



*Confronting migration narratives with aspirations
and the ability to move in Ghana*

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Migration has long been an important livelihood strategy for young people in Ghana. Ghanaians have mainly migrated for reasons related to employment, education or training, marriage and family reunification and political persecution. Efforts to control migration date from the colonial period, and recent migration governance has become institutionalized in regional frameworks, Ghana's national migration policy and bilateral labour-migration arrangements. International actors' interventions in Ghana have also brought specific narratives around managing migration for development combined with neo-liberal development agendas that emphasize the role of migrants and would-be migrants in contributing to local development. This presentation will detail the central policy narratives around migration, immobility and development as espoused by external and domestic policy actors, and it will contrast them with youth perceptions, local socio-economic realities, youth aspirations and a so-called culture of migration. The findings draw on two distinct studies conducted from 2016 to 2018, including documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews with government officials as well as other migration stakeholders in Accra and an ethnographic study of children and young people in British-Ghanaian transnational households. Applying a political economy of migration lens, this presentation argues that migration narratives that ignore socio-economic realities and youth aspirations and perceptions are unlikely to resonate in communities of migrant departure in Ghana.