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## EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF TRANS-BORDER TRADE WITH CAMEROON ON URBAN-TO-RURAL MIGRATION PATTERNS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Urban-to-rural migration in Nigeria, particularly in Cross River State, has emerged as a significant socio-economic phenomenon, with notable implications for rural development. This study focuses on understanding the patterns of urban-to-rural migration in Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Cross River State, driven primarily by the thriving trans-border cocoa trade with Cameroon. The study aims to analyze the factors that propel individuals and families to leave urban centres and settle in these rural areas, where cocoa farming and trade are prominent economic activities. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions were conducted among migrants, local farmers, community leaders, and key stakeholders involved in the cocoa trade. Additionally, secondary data from government reports, migration records, and trade statistics were analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the migration patterns and their socio-economic impacts on the region. Findings reveal that the lucrative nature of the cocoa trade, coupled with the relatively higher income potential in rural areas like Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku, compared to urban centres, is a major pull factor for migration. Moreover, the proximity to the Cameroonian border, which facilitates easier access to international markets, further incentivizes this migration trend. The study also identifies that urban-to-rural migrants in these areas contribute significantly to local economies by bringing in new skills, increasing labour availability, and enhancing agricultural productivity. However, the influx of migrants has also led to challenges such as land tenure conflicts, pressure on local infrastructure, and social integration issues. The study concludes that while urban-to-rural migration driven by the cocoa trade has positive economic impacts on Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku LGAs, there is a need for targeted policies to manage the associated challenges effectively. Recommendations include the development of infrastructure, land-use planning, and social integration programs to ensure sustainable development in these rural communities.

**Keywords:** Urban-to-Rural Migration; Cocoa Trade; Cross River State; Trans-border Economy; Rural Development

### 1. Introduction

Urban-to-rural migration refers to the movement of people from urban areas to rural regions, often driven by economic, social, or environmental factors. Globally, this trend has been influenced by various factors, including agricultural opportunities, quality of life improvements, and the quest for lower

living costs (Jończy, et al., 2021). In Nigeria, urban-to-rural migration has gained prominence due to factors such as economic instability in cities, the high cost of living, and the allure of rural agricultural opportunities (Dzudzor, 2019). This migration pattern reflects a shift where individuals seek better livelihoods and lower-

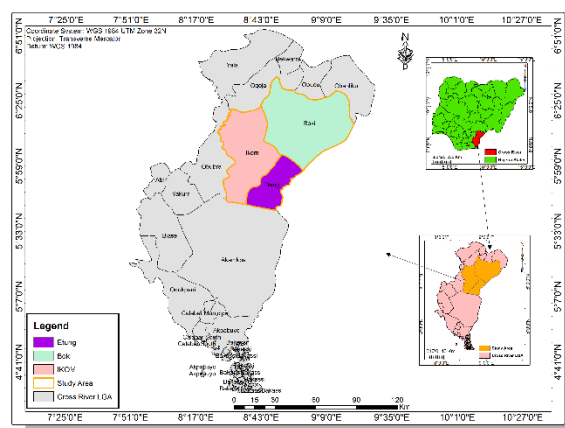
density living environments outside congested urban centres (Randolph, 2024).

Cross River State, located in southeastern Nigeria, is known for its rich biodiversity and significant agricultural activities. The local government areas (LGAs) of Ikom, Etung, Boki, and Obanliku are integral parts of this region. Ikom is renowned for its robust agricultural practices, while Boki is noted for its dense forests and agricultural potential. Obanliku is characterized by its mountainous terrain and fertile lands conducive to crop cultivation (Okang, et al., 2024). Historically, these areas have been vital in cocoa production, contributing significantly to the state's agricultural output. The socio-cultural landscape in these LGAs is deeply influenced by traditional farming practices and community-centred lifestyles, which play a crucial role in their economic activities. Cocoa is a major cash crop in Cross River State, serving as a vital source of income and economic stability for many rural communities (Kehinde, Ojo, Ogunleye, & Ogundeji, 2024). The state's favourable climate and soil conditions make it ideal for cocoa cultivation. The trans-border cocoa trade with Cameroon has further amplified the economic significance of this crop. This trade not only boosts local economies but also introduces complexities such as trade regulations and cross-border logistical challenges (Oyebamiji, 2024). The economic benefits of this trade include increased revenue and job creation, while challenges encompass market volatility and regulatory hurdles.

The cocoa trade has a profound impact on migration patterns, particularly driving movement from urban centres to rural areas (Michel, Blanco, Essouma, & Carrière, 2024). As demand for cocoa grows, rural regions like Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku become attractive to individuals seeking agricultural employment and business

opportunities. This migration is often motivated by the potential for higher earnings in cocoa production compared to urban jobs, as well as the availability of land for cultivation. Consequently, the influx of migrants contributes to demographic shifts and changes in local economic dynamics.

The demand for labour in cocoa production and trade has led to significant population shifts toward Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku. As cocoa farming becomes more profitable, these rural areas attract individuals from urban centres seeking better economic opportunities and a chance to engage in agricultural work. This migration contributes to population growth in these LGAs, altering local demographics and potentially straining existing infrastructure. The increased labour force supports the expansion of cocoa production but also poses challenges related to housing, public services, and community integration.



**Source:** GIS Unit, Dept of Geography, University of Calabar, Calabar (2024).

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Urban-to-Rural Migration Trends

Urban-to-rural migration, the movement of individuals from urban areas to rural regions, has been a notable trend in various parts of the world due to several driving factors. Globally, urban-to-rural migration is influenced by the high cost of living and

This migration trend highlights the shifting preferences of individuals as they respond to urban challenges and seek more sustainable living environments.

In developing countries, such as Nigeria, urban-to-rural migration is frequently driven by economic pressures and the pursuit of agricultural opportunities (Olsson, 2023). The rapid urbanization and subsequent challenges in cities, including high unemployment rates and inadequate infrastructure, push individuals towards rural areas where agricultural activities promise better livelihood prospects. In Nigeria, this trend is particularly evident as rural areas offer opportunities for subsistence farming and agricultural business ventures, which are often seen as more stable and rewarding compared to urban employment (Maisule, et al., 2023). This migration reflects broader socio-economic dynamics and underscores

### 2.2 Economic Impact of Trans-Border Trade

Trans-border trade, particularly in agricultural products such as cocoa, has significant economic implications for regions involved in such exchanges. In the context of Cross River State, Nigeria, the cocoa trade with Cameroon plays a crucial role in shaping the local economy. Cocoa is a major cash crop in Cross River State, and its production

quality of life issues in urban centres. As cities become increasingly congested and expensive, individuals seek the perceived tranquillity and affordability of rural areas (Ojobo, Oluwagbemiga, & Shamang, 2024). In developed countries, this trend is often associated with the search for better work-life balance and improved living conditions, as well as a desire for more space and a connection to nature (Joseph, 2023).

the role of rural areas in providing viable alternatives to urban challenges.

The implications of urban-to-rural migration are complex, affecting both the urban centres from which individuals depart and the rural areas to which they migrate. In urban centres, the outflow of the population can alleviate some pressure on infrastructure and resources, but it may also result in a loss of skilled labour and economic activity (Dokubo, et al., 2023). In rural areas, the influx of new residents can stimulate economic development and contribute to the growth of local communities, but it may also lead to increased demand for services and resources, potentially straining existing infrastructure (Okosun, et al., 2022). Understanding these trends and their impacts is crucial for policymakers and planners in managing both urban and rural development effectively.

and trade contribute significantly to the economic stability of the region (Ogundare, Edun, & Ayinde, 2023). The trans-border trade with Cameroon enhances the economic impact of cocoa production by providing additional revenue streams and creating economic opportunities for local farmers and traders. This trade relationship underscores the economic interconnectedness between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries and

highlights the importance of cross-border trade in regional economic development.

The economic benefits of trans-border trade extend beyond immediate financial gains. The trade stimulates local economies by creating job opportunities, supporting small businesses, and fostering trade relationships that contribute to broader economic growth (Omale, Olorunfemi, & Aiyegbajeje, 2023). However, this trade also presents challenges, including regulatory issues, logistical complexities, and market fluctuations that can impact the profitability and sustainability of cocoa production and trade (Martins, et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges requires effective policy frameworks and

### **2.3 Trade Influence on Urban-Rural Migration Patterns**

The influence of trade on migration patterns, particularly the movement of individuals from urban centres to rural areas, is a significant aspect of economic geography. In regions where trade, especially in cash crops like cocoa, creates economic opportunities, rural areas often become attractive destinations for individuals seeking better livelihoods (Adams, & Carodenuto, 2023). The demand for agricultural products and the economic benefits associated with their production drive migration as individuals and families relocate to areas where they can engage in farming and related activities. This migration reflects a strategic response to the economic incentives provided by trade and highlights the role of agricultural economics in shaping population distribution.

The cocoa trade between Nigeria and Cameroon exemplifies how trade influences migration patterns. As demand for cocoa increases, rural areas such as Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku become focal points for migration, driven by the economic opportunities created

### **2.4 Demand for Labor and Population Shifts**

collaboration between stakeholders to ensure that the economic benefits of trans-border trade are maximized and sustained.

Additionally, the economic impact of trans-border trade is reflected in the development of infrastructure and services in the regions involved. Improved transportation networks, market access, and trade facilitation measures can enhance the efficiency and profitability of cocoa trade, benefiting both producers and consumers (Nisa, & Antriyandarti, 2023). The interplay between trade, economic development, and infrastructure highlights the multifaceted nature of trans-border trade and its role in shaping regional economies.

by cocoa farming and trade. The influx of people into these areas is often motivated by the prospect of employment and business opportunities related to cocoa production, leading to shifts in population distribution and changes in local economies. This migration pattern illustrates the interconnectedness between trade, labour markets, and population dynamics in rural areas.

Furthermore, the impact of trade on migration patterns underscores the need for integrated planning and development strategies to manage the effects of population shifts. As rural areas experience increased migration, there is a growing demand for infrastructure, services, and community support to accommodate new residents (Weidinger, & Kordel, 2023). Effective management of these migration patterns requires collaboration between government agencies, businesses, and local communities to ensure that the benefits of trade are maximized while addressing the challenges associated with population growth and rural development.

The demand for labour in agricultural sectors such as cocoa production significantly



influences population shifts, particularly from urban centres to rural areas. As the cocoa industry grows and the demand for labour increases, rural regions often experience an influx of individuals seeking employment opportunities in farming and

In Cross River State, the expansion of cocoa production and the associated demand for labour has resulted in notable population shifts to areas like Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku. The movement of people to these rural areas reflects the economic opportunities provided by the cocoa industry and highlights the role of agriculture in shaping population distribution. The influx of labour contributes to the growth of local economies and supports the expansion of agricultural activities, but it also presents challenges such

### 3. Method of Study

The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions were conducted among migrants, local farmers, community leaders, and key stakeholders involved in the cocoa trade. Additionally, secondary data from government reports, migration records, and trade statistics were analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the migration patterns and their socio-economic impacts on the region

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Reasons for Migration

Details from the descriptive analysis of Table 1, indicate that most respondents in all three LGAs cited business (Trading) opportunities as the primary reason for migrating to rural areas, highlighting the significant role of the cocoa trade in driving labour migration. Better living conditions and affordable housing were also noted but to a lesser extent.

related activities (Agyapong, et al., 2024). This migration is driven by the economic prospects offered by cocoa cultivation and trade, leading to demographic changes in rural areas as new residents contribute to local economies and community life.

as increased demand for infrastructure and services. The link between labour demand and population shifts underscores the importance of strategic planning and

development in managing rural growth. As new migrants settle in rural areas, there is a need for effective management of resources, infrastructure, and community services to support population growth and ensure sustainable development (Omale, et al., 2023).

Agricultural opportunities and family relocation were less common reasons, indicating that economic factors, specifically related to cocoa production, are the major drivers of migration. The high percentage of respondents moving for employment opportunities reflects the influence of the cocoa trade on migration patterns. This suggests that as cocoa production and trade increase, so does the demand for labour, which is a key factor in urban-to-rural migration. Maisule et al (2023) and Olsson, (2023) had observed this in their studies that urban-to-rural migration in less developed nations is driven by economic pressure and the pursuit of agricultural business opportunities.

**Table 1: Reasons for Migration to Rural Areas**

Reasons for Migration	Ikom (n=100)	Boki (n=100)	Obanliku (n=100)	Total (n=300)
Business Opportunities	45	50	48	143
Better Living Conditions	25	20	22	67
Affordable Housing	15	10	12	37
Agricultural Opportunities	10	15	18	43
Family Relocation	5	5	7	17

**Source:** Authors fieldwork, 2024

## 4.2 Economic Impacts of Cocoa Trade

Output from Table 2., indicates that increased income and job creation are the most significant economic impacts of cocoa trade in the LGAs. Improved infrastructure and business opportunities are noted but are less prominent. Economic stability is the least reported impact, suggesting that while the cocoa trade has immediate economic benefits, long-term stability might be less

assured. The focus on increased income and job creation reflects the direct benefits of the cocoa trade on the local economy. This finding corroborated with that of Ogundary et al (2023) and Omale et al (2023) hence affirming the economic importance of trans-border trade in cocoa. However, the lesser emphasis on economic stability and infrastructure improvements indicates potential areas for further development to support sustainable growth.

**Table 2: Impact of Cocoa Trade on the Local Economy**

Economic Impact	Ikom (n=100)	Boki (n=100)	Obanliku (n=100)	Total (n=300)
Increased Income	60	55	58	173
Job Creation	50	45	52	147
Improved Infrastructure	30	25	28	83
Business Opportunities	20	15	18	53
Economic Stability	15	10	12	37

**Source:** Authors fieldwork, 2024

## 4.3 Effects of Migration on Infrastructures

Information from the analysis of Table 3, shows that a significant number of respondents believe migration has put a strain on existing facilities. The need for new facilities is also highlighted, while improvements in public services and infrastructural development are less frequently reported. This suggests that the

rapid population growth in these rural areas is outpacing the development of infrastructure. The high reports of strain on existing facilities point to a pressing need for improved infrastructure and services to accommodate the growing population due to migration. Policymakers should focus on enhancing infrastructure to ensure that it meets the needs of the expanding communities

**Table 3: Migration Effects on Local Infrastructure**

Infrastructure Aspect	Ikom (n=100)	Boki (n=100)	Obanliku (n=100)	Total (n=300)
Strain on Existing Facilities	55	60	57	172
Need for New Facilities	40	35	42	117
Improvement in Public Services	25	20	22	67
Infrastructural Development	20	15	18	53

**Source:** Authors fieldwork, 2024

#### 4.4 Benefits of Migration

Results from the descriptive analysis of Table 4 show most respondents perceived improved economic opportunities as the primary benefit of migration. Enhanced quality of life and better access to services are also noted but less frequently. Increased community cohesion and no significant benefits were the least reported, indicating that the economic advantages are the most prominent perceived

benefits. The focus on economic opportunities as the primary benefit underscores the importance of the cocoa trade in improving livelihoods. However, the limited reports of community cohesion and service access improvements suggest that further efforts are needed to enhance the overall quality of life in these areas

**Table 4: Perceived Benefits of Migration**

Benefit of Migration	Ikom (n=100)	Boki (n=100)	Obanliku (n=100)	Total (n=300)
Improved Economic Opportunities	55	50	53	158
Enhanced Quality of Life	25	20	22	67
Better Access to Services	15	15	18	48
Increased Community Cohesion	5	10	7	22
No Significant Benefit	5	5	7	17

**Source:** Authors fieldwork, 2024

#### 4.5 Challenges Confronting Migrants

Details from Table 5, revealed that the most frequently reported challenge faced by migrants is the lack of basic amenities, followed by poor infrastructure and limited access to health services. Difficulty in securing employment and social integration issues are less commonly reported, indicating that while these challenges are significant, they are not as prevalent as issues related to

infrastructure and amenities. The prominent challenges related to amenities and infrastructure highlight critical areas where intervention is needed to support migrants effectively. Addressing these issues will be essential for improving the quality of life and ensuring the successful integration of migrants into their new rural communities

**Table 5: Challenges Faced by Migrants**

Challenge	Ikom (n=100)	Boki (n=100)	Obanliku (n=100)	Total (n=300)
Lack of Basic Amenities	60	55	58	173
Poor Infrastructure	50	45	52	147
Limited Access to Health Services	30	35	28	93
Difficulty in Securing Employment	25	20	22	67
Social Integration Issues	10	15	10	35

**Source:** Authors fieldwork, 2024

The study on urban-to-rural migration patterns in Cross River State reveals that the cocoa trade significantly influences population shifts to the LGAs of Ikom, Boki,

#### 5. Conclusion



and Obanliku. The findings indicate that economic opportunities related to cocoa production are the primary drivers of migration from urban centres to these rural areas. Increased income and job creation resulting from the cocoa trade are highly valued by migrants, although the rapid influx of people has strained existing infrastructure and amenities. This has led to challenges such as inadequate basic amenities and poor infrastructure, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

## 6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were proposed based on the study findings;

- i. The government should invest in upgrading and expanding infrastructure in Ikom, Boki, and Obanliku to accommodate the growing population and improve living conditions for both migrants and existing residents.
- ii. Develop and implement programs to increase the availability of basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation facilities, and health services in the affected LGAs.
- iii. The local authorities should promote sustainable cocoa

The migration trends also underscore the substantial economic impact of the cocoa trade, demonstrating its role in shaping local economies and influencing migration patterns. However, the challenges faced by migrants, including the lack of infrastructure and limited access to essential services, call for urgent policy attention. Addressing these issues will be crucial in ensuring sustainable development and improving the living conditions of both new and existing residents in these rural areas.

farming practices to ensure the long-term viability of the cocoa trade and its benefits for local economies while minimizing environmental impact.

- iv. The government should create and support programs that provide diverse employment opportunities for migrants to reduce the difficulty in securing jobs and enhance economic stability.
- v. The government and the community stakeholders should implement initiatives to foster social integration and cohesion among migrants and local communities to address social integration issues and enhance community harmony.

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