

**DO MIGRANTS IN DIFFERENT PLACES VOTE DIFFERENTLY? A STUDY  
OF VOTING PATTERNS IN TWO MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN GHANA**

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## **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. 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

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 census data from the Ghana Statistical Service as well as election results from the Ghana Electoral Commission over the last 3 decades to analyse trends in the composition and growth of the two migrant communities as well as the election trends. 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.

## **Findings and Recommendations**

The paper finds 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. It analyses why certain parties appeal more to voters who have moved frequently or who are predisposed to frequent migration. It recommends that 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.