become full members of the countries that host them. As such, citizenship can act as a medium through which immigrants are granted the opportunity to enjoy the same rights and entitlements as the citizens of the hosting country (Bauder, 2014) or serves as an avenue for an international migrant to have a formal belonging to a specific country by providing the official recognition of a close relationship between them and the destination country (Yuval-Davis et al., 2005; Koser, 2007; Bhabha, 2009; Antonsich, 2010; Golash-Boza, 2016; Prabhat, 2018; Chin, 2019). Put broadly, citizenship can, therefore, be defined as being a legally recognized member of a sovereign political community, including the enjoyment of rights and obligations and emotional belonging for both the citizen and their community (Stanford University, 2017; Prabhat, 2018) or a medium through which people build a formal legal relationship and status with a state (Long et al., 2017). However, citizenship is not just a legal concept, but it is embedded in the quest for self-identity (Manby, 2018). Generally, the concept of citizenship is primarily constructed and understood within the confines of national identity and belonging (Aber and Small, 2013).

Globally, membership of a particular society or a group of people is governed by legal citizenship regimes. These structures also regulate the multifaced systems of conferring citizenship. Broadly, there are two principal modes of conferring citizenship at birth – jus sanguinis (attainment of citizenship through blood

connection) and jus soli (citizenship by soil or place of birth). The conferment of jus sanguinis varies from country to country on how citizenship is passed from parents to children. Ng'weno and Aloo (2019) contend that attainment of citizenship through jus sanguinis is selective in that it poses the risk of marginalizing people within the same shared space of the nation-state. Citizenship, therefore, is inherently a means of inclusion and exclusion (Van den Brink and Kochenov, 2019). A third principle for the acquisition of citizenship is by jus matrimonii (citizenship by marriage); however, it varies from country to country, coupled with its challenges regarding the holding of dual citizenship and the associated complexities in the enjoyment of rights. Individuals attain rights to state protection, opportunities, and privileges by virtue of being a national of the state (Mancini and Finlay, 2008; Middleton and Wigginton, 2012; Cohen, 2022). Nationality can therefore be characterized as "the right to have rights" (Arendt, 2007:299).

Citizenship transforms and borders and boundaries transform (Schacher, 2020). In most countries across the world, demographic changes have impacted jus soli, which has further engendered debates and complexities around issues of belonging, membership, and citizenship. These have also influenced immigration policies (Van Waas, 2007; Mancini and Finlay, 2008; Tarumoto, 2020; Cohen, 2022). Some countries have introduced the concept of double jus soli in their citizenship policies where at least one migrant parent is required to be a citizen before children born to immigrants in soils of destination countries can attain automatic citizenship (Manby, 2018). At independence, African countries that were colonized by Britain, France and Portugal applied double jus soli to determine the citizenship of migrants as a means of limiting the volume of claims to citizenship by migrants who were born in these countries, but their parents were foreign-born.

Aside from the attainment of citizenship, migrants also have the option of being granted permanent residency, right of abode or indefinite leave to reside/remain, which are often devoid of the obligated rights associated with citizenship. In other contexts, citizenship can also be granted to migrants through registration, naturalization and investments (e.g., Antigua, the Comoros, or the Dominican Republic). This channel is mainly used by states, especially small Island states, to attract foreign investments for economic purposes. While the overwhelming focus of citizenship is a symbol of belonging, possession of national identity and exception from exclusion (Cresswell, 2006; Van den Brink and Kochenov, 2019), citizenship is also linked to the concept of "othering", culminating in exclusion and denial of rights and privileges. Citizenship is one of the tools of inclusion and exclusion used by states to cope with the perceived threat of mobile migrants (Gilmartin, 2008; Healy, 2019; Ng'weno and Aloo, 2019; Schenk, 2021).

There are also racial, religious, and gender requirements in acquisition of citizenship in some countries (Solhjell et al., 2019). The constitution of Liberia, for instance, is categorical that all applicants for citizenship must be 'negro or be of negro descent'. This obviously excludes all non-black residents – like Lebanese – from

acquiring Liberian citizenship (Long et al., 2017). More so, the same constitution also bars non-citizens from owning property in Liberia. Beyond race, other countries (Benin, Burundi, Eswatini, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, and Togo) have citizenship laws that discriminate based on gender (Manby, 2018). Whereas males can transfer their citizenship status to their offspring, females cannot.

In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, as noted by Manby (2018: 62), the country had a legal provision that changed the jus soli route to acquiring citizenship for children born in the country to parents, one of whom was a citizen, to requiring that both parents must be born in Côte d'Ivoire. These changes were occasioned by the motive to disqualify some political candidates from contesting elections. As such, the constitutional amendments that required candidates for the presidency or vice presidency of the country to be "Ivorian by birth" (ivoirien de naissance) born of parents who were (both) also Ivorian by birth (Manby, 2018: 62), reinforced a legal environment in which all those who might be regarded as not from Côte d'Ivoire's "core" ethnic groups, were not eligible for nationality. As argued by Hendow and Kandilige (forthcoming), it is important to examine how the process of establishing "groupness" of the "self" and exclusion of the "other" based on racial, ethnic or cultural characteristics involves establishing policies and practices, as well as public narratives or discourse, which set the boundaries of certain groups' belonging or exclusion (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 19; Brubaker et al., 2004: 4647). The pernicious reliance on othering is manifested in the exploitation of power imbalances in relationships to the extent that the gains of one party are at the expense of others (Canales, 2000; Miles, 2002; Bastos et al., 2006). Moreover, othering can be either overt or transpire through more opaque and subtle instances of exclusion, with the potential of being taken for granted as part of the routine of daily life (Sibley, 1995). These include institutional and structural arrangements whereby boundaries are constructed between different groups in society, some of whom believe themselves to be superior to others (Jensen, 2011; Mensah and Williams, 2015).

We draw on the concepts of citizenship, nationality, belonging, and othering to examine the context within which the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire was occasioned, as well as the experiences of victimized and trapped migrants during the conflict, and their re-integration into their communities of origin in Ghana.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research design*

The research employed a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews conducted with six main categories of participants in Ghana. Cresswell (2006) explains that qualitative research techniques are useful when one wants to explore and gain an in-depth picture of the meanings and subjective views that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human phenomenon. According to

Bryman (2012) and Akcam et al. (2019), qualitative research is characterized by the deployment of a wide range of interconnected methods, including desk-based research, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Our choice of the qualitative design is informed by the main objective of our research, which was to gain in-depth knowledge on the experiences of victimized and trapped migrants in a conflict situation at a destination and their experiences with re-integration upon return. Hammarberg et al. (2016) posit that qualitative methods are useful to answer questions about experiences, meaning and perspectives from the perspective of the participant. The choice of this design is also informed by the fact that we were interested in seeking the views of participants on a focused topic, namely, to understand the experiences of victimization and re-integration upon return (Hammarberg, et al., 2016; Braun and Clarke, 2021).

*Target population and sampling procedure*

The research targeted Ghanaian migrants who were victimized in Côte d'Ivoire but had returned to Ghana, their adult relations (siblings, aunts, mothers, fathers, etc.) in addition to key stakeholders involved in decision-making, policy formulation, protection, advocacy and support services for migrants through evacuation, repatriation and re-integration of migrants. In all, 22 participants were purposively sampled to participate in the study. They included: 4 government authorities (A), 2 intergovernmental organizations (I), 1 civil society organization (C), 1 private sector actor (E), 9 return migrants (M), and 5 family members of return migrants (F). The alphabetic characters assigned to each category (i.e., A, I, C, E, M, and F), together with the designation 'GH' (which is an abbreviation for Ghana) and the unique numerical codes e.g., 01, 02, etc., are meant to aid the anonymization of data from participants.

Within the returnee category, the sampling technique adopted was mainly snowball sampling. This was necessary because there is no credible sample frame that one could rely upon to carry out rigorous probability sampling of participants. In addition, due to the traumatic nature of involuntary returns from crisis situations and the fact that few returnees registered with formal governmental as well as non-governmental agencies, using different entry nodes based on contacts with returnees who could serve as bridgeheads was the most viable approach. Return migrants were selected based on their experience of crises in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002–2003 or 2010–2011, subsequent evacuation and return to their country of origin. Family members of migrants were interviewed based on their knowledge of relatives' migration and return experiences. Government authorities, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, experts and private sector actors were purposively sampled based on the degree of their knowledge of or involvement in policy formulation and execution, advocacy, protection, technical and logistical support or the provision of funding for evacuation, repatriation and re-integration of migrants.

*Data collection*

The researchers developed six tailored semi-structured interview guides for the six main categories of respondents, based on an overall topical guideline prepared for the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) project as well as a data collection manual developed by research teams at the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the International Migration Institute (IMI). Key themes covered included: drivers of migration to Côte d'Ivoire, role of migrants in the conflict, experiences of the conflict, return processes, key institutions that oversaw the evacuation of migrants, availability of support to reintegrate into origin communities, and impact of conflict on migrants and members of their households. The researchers executed the fieldwork within April and May 2016 with a focus on Accra, Ghana's capital, and the Western Region. Accra was selected because it hosts the head offices of almost all government authorities as well as those of inter-governmental organizations. The Western Region accounts for the largest number of Ghanaian migrants to Côte d'Ivoire and returnees to Ghana during 2002–2003 and 2010–2011 (Awumbila et al., 2013).

*Data analysis*

The researchers transcribed all the interviews fully, and employed the reflexive thematic coding and analysis technique to analyze the qualitative data. This approach involved the centrality of the researchers' subjectivity and reflexivity, involving a six-phase process (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The reflexive thematic coding and analysis technique first involved reading through all the transcribed texts to help with familiarization. The next process involved coding the text. This involved assigning words and phrases to chunks of the textual data which enabled the researchers to sort, reduce and distil the content of the textual data. The coding process involved was iterative, involving revisions, reorganization of codes and relating coded interview data to the key questions that were asked during the data collection process. The next step involved analyzing the data using the thematic analysis technique. This approach involved identifying and grouping closely related codes, expressions, ideas, and patterns which emerged from the qualitative data. This enabled the researchers to derive the key themes for analysis and write up.

*Research ethics*

The researchers obtained written consent from participants who were literate. In cases where written consent was not possible, because the participant was illiterate, interviewers obtained verbal consent. For the sake of confidentiality, consent forms and interview transcripts were kept separate, at all times, to ensure that interviewees were not linked with their responses. Researchers reiterated to participants that participation in the research (i.e., interviews) was voluntary and that withdrawal from the interviews would not lead to any sanctions. Where possible, and in most

cases, researchers conducted interviews in locations where participants could speak freely without interruptions or the risk of being overheard by others. The researchers presented a summary sheet containing information on the rationale for the research to any participant who needed more background information.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Migrant experiences of and responses to Ivorian crises*

Relying on the conceptualization of citizenship and nationality, we discuss the experiences and responses of Ghanaian migrants to the crises. Citizenship and nationality did not play a significant role in discourses about belongingness to the Ivorian community prior to the economic and political challenges that culminated in the 2002–2003 and 2010–2011 conflicts in the country. Our interview data suggest that during periods of economic upturn and increased demand for agricultural labor, the presence of foreigners was not perceived as posing a risk to national security, a dilution of the national identity nor an encroachment on the sense of belongingness. In fact, as noted by Pailey et al. (2017), between 1960 and 1980 foreign-born non-citizens and Ivorian-born non-citizens were accorded courtesies as citizens even though they lacked any such formal legal status as citizens. However, a poor run of economic performance characterized by falling prices of cocoa and coffee and the ensuing spike in unemployment rates, ignited a complete reversal of the sense of inclusiveness of migrants into the Ivorian society. Discriminatory and xenophobic sentiments thrived amid stiff competition for scarce land resources. This ended the longstanding collegial attitude to land ownership and the ability of migrants or people of migrant heritage to transfer same to others. Two examples demonstrate this complete change in relations between the destination community and West African economic migrants:

> We used to enjoy the country [Côte d'Ivoire] a lot! People mingled well and bought things from our kiosks. The same people wanted to kill us the next day (GH/M/14; 40-year-old female return migrant).

> This whole thing [conflict] had nothing to do with us [foreigners] but we were used as scapegoats. I managed to buy a small plot on which I built my business; but they are now saying that I'm Ghanaian so I can't own land in their country! This is not the Côte d'Ivoire I knew (GH/M/18; 32-year-old female returnee from Côte d'Ivoire).

Quoting Bekoe and Bartoli (2010), Pailey et al. (2017) further note that the passing of the Rural Land Law (1998) firmly revoked non-citizens' rights to customary ownership of property. Within the political realm, accusations of unqualified or illegitimate non-citizens tilting the outcome of the 1990 elections in favor of the then

incumbent government, marked the beginning of violent retaliatory attacks against foreigners. As noted by Human Rights Watch (2011), the outbreak of conflict in 2002–2003 and the electoral crisis of 2010–2011 fostered anti-foreigner reprisals against non-citizens and 'non-Ivorian' citizens, who were arbitrarily detained, attacked at checkpoints, burned alive, or had their homes or businesses looted or confiscated (Pailey et al., 2017). Citizenship, therefore, became an exclusionary concept within the Ivorian polity, singling out migrants as the 'other'.

*Citizenship and experiences of violence and trauma*

Unlike the citizens of Burkina Faso and Liberia who were widely accused of participating in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire as mercenaries who actively fought in support of multiple factions, Ghanaian migrants were less involved in the direct upheavals as perpetrators. Nonetheless, the relatively passive role of Ghanaian migrants did not immune them from becoming victims of the conflict. Within a political climate where migrants were perceived as an undifferentiated group, who were scapegoated for all economic and political problems, Ghanaians were tagged along with other migrants as mercenaries and biased conspirators who encroached on the national identity of "Ivoirité" (Bjarnesen, 2012; Romano, 2015). As a result, Ghanaian migrants were subjected to physical attacks, intimidation, and harassment, which led to traumatic feelings beyond the crisis periods.

Citizenship as a vehicle through which rights are accorded to persons within a polity, serves as a double-edged sword that states equally use to exclude so-called undesirable sections of a population when it is politically expedient. Migrants, as a perceived threat to national security during a conflict situation, are exposed to exclusion and victimization (Gilmartin, 2008). Migrant enclaves or sections of Côte d'Ivoire that hosted significant numbers of migrants, quickly became frontlines during the conflict. As recounted by a male and a female return migrant from the 2010–2011 conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, both factions of the conflict perceived migrant neighborhoods as a contested turf for settling political differences:

> In Koumassi, where I was staying, military men numbering thousands started patrolling the place day and night. So, the place became uneasy for us to live in. Then at one point, the supporters of one of the fighting political parties killed one of the military men and that started the riot and the unrest in Koumassi. The military men also became crazy over the loss of their colleague and forcibly went into houses to drive occupants out and subjected them to unnecessary questions. If you're not able to answer correctly, they'd give you severe lashes … What was happening in the town, was that if they found you outside, you could be arrested by the military men or harassed by the civilians who were fighting the military men (GH/M/20; 25-year-old male returnee from Côte d'Ivoire).

> The conflict was very severe in my neighborhood. It was so intense, that we woke up every morning to hear rumors circulating that hundreds of people have been massacred on the streets. It was very scary; the cry of gunshots intensified each passing day. Sometimes you could hear people shout, "They are coming!" referring to the rebels. Then you have to run and look for a good place to hide (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female returnee from Côte d'Ivoire).

Beyond the residential neighborhoods of migrants and other non-citizens, the conflict targeted economic sectors that were popular with non-citizens. Côte d'Ivoire, like many other host countries, has a dual/segmented labor market (Piore, 1979) with a primary labor market of high-wage, secure and high-status jobs, mostly occupied by the native population and a secondary labor market comprising low-wage, insecure and low-status jobs, mostly done by the immigrant population.

Ghanaian migrants interviewed as part of the study all held secondary labor market jobs. This does not, however, suggest that no Ghanaian migrant works in the primary labor market, but rather that the overwhelming majority operated within the secondary labor market. The job roles undertaken by Ghanaian labor migrants are to some extent gendered. For instance, the predominant employment for female Ghanaian labor migrants in Côte d'Ivoire is trading, but apparently includes some prostitution as well (Anarfi, 1998). These two sectors are readily accessible to female migrants (for instance, GH/M/15 was a clothes trader; GH/M/19 was a fishmonger; GH/M/16 was a petty trader; GH/M/17 was a food vendor; GH/M/12 was a retailer of jewelry; GH/M/14 was an owner of a supermarket) compared with the sectors that male labor migrants tend to engage in (fishing and farm labor) (for instance, GH/M/13 was a farm laborer; GH/M/20 was a fisherman).

As noted earlier, the concept of 'othering' can either be overt or transpire through more opaque and subtle instances of exclusion and victimization whereby persons who are deemed not to belong, are targeted for attacks, sometimes in a manner that could be mistaken for being coincidental or random (Sibley, 1995). Three Ghanaian female return migrants all recounted how markets, which were popular with the non-citizen migrant population, became a focus of attacks:

> One day at the market I heard people screaming and running and there was a tenant who lived in our house who wanted to close his store before running and he was hit by a bullet. So, we went to the village, where my husband was working and we walked; we couldn't take any of our things. So, we walked till we got to a point and we boarded a bus and came to Ghana (GH/M/18; 32-year-old female return migrant).

> I was selling [goods] when the war broke out. I had to run without packing my things. We walked to 'Konzak' and we boarded a vehicle to Ghana. I get worried sometimes because I had to leave everything I had in Côte d'Ivoire

> (GH/M/14; 40-year-old female return migrant).
>
> I was trading. I was selling fish also. When the war started, we were in the market selling our fish and other products. I had to run because guns were being fired. So, I left the things I was selling behind and came home. I was thinking the war would stop, but it rather worsened, so I had to leave that country because my life was in danger (GH/M/16; 40-year-old female return migrant).

While the market attacks might have affected some of the indigenous population as well as the migrants, the choice of a location that is predominated by migrant workers, suggests a degree of victimization of foreigners based on their otherness. Akin to the possibility of one enjoying citizenship or nationality (and all the rights and privileges that are associated with citizenship) on account of one's parents through the jus sanguinis, jus soli or double jus soli channels of gaining citizenship, we suggest that the experience of violence and the trauma of conflict can be suffered due to the citizenship status of one's parents. The targeting of non-citizens equally imperiled their children who were caught up in the conflict on account of their lack of citizenship or that of their parents. The implications of war have the potential to be detrimental to children who observe, unwillingly participate, or are compelled to plan and execute their own escape from violence. The impact of the Ivorian crises, therefore, extends beyond adult migrants to affect children with long-lasting implications for their mental health and well-being, as explained by a female Ghanaian migrant who fled the crisis in 2011:

> When the war happened, my child really suffered. She was just eight years [old] as at that time; the kid walked for miles in trying to come to us. She was made to jump over dead bodies that were lying on the streets. She was made to handle a gun as young as she was to protect herself; it was even broadcast in the print media. She walked all the way from Bouaké to Abidjan. Most of the kids she came with became paralyzed and they couldn't walk again … Because of the war, my children became traumatized and terrified by any sound; anytime they heard any sound or loud noise, they would quickly run to hide. It really affected them psychologically; but gradually through prayers, they came back to normal. The neighbors convinced them that we don't kill human beings in Ghana (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female return migrant).

*Citizenship, nationality, and involuntary returns*

As both exclusionary and inclusionary concepts, citizenship and nationality equally define the nature of involuntary returns to a geographical space where one can reassert one's sense of belongingness and membership. The same national identity that constitutes a basis for discrimination and victimization at the destination

country, becomes the marker of belongingness upon return, even in involuntary situations. Involuntary returns were realized through the efforts of a combination of actors – international, state, non-state and private individuals. Despite the geographical closeness of Ghana to Côte d'Ivoire, evacuations and returns were arduous for Ghanaian migrants. Trapped migrants did not rely on consular officials who were located at the capital city for assistance, but rather fled through the nearest exit points. In addition, a lack of a credible registration database of Ghanaians in Côte d'Ivoire suggested that embassy officials did not know the number of migrants who needed evacuation assistance, in the first instance. Additionally, Ghana did not have a policy on evacuation of nationals from conflict situations abroad, until the country's National Migration Policy was launched in 2016. The absence of such a policy led to delays in extracting trapped migrants from not only Côte d'Ivoire, but also from other conflict situations, such as Libya in 2011. Migrants returned via a variety of modes of transportation during both episodes of crisis, including on foot, by hired cars, boats and buses.

As GH/M/12 recounted, most victims escaped on foot:

> Most of the journey was done on foot. The fact is, you are running for your dear life, so no time to wait for vehicles. We walked to a point and then joined a car. Those who had cars were also doing their business. Some people took advantage of the situation and were making money out of the desperate people. So, these drivers go round looking for stranded people to transport; then, after transporting you to your destination, they would charge you. Sometimes you get to a point [when] the car can't proceed because the road is barred from any vehicular movement. So, when it happens like that, we had to continue the journey by foot (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female migrant).

Others left on buses that were escorted by military personnel, under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM):

> They advised that those who wanted to go, should come out with their luggage. So, I went there and stayed there for a day because the people gathered there were many – we were in the thousands who agreed to return to Ghana, in Koumassi alone. They arranged to take us in batches, and I was in the third batch, which was the last one. Some of the military men would accompany the first batch into the vehicle to Abidjan and put them in a vehicle that would bring them to Ghana (GH/M/20; 25-year-old male migrant).

Moreover, GH/M/13 explained that some Ghanaian migrants relied on a combination of means of transportation, including boats and walking:

> Some people died in the bushes and their bodies were never found. Yes, some were Ghanaians, Nigerians, Togolese and Beninese and others. A lot of people lost their lives because they were caught unawares. So, there are people who died and their bodies have not been found to date. Initially, we used boats, but some guys showed us a route on land. We had to pass through bushes till we got to the Ghanaian border. We met the officials at the border and explained to them that we were Ghanaians and they understood (GH/M/13, 45-year-old male migrant).

While transportation was organized by the UNHCR and the IOM, in some cases (GH/M/20; GH/I/01), other migrants escaped on their own. In all cases, the sense of 'Ghanaianness' by virtue of their citizenship or nationality entitled return migrants a hassle-free entry and welcome at border entry points. However, prior to arriving at the entry points, where their citizenship was an asset rather than a liability, migrants had to navigate several checkpoints and barriers that were manned by multiple actors in the conflicts they were fleeing from. These included military personnel, rebels, and vigilante groups. Crossing each barrier involved thorough searches and the extortion of cash and personal possessions, especially by vigilantes. Failure to succumb to demands for bribes, could lead to death (GH/M/12). These conditions exacerbated migrants' experiences of crises in Côte d'Ivoire, as demonstrated by a female Ghanaian migrant who fled the political violence in 2011:

> Each living thing crossing any of these barriers, was given an amount to pay, including children and even the unborn babies, before they were allowed to cross. This amount is per head; so, I, for instance, had five kids and I was also pregnant. I was made to pay for each and every child, including the one I was carrying in the womb. Failure to pay would mean you can't cross. You would have to die. They would kill you should you fail to pay (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female migrant).

The right of citizenship, coupled with the proximity of the origin to the destination country, allowed some Ghanaian migrants to returned to their hometowns and villages without any contact with government agencies and officials. These migrants returned to their towns and villages along the shared border with Côte d'Ivoire, without going through any formal immigration control processes. This was possible because these are communities that share common linguistic, cultural, and familial relations with communities in parts of Côte d'Ivoire and they were one community prior to the artificial carving of national borders by colonial powers. Two respondents reflected thus:

> When you speak to them, it is mainly for the economic reasons. With the western side, with Côte d'Ivoire, you know, if you look at the South-Western

> corner of Ghana, they are predominantly Nzemas and there are Nzemas at the other side in Côte d'Ivoire; basically, they see themselves as one people. So, they maintain close family ties, going there to stay and if need be, they return to Ghana (GH/I/01; Staff of intergovernmental organization).
>
> Nobody met us; we just crossed and entered our homes with no reception from anywhere. We weren't even expecting anything. All we wanted was to get home safely, which we did; so that was okay for us (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female migrant).

The shared linguistic, cultural, and familial relations were insufficient to protect Ghanaian migrants in times of the conflict situations in Côte d'Ivoire because the attacks against the 'other' were premised more on the political/legal concept of citizenship or nationality rather than a cultural sense of affiliation. As opined by Aber and Small (2013), the concept of citizenship is primarily constructed and understood within the confines of national identity and belonging. Hartnell (2006) also emphasizes that citizenship refers to "full membership" in a political community. While Ghanaian migrants could assert some level of belongingness to some communities in Côte d'Ivoire on account of their shared cultural history, their lack of "full membership" as citizens ultimately determined their experiences of conflict.

*Belongingness in the process of re-integration*

Re-integration is a multifaceted phenomenon that operates at different levels. This suggests more than a mere reinsertion of an individual into their community of origin after an episode of migration. Re-integration must be sustainable for it to be meaningful to both the returnee and the community. The IOM (2017) notes that re-integration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychological well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable re-integration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions, as a matter of choice, rather than of necessity. Cassarino (2008) also posits that re-integration is the process through which a return migrant participates in the social, cultural economic and political life of the country of origin.

Citizenship and belongingness to a home community do not automatically guarantee a seamless re-integration upon an involuntary return. For returnees who made it back safely to their communities of origin, the processes of resettlement and re-integration proved to be difficult, particularly for those without strong social networks and transferable skills that could easily be absorbed into the local labor market. This adversely affected their economic self-sufficiency as well as their social stability within their communities of origin. Members of return migrants' households in Ghana attested to the lack of material as well as monetary possessions during the involuntary return of their relatives. For migrants' families, the abrupt return of their

relatives contributed to increased household expenses, which have become sources of tension. Nonetheless, families have had to extend reciprocal gestures of support to returnees, in recognition of remittance income received during periods abroad. Due to the sense of belongingness, some migrants who returned to their villages were received by their extended families and provided with shelter and food, as corroborated by a relative of a return migrant and a return migrant who fled Côte d'Ivoire:

> Well, if you couldn't bring anything, but you came back with your life, that is good enough. Besides, everyone knows what happened; so, she can't be blamed. She lost all her room's possessions, including the things at her shop, so she couldn't bring anything along. Getting these things now will be quite difficult. We can't eat without her, because she used to provide for our feeding. So, since she doesn't have anything now, we give her some of what we have (GH/F/15; 41-year-old brother of a return migrant from Côte d'Ivoire).

> Oh yes, as I said, my family received me warmly; they supported me financially since we returned empty-handed. My elder siblings supported me in terms of money and food. They gave us almost everything and my children never lacked [anything]. They really did well (GH/M/12; 38-year-old female return migrant).

As much as this type of socio-economic support to returnees is helpful in meeting their immediate needs, it is not sustainable. Moreover, the psychosocial support, which is vital in addressing the traumatic experiences that led to their forcible return, was lacking. Beyond direct kinship relations, some return migrants also received support from non-familial ties, such as friends, including a 45-year-old male returnee who said: "Some of my friends helped by giving me money or even food" (GH/M/13). This support was critical, especially in cases where returnees' nuclear and extended families perceived their returns as particularly burdensome, as indicated by the following quotes from Ghanaian returnees who fled Côte d'Ivoire during the 2010–2011 crisis:

> I didn't get any help from the family. They were all looking up to me. They didn't consider the fact that I could have died. They were rather complaining about the fact that I couldn't bring anything when I was coming. The major problem is that I am not earning enough to help my family the way I want to. I am not getting help from anywhere. So, that is my worry at the moment. That is why I go to the bush to work to make ends meet (GH/M/13; 45-year-old male return migrant).

> I'm now a useless person over here with nothing. It's my younger brother who

> even helps [me] because he now works after he completed school. He also takes care of my mother (GH/M/18; 32-year-old female return migrant).

It is worth noting that not all return migrants were gainfully employed in Côte d'Ivoire and therefore able to support family and friends while abroad. Household members are ambivalent about the impact of return if migrants previously lamented hard times while abroad and failed to remit, as articulated by this spouse of a Ghanaian returnee:

> Initially I did not want her [my wife] to go, but she managed to take the kids with her when I was not at home. She returned when the war started. She told me she was selling fish, but it wasn't lucrative enough. I can't really tell if she told me the truth. She was always complaining of hardships. She couldn't even call; I was always doing the calling. I can't really tell what she lost. She came with just a polythene bag. Aside [from] the clothes I bought for her on credit when she returned, I did not help her in any way. She had to join me in the firewood business in order for us to earn a living (GH/F/14; 46, male).

*Re-migration as a last resort*

The absence of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and support towards improving the psychological well-being, exposed returnees to a high risk of re-migration. According to Pailey et al. (2017), migrants who were unable or unwilling to fully reintegrate in their countries of origin, considered re-migration to Côte d'Ivoire to be an enticing alternative. For example, after the Lina Marcoussis agreement of 2003 was signed between the Ivorian government and rebels, bringing the first Ivorian crisis to an end, many Burkinabé returnees re-migrated to Côte d'Ivoire, especially those who wanted to reclaim farms and property they had abandoned (Pailey et al., 2017). In 2007, the Government of Burkina Faso estimated that more than two thirds of Burkinabé migrants previously resident in Côte d'Ivoire returned to the host country (Bredeloup, 2009).

Ghanaian returnees interviewed also cited the lack of employment opportunities and re-integration programmes in Ghana as the catalyst for their re-migration to Côte d'Ivoire (GH/M/12; GH/M/13; GH/M/18), as articulated by GH/M/13 above. Some returnees to Ghana found that, apart from reception and accommodation, they received almost no contribution from families, which forced them to re-migrate (Bredeloup and Zongo, 2005). This also highlights the nexus between provision of economic opportunities and reduction in international migration in the longer term, even though the migration literature indicates initial short-to-medium term increases in migration flows due to development (De Haas, 2005).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

This paper explored the experiences of Ghanaian migrants who were trapped and

victimized in Côte d'Ivoire, following the episodes of political violence in 2002–2003 and 2010–2011. It focused on migrants' experiences during the crises as well as with re-integration and resettlement upon return to Ghana. Overall, what emerges from a variety of experiences and narratives is that, unlike other foreign citizens or migrants from elsewhere who were perceived to have played a fundamental role as perpetrators of the violence, Ghanaian migrants were seen to have played no active role in the processes leading to the escalation of the two episodes of political crises in Côte d'Ivoire. Nevertheless, their passive role did not necessarily immune them from encountering physical attacks, harassment and other forms of torture that were meted out to migrants as a result of the crises. In effect, migrants – including those we interviewed from Ghana – were implicated in the Ivorian political crises, not because of their ethnicity or nationality, but rather because of their perceived involvement (and the involvement of their governments) in the crises (i.e., Liberians and Burkinabé) and their often falsely perceived advantaged socio-economic positions in the Ivorian society. While one would have generally expected that the notion of citizenship and nationality would have facilitated migrants' re-integration and resettlement of migrants upon return to Ghana, the process of return itself was particularly daunting for the Ghanaian migrants we interviewed. With little or no support from neither the host nor the origin country, migrants were implicated in the process of return, often through extortion of cash and material possessions. Moreover, the extra burden of re-integration and resettlement was particularly problematic for return migrants with no networks and skills that could have opened up opportunities for them in the labor market. This ultimately impacted their economic, social and psychosocial re-integration into their communities of origin and formed the basis for re-migration.

Overall, these findings bring into sharp focus the limited capacity of governments of origin countries and their development partners, including private sector and civil society in developing comprehensive mechanisms that facilitate long-term mass return of migrants implicated in humanitarian emergencies. This points to the need for origin country governments to better recognize the unique vulnerabilities and circumstances that migrants in crisis situations are confronted with, to better organize targeted actions and strategies to protect such groups from crisis as well as to facilitate their re-integration through initiatives that enable their access to skills, the labor market, resources and opportunities in the home country. Furthermore, the ability of origin governments to support their nationals abroad in crisis situations – particularly through embassy consular services – would be significantly enhanced by reliable data on their migrant populations abroad, as well as nationally derived migration policies with crisis and emergency response protocols. The collation of credible migration data and real-time access to migrant stock, as well as migrant flow figures, are also critical to international responses to crisis situations in which migrants are implicated (see Pailey et al., 2017).

Finally, the findings also call into question the need for clear-cut and well-carved policies and procedures to facilitate the timely evacuation, resettlement and

re-integration of migrants caught up in crisis abroad. Such procedures and policies need to outline actions and plans, and identify actors responsible for a delineated mandate, through making resources available to relevant stakeholders and actors. Origin country diplomatic missions abroad, particularly in countries where migrants are caught up in crisis situations, will need to be fully engaged in the process of supporting their nationals, through providing easily accessible consular services beyond capital cities.

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