

Youth Rural-Urban Migration in Sierra Leone: Freetown – Western Area

Memunatu Pratt

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Fourah Bay College,
University of Sierra Leone

Introduction

Evidence shows that rural-urban migration whether for temporary or permanent is the most significant form of migration. The concentration of the urban populations of youth encourages growth of large urban communities. The rate at which growth in population is taking place in cities of developing countries is a concern for all both developed and developing countries. Urbanization which is a form of migration involves an increase in the proportion of population living in the cities.¹ By the year 2000, nearly one-half of humanity (47%) lived in urban centres, yet as in 1975, the urban share was just over one-third. Within these global averages, however, there are major differences. The urban share of the population in More Developed Countries (MDCs) is for example 70% in the year 2000, as compared to 40% in less Developed Countries (LDCs). The challenge of coping with massive urban growth will thus be the greatest challenge to sustainable development and peace for the countries least able to meet it¹. The LDCs will on average face an urban growth rate of 2.6% per annum.² Some of the poorest countries like Sierra Leone are expected to face the fastest rates of urbanization. For example, Burkina Faso 5.4%, Ethiopia 5%, Laos 4.7%, Malawi 6.3% per annum etc as well as countries disrupted by conflict, for example, Angola 4.5% and

¹ Duncan, Otis D. *Human Ecology and Population Studies*, The University of Chicago Press, U.S.A, 1972, pp.51-69.

² Department for International Development (DFID). "Sustainable Urbanization, Achieving Agenda 21," 2000.

Burundi 5.5%

In a post conflict country like Sierra Leone the mass movement of people from rural urban areas such as Freetown poses a threat to peace and development.³ The developmental plans of government have been over taken by the rise in population in the city. Illegal settlements have been created all over the city, most in very dangerous and unconventional dwelling places serving as a threat to human existence⁴. It is therefore vital to note that achieving the millennium development goal will always be a challenge if government is unable to meet the socio-economic welfare of the people in the rural area and they continue to flood the urban areas posing a threat to security, development and peace. Migration tends to cause social tension⁵ as individuals and communities can create instability by competing for the little available resources such as drinking water and land. If these things are not handled carefully it may lead to violence.⁶

Youths are a pivotal category of the population of any country's developmental strides. They play significant role when their capacity is fully utilized. But when the state cannot provide their basic needs their already volatile position becomes endangered. They are often susceptible to manipulation and are therefore engage in crime and violence. Youths in the rural areas who think they are missing out on the luxuries of the city often migrate from rural to urban areas to better their lives. The situation of youths and young people in Sierra Leone is of particular concern to policy makers because of their involvement in the conflict where they were both perpetrators and victims. Perpetrators in the sense that they took up arms and committed various atrocities and victims in the sense that some were recruited as child soldiers destroying their childhood and making them suffer post-conflict trauma and stress disorder.⁷ A large number of youths under the age of 35 years are inactive in the

³ Government of Sierra Leone. "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Progress Report 2005-2007," unpublished report, 2008.

⁴ Government of Sierra Leone, "Population and Housing Census, Census Tabulations," unpublished report, 2004.

⁵ Richards, Paul. *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*, Heinemann, 1996.

⁶ Knapp B, Ross S and McCray D. "Challenge of the Human Environment," Longman, 1989, p.61.

⁷ Ekundayo, Thompson, J.D. "Addressing Youth Marginalization in Post-War Sierra Leone:

labor market. This has the potency of undermining the development interventions of the government and ultimately threatening the recently established stability. Many of the youths are illiterate, equipped with few employable skills and lack experience mostly due to the 11 years conflict which affected their formative years.

The special needs of young people should be of particular concern to policy makers, for social and political reasons. On the social development side, the majority of people “between the ages of” 15-35 are disadvantaged because they grew up during the war,⁸ which affected both their human capital development and their transition into adulthood. The lack of access to income and recognition by society can lead to frustration, hopelessness which is a potential for violence and crime, political motivations are also important, youths have proved to hold government responsible for the problem they face in making the transition to adulthood.⁹

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC Report 2006) identified marginalization and political exclusion of youth among others as some of the primary causal factors of the civil war.¹⁰ Although youths constitute majority of the population in Sierra Leone, their majority status is not reflected in the distribution of national resources, recognition, and employment, peace building processes or political positions in relation to other groups in the country. In order to ameliorate the plight of youths, the government and partners in response to the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission included youth empowerment and employment in the priority intervention areas in the *Agenda for Change*.

Ongoing initiatives to address this issue include the creation of a Ministry of Education Youths and Sports in 1996, and now the Ministry of Youths and Sports; not tied to education, the formulation of a National Youth Policy¹¹ and the formation of

Mapping the Challenges for Peace,” unpublished research report submitted to the Nordic Africa Institute, 2008.

⁸ *Ibid*, Paul Richards, 1996.

⁹ Zack-Williams, A. “Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991 – 1998,” *Third World Quarterly*, 20 (1), 1999, pp.143-162.

¹⁰ The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Committee. “Truth and Reconciliation Report,” Vol.3(A), 2006.

¹¹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. “Sierra Leone National Youth Policy,” unpublished policy paper, 2003.

the National Youth Commission (NYC) by an Act of Parliament in 2009 This commission is yet to be fully functional., Other interventions include; the establishment of micro-farms, Agricultural Business Units (ABU) and specific enterprises for “Girls off the Street” in several districts and the launch of a Youth Employment Scheme (YES), focusing on immediate and feasible options for employment creation.

Unemployment is major problem or challenge to the governments’ post-conflict peacebuilding effort. Though the rural areas are the most affected the problem is more acute in the city where in almost every main street you see cluster of youths idling or in “Ataya” shops and “ghettos” mostly talking about European football. It is estimated that up to 70% of the youths of the country are unemployed or underemployed.¹² The 2002 poverty profile showed that youth aged 14- 24 are amongst the poorest of the poor, unemployment can be a daunting task as over 800,000 youths are unemployed¹³ especially for able bodied persons who have been accustomed to being involved and participating in rewarding activities of different kinds.

Many youths after spending a few years at university and or vocational training institutions to obtain relevant advanced education that equip them to function in society by contributing to the development of the state and people therein, find that after all the commitment and achieving the appropriate and relevant qualifications there are no openings to engage and absorb the knowledge they have acquired.¹⁴ This leads not only to frustration but almost invariably and imperceptively, to develop thoughts and actions in unsavory directions in society, to the detriment of themselves and the nation as a whole. Equally so there are also other youths who are illiterate, untrained and unqualified, majority have attained only primary and secondary school education levels and formal systems of education are yet to meet the training and

¹² United Nations Development Programme. “Joint Response Initiative 2010,” unpublished policy paper, 2010.

¹³ Government of Sierra Leone. “Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2012): An Agenda for Change,” unpublished policy paper.

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. “Education Sector Plan: A Road Map To A Better Future,” unpublished policy paper, 2007.

capacity building needs of the young people. Despite efforts made in the restructuring of the education system, large numbers of youths are excluded from formal education programmes. Non-formal systems of education therefore have to cater for the re-education of these youths for them to become more productive especially after falling out of the formal education systems.¹⁵

For most developing countries the last decade has been one of increasing difficulty -declining living standards, unemployment, deteriorating services, social unrest and political instability. In Latin America, the standard of living dropped by 10%; in sub-Saharan Africa, by 25%. In Asia, the successes of several Pacific Rim countries disguise the huge numbers -about 300 million in India alone - who still live in absolute poverty with a diet too poor to allow enough energy for work. Population growth is often singled out as one of the main negative factors in any approach to developing sustainable agricultural and rural development programmes. Increasing pressure on finite natural resources is an inevitable result of rapid population growth. The world's population increases by 220,000 every day and will be over 6 billion by the end of the century.

It was estimated that by the year 2000 there will be over **one billion youth** from the ages of 15 to 24. Nearly eighty-five percent of them will be from low-income countries where there are already food shortages, massive rural-to-urban migrations; Inadequate housing, health care and education; and high rates of unemployment. The youth populations of Africa, Asia and Latin America will almost double between 1985 and the end of this century. In 1990, the Youth population (15-24 years) of the world was approximately 1.01 billion or 19.1% and the number of children (0-14 years) was reckoned to be about 1.7 billion or 32.2% of the world's population. The projected figures for the year 2000 are 1.19 billion for youth and 2.01 billion for children. This has increased dramatically ten years on.¹⁶

All the increase in the world's children and most of the increase in youth has

¹⁵ Government of Sierra Leone. "Progress on Meeting Education for All (EFA) Goals with Emphasis on Adult Literacy: an Assessment of Sierra Leone's March to Meeting the Full EFA Agenda," unpublished policy paper, November 2008.

¹⁶ United Nations Populations Fund. "The State of World Population 2000," 2000.

been in the less developed regions of the world over the last three decades. For the remainder of this century, youth in the developed regions will decline slightly in absolute numbers, while the numbers in developing regions will continue to rise, such that by the end of the century close to nine out of ten youth will live, in developing countries. Youth and children will constitute the largest proportion of the population in developing countries compared to around one third of the population in developed countries. Rural youths account for around 55 percent of the world youth population. They are among the most disadvantaged of groups¹⁷ Often they have limited access to educational programmes that are geared to their situation and needs - not surprisingly, many rural people drop out of school at an early age. Class-work is often geared more toward academic accomplishments and to the urban areas than to learning skills useful to rural life, and preparing for adulthood. In many cases too, there is a genuine need for the young person's labour on the farm or in the home adding yet another reason why parents see little reason to keep their children in school. Rural young women have even greater difficulties than young men as they are often not given the same opportunities in education, training and Involvement in rural development activities.¹⁸

Children and youth combined therefore make up slightly more than half of the total population of the world. Their characteristics represent the legacy of the recent past and the successes or failures of policies and programmes. Their aspirations and opportunities are also indicators of the characteristics of adults in the near future because the world of the future depends on the youth of today.

In future rural youths need to be prepared in Improving their capabilities to produce food and to conserve productive resources in the rural environment, Improving their skills and abilities in carrying out income generating activities in rural areas, relieving population pressure and improving nutrition and the well being of farming families and developing leadership and the ability to work well with others in group and community situations. Their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour are

¹⁷ United Nations Development Report (UNDP). "Making New Technologies Work for Human Development," in *Human Development Report*, New York and Oxford University Press, 2001.

¹⁸ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). "The Out of School Children in Sierra Leone," unpublished report, 2008.

of vital importance in the implementation of sustainable agricultural and rural development programmes.

One of the consequences of the rising population and lack of opportunities in rural areas is urban migration - young people consciously decide to move to the towns with the hope of greater opportunities for employment and better education. The education they do receive in rural areas is so often urban oriented that it adds to the belief that their prospects will be better in the towns. The “push” of poverty in rural areas is at least as great as the “pull” of the bright lights. As a consequence the towns become increasingly overcrowded putting pressure on limited services. For some, opportunities are indeed found in the urban areas, and this increases the lure of the towns for the many others who then find themselves worse off than they would have been in the rural areas. The challenge is to develop the rural areas to make them attractive to young people in terms of employment prospects, education and training opportunities, health services and social life.

Three major worldwide trends of concern for youth are, firstly a dramatic decline in most countries in the formal sector job opportunities, Secondly, increasing urbanisation and increasing concentration of resources on urban youth at the expense of rural youth and the Increasing population pressure on land and other resources.¹⁹ In spite of regional diversity, some problems are universal to all regions. The problems that rural young people face are reflections of the larger problems of society. The major problems that affect young people across the world are those concerning peace, development, education and training, work, health, housing, family life, culture and the environment.

In the case of Freetown, migration has continued to be a major contributing factor to the high rate of population growth. Economic development in Freetown after independence brought in its wake many laborers from other parts of the country in search of jobs in the then expanding city, which has continued even to date. The housing situation in Freetown is deficient in terms of quality and quantity. Overcrowding is a contributing factor which especially is as a result of large number of

children and extended family.²⁰

The rapid deterioration in living standards of people and the prospect of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 is a serious challenge for countries²¹ subsequently; the proliferation of slums and shanty towns, squatter settlements or informal settlements merely exacerbates the problem of insecurity and underdevelopment. As most residents in these areas of the cities are low income earners and unemployment is highly rated among them which makes them vulnerable to diseases, misuse and violence.

1. Background to the Study

Population movement, be it in the form of migration or forced displacement has been a defining characteristics of much of the world. The movement from one place or locality to another could be by chance, instinct or planned. It is a historical process that has given us the present geographical distribution of people. Much of early migration was in the form of slavery. As strong nations exploited new lands they discovered that the indigenous populations were too sparsely distributed to be coerced in areas of surplus to areas of deficit. The notorious slave trade between West Africa and the Americas is a classic example. This has led to the mix racial foundation in which people of African descent make up 10% of the total population of the United States. Migration has been a deeply rooted cultural process, helped by people's unique ability to adapt to environments without evolution. It has enormous importance to the progress of the humanity; it has allowed development of a global resource base and thus overcome the restriction imposed by any one environment. That notwithstanding, migration, especially rural urban migration has negatively impacted on the attainment of sustainable peace and development in many LDCS.

People were driven from one country to another and between countryside and

¹⁹ UNDP. "World Development Report 2008," The World Bank, Washington DC, 2008.

²⁰ Muana J.K.L Unpublished Dissertation, 1991.

²¹ Government of Sierra Leone. "Millennium Development Goals Progress Report," unpublished report, 2010.

city in an unending search for more fruitful existences. Political harassment or physical violence and threat to life have caused people to move long distances. Examples of some groups include the Quakers, Mormons, Jews, Ethiopians etc who were more or less evicted from their lands and had to settle in other places.²² In Africa, population movement has occurred for well over 500 years, this was more so with pastoralist, traders and agriculturist.

More recently, the search for a better life, future or for the purpose of basic survival, people have moved increasingly in Africa responding to globalization with individuals moving beyond traditional countries of destruction, including outside the continent itself. Many take to the high seas in an irregular way, some across the Mediterranean to countries in Europe, some across the Gulf of Aden, to the Middle East and some braving the wild hot Sahara desert to Libya from West Africa.²³ It is no secret that some of these migrants suffer disastrous consequences even to the point of losing their lives either by starvation, thirst or been thrown overboard motorized boats into the high seas by the people smugglers.

Even though migration tends to impact negatively on development, it also has the positive attributes that is worth mentioning. It has been argued on one hand that underdevelopment is a cause of migration, and on the other that migration causes developing countries and rural areas to lose their highly skilled persons. While there is a measure of truth in both assertions, migration has enormous potential for development of countries and rural communities. Remittances have become a prominent source of funding for development programmes²⁴ Migration can thus contribute to reduction of poverty at both local and national levels and also to reduction in the economic vulnerability of people. Many people who migrate that have been fortunate to secure well paid jobs contribute to development projects back home in rural areas. If they had stayed they wouldn't have been able to accomplish such task

²² Knapp B.J., Ross SRJ and McRae DLR. *Challenge of the Human Environment*, Longman Group K.U. 1989.

²³ Summary Report of "United Nations/International Organization for Migration High Level meeting on African Development Needs," implemented on September 2008.

²⁴ The World Bank's International Finance Team. "Global Development Finance, Striving for Stability in Development Finances," The World Bank, 2003.

like building a modern house, supporting agricultural activities and also educational activities for children of family relations. If the remittances are well managed it leads to development.

Migration into Freetown from rural areas had a nexus with the causes of the war, some of which were as a result of over centralization, inefficient public utilities poor infrastructure, a high rate of unemployment, injustice and national politics.²⁵ The colonial administrative legacy has still not been dismantled. It based the seat of power and policy formulation in the Western Coastal city of Freetown. All policy matters and decisions are taken in Freetown. One negative effect is that in most cases the specific needs, the realities and circumstances of the provincial/rural communities have either been marginally treated or in extreme circumstances neglected outright. Visible evidence of this has been the lack of equity in resource allocation, leading over the years to a feeling of deprivation and alienation by the rural people. Some of these were accessing the national passport and higher education. In order to acquire travel documents people had to move to Freetown and spend weeks and even months to get the documents. In the interim, these people get adapted to city life and see going back to the rural areas a difficult task. In the same vain the highest form of education in the northern eastern provinces was higher teachers' certificate as there were only teachers training colleges in Bunumbu in the east, Bombali and Port Loko in the North. The south has Njala University College. Districts like Kono only had sixth forms as the highest form of education. Therefore in the quest to access higher education or the university, young people had to migrate to Freetown in order to be admitted into Fourah Bay College after passing their General Certificate of examination, ordinary and advance levels.

Furthermore, inefficient public utilities and poor infrastructure also contributed to the migration of people into Freetown from rural areas. Barely two decades after independence, Sierra Leone began to experience a massive rate of

²⁵ The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Truth and Reconciliation Report 2006," 2006.

decline in public utilities and infrastructure.²⁶ During the 1980s' the capacity and ability of government to respond to the needs of its citizenry especially the youths had been constrained. Power plants in the district headquarter towns broke down massive blackouts set in. The hospitals lack medicines and quality staff, water supply became inefficient as these were no chemicals to chlorinate the dams. Poor roads were also visible in the rural areas. Rural people highly depend on the roads to convey their agricultural products to bigger towns for the sale. Vehicles cannot access the villages, due to bad roads; farmers could not access the market thereby leaving the farm products to rot. Another problem was communication. During the pre war era communication was only limited to the Sierra Leone Postal Services, the Sierra Leone National Telecommunications and Sierra Leone External Telecommunications. Many rural residences had relatives and friends in the Diaspora who needed to be communicated to, but since the services were inefficient as letters coming through the post were tampered with and content removed and eternal communications were limited to Wallace Johnson Street headquarters of Sierra Leone External Communications Company. Due to these inefficient services people had to migrate to Freetown; to seek medical services and after getting cured they stayed in Freetown, youths who get bored with agriculture migrated and to communicate with relations in the Diaspora, people resided in Freetown to represent their family members in the rural areas.

Unemployment was another factor that led to the migration of people. During the 70s and 80s there were multinational companies that employed a lot of Sierra Leoneans. Companies such as the National Diamond Mining Company of Kono and Tongo, the Marampa Iron Ore mines and Sierra Rutile Company.²⁷ Before the war the National Diamond Mining Company and the Marampa Iron Ore mines became defunct leading to mass unemployment. Since Freetown had industries and factories many people left the rural areas to seek employment in the city.

²⁶ Zack-Williams, Alfred B. "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War 1991-1998," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.20, No.1, pp.143-162, 1999.

²⁷ Gberie, L. 1999. "The Sierra Leone War: Background and Key Actors," in Abdullah, I (ed.) 2004.

Other factors attributed to migration were the issues of injustice, excessive court fines and politics. Some people felt intimidated by local political authorities and natural rulers, they had to migrate for safety. In the same vein, local courts levy excessive fines²⁸ for minor crimes especially against the youths which leave them no alternative but to quit the rural areas. Some people also thought they do not get justice in the areas, they reside when they were aggrieved, which prompt them to move.

During the conflict, government authority diminished in most areas in the rural areas due to insecurity as they became targets. Since the start of the conflict in 1991 authorities such as chiefs, magistrates and judges, police, military and civil servants all became prime targets of the rebels. The civil populace became extremely vulnerable as the rebel activities were characterized by amputations, rape, mutilations etc. At some point even soldiers and other allies such as the Civil Defense Forces (CDF) also became perpetrators of violence instead of protectors. This insecurity prompted massive migration into the city from all over the country as the city seemed relatively safe due to the presence of government troops and international forces of Economic Community of West Africa States Monitoring Group ECOMOG and United Nations peacekeeping forces (UNAMSIL). This mass influx led to the creation of many displaced camps all over the city and its environs.

At the end of the war in 2002, government and other partners repatriated and reintegrated displaced persons and ex-combatants into their places of origin. This process was successful as all the inmates of the camps in the Western Area were repatriated. Reintegration packages were given to the returnees which included food and non food items such as blankets, cooking utensils and roofing materials as most houses were destroyed during the conflict. After repatriation some national and international non-governmental organizations together with the government embarked on developmental programmes. Dwelling houses were built, hospitals, court houses, markets, schools and roads were maintained. Agricultural projects were supported and micro credit facilities were opened to the returnees to enhance their economic capacity. At the end of the war the government embarked on decentralization programmes by

²⁸ Justice Sector Development Programme. "Strategic Plan 2007," unpublished plan, 2007.

establishing local government through elections. The decentralization motive is to ensure the civil populace participation in governance and enhance effective and efficient delivery of goods and services to the people. Devolution of ministries, departments and agencies have also been ongoing where in local governments that is, city and district councils are implementing and supervising programmes previously done by the central government such as agriculture, health, etc.

Sustainable development and peace are two inseparable concepts as development cannot thrive in insecure and chaotic atmosphere. Therefore a serene and peaceful environment is a prerequisite for development of a country. For a long time, Sierra Leone has been pegged at the bottom rung of the United Nations Human Development Index and in order for it to be elevated it must take great strides in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) which world leaders outlined in a summit to be achieved by 2015. These goals are to: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; empower women and promote gender equality between men and women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal mortality ratio; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development. These goals are based on or centered on improving the quality of human life.

There are various reasons as to why persons migrate from rural to urban areas. These could be classified under the “push” factors and the “pull” factors. The push factors are unfavorable conditions in the rural settings these include famine, drought, natural disasters, poor living conditions, such as housing, education and health care, unemployment, war and conflict. The pull factors includes the rising expectations of a better life such as: employment, higher incomes, better health care and education, security, quite life, pleasant environment, urban facilities and way of life such as pipe borne water, electricity, television, recreational facilities, and security..

2. Theoretical Evidence/Literature Review Migration:

The theory of migration stems from social demography in sociology. The theories of migration could be dated back to 1885 and 1889,²⁹ when Ravenstein propounded on six laws which covers all major aspects of migration. They include; migration and distance, dominance of economic motive. He observed that: most migrants only move short distances, and that numbers decrease as distances increase; people moving long distances are only poorly aware of the possibilities at their chosen destination: they tend first to go to large urban areas rather to small towns and rural areas; after arrival at a place; migrants will often then disperse as they become more aware of their local environment; as people leave a place so others often migrate in; and urban people migrate less than rural people. Ravenstein made his observation at a time when the urbanization of the industrial world was at its maximum. However, taking the world as a whole, the statement remains valid as huge numbers move within the developing world.

According to Ziff's inverse distance rule of 1930,³⁰ he agreed with Ravenstein's first law, he maintained that the volume of migration was inversely proportional to the distance traveled by the migrants. He also expressed Ravenstein's Law II as a relationship, called a gravity model. This makes a parallel with the laws of gravity. One must note however that in the decision to migrate, people rarely think in terms of physical distance, but move in terms of remoteness, which is time and difficulty to travel and this is less easy to quantify. After a certain distance, people have little appreciation of real distances and they tend to foreshorten long distances.

The Bright light theorist advocated that rural-urban migration was due to the pull of migrants to the cities in terms of the excitement of the city life and other opportunities there; for example unemployment.

Everette Lee developed a "General Scheme" for migration, divided into "push" and "pull" factors.³¹ The push factors are centrifugal and she associated them

²⁹ Ravenstein, E.G. "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol.48, 1885, pp.167-227; Ravenstein, E.G. "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol.52, 1989, pp.241-301.

³⁰ Zipf J. The Inverse distance rule 1930.

³¹ Lee, E.S. "A Theory of Migration Demography," *Demography*, Vol.3, No.1, 1966, pp.47-57.

with the areas of origin, while the pull factors are centripetal and associated with areas of destination. Furthermore, she mentioned other factors which she calls “intervening variables” and “personal factors” and pointed out that part of the prospective migrant particularly as he or she may have an imperfect knowledge about the areas of intended migration.

Furthermore, Byerlee D. argues that growth forms an integral part of socio-economic development, and efficiently allocates labor and equalized factor markets in a fairly competitive economy.³² He postulated four factors that are linked to high migration, viz: (i) increase rural – urban income gap resulting from distortion in factor markets; (ii) the high propensity of human capital transfer from rural to urban areas; (iii) the externalities arising from migration; and (iv) the role of remittances in equilibrating rural and urban incomes. He like Todaro believes that these arise out of the selfish economic objective of the rural rational man to improve on his welfare. This in response has made urbanization process undesirable and, therefore should be reversed.

Of the additional world population expected between the year 2000 and 2015, about 970 million will be added in urban areas, compared to only 130 million in rural areas. According to the Department for International Development (DFID),³³ a British organization, most (93%) of the world’s additional urban population will live in towns and cities of the less Developed countries (LDCs). In Asia, they say that eight times as many of the additional people will be urban rather than rural (590 million compared to 70 million), an increase of 44% in the regions total urban population. In Africa, their work reveals that twice as many of the additional people will be urban (200 million compared to 90 million), representing an increase of 69% in Africa’s total urban population. In contrast, Europe will probably add only about 200 million to its urban population, an increase of 4% over 15 years (DFID, 2002).

³² Byerlee, Derek. “Rural Urban Migration in Africa: Theory, Policy and Research Implications,” *International Migration Review*, vol.8, 1979, pp.55-94.

³³ United Kingdom’s Department for International Development. “Sustainable Urbanization - Achieving Agenda 21,” 2002.

3. Statement of Problem

The rate of youth rural migration into Freetown has been unprecedented in this post conflict era of Sierra Leone. This has led to over population of the city leading to the creation of new settlements and a proliferation of ghettos/potes all over the city bringing considerable strain on public utilities. In 1963, there was only one urban city (Freetown), with 50,000 or more inhabitants. Its population made up only 5.9% of the country's total population. In 1974, its population had more than doubled its size and up to 10% of the country's population lived in Freetown. This implied that there was an average annual rate of natural increase of 2% and a generous net increment of about 0.8% per annum due to international migration. It would be seen that the contribution of internal migration alone to the growth of Freetown between these periods was of the order 4% per annum. Of course rural urban migration contributed immensely to this aspect of the growth of Freetown. (Harvey and Riddle, 1975).³⁴

When the countryside became extremely insecure during the eleven years of conflict many people who become vulnerable especially youths had to seek protection in the capital Freetown as government authority had dwindled in their areas with members of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces abandoning their constitutional duty of protecting the lives and properties of people becoming perpetrators. This search for a safe heaven led to a dramatic increase of the population of Freetown leading to the establishment of displaced camps in and around city. The inmates of these displaced camps where those persons from the interior who could not access accommodation from friends or family members. This excess population which the city was not adequately prepared for had a debilitating effect on the social and economic lives of the people as well as the associated environmental problems.

Furthermore, youths keep migrating to the city rural areas due the social life

³⁴ Harvey M.E. and Riddle J.B. "Development Urbanization and Migration: A Test of a Hypothesis in the 3rd World," In Kozinski and Prothero (eds). *Geography and a Crowded World*, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1972, p.52.

they tasted during their displacement in the city and since these social amenities are absent in the rural areas despite the repatriation and resettlement packages provided by the government and development partners, the youths continue to migrate in droves.

4. Justification

Even though writers in the past have tried to identify problems associated with youth rural-urban migration yet not many studies have tried to quantify the proportion of the urban population contributed to by youth rural-urban migration as against that by natural increase and the and the consequences on peace and development in the post conflict era. Much has been said about the reasons behind people moving from rural urban areas but not its threat to their very lives and well being.

This study is therefore relevant and timely as it endeavored to analyze the challenges and threats of youth rural-urban migration on the city of Freetown and how it affects their lives and well being. The study recommended measures that enabled government/development partners to address challenges encountered by youths in urban and rural areas as a result of migration. It further proffered suggestions on what needs to be put in place for youths to return to their places of origin and coping mechanisms that can reduce the effects of urbanization. The recommendations are further in line with interventions made by the United Nations Development Youth programme and implementing the areas of youth's development articulated in the government's document on the *Agenda for Change*.

5. Significance of Study

This study is important as its findings are useful to researchers, academics policy makers, civil society groups, non-governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations. The result of this research is used as a source for

referral for subsequent researches to be undertaken on youth migration. It is very useful to policy makers such as government ministries, departments and agencies for assisting them to implementing existing programmes and formulate policies that would reduce the rate of mass migration and better the condition of youth migrants already in the city. Policies should be able to target the push and pull factors that influence migration. Main while draws the attention of government to the policy implementation of establishing new settlement and the dangers of living in slums and shanty towns.

Furthermore, to civil society groups, local and international non-governmental organizations who are development partners with government, the research finding is vital to the activities to identify target groups that are prone to migrate from rural-urban areas.

6. Objectives of the Study

Purpose

To provide reliable qualitative research on the situation of youth in Sierra Leone, that is generated partly by the youth, and that can be used to inform future interventions in the youth sector. To provide an overview of the changing mind-set of youth including emerging and new (both negative and positive) value-systems among youth and how these relate to the existing governance structures in Sierra Leone: the constraints and possibilities.

General Objectives

- To generate reliable qualitative and up-to-date information on the situation of youth in Sierra Leone, which can be used to inform interventions in the area of youth;
- To involve the youth in carrying out research on youth as a means of empowerment;
- To research on issues that are pertinent to the situation of youth in the following thematic areas: Youth development and employment; Youth

and political violence; Issues surrounding rural-urban youth migration; and emerging value systems amongst urban youth.

Specific Objectives

The main objectives of this survey were to:

1. Examine the link between the huge numbers of youth migrants to that of rural urban migration and assess the ready availability of pull factors in Freetown and equal access to social amenities.
2. Assess coping strategies and how Government would address rural urban migration, the stemming of rural-urban migration in rural areas and how youths would develop/improve their places origins.
3. Proffer suggestions/recommendations in addressing the findings of objectives 1-3

7. Methodology and Scope

In order to be assured of reliability and dependability of the research findings, the study made extensive use of the expertise of National Youth Coalition (NYC) that works with a huge number of existing youth groups nationwide. The study area – Western Urban and Rural, was divided into (4) four zones to cover the geographical spread of the study area. These zonal areas include: (1) Waterloo zone covering the mountain rural communities, (2) East zone starts from Eastern Police roundabout and ends at Allen Town, (3) Central zone covers the business area of Freetown, and (4) West zone runs from St John to Goderich and the Lakka communities. These zonal divisions of Freetown host thousands of youth groups albeit a good number of these so called youth groups are dysfunctional.³⁵ The identification of NYC was therefore handy in drawing up the sample size for the study.

A total of six hundred (600) questionnaires were administered to respondents

³⁵ This was revealed in methodology training workshop organized for data collectors for this research by a representative from National Youth Commission Sierra Leone.

from functional youth groups and forty eight (48) focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted. A simply random selection of respondents was employed. However, prior to this, each zonal division of the study area had equal numbers of the two instruments used. Thus, each zone had 150 questionnaires and held 12 FGDs, it is from these allocations of the instruments that the research randomly selected its respondents. Invariably, 12 field researchers (students) and 4 lead researchers (lecturers) were divided into 4 groups to cover the 4 zonal division of the Western Area where the survey was carried out.

At the commencement of the study, a 1 day study/survey methodology workshop was organized for both lead researchers as well as field researchers. This workshop was crucial for the overall success and realization of desired outcomes of the survey. The objectives and purposes of the study were discussed in order for the researchers to be acquainted with the survey before field work. Part of this workshop also, trained researchers on the methodology of the study including techniques involved in conducting interviews, administering questionnaires and handling focus group discussions.

Furthermore, questions on the questionnaires were reviewed so as to enable researchers to be familiar with the issues involved in the study. This was necessary as no time was allotted for a pre-test survey to test the correctness and reliability of the instrument. A simulation of focus group discussion was carried out in order also to familiarize field researchers with techniques involved handling FGDs using the FGD Guide. Questions in the FGD Guide such as; would you associate high crime rates to rural-urban migration? Would you associate the congestion and population explosion in Freetown to migration? And what do you think the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and her development partners should do to address rural – urban youth migration among others, were discussed in the simulation exercise to measure the duration of each FGD.

8. Research Challenges

Many youth participants expected better form of remunerations for participating in the focus group discussions as they thought they were doing researchers a favor and should be paid for whatever time they spent, forgetting the fact that the work when completed will help transform or better their status. During the focus group discussions some participants abruptly leave the discussions to attend to other pressing issues despite the plea of researchers. Female participants were not easy to come by as most of the youth organizations/groups are dominated by men and some female participants shied away from the discussions.

9. Summary Findings

The main objectives of this survey were to firstly examine the link between the huge number of youth migrants to that of rural urban migration, secondly to assess the ready availability of pull factors Freetown and assess equal access to social amenities, thirdly, to Investigate the high crime rate in the city and congestion/population explosion in the city in relation to rural urban migration. Fourthly to examine the adverse effects of migration and assess how youths survive the effects/problems of migration and how Government would address rural urban migration Finally, investigate the stemming of rural-urban migration in rural areas and assess how youths would develop/improve their places origins.

The research instruments used to solicit data were semi-structured questionnaire and focus group discussions and were utilized in all zones of Western Area. A combined qualitative and quantitative analysis was carried out on the transcribed data of the responses. Simple statistical techniques such as percentages and tabulation were utilized in the analysis.

In conclusion therefore, the huge number of youth migrants in the city from rural Sierra Leone could be attributed to the following; absence of job opportunities, high rate of unemployment, inadequate higher educational institutions, lack of better

schools and qualified teachers, inadequate medical care, better business opportunities, insecurity during the war, lack of mechanized farming and subsidy for farmers and poverty all present in the rural areas forced youths to migrate to the city. Others include high birth rate and centralization of services in the city.

With regards the ready availability of pull factors in the city, findings indicate that they are readily available but not sufficient for all youth migrants to benefit from. Findings also reveal that youths have equal access to social amenities though some expressed reservations that accessing social services depends on the individual's financial capability to afford them. In relation to high crime rate, findings indicate that it is associated to rural urban migration though in some sense it has been attributed to urban youths as they are the architects who lure rural youths into it. Findings indicate that congestion/population explosion is indeed linked to rural urban migration as evidences of it are seen with the high rate of street children, high street trading, traffic congestion and people putting up structures in disaster prone areas that has led to loss of lives and property through disasters such as flooding and landslides.

With regards the adverse effects of migration, findings indicate shortage of houses and its related hike in rent, huge unemployment, inadequate medical care, high crime rate, more youths involved in drug abuse, proliferation of slums and ghettos, overcrowding in schools, traffic congestion, inadequate transport facility and overcrowded city. According to findings, migrants have been able to survive the effects of migration in one way or another and few highlighted armed robbery as a grave threat to their survival. In order to address rural urban migration, findings indicate that government and development partners should provide low cost housing facilities country wide, provide better academic institutions with qualified staff nationwide, improve on infrastructural development such as roads for farmers to access the market with their farm products, affordable medical care for all, improve on the decentralization process, create job opportunities for youths all over the country, provide social amenities such as electricity and water supply nationwide at affordable cost, enhance mechanized farming and provide subsidy to farmers.

As to what Government should do in the rural areas to stem rural urban

migration, findings indicate that Government should embark on mechanized farming with the provision of subsidy to farmers, improve on road network for farmers to access the market with their farm products, provide higher educational institutions and medical facilities with qualified staffs, ensure there is an enabling environment for companies and factories to operate for them to employ youths in the rural areas. Findings indicate that youth migrants are of the opinion that they should contribute in diverse ways to the improvement/development of their places of origin.

10. Recommendations

In the process of conducting the study many issues were discerned, amongst others the various aspects of migration process in Sierra Leone highlighting its high rate of acceleration that mainly involves youth and its concentration in the capital city Freetown which in turn poses greater problems both for planning and development oriented activities. Rural urban migration has been singled out as the main engine of growth of the urban city. In response to this situation, congenial urban development policies that will take into account the simultaneous development of the rural areas are necessary. In this regard the following policy options are proposed

1. Policies that affect the growth of urban areas Increasing the capacity and competence of the newly created town and city councils to manage their growth and development especially to cater for the masses. The present decentralization of government is a step in the right direction. Local government units to raise their own revenues to run and develop their localities, since this can lead to the creation of alternative growth roles, rural-urban migration would be modified. Medium sized towns made to attract some migrants and rural-urban migration would be modified.
2. Slums could be upgraded and low cost building material developed and advocated for use in the building industry Adherences to town planning regulations must be enforced to direct growth of urban units

3. Government should institute policies that would encourage private sector investment in commercial agriculture. Only commercial agriculture has the full potentials of providing employment for the youth thereby making life better in the rural communities
4. The institution of national agricultural pricing policy that would encourage rural farmers to realize much returns from their agricultural activities thereby discouraging their movement into bigger for economic reasons
5. Construction of rural roads and maintenance for the safe and speedy delivery of agricultural product to market in order to avoid them getting rot
6. Decentralization of educational institutions whereby every provincial headquarter town must have a university to absorbed student and discourage them from migrating to Freetown
7. Teachers in rural areas should be trained and properly enumerated for a better output of their students in national exams
8. Awareness raising campaign should be undertaken through the media and community meetings about the challenges of migrating into the city where the expectation of migrants are not met
9. Adequate resources must be geared towards the improvement of housing for the poor and also government should encourage private sector investment in the housing sector
10. Sustainable development standard codes must be established for possible renewal of natural resources such as reforestation programmers which will curb the depletion of natural resources and check the excessive erosion responsible for flooding in the city
11. Government should improve on the mechanism for monitoring rent determination by landlord so as to check the unnecessary exorbitant charges and curtail the payment of rent in foreign currency
12. Government to ensure equitable distribution of social services
13. Government to address youth unemployment and high crime rate

References

- Abdullah, I., (1998), "Bush Path to Destruction: the Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone," *Journal of African Studies*, 36, 2.
- Abdullah I., (2002) "Youth Culture and Rebellion': Understanding Sierra Leone's Watershed Decade," *Critical Arts* 16, no.2, pp.19-37.
- Abdullah Riddle J.B., "Development , Urbanization and Migration," Methner and Co.ltd London.
- Byerlee Derek (1979) "Rural Urban Migration in Africa: Theory, Policy and Research implications," vol.8, pp. 55-94.
- DFID and the Government of Sierra Leone (2008), "Private Sector Development Strategy Programme – Diagnostic Report," prepared by Nathan EME.
- DFID (2002), "Sustainable Urbanization - Achieving Agenda 21," A paper jointly produced by HABITAT and DFID.
- Duncan Otis D (1972), "Human Ecology and Population Studies," The University of Chicago Press, U.S.A, 1972, pp. 51-69.
- Ekundayo-Thompson, J.D. (2008), "Addressing Youth Marginalization in Post-War Sierra Leone: Mapping the Challenges for Peace," Unpublished Research Report Submitted to the Nordic Africa Institute.
- Richards, Paul (1996), *Fighting for the Rain Forests: War Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*, Heinemann.
- Gberie, L. (1999), 'The Sierra Leone War: Background and Key Actors,' in: Abdullah, I (ed.) 2004.
- Government of Sierra Leone (2004), "Population and Housing Census, Census Tabulations," unpublished policy paper.
- (2008), "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Progress Report 2005-2007," unpublished policy paper.
- (2008), "Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2012): An Agenda for

Change,” unpublished policy paper.

----- (2008), “Progress on Meeting Education for All (EFA) Goals with Emphasis on Adult Literacy: An Assessment of Sierra Leone’s March to Meeting the full EFA Agenda,” unpublished policy paper, November 2008.

----- (2010), “Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2010: Global Development Finance, Striving for Stability in Development Finances,” The World Bank.

Harvey M.E. and Riddle J.B (1972), “Development Urbanization and Migration: A Test of a Hypothesis in the 3rd World,” In Kozinski and Prothero (eds), Methuen and Co. Ltd. London, p.52,

Linden, Eugene (1996), “The Exploding Cities of Developing World,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75.

Hope, kempe Donlad, Sr. (1998), “Urbanization and Urban Growth in Africa,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol.33 (4), pp.345-358.

Knapp B, Ross S and McCray D. (1989), “Challenge of the Human Environment,” Longman, 1989, p61.

Lee, E.S. “A Theory of Migration Demography,” *Demography*, Vol.3, No.1, 1966, pp.47-57.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. (2003), “Sierra Leone National Youth Policy,” unpublished policy report.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2007), “Sierra Leone Education Sector Plan: A Road Map to a Better Future,” unpublished policy report.

Ravenstein, E.G (1885), “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, No.48, pp.167-227.

Ravenstein, E.G (1889), “The Laws of Migration,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, No.52, pp.241-301.

Sesay I.M. (1889), “Urban Growth in Sierra Leone,” unpublished dissertation in “UNDP-Water and Sanitation for Health: Towards the Year 2000,” p.1.

“Summary Report: United Nations/International Organization for Migration High Level Meeting on African Development Needs,” September 2008.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (2006), *Truth and Reconciliation Report*, Vol.1, 3A.

United Nations Development Programme (2001), "Making New Technologies Work for Human Development," New York and Oxford University Press.

----- (2008), "The Out of School Children in Sierra Leone."

----- (2008), "World Development Report 2008," The World Bank, Washington D.C.

----- (2010), "UNDP Sierra Leone Joint Response to Youth Employment in Sierra Leone 2010."

Zack-Williams, A. (1999), "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991 – 1998," *Third World Quarterly*, No.20 (1), pp.143-162.

List of participating Youth organizations by Zones

Western Zone

Under Pole Youth Development Organization Congo Town

Guys in the Hood Youth Organization Kingtom

Oloshoror Youth Organization

Malamah Youth Organization Crab Town Youth Organization Grey Bush

Juba Hill Terrace Youths

Sherbro Town Youth Organization

Arts and Craft Youths Organization Aberdeen

IMATT Youth Organization

Banana Watta Youth Development Organization

Murray Town Youth Organization

Goderich Youth Organization

CENTRAL FREETOWN

Soldier Town Community (Soja Tong Youth Organisation)

Sorie Town Community, Luke Farm (Luke Farm Youth Development Organisation)

Kissy Road, Annie Walsh Memorial School (Girls and Boys Friendly Society Annual Camp Meeting)

Fort Street (Don Bosco Youth Center)

Victoria Park

Elizabeth Lane, Off Berwick Street (Lion Rock Youth Organisation)

Kroo Bay Community (Le We Ep We Sef Youth Organisation)

Mountain Cut Community (Ma Rub Youth Organisation and Solar Youth Organisation)

Circular Road (Peace Links Sierra Leone and Youth Partnership for Peace and Development)

New England Ville Community (New England Ville Youth Organisation (NEW))

Soldier Street

Towerhill Community (British Council Area)

East

Brass youth community organization (Fourah Bay)

Ginger Hall youth organization,

Saviour and Volunteer of the Environment

Independent Youth Forum, Green Base Youth

Up Gun Youth Organization,

Ataya Base Development youth organization

Civil Rights and Community Organization

Humanitarian Youth Organization

Konkorton Youth Organization,

Adolphause Youth Organization

Peckham Base Youth Organization

Grass Field Youth Organization

Calaba Town Youth Organization for the East zone

Agele Youth Development Organization(Igbo Town, Waterloo)

Kissy town Displaced Camp Youth Organization

Tombo Juncture Youth organization (Leceister Junction)

War Affected Youth Organization (Waterloo),

Station No.1 youth Organization

Under the Mango Tree Youth Organization (Waterloo) for the Waterloo and mountain rural zone.

¹ The Joint Response to youth employment creation takes on a multidimensional approach targeting several employment areas both upstream (policy, planning, capacity building of ministries and public institutions), and downstream (programmatic interventions that directly create employment through labour intensive works, agri-business, small and medium size business development and training). The Joint Response encompasses the elements of both supply and demand with an emphasis on creating demand for labour.

* The author would like to express her appreciation for the support provided by UNDP-Sierra Leone for this research and data collectors from Peace and Conflict Studies, Fourah Bay College University of Sierra Leone.