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Migration and Development: Examining the Development Impact of Out-Migration on Bokora Communities in Karamoja.

The purpose of this research was to analyse the development impact of out-migration on Bokora communities in Karamoja. From 2005 at the height of forceful disarmament, thousands of Karimojong from Bokora ethnic clan, especially women and children out-migrated to Kampala and other bigger towns in Eastern Uganda and have continued to do so in an attempt to escape misery, uncertain survival and violence at home. The study attempted to answer how continuous out-migration of the Bokora people impacts on development in the same area. Hence the study adopted a descriptive research design, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The findings reveal that, out-migration in this community presents a development challenge, where a combination of social, economic and political development gaps such as acute poverty, insecurity and loss of cattle, poor infrastructure and social service delivery, limited marketing opportunities, natural resource degradation, and social-cultural marginalisation are clearly at the centre of decisions by individuals and/or households to out-migrate as they find themselves vulnerable and unsure of survival within their own land. Whereas out-migration has had some positive impacts on community development in instances where out-migrants have acquired new business skills and ideas, improved household incomes as a result of remittances, nevertheless it remains a challenge for development affecting human and social capital, economic growth, poverty reduction efforts, and societal fragility. Because of this, national and local governments recognise it as a problem and have occasionally tried to resettle migrants back to their land. However, it is unsuccessful as the casual factors remain unaddressed resulting in a sort of cyclic out-migration process. The implication is that, out-migration is only a coping strategy employed by individuals and households in distress. Survival is a focal issue as they make decisions to migrate. Unfortunately, women, girls and children are the most migrants, some of whom are victims of child and human trafficking. While majority are illiterate rural people with limited or no skills to engage in meaningful jobs that would otherwise help reduce their levels of vulnerability to human rights violations and exploitation in receiving areas, there is little or nothing being done in those communities to ensure their human rights and dignity is protected. This, therefore, calls for policy makers and practitioners to ensure, policies and projects aim to impact on out migration, migrants and development of their communities of origin. Interventions should focus on addressing the root causes rather than dealing with the symptoms.

Key Words: Migration, Development, Communities, Karamoja