

**Male Out-Migration and Women Household Heads: The Cross-River  
Women Experience**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigates Male Out-Migration and Women Households Head: The Cross-River Women Experience. Both international and local migration of skilled and un-skilled person have assumed increasing importance in recent years reflecting the impact of globalization revival of growth in the world economy and the explosive growth in the information and communication technology (ICT). Such migratory patterns have been necessitated by “push” or “pull” factors like lack of jobs/poverty which leaves people with no choice but to emigrate from their home communities to other places for better life. Higher standard of living/higher wages provide the biggest push and pull factors for potential migrants. Within the last decade, male out-migration especially from the rural Cross River State to urban centres and other European countries has become a popular livelihood strategy. Drawing on primary field research, this study is an attempt to highlight interconnections between male out migration and women house-hold head in Cross River State. In doing so, the study found that male out-migration had both positive and negative effects on the women left behind. First, the financial outcomes of migration are mixed. Few women received large, steady remittances while the majority received minimal sporadic remittances. The paper employs both secondary and tertiary sources of data collection and adopted the historical research method in assembling and interrogating the data sourced for the study. Findings during the study revealed that despite the fact that male out migration has better off the lives of most migrant families, evidence abounds to the fact that challenges associated with it are numerous which include; increased stress on marital relationships, increased infidelity on the part of both women and men, and greater vulnerability to abandonment for the women left behind etc. The study conclude that the family structure is gradually weakening as a result of migration; young men and women are exposed to societal vagaries, the family security which children hitherto enjoyed by virtue of the presence of both parents is being lost.*

**Keywords:** Out- migration, women left-behind, household head, remittances

**Introduction**

Migration was a common feature of pre-colonial African life. Traditions of various African societies often make reference to migration from an original homeland to a new found-land especially where such people were farmers or pastoralists. Migration in human history is not a new phenomenon. There are several literatures on human movement. All have concerned themselves on the nature of movement as well as on the causes and perhaps consequences of such movement. In the primitive era for instance, people migrated to escape from the



scourge of tse-tse fly, on a hunting expedition, the quest for better land for cattle in case of pastoral farmers among others<sup>1</sup>. In the slave trade era, men, women and children were carried off their homes into slavery, but to escape being sold and forced into slavery; people migrated to other areas where slave traders are yet to come. Sometimes too to escape slavery people migrated in large number to distant lands and perhaps for settlements.

It is on this note that scholars have deduced that the concept “migration” has become an issue of interest among scholars in diverse disciplines including demographer; inter group relations analysts, geographers, historians etc. The reason for the historian in particular is that there is a connection between migration and the history of a people<sup>2</sup>. Ebong argued that the subject matter of migration is central to the history of a people. Outside forced migration, migration is generally characterized with push and pulls factors. Push factors are the social, economic and political determinants that may compel an individual or group of people to migrate from a given geographical area while the pull factors refer to the same determinants mentioned in the push factors but here are rather inviting factors for people to come and settle in an area<sup>3</sup>. It is instructive therefore to note that people would want to emigrate from areas (of push factors) because of better prospects in other places (where pull factors exist). Some scholar like Okpoh summarized the intricate pattern of migrations when he aptly captured that; such movement is often underpinned by the inter-play of socio-economic and political variables operating in the source and destination of the movement<sup>4</sup>. Migration thus can be understood to be evolving from the responses to the process of development.

Migration is a widely prevalent phenomenon across the globe, with millions of people migrating in hopes of increasing their incomes and improving household welfare. According to the World Migration Report 2020 (published by the International Organization for Migration IOM), the number of international migrants has increased from 174 to 272 million over the last two decades<sup>5</sup>. However, while international migration is growing and is more widely spoken about, internal migration is larger and predominant in several low and middle-income countries including Nigeria, India and China<sup>6</sup>. Studies have shown that the patterns and trends of mobility and migration in sub-Saharan Africa are complex and its causes or drivers vary widely. In general, people may be induced or compelled to move as a result of cultural, demographic, socio-economic, environmental and/or political factors<sup>7</sup>. Often the decision to move is

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1 Adepoju, A. Migration and Development: Challenges and Opportunities for west African Region. In Nigeria Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 33 number, 2007, 4.

2 Ebong, M.O. Planning Perspective in Rural Settlement, Calabar, Wusen Publishers, 2009, 71.

3 Ebong, M.O. Planning Perspective in Rural Settlement, 71.

4 Okpoh, O.O. Intergroup Migration, Conflicts, and Disputes in Central Nigeria, in Falola T. & Okpoh O.O. (eds). Population Movements, Conflicts and Displacement in Nigeria: Asmara, Eritrea, African World Press, 2008, 4.

5 IOM International organization for Migration, 2012, 11.

6 Sander, C. Migrant Remittance to Developing Countries: A Scoping study. Paper prepared for DFID, Bannock Consulting, June, 2003, 108.

7 Omagu, D.O. A Wind of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization. Makurdi: Aboki, Publishers, 2012, 186.

influenced by a combination of several of these factors. For instance, a rural population pressure on increasingly unproductive land combined with agricultural land degradation may become powerful important causes for out-migration. Other drivers of migration may be political and ethnic conflicts, natural disasters or processes like land grabbing, large scale infrastructure projects and resettlement<sup>8</sup>. The economic factor is of major importance for most voluntary migration. People tend to move to places where they expect potential income generating opportunities to be greater than in their area of origin. Although transnational migration is increasing in Nigeria, but most migrants in Nigeria today move between Nigeria and other international borders as well as rural-urban regions.

Due to social and gender norms, labor migration is heavily male-dominant in several parts of the world, especially in Africa, South Asia, Mexico and Southern Africa<sup>9</sup>. Women thus tend to be left behind in rural areas, and continue to be engaged in agriculture and other menial jobs. cursory examination has indicated that migration for employment is a dominant stream of migration in Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular, and has important implications for women household especially when the migrants are men who are heads of the family. This trend of migration has both positive and negative effects on the women left behind, as few of the women received large, steady remittances while the majority received minimal and sporadic remittances. This form of remittance couple with some form of total negligence exhibited by most of the male out migrant in Cross River State, have not only created an avenue for high level poverty among some family, but it has also led to break down in family structure which at the end have negative effects such as single parenting, prostitution, arm rubbing, kidnapping, cultism etc on the society in particular and the country in general.

### **The Geography and the People of Cross River State**

Cross River State is one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria created in 1967. As an integral fragment of the former South Eastern State, the state was created in 1967 and rechristened Cross River State. The state is bounded in the north by Benue State, in the South-west by Akwa Ibom State, in the south by the Atlantic Ocean, in the East by the Republic of Cameroun and in the West by Abia and Ebonyi States<sup>10</sup>. The state falls within latitudes 70 and 40 30<sup>0</sup> north and longitudes 70 23<sup>0</sup> and 90 30<sup>0</sup> east<sup>11</sup>. The state is delineated into 18 Local Government Areas namely: Abi, Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Bekwarra, Biase, Boki, Calabar Municipal, Calabar South, Etung, Ikom, Obanliku, Obudu, Odukpani, Ogoja, Yakurr and Yala. Cross River State has a land mass of about 98,000 square kilometres with a population of over 2.89 million people

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8Mabogunje, A. "Migration Policy and Regional Development in Nigeria," *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 1997.

9Richards, A. I. (ed). *Economic Development and Tribal Change: A Study of Migrant Labour in Buganda* (Cambridge: W. Heffe& Sons) Lusaka: Oxford University Press, 2012, 28.

10Uya, O.E. *History, Culture, Diaspora and Nation Building the Collected Works of Okon Edet Uya* (ed), Bethesda: Arbi Press, 2012, 714.

11Uya, O.E. *History, Culture, Diaspora and Nation Building the Collected Works of Okon Edet Uya* (ed), 714.

(NPC 2006). One-third of the state is covered by water from the tributaries of the Atlantic Ocean. This renders the land very fertile and provides abundant aquatic resources for exploitation. The temperature of the state varies with latitude and vegetation cover. Highlands for instance Obudu Ranch Resort in Obanliku Local Government Area have lower annual temperature when compared with the low land areas with higher temperature. Rainfall also varies with distance from the Atlantic Ocean and season. In the southern part of the state which is bounded by the ocean, the rainfall distribution is over 300 cm while in the northern part of the state it is between 200 cm-300 cm<sup>12</sup>. Rainfall is heavier in the rainy season (April-September) than in the dry season (November-February).

There are peaks of rainfall which are in June/July and September/October. The state falls within three vegetation belts; from the south, mangrove, tropical rain forest and guinea savannah. Cross River State is described as a miniature nation because of its ethnic, cultural and artistic diversity<sup>13</sup>. There are three major languages in the state namely; Efik, Ejagham and Bekwarra. The culture of the people of Cross River State is expressed in their various languages, songs, dances, festivals, dressings, food and religious affiliations. Craft such as basket and mat weaving, pottery, production of black soap, sculpturing and indigenous blacksmithing like hoes, knives and local guns are made in the state. The people of Cross River State are predominantly farmers. Coaco, maize, beneseed, cassava, groundnut, lucost bean, palm oil, palm wine, rice and yam are some of their agricultural products. The people also practice hunting and lumbering.

### Theoretical Framework

Scholars in the various disciplines that research on migration such as economics, law, demography, history, geography, sociology, anthropology, political science, among others in an attempt to unravel the causes, effects and dynamics of migration have spawned a wide variety of theories. These theories are Lee (1966) theory of migration, Harris and Todaro (1970) neo-classical migration theory, Mabogunje (1970) migration systems theory, Zelinsky (1971) mobility transition theory, Stark (1978); Stark (1991) new economics theory of migration, Piore (1979) dual labour-market theory, Skeldon (1990) work on migration transitions, Massey (1990) cumulative causation theory among others. The push and pull methodological framework of the neoclassical economic theory by Everett Lee was used as the theoretical platform for this study

This is based on the premise that the current overriding theory in the investigation of the causes of migration is the neoclassical theory with the fundamental assumption that the main motivation for migration is economic deliberations of comparative benefits and costs, largely financial and psychological borne out of rational decisions<sup>14</sup>. Hence, it will be used in this

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<sup>12</sup>Ogar, S.M.U. The Fading Legacies of the Descendants of Agba, Calabar: Sea sprint Nig. Co. 2006, 74.

<sup>13</sup>Ogar, S.M.U. The Fading Legacies of the Descendants of Agba, 74.

<sup>14</sup>Arthur, J. A. Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000,18.

study to know the migration decisions of both local and international migrants. Because this theory sees migration as an economic phenomenon, it contends that economic factors are the main driving force of migration<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, it presupposes that trade and migration serve as a platform for labour markets and economies to move near a long-run steady state. It believes that migrants are just rational actors. Under this theory, an abundance of labour and low wages in a society results in movements of migrants to societies of scarce labour and high wages. Also, the choice of migration is taken individually. Hence, in a nutshell, migrants move from societies of a large labour force and low wages to societies of a small labour force and high wages. Meanwhile, the feeling that higher returns expected at the end would offset the cost and relocation risk further informs the decision to migrate

The push and pull methodological framework submit that the low wages and poor standards of living in less developed countries push away the labour force whereas high salaries and better standards of living in the more industrialized regions pull them<sup>16</sup>. Under the push and pull factor model, the exodus of individuals from an area with low labour demands and low salaries to one with high labour demand and high salaries is expected to finally align the salaries and conditions of living between the sending and receiving regions so that migration would be beneficial to both<sup>17</sup>. The emigration of workforces in a given area decreases the supply of labour in the labour market in the locality and enlarges its value causing higher salaries. Thus, the emigration of labours from an area is beneficial for workers at home since it leads to an increase in wages locally.

The push and pull model have some limitations. It is a static model. Thus, it failed to state how original structural conditions are influenced by migration. It is a descriptive model that employs a post-hoc mechanism in the explanation of migration. Again, factors that influence migration are usually copied in origin and destination areas. It believes that macro-level variables are the only causes of migration. However, it ignores other motives of individuals for migration. Despite these shortcomings, the theory is still fashionable in the literature of migration. However, it was modified to incorporate some added pull and push factors. Dovlo stated that the push factors or supply factors are the conditions that are unfriendly in the source countries or regions that make professionals and skilled workers emigrate and search for employment elsewhere<sup>18</sup>. The literature pinpointed the following push factors: low salaries; low per capita income; unemployment or job scarcity; crime and conflict; political repression; poor educational systems; poor conditions of service; climate change (including extreme weather events); lack of progression within a career; inadequate or

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15Djamba, K. Y. "African Immigrants to the United States: A Socio-Demographic Profile in Comparison to Native Blacks." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 34(2), 1999, 87.

16Girdler-Brown, B. "Migration and HIV/ AIDS: Easter and Southern Africa" *International Migration*, Vol. 36, No.4, 1998.

17Min-Harris, C. "Youth Migration and Poverty in Sub-Sahara Africa: Empowering the Rural Youth" [http://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/reserchdigest/Africa youth migration.pdf](http://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/reserchdigest/Africa%20youth%20migration.pdf). retrieved 14th August, 2022.

18Dovlo, D. *The Brain Drain and Retention of Health Professionals in Africa. Accra: A case Study Prepared for a Regional Training Conference on Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Sept. 23-25, 2003,46.

limited urban services and infrastructure (including healthcare, education, utilities, transport and water); lack of necessary technology; crop failure and scarcity of food; safety and security concerns (ethnic, religious, racial or cultural persecution); rural poverty; political instability; slavery or bonded labour; unsustainable livelihood and resources and limited chances of self-advancement.

Pull factors or demand factors are the socio-economic settings that entice professionals to leave their countries of origin or regions to destination economies or regions<sup>19</sup>. The following pull factors have been spotted in the literature: higher salaries for the same jobs in the receiving countries; family reunification; better conditions of services; independence and freedom; advanced technology and availability of resources that make work easier and safer; integration and social cohesion; the situation of the labour market in receiving countries; food security; higher chances of professional and personal improvement; affordable and accessible urban services (comprising healthcare, education, utilities and transport); greater environmental safety; higher standards of living; abundance of natural resources and minerals (e.g. water, oil, uranium); legislation on migration; pursuit of specialized education, favourable climate and less bureaucratic control all form the basic reason for migration.

#### **Understanding African Migration**

Black African migration to North America dates back to the earliest days of the passage of slaves from Africa to the region in 1519 in what became known as the Middle Passage. Between 1519 and 1867, when the slave trade ended, an estimated 10 million African slaves were taken involuntarily from Africa to the Western Hemisphere; 360,000 landed in what today is the United States to develop and sustain plantation agriculture in a new and unfamiliar environment<sup>20</sup>. The 20th Century African migrants to the U.S. unlike their predecessors reflect disparate motivations and processes. The composition of the African immigrants during the period had a growing body of African students migrating to the United States in search of both secular and sacred education<sup>21</sup>. To some degree, other groups of Africans who voluntarily migrated reflects those confronted with the crushing economic crisis, the effects of natural disasters, as well as civil wars fought either as a result of the Cold War, in pursuit of national liberation, or in pursuit of national or sectional interest in border conflicts, or on the domestic front. Indeed, such economic paralysis and political suffocation is that, many Africans, particularly highly skilled professionals, have been forced to seek their economic fortunes elsewhere, including the United States. These immigrants typically reach the United States in stepwise fashion, sometimes living in several other countries before managing to secure a visa for their ultimate destination in the United States.

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19Omagu, D.O. *A Wind of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization*. Makurdi, 64.

20Capps, R. McCabe, K. & Fix, M. "New Streams: Black African Migration to the United States". Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/AfricanMigrationUS.pdf>, retrieved, March, 14, 2021.

21Nyang, S. S. "The African Immigrant Family in the United States of America: Challenges and Opportunities". [http://www.africa.migration.com/Issue%205/Articles/PDF/Sulayan-Nyang\\_The-African-Immigrant-in-the-USA.pdf](http://www.africa.migration.com/Issue%205/Articles/PDF/Sulayan-Nyang_The-African-Immigrant-in-the-USA.pdf). Accessed April 8, 2021, 98.

Relative to other immigrant population groups such as Hispanics or Asians, the African immigrants have a low rate of naturalization. Many consider themselves as sojourners in the United States, intending to return home when economic and political conditions improve<sup>22</sup>. The influx of the numbers of African immigrants to the United States according to figures from the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), more than quadrupled in the last two decades; from 109,733 between 1961 and 1980 to 531,832 between 1981 and 2000 that number increased to 1,419,317 African immigrants in 2007<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, of the 1.4 million African immigrants in the United States, Nigeria tops the list with 185,787 (13.1%), while Egypt has 136,648 (9.6%) and Ethiopia with 134,547 (9.55%) as well as Ghana with 104,842 (7.4%), and Kenya with 80,595 (5.7%)<sup>24</sup>.

In 2009, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone collectively accounted for 46 percent of all Black African immigrants. In Africa, this flow which in recent decades has resulted in the loss of one-third of the continent's skilled professionals has contributed to a brain drain. Individuals who have immensely benefited from this migration and the brain drain of Africa's talents are those with professional or marketable skills. The stark reality is that the labor markets and economies of Africa have not been able to expand to absorb and sustain college graduates in gainful employment. The result is massive underemployment and unemployment among graduates and professionals. Secondary schools and university graduates are, therefore, forced to look for better economic opportunities overseas.

Indeed, this mass exodus permeated Nigerians of all walks-of-life and literally speaking, the idea was, living either in the US or abroad, was the be-all and end-all of most Nigerians. It was a period when girls jilted their lovers for unknown Nigerian male from the USA or when families mortgage their homes to send their kids overseas. This burning desire by most Nigerians to travel out and actualize their "American Dream" was romanticized in Nigerian movies and trailers like "Omugwo", "American Dollars", "My American Nurse" and "American Influence" other movies with similar narratives include "On the run again," "This America", and "Cultures" (comedy) T V series.

Also, for about a decade, many pregnant women entered the United State illegally and gave birth to children and later used their united states-issued birth certificates to apply for citizenship. In 1976, the 1965 Immigration Act was amended so that undocumented parents of U.S. -born children could not apply for citizenship until their children reached the age of twenty. Furthermore, in abandoning the national origins quota system, which for years had favored Northern and Western Europeans, U.S. immigration laws in 1976 made it possible for Africans to obtain visas to come to the united states to pursue education, reunite with families, or even market their skills<sup>25</sup>. Africans

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22Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000, 18.

23Takougang, J. "Contemporary African Immigrants to the United States". Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2009, 74.

24Takougang, J. "Contemporary African Immigrants to the United States". , 74.

25Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 18.

and other citizens of developing regions view the United States as the land of immense economic opportunity, liberty, and freedom. This has created “a going abroad to the united states” syndrome in all levels of African society, particularly among youths, urbanites, and educated people. The vision of life created by returnees is that of an America where it is possible to survive on minimum wages and where the monthly minimum wage is more than what the average African worker makes in a year <sup>26</sup>. This has made it possible for African immigrants to the United States share their relative prosperity by making remittances annually back to their families and friends. Indeed, a recent report by the World Bank indicates that officially recorded remittance flows to developing countries are estimated to reach \$406bn in 2012 with Nigeria topping the list of recipients in Africa with \$21bn (N3.28tn).

The cultural polyphony of the Africans is becoming more noticeable in major metropolitan centers which play host to African Immigrant Population. Demographically, New York had the largest number of African immigrants in 2009 with 168,426 (11.3%) individuals, followed by California 143,214 (9.6%), Texas 124,691 (8.4 %), and Maryland 117,315 (7.9%). The African-born in these states collectively accounted for 37.1% of all African immigrants.<sup>27</sup> Other states with African immigrant population greater than 60,000 in 2009 included New Jersey 79,420 (5.3%), Massachusetts 76,832 (5.1%), Georgia 75,692 (5.1%), Virginia 69,941 (4.7%), and Minnesota 63,982 (4.3%)<sup>28</sup>. Though few in number compared to other immigrant groups in the new migration to the United States, the African contributions to the American immigrant quilt have been noteworthy in the areas of educational attainment, multilingual characteristics, strong kinship and family structure, ethnic business formation, and unfettered ambition to become successful<sup>29</sup>.

The African immigrants in the United States do not constitute a monolithic entity. They are as varied in their cultures as the countries in Africa that they represent. They are divided by language, religion, class, and nationality. But they remain united in their journey to America to pursue cultural and economic goals<sup>30</sup>. Until the postcolonial era, the African immigrants were overwhelmingly male and single. This distribution pattern changed by the time Africa achieved her political freedom, with a large and growing body of women beginning to compete for opportunities to study in colleges and universities abroad. Some of these women returned home just like their male counterparts, while a small percentage of others decided to remain in the US due to marriage to American men<sup>31</sup>.

Black African immigrants also have diverse modes of entry into the United States, and various statuses. In 2007 about a quarter of all Black African immigrants in the United States had entered as refugees or received asylum

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<sup>26</sup>Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 18.

<sup>27</sup>Capps, R. McCabe, K. & Fix, M. “New Streams: Black African Migration to the United States”. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute,

<sup>28</sup>Capps, R. McCabe, K. & Fix, M. “New Streams: Black African Migration to the United States”. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute,

<sup>29</sup>Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 3.

<sup>30</sup>Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 18.

<sup>31</sup>Nyang, S. S. “The African Immigrant Family in the United States of America”, 8.



(though many had since become permanent residents or citizens), accounting for about seven percent of all US immigrants. Remarkably, five refugee source countries comprising Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Sudan, and Eritrea accounted for 30 percent of all Black African immigrants in 2009. Other category of African immigrants are legal permanent residents (LPRs) who primarily entered the United States through one of three types of visa programs like family reunification, employment, or diversity<sup>32</sup>.

Family reunification is the most common mode of legal admission to the United States, including people who enter through marriage or who are sponsored to immigrate by their parents, siblings, or adult children. In 2010, two-thirds of the approximately 1 million immigrants legally admitted to the United States were admitted through family provisions (either as immediate relative of a US citizen or through other family preferences). Indeed, the number of immigrants admitted in 2010 through family reunification channels were highest for African nations with the longest history of emigration to the United States, led by Cape Verde the oldest source country (98 percent) and followed by Malawi, Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria, and Ghana<sup>33</sup>.

Immigrants' entry has also been facilitated through the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) designated by the US Congress to give temporary legal status to a small group of African immigrants affected by political conflicts or natural disasters in their home countries to stay in the United States. Although, the TPS and DED allow immigrants to work in the United States and protect them from deportation, these statuses do not, however, put immigrants on a path to permanent residency, nor do they confer eligibility for major public benefit programs. In March 2011, approximately 4,000 immigrants from Liberia, Somalia, and Sudan had TPS or DED status and a much larger group from Central American countries (300,000–400,000)<sup>34</sup>.

It is however, important to add here that the immigration of Africans to the United States has been facilitated, in part, by the relaxation of immigration policy like the 1965 immigration act, the 1980 changes in laws related to refugees, the 1986 immigration reform and Control Act (IRCA), and the 1990 Immigration Act. Another policy worth mentioning is the Diversity Visa Program that was introduced as part of the 1990 Immigration Act. The Diversity Visa Program, which was aimed at promoting immigration from hitherto underrepresented countries and regions of the world allowed up to 50,000 "qualified" Africans annually to migrate to the United States through a lottery process<sup>35</sup>.

The mass migration of skilled workers out of Africa to the developed economies of the world is at a crisis stage. From 1960 to 1989, an estimated seventy thousand to one hundred thousand highly skilled Africans left the continent to

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32Capps, R. McCabe, K. & Fix, M. "New Streams: Black African Migration to the United States". Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute,

33Zezeza, P.T. Contemporary African Migration in Global Context. African Issues, Volume 30. Issues, 2002.

34Wasem, R. E & Karma E. Temporary Protected Status: Current Immigration Policy and Issues. Congressional Research. www.crs.gov. 2002, 13.

35Zezeza, P.T. Contemporary African Migration in Global Context. 14.

settle in Europe and the United States (Gordon, 1998: 86). Acculturated but not assimilated, the Africans engage the host society selectively, confining their activities to carefully constructed zones, mainly educational and economic, that are vital for their survival in this country. For the majority of immigrants, education is seen as the pathway to social mobility and economic advancement<sup>36</sup>. Beginning immediately upon arrival in the United States, the adjustment process is influenced by a number of factors. These include access to immigrant networks and information, the presence of relatives and friends, immigrant education, age, class, marital status, fluency in English, attitude to risk, predetermined expectations, and even luck. Once in the United States, some of the immigrants find themselves confronted with cultural, psychological, and economic problems such as poverty, low educational attainment, linguistic barriers, isolation, depression and confusion<sup>37</sup>.

The social and cultural processes involved in immigrant assimilation or acculturation are complex and sociologically interesting. The history of immigrant adjustment in a society like America that is characterized by internal diversity and variety in its material and non-material cultures shows that the pace of assimilation and integration into the affairs of the host society varies significantly among immigrants. Immigrant incorporation into the host society is a function of the values and expectations that the immigrants hold and the degree of openness of the host society<sup>38</sup>. Consequently, the next section discusses the challenges associated with male out migration and woman household head in Cross River State.

### **The Challenges of Male Out- Migration on Families and Household**

As laid out by Lee in his seminal push/pull model of migration, individuals are “pushed” away from locations where they are dissatisfied (for economic, political, or other reasons) and “pulled” to areas (for reasons of economics, climate, or others) where they can “better” themselves<sup>39</sup>. This theory suggests that a major motivation for migrating is to improve the economic well-being of the household. However, there is considerable debate as to whether migration is actually a successful strategy for achieving this goal. In as much as evidence have shown that migration have better off most migrant lives, its effects on family life among Nigerian woman in general and Cross River State women in particular cannot be over emphasize. Some of the challenges includes but not limited to changes in family structure, changes in women’s status and empowerment and changes in agricultural productivity which will be discuss one after the others.

### **Changes in Family Structure**

The word family can have different meanings. The term refers to a group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, adoption, and residing together in a

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36 Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 3.

37 Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 61.

38 Arthur, J. A. *Invisible Sojourners: African Immigrant Diaspora in the United States*, 70-71.

39 Lee, 1966.

household. A family includes the householders among its members. Furthermore, family is defined as two or more persons who love and care for each other<sup>40</sup>. These share resources, responsibility for decisions, values and goals and have a commitment to one another over time. Families provide emotional, physical, and economic mutual aid to their members. It is characterized by intimacy, intensity, continuity and commitment among the members. A single parent family is becoming a societal challenge as its number is increasing rapidly. Conventionally religious establishment, media and most of the government entities define the ideal family as that comprised of two happily married, heterosexual biological parents living with their children. Despite parents being responsible for the psychological, emotional welfare, educational and career development of their children, migration, divorce, and separation of various kinds or death of one spouse may leave the role in the hands of single parent. Many children are being reared by single-mothers, who seem to struggle making ends meet living below the poverty line; though some few women are rich the majority are poor. Therefore, children from single parent households face many challenges throughout their development. Study have also shown that children rise by single parents especially single mothers are likely to face certain challenges such as marrying early and to have children at tender age, both in and out of marriage; to divorce, if they marry; and to commit delinquent acts such as drug and alcohol usage. In the streets of Calabar, the capital of Cross River State, many under age children are found in the streets of Calabar popularly call scholombo boys/girls who have terrorized the peace relatively enjoyed by the resident in the dim past. Most of these children are homeless, jobless, and hopeless as a result of no parent, careless parenting as well as single parenting. This family abandonment and negligence is not only causing societal nuisance to the immediate family but also to the state and country at large.

Within the Upper Cross River Region of Cross River State which covers, the people of Obanlikwu, Obudu, Bekwarra, Ogoja and Yala Local Government Area, it has been observed that male-out migrant occasion by labour migration is high within the area. Most of the male-out migrant are in Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti and Edo state as labour migrant. Some of this migrant only return at the end of December every year to only celebrate the Christmas with the family while others come home once in five to ten years. Most of the women who become the household head as a result of the absent of their husband receives little to no monetary support from their husband. In such a situation, studies have revealed that children who are raised by single-parents are likely to experience trauma, lack of quality education, poor parental upbringing among others which may translate to bad behaviour which may affect such children throughout their lives. Single mothers have experienced even far greater challenges as they have to be both mother and father to raise their children. In such a situation, a single-mother who have suddenly become the head of the family is in one way or another obliged to play two roles in raising the child and many cases it becomes a problem to the children. Evidence abound to the fact that the man who is the head of the family is expected to carry out his duties and responsibilities as the principal educator and supervisor of morals and character. In that regard, if the family is headed by single mother, it is often very difficult for the single mother to provide the required children nurturing as per expected moral standards of

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40Omagu, D.O. A Wind of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization. Makurdi, 63.

the particular society<sup>41</sup>. This is due to reasons beyond her biological make-up. In most African culture there is a well-marked social distance between male and female. That means male children would feel more comfortable to be guided by fathers while girls would cling to their mothers. Therefore, in father-headed families, girls will be unable to open up their hearts to their fathers and their fathers would be in difficult position to nurture, counsel or guide their daughters into the best societal accepted characters, likewise mothers to their sons. As a result of family structure and gender roles of single parent being inappropriate, they lead to problems such as psychological distress in the children<sup>42</sup>.

Further challenges of male out-migration and woman household head in Cross River State like other part of Nigeria society is that women who are left behind are either to remarry or become the *defacto* head-of-household. A *de facto* female-headed household refers to a situation where a husband is temporarily absent due to labor migration, but the couple maintains contact and the wife receives remittances from her absentee husband, however sporadic<sup>43</sup>. Both options represent important changes in the family structure. The rise in female-headed households is a trend that has been noted throughout much of the developing world, including Latin America, Mexico, Nigeria society and Cross River State in particular. Although every case is different, *de facto* female-headed households may be better off economically if their husbands find stable, well-paying jobs and send money home on a regular basis. However, *de facto* female heads-of-households must confront the challenges of maintaining a long-distance relationship or they risk becoming *de jure* male heads-of-households receiving no economic support<sup>44</sup>. The challenges and stresses associated with the new transnational family structure among the Cross-River State women like other part of Nigeria societies is that it can lead to an increased propensity for both men and women to commit infidelity and/or increased marital problems. It has been observed that, Long spells apart and erratic communication can be highly stressful, sowing seeds of mistrust and/or provoking men and women alike to engage in extra marital liaisons. Suffice it to say therefore that male-outmigration contributed to increased divorce rates, marital instability and family breakdown.

Within the Nigeria society and especially among the people of Cross River State where their men often migrate to South- West states like Osun, Ondo, Oyo, Edo etc as labour migrants, this male out migration often creates factors or avenue that may increase the propensity for women left behind to commit infidelity. First, as already mentioned, the distance sows' seeds of distrust, with both men and women more likely to seek a new partner as a result.

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41Wahyuni, S.E. Impact of Migration on Family Structure and Functioning: A case in Jawa. Paper presented in Session Five in International Conference, Tours, France, July, 18-23, 2005, 14.

42Wahyuni, S.E. Impact of Migration on Family Structure and Functioning, 14.

43Findley, S.A. Migration and Family Interactions in Africa. In A. Adepoju (ed.). Family, Population and Development in Africa, London: Zeb Books, 1979, 84.

44Massey, D.S. Social Structure, Household Strategies and the Cumulative Causation of Migration. Population Index, vol. 56, No.1, 1990, 104.

Second, women's financial vulnerability increases with male out-migration. As noted by Omagu (2012), women in much of the rural women are dependent on men to securer sources<sup>45</sup>. If the migrant husband fails to send money, she must look for another source of financial support, in most cases this source of financial support is another man. Studies indicate that due to the patriarchal system, women are dependent on men for their family's survival and as such, failure of the male-out migrants to constantly send remittance to the wife and family often give clear opportunity for infidelity which most women begin to see it as survival strategy with the excuse that such action was taken because economic needs of their households were not met.

### **Changes in Women's Status and Empowerment**

For the purpose of this work, social status refers to one's position or rank in society and the prestige that comes with that position. Social status is closely related to social roles and the gendered division of labor. While Kabeer defines empowerment as, "people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them"<sup>46</sup>. Though empowerment is an abstract concept, it is often operationalized by measuring decision making power, autonomy, agency, personal freedom, mobility, access to and control over resources, and bargaining power. Though research indicate that male out-migration have both positive and negative impact on women household left behind. This study outlines three possible outcomes. First, women's status can improve due to remittances, greater autonomy and decision-making, greater flexibility in gender roles, and more personal freedom. Second, women's status can remain the same because, although the gendered division of labor changes, gender ideologies remain unchanged. Or third, women can experience a deterioration in their status. This may be in relation to men's increased status as a rich or worldly migrant or it may be a result of marginalization from the larger community. In as much as some are of the view that women from migratory households had greater decision-making authority, control of the household budget, and responsibility for the shopping, others maintain that absenteeism of the husband does not necessarily translate to increased decision-making and freedom on the wife's behalf<sup>47</sup>. In spite of this positive impact, it may be justifiable to deduce that as a result of male-out migration many women stands the risk of losing their impendence and status...suffer poorer health and welfare...and become subjugated to men Often.

### **Changes in Agricultural Productivity**

Migration could also lead to changes in farm decision-making. If the migrant was the key decision maker on matters related to the farm, the migrant's departure can result in a change in the farm decision-maker, and consequently, a change in the nature of decisions taken. Male out-migration alters the gender composition of the household, resulting in women being left behind, tending to

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45Omagu, D.O. A Wind of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization. Makurdi, 10.

46Kabeer, N "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment." and Change 30: 1999, 435- 464.

47Omagu, D.O. A Wind of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization. Makurdi, 82.

agriculture. To make up for the reduction in family labor due to the migrant's departure, the women in Cross River State especially at the rural areas may increase their labor supply on the farms – a phenomenon referred to as the *feminization of farm labor*<sup>48</sup>. If the migrant had played an important role in the household's agricultural management/decision-making, the departure of the migrant leads to a change in the decision-maker. This is reflected as a switch from having a male farm manager to a female farm manager.

When women assume managerial roles following male migration, the nature of decisions taken will also change, thereby impacting agricultural production/profits. Oral sources indicate that women farmers face challenges in hiring and supervising labor (especially male labor for ploughing), in accessing credit, improved inputs and extension services. On the other hand, remittances from migrants can help alleviate these constraints. Therefore, the overall effect of migration on agricultural production/profits is thus a combination of the effects resulting from the migrants' departure, receipt of remittances and the presence of a female farm manager.

In the aspect of *feminization of Agriculture*, it is believed unless male out-migration results in changing agricultural patterns or agricultural abandonment, someone must take on the tasks that the male migrant leaves behind. This can be accomplished by paying other males (i.e., daylaborers) to do the work, assigning the tasks to children or other family members, or changing the traditional gender roles of women (Deere, 2005: 17). Deere (2005) notes that when male out-migration occurs and the men remain absent for long periods of time, married women typically become the farm managers, picking up many of the agricultural tasks that were traditionally defined as "men's work." This process is part of a trend known as the "feminization of agriculture," which refers to the increasing rates of women's participation in the agricultural sector. This phenomenon is common among Cross River State women, especially women at the rural areas like Yala, Bekwarra, Boki, Ikom, Obanlikwu, Obudu, Etung among other local government areas. These women are left with no option than to take up male agricultural tasks that were traditionally defined as "men's work. They do the clearing of the bush, the digging, the planting and supervising the general farm activities. This development has not only created additional burden on Cross River State rural women, but it has also contributed negatively to food shortage in the state.

#### **Benefit of Male-Out Migration in Cross River State**

It has become a thing of pride to have at least one member of the household living outside the shore of the country of Nigeria. The picture that readily comes to mind is that of prosperity and unlimited opportunity for other members of the household or extended family to benefit from the successes of the first person. This would appear logical given that the member abroad would send some foreign currency home, eventually get established and able to give information that could help others access the same opportunity. The

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48Kiriti-Nganga, Tabitha W. 'Migration of Husbands, Remittances and Agricultural', 2007, 68.

expectation is even more logical if the individual happens to be in a develop country in Europe or in the United State of America because such countries offer a higher standard of living and a better quality of life for all cadres in the society. Such an environment and expectation of life are not readily accessed by all in Nigeria, hence the driving force to see a “better life” spread the joy and share the goodies.

But how does it start? And from where does it start? The inequality of the society gives credence to the fact that for many, migration both local and international is the window through which they can improve their income, have educational opportunity and improve the prospects of their future generation. As such people move both within the county and across international borders with the expectation that they will have access to better opportunities in the destination location in order to benefit themselves, their immediate families and communities<sup>49</sup>. The movement from one part of the county to another for example from a hamlet to a village and later from a village to a town is usually the start and characteristic pattern of migration. One moves to a place considered to be better or to have more opportunities. Several push and pull factors are responsible for this but some factors could be peculiar to the individual e.g cultural stigmatization. Evidence abounds to the fact that this movement is characterized by dual perspectives, which include the loss of human resources on one hand and the benefits in form of remittance on the other hand. The focus in the short run on the remittance benefits makes migration desirable but long-term impact on the fact, the society and the individual at large could have negative consequence.

### **Conclusion**

Migration is a widely prevalent phenomenon across the globe, with millions of people migrating in hopes of increasing their incomes and improving household welfare. It is clearly a strategy for economic emancipation. Young people leave in order to get established and pave way for other family members in the cities. Male out migrant decision to move is influenced by a combination of several factors, such as rural population pressure on land, political and ethnic conflicts, natural disasters or processes like land grabbing, large scale infrastructure projects and resettlement. The economic factor is of major importance for most voluntary migration.

The study observed that the growing significance of migration in rural livelihoods in most societies Cross River State inclusive means that left-behind women are playing increasingly enhanced roles within and outside the household. Women’s greater involvement in household decision-making can have the effect of weakening, and even dislodging, the stronghold of patriarchal norms on women’s roles and standing in society. This has far reaching consequences on the family, agriculture, rural communities and urban centers. The tide will continue for as long as disparities exist in-between the rural and urban centers. Some of the challenges associated with male out migrant and women house hold head in Cross River State include increased stress on marital relationships, increased infidelity on the part of both women and men, and

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49Omagu, D.O. A Wind of Change: Bekwarra in an Age of Globalization. Makurdi, 51.

greater vulnerability to abandonment for the women left behind. However, the findings also suggest that migration is not the only factor contributing to marital instability. In order to maintain their families, abandoned women looked for a new partner, which clearly is not a sign of empowerment or “emancipation from male power”. Single parent has problems in instilling discipline in their children. This was particularly so when it is a mother and a male child. The single mother left behind as a result of male-out migration find it hard to maintain discipline among the children due to absence of male counterparts. The mothers became lonely and found it difficult to handle the responsibility of child-care, to answer their question and to establish a routine for their children. Therefore, it could be concluded that majority of single mothers in Cross River State faced economic, emotional and social problems.