

Displaced Persons, Refugees and International Migrants: An Overview of the Situation in Ghana

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1 Introduction

In the 1950s and 1960s, Ghana was well known as a haven for international migrants and refugees in West Africa due to its relatively prosperous economy and a liberal foreign policy that supported migrants from other African countries. Ghana received thousands of international migrants who came to work in the booming agricultural and mining sectors of the economy as well as persons fleeing persecution in neighbouring countries. Having gained independence from British rule in 1957 the country also hosted a number of leading political refugees and supported other African countries in their struggle for political liberation from colonial rule and apartheid, particularly in Southern Africa. However, this situation changed in the 1970s and 1980s following the downturn in the country's economy and the accompanying political instability and insecurity (Awumbila et al. 2011; Anarfi/Kwankye 2003). During the 1980s, Ghana became a net out-migration country with a large proportion of its population moving abroad in search of greener pastures. Most of these migrants went to the neighbouring West African countries, particularly Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire, where they sought for employ-

Tonah, S. (2023): Displaced Persons, Refugees and International Migrants: An Overview of the Situation in Ghana. In: Pohn-Lauggas, M./Tonah, S./Worm, A. (Eds.): *Exile/Flight/Persecution. Sociological Perspectives on Processes of Violence*. Göttingen: Göttingen University Press, 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.17875/gup2023-2444>

ment and a better standard of living. Indeed, it is estimated that there were over a million Ghanaians resident in Nigeria prior to their expulsion from that country in 1983 and 1985 (Aremu/Ajayi 2014).

Since the 1980s, Ghana has been categorized as a country of emigrants with large numbers of its citizens moving abroad, particularly to neighbouring West African countries, each year. It also has many diaspora communities abroad (Kandilige 2017; Akologo 2005). The country has not been associated with having large numbers of internally displaced persons, refugees and international migrants on its soil. Indeed, the 2021 census indicated that only 1.5 percent of its current total population of 30.8 million inhabitants, (that is, a mere 462,000 persons), are of foreign origin, with nearly two-thirds of the foreign migrants in the country coming from the neighbouring West African countries. Similarly, Ghana's population of international migrants and refugees is, in comparison with its West African neighbours, very low (Tonah/Setrana/Arthur 2017). In the early 1990s, Ghana officially received about 45,000 refugees and internationally displaced migrants, most of whom were victims of the violent conflicts and political unrest in neighbouring Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. The number of refugees and displaced migrants in the country has since fallen sharply. In the past decade, the population of foreigners granted refugee status has decreased from 23,000 persons in 2011 to the current figure of about 12,000 in 2020. This is mainly due to the policy of returning, reintegrating or transferring some of these refugees and displaced persons to third countries (Antwi-Boateng/Briamah 2020; Agblorti/Grant 2019).

In spite of the general picture of a relatively peaceful country with low numbers of refugees, international migrants and internally displaced persons, Ghana frequently experiences occurrences that result in the forceful dislocation and displacement of its population. These are largely a result of localized violent communal conflicts, land and chieftaincy disputes, large development projects, irregular migration and refugees from the Sahelian region, natural and human-made disasters such as recurrent drought, floods, erosion, environmental and resource pollution and other occurrences.

In this paper I examine some of the key issues that have resulted in the displacement of the local population, as well as the situation of refugees and internationally displaced migrants in Ghana. The focus is on analysing the situation within Ghana as well as the neighbouring West African countries where most of the foreign migrants and refugees come from and Ghanaian migrants move to. I adopt a historical approach, by analysing cases of Internally and internationally displaced persons and forced migration during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods in Ghana. This approach enables us to realise that forced migration and displacement has always been a common phenomenon in Ghana and other West African countries. Indeed, the situation of migrants and refugee in Ghana cannot be well understood without placing it within the West African sub-region where people have moved around voluntarily or forcefully for several centuries. What

has changed has been the political, social and economic conditions under which forced migration and displacement took place during the different eras and the factors responsible for such displacements. The next session provides some conceptual clarifications about the main concepts used in the paper. This is followed by an analysis of international displacement to and from Ghana and a historical analysis of displacement during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period in Ghana. The paper then examines the main factors responsible for internal displacement in Ghana.

2 Explaining Displacement

Displacement is a particular form of mobility in which individuals and groups have to relocate from their habitual place of residence to another location for a long period of time or even permanently. Displacement can be forced or voluntary. The former involves where individuals or groups are compelled to move against their will while the latter deals with cases where such persons agree to move away from their places of residence on their own volition; or as is sometimes the case, such persons may be induced to move to another location after some negotiations and the payment of compensation in kind or cash or both. However, it should be indicated that, in popular usage, a displaced person is a generic term for individuals or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to leave their home or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of the effects of armed conflicts, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, natural or human-made disasters; but also those seeking refuge from natural disasters, climate change or other such events. In this sense, displacement is akin to forced migration. While forced displacement typically takes place during violent conflicts, after a (sudden) natural disaster or other such occurrences, negotiated displacement can be the result of an agreement between two or more warring factions or following the construction of a large development project such as an irrigation dam, a hydro-electric scheme or a mining project.

3 International Displacements To and From Ghana

This section examines expulsion exercises undertaken by the Ghanaian and other West African governments that forcibly displaced international migrants resident in their countries.

3.1 Mass Expulsions of Foreign Nationals

The expulsion of foreign nationals from a country has been a recurring phenomenon in West Africa, particularly between the 1960s and 1990s. Ghana, Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire and other countries in West Africa have at different periods expelled foreign nationals from their territories (Adepoju 2010). For example, in November 1969 Ghana expelled more than 830,000 foreign nationals, mainly Nigerians, Togolese and Burkinabes resident in the country (Aremu/Ajayi 2014; Brydon 1985; Peil 1971). Similarly, Nigeria expelled foreign nationals from the country in 1983 and 1985. Those affected by the expulsion order were mainly nationals of Ghana, Niger, Benin and Togo. Over a million Ghanaians were displaced by the Nigerian expulsion of 1983 which ordered illegal and/or irregular migrants to leave the country (Gary-Tourkara 2015; Aluko 1985). Cote d'Ivoire also expelled foreign nationals, particularly those from neighbouring Burkina Faso, during the period of political upheavals in the 1990s. Several thousands of West African nationals left that country as a result of political dispute and insecurity (Bouquet 2003; Bredeloup 2003). In all of these cases, foreign nationals were typically blamed for the deteriorating economic situation, depriving locals of economic opportunities and accused of being involved in criminal activities such as smuggling, armed robbery, car-jacking, and for contributing to the high unemployment situation among locals (Peil 1971; Aluko 1985).

Since the 2000s, mass expulsions of foreign nationals from individual West African countries have been rather uncommon. It appears most West African nations have learnt some lessons from the decisions to expel foreign nationals from their territories in the earlier decades since the benefits of the expulsion exercises were minimal in comparison with what can be derived from regional cooperation (Ninsin 2009). Besides, the emergence of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional body that allows citizens of member states free entry and exit as well as the right of residency, and seeks to promote regional trade and cooperation has dissuaded states from implementing such mass expulsion exercises in West Africa.

3.2 Forced Migrants and Refugees

Ghana has for several decades been host to a number of internationally displaced persons and forced migrants from neighbouring West African countries. Most of these internationally displaced persons are irregular migrants who cross the border unregistered and undocumented because of the visa-free policy applicable in the sub-region. The vast majority of these forced migrants are from the Sahelian countries of Niger and Burkina Faso, They seek refuge in Ghana as a result of the violent conflicts, civil wars and recurrent droughts that have decimated their means of livelihood. There are also many international migrants from Togo and Cote d'Ivoire and other African countries, who moved to Ghana to flee ethnic,

communal and political conflicts in their countries. Among these include the pastoral Fulani and Tuareg from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, as well as the Zarma and Kotokoli agriculturalists from Niger and Togo, respectively (Osei 2021; Tonah 2005; Painter 1988). Most of these forced migrants work in the informal sectors of the economy as petty traders, itinerant recyclers, security personnel, street beggars and other low-level jobs (Bertrand 2010). It is difficult to estimate the number of internationally forced migrants in Ghana but they could be several thousands given that most West African migrants enter and reside in the country without adhering to the required formal registration of their residency.

Another group of international migrants are those who have refugee status. They usually constitute a small fraction of the total population of forced migrants. In comparison with its neighbours, Ghana has traditionally a very low population of refugees and asylum seekers. The number of refugees in Ghana which stood at about 45,000 in the early 1990s decreased to 12,153 persons in 2017. This further decreased to 11,896 in 2018 but slightly increased to 11,946 in 2019. By 2020 there were only about 12,411 registered refugees and asylum-seekers in Ghana after many of the refugees were given the option to return home or integrate into the country as permanent residents (Agblorti/Grant 2019). Most of Ghana's officially registered refugees come from neighbouring Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia with smaller numbers arriving from Sudan, Syria, DRC, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Niger. Most of these refugees and internationally displaced persons have fled political conflicts, ethnic and communal violence, as well as political persecution and human rights abuses. While Ghana has in the past received political refugees from several southern African countries, it became famous for the reception given to refugees from the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire during the 1990s and 2000s (Antwi-Boateng/Braimah 2020).¹

¹ Ghana has six main refugee camps. These are the Ampain, Krisan, Egyeikrom and Fententaa camps and the Urban Refugee Area (formerly Buduburam Refugee Camp) in the Greater Accra area (Agblorti/Grant 2019; Yeboah 2013). Even though the Ghanaian government officially announced the closure of the Buduburam Refugee Camp in 2012 (following the option given to the refugees to either return home, integrate into the local community or move to a third country), most of the former Liberian refugees continue to live inside the camp area. By February 2014, almost two years after the cessation of their refugee status, Liberians remaining in Ghana were issued with ECOWAS passports, which included a two-year work and residence permit. Nevertheless, many of them have been unable to return to their home countries while their integration into the Ghanaian society has also proven more difficult than envisaged (Antwi-Boateng/Braimah 2020; Essuman-Johnson 2011).

4 Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees and Migrants in Ghana – A Historical Overview

4.1 The Pre-Colonial and Colonial Era

Population movements and displacements have always been part of the search for a better livelihood in Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, for several centuries. During the pre-colonial era, the movement of people were largely the result of groups seeking new territories to settle down. The establishment of kingdoms in the forest and savannah areas of Ghana during the pre-colonial era was a major source of population displacement in the region. Powerful and hierarchically organized groups such as the Ashanti, Gonja, Mamprusi, Dagomba invaded the territories of their largely acephalous or clan-based ethnic groups, and in the process killed, expelled and integrated sections of the autochthone groups into their fold (Maasole 2006; Cardinall 1969; Rattray 1932). Other groups such as the Ewe and Fante fled despotic rulers and warring factions before establishing themselves at their current locations (Adu-Boahen 2000; Amenumey 2008).

Trade was another major source of population movements and displacements in the pre-colonial period. Individuals and groups moved across the West African sub-region to trade in products such as kola nuts, gold, slaves, ivory, livestock, gun powder and manufactured goods (Adu-Boahen 2000; Amenumey 2008). For example, the Hausa of Northern Nigeria migrated to the savannah and forest areas of Ghana where they purchased kola nuts, livestock and other goods from the local inhabitants. Similarly, the Wangara and other traders from the Sahelian region settled in Gonjaland where they were engaged in trade and other commercial activities (Wilks 1989; Maasole 2006).

The wars and raiding of weaker groups by their more powerful neighbours for loot, women, warriors and slaves also accounted for a large part of the forced migrations and displacements that took place in Ghanaian territory during the pre-colonial period. Powerful ethnic groups used their access to European goods, arms and ammunitions to raid their weaker neighbours, particularly those in the savannah region, for slaves, warriors and other products. Indeed, it is well documented that slavery, and in particular the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its associated raids, looting, wars, and fear of attacks, was a major source of death, forced migrations and displacement of thousands of persons in Ghana and West Africa between the 16th and the 19th century (Keren 2009; Schramm 2005; Der 1998).

The colonial period did offer some form of respite as the European powers pacified the country putting an end to many of the inter-ethnic raids and wars that raged in the country. Furthermore, colonial rule also terminated the activities of the slave raiders, traders and merchants (Akyeampong 2001). Nevertheless, the policies of the colonial government in both Ghana and neighbouring states also introduced new forms of migrations and displacement among the population. For example, the introduction of head taxes and forced labour recruitment among the

population compelled people, especially young men to leave their communities. Others left their homes because they did not want to be recruited into the colonial security forces or detested being sent to work in the mines in southern Ghana where they were compelled to do dirty and dangerous work (Bening 2013; Thomas 1973).

Generally, colonial rule in Ghana was characterized by uneven economic development and provision of social infrastructure which compelled many people from the then Northern Territories of Ghana to seek greener pastures in Southern Ghana. Many Northerners and savanna peoples were compelled to migrate to the south to work as labourers, miners, farmers, soldiers and on infrastructural development projects (Bening 2013; Thomas 1973).

4.2 The Post-Colonial Era (1957 to Date)

The post-colonial period in Ghana has seen massive population movements as a result of unevenly distributed social and economic infrastructure, recurrent drought and conflicts. There is a general movement from Northern Ghana to the south of the country and from small, rural settlements to larger urban settlements (Awumbila/Badasu/Teye 2018).

Internal displacements among the population have also been a recurrent phenomenon during this period. The seven main sources of forced migrations and displacements in contemporary Ghana include, first, climate variability and change, recurrent droughts and the associated poverty, especially in Northern Ghana. Second, violent conflicts resulting mainly from communal, intra- and inter-ethnic, land, chieftaincy, boundary, farmer-herder and other sources of violent conflicts. Third, natural and human-made disasters such as floods and sea erosion. Fourth, large development projects such as the construction of dams, irrigation projects, hydro-electric schemes. Fifth, population and housing expansion and changing land-use. Sixth, mining, land degradation and pollution; and finally, displacements resulting from socio-cultural factors such as banning and expulsion of persons accused of witchcraft, forced marriages, forced labour (child slavery), among others. These factors are expatiated upon below.

5 Factors Responsible for Internal Displacements in Ghana

Ghana has had a number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and migrants since the 1960s. Many of the factors responsible for these conditions are still being experienced currently with continuing grave consequences for the population while other factors have over the decades been transformed.

5.1 Drought, Climate Change and Poverty in Northern Ghana

Climate variability and change are significant drivers for internal displacement in Ghana, particularly in the north of the country. Northern Ghana experiences a single rainfall pattern with a very long dry season which can last up to about 6–7 months each year. The area has an annual rainfall of between 800–1200 millimetres with temperatures ranging between 16 and 42 centigrade. A poorly distributed rainfall pattern and recurrent drought have been a feature of the climatic conditions in the savannah north since the 20th century and in earlier periods (Hunter 1967; Fortes/Fortes 1936). Household food security has been a frequent problem in the area. It is common for households to experience inadequate food (grain) supply during the long dry season when sections of the households will migrate to southern Ghana in search of work and income. The introduction of dry season irrigation agriculture during the 1960s and 70s has somewhat attenuated food shortages and poverty in the north during the dry season (Tonah 1993; Nabila 1974). Nevertheless, the problem persists and household food shortages is a recurrent phenomenon.

As a result of climate change, Northern Ghana has since the 1970s been experiencing not only lower total volumes of rainfall and very high temperatures but also unreliable and unpredictable rainfall pattern and violent rainstorms resulting in land degradation, soil erosion, poor crop harvests and occasional famine, and widespread poverty among the rural subsistence farming population (Adu-Boahen/Dadson/Halidu 2019; Yelfaanibe/Zeeter 2018; Van de Geest 2004). In response to the unfavourable weather conditions and climate change, large numbers of able-bodied men and women leave Northern Ghana seasonally or permanently in search of farm lands and other forms of livelihood in the formal and informal sectors of the economy in Southern Ghana (Obour/Owusu/Teye 2017; Oteng-Ababio 2013; Awumbila et al. 2011). They are part of the growing victims of environmental displacement in Northern Ghana.

5.2 Violent Conflicts-Induced Displacement

Localized violent conflicts are a major source of population displacement in Ghana. Most of these conflicts are a result of land, communal, ethnic, chieftaincy, boundary and farmer-herder disputes. Land-related conflicts are the most widespread in Ghana. While some of the land conflicts date back to the colonial era, others are a result of socio-economic changes and developments in the country since independence. In particular the commercialization of land has made land-related conflicts very common in Ghana (Owusu/Tonah 2013). Disagreements over the ownership of land amongst neighbouring communities and traditional areas are a common source of violent conflicts and population displacements. Some of the violent boundary disputes in Ghana that have displaced hundreds of inhabitants in-

clude the Nkonya-Alavanyo, Nsuta-Beposo, Weija-Oblogo and Tsito-Peki conflicts (Gariba 2021; Kpormasi 2013).

Violent intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts in Ghana have also resulted in population displacements in several areas. The most devastating ones include the Dagomba-Konkomba conflict and the Gonja-Nawuri conflict in the 1990s in the Northern Region of Ghana. Indeed, the Dagomba-Konkomba war was one of the bloodiest conflicts in Ghana in the last century resulting in hundreds of deaths, destruction of properties and the displacement of thousands of inhabitants (Bogner/Neubert 2016; Brukum 2001, 2007). Similarly, the Gonja-Nawuri conflict in 1991 also led to the displacement of hundreds of persons from settlements in the Northern Region. In Southern Ghana, chieftaincy disputes have occurred among the Anlo, the Ga and the Krobo in the last decade but these have not been as violent as those in Northern Ghana and have not involved the displacement of large numbers of people (Bogner 2020; Tonah/Anamzoya 2016).

Finally, conflicts between the pastoral Fulani herdsmen and sedentary farmers over the destruction of crops by cattle, the struggle for farm and grazing lands, cattle rustling and the pollution of water sources by cattle are common in Ghana. These clashes have been particularly fierce in Agogo, Gushiegu and in the Afram Plains resulting in deaths and the displacement of the inhabitants. In other parts of the country, including in Kassena-Nankana, Agogo, Atebubu, West Mamprusi, and Afram Plains, local and central governments have organized the expulsion of migrant Fulani herdsmen from their settlements following clashes with the local farming population (Paalo 2020; Olaniyan 2015; Tonah 1993, 2002).

5.3 Disaster-Induced Displacements

Ghana regularly suffers from natural and human-made disasters that result in the displacement of sections of the population. Some of the most common forms of disaster include flooding, storms, and coastal erosion. In the north-east of the country and the capital Accra, flooding has become an annual affair with severe consequences for the population. Low-lying areas in parts of Accra experience flooding during the rainy season resulting in extensive damages to properties and the displacement of residents. Similarly, some residents of eastern Accra experience flooding whenever the Weija dam is spilled. North-eastern Ghana also experiences flooding during the wet season when water is released from the Bagre and Kompienga dams in Burkina Faso. These floods typically result in loss of lives and damage to farmlands, houses, roads and other properties as well as the displacement of inhabitants living close to the banks of the Black and White Volta Rivers. In 2018, for example, floods from the Bagre dam spillage resulted in 34 deaths, inundation of downstream communities and widespread destruction of properties (Amuquandoh 2016).

Between 2011 and 2020, Ghana reported 49 natural disasters, comprising mainly of floods and storms which led to the destruction of habitations, dis-

placements, and deaths with the highest number occurring in 2017. In 2016 for example, flooding resulted in 7,918 people being displaced throughout the country. Each year on average, some 20,081 people are at risk of earthquake and flood related displacement in Ghana. Similarly, in October 2019 as many as 29 people died in flood-related incidents in north-eastern Ghana and between 1,000 and 4,000 buildings were damaged in the Kassena-Nankana Municipality and the Bongo District.² Sea erosion is also very common in the south-eastern shoreline of Ghana, particularly at Accra, Ada Foah and Keta, resulting in the washing away of buildings, damage to properties and the displacement of hundreds of residents in the country each year (cf. Kusimi/Dika 2012).

5.4 Displacements due to Large Development Projects – Hydro Dams and Irrigation Projects

Large development projects such as hydroelectric schemes and irrigation dams have contributed to the displacement of large populations in Ghana. The hydroelectric dam at Akosombo and the subsequent Volta Lake that the dam created flooded large parts of the Volta River Basin. The Lake flooded hundreds of communities and displaced more than 84,000 people (Tsikata 2006; Stanley 2004; Chambers 1970). The resettlement of the displaced inhabitants proved complex and in some cases unsuccessful; traditional farming practices disappeared and poverty increased among the affected population. Many residents in the Upper and Lower Volta sections of the Akosombo dam lost not only their lands and important archaeological sites but also their sources of livelihood. The dams at Akosombo and Kpong also led to an increase in water-borne diseases such as bilharzia, river blindness and malaria. These diseases and the accompanying loss of livelihood compelled many inhabitants of the lower Volta area to migrate from their settlements (Tsikata 2006). Similarly, the Bui Dam project on the Black Volta River in north-western Ghana resulted in the flooding of dozens of communities as well as the Bui national park. It also resulted in the displacement and relocation of 1,216 people to new settlements (Fynn/Abdulai 2018; Asiamah/Lengoiboni/Van der Mole 2017).

Large irrigation projects such as the Tono, Veia and Botanga irrigation projects in Northern Ghana have also displaced hundreds of households and destroyed livelihoods as well as social and cultural artefacts. The Tono irrigation project, one of the largest irrigation schemes in West Africa, was completed in 1985 and brings about 2490 hectares of land under cultivation. The Veia irrigation project, on the other hand, has about 850 hectares under cultivation. Despite the positive impacts of both projects in terms of providing alternative livelihood forms and securing household food requirement and income, particularly during the peak dry season, these irrigation projects have displaced hundreds of residents, led to the

² See: <https://reliefweb.int/disaster/fl-2019-000135-gha> <25.11.2022>.

expropriation and loss of farms and rangelands, as well as loss of cultural artefacts, among others (Asare 2002; Laube 2008).

5.5 Population/Housing Expansion and Changing Land Use in the Peri-Urban Areas

The last decades has seen a continuous increase in Ghana's population as well as the proportion of urban residents. Ghana's population increased from 12.29 million inhabitants in 1984 to 24.65 million in 2010 and is currently estimated at 30.8 million in 2021. Similarly, the proportion of the population living in the urban areas has increased from 32% in 1984 to 50.9% in 2010 and is estimated at 56.7% in 2021. The sharp increase in the urban population has been accompanied by an increase in the population density in the urban areas, particularly in the Greater Accra Region. The population density in the Greater Accra Region has increased from a mere 278.4 persons per km² in 1970 to 895.5 per km² in 2010 and then further to 1,236 persons per km² in 2021. As a result, cities such as Accra and Kumasi have rapidly expanded to absorb most settlements in the peri-urban and hinterland areas. Accra, for example, has since the 1980s expanded more than 10 kilometres in all directions to absorb the peri-urban settlements of Kasoa, Amasaman, Oyarifa and Adenta (Cobbinah/Aboagye 2017). The accompanying expansion in housing and commercial infrastructure have often meant that rural residents in the peri-urban localities have been displaced from lands that served as the basis for their economic survival and social cohesion. Lands hitherto used by smallholders for farming and livestock herding have been sold out as building plots, offices, industrial estates, retail and wholesale shops and other commercial uses (Gough/Yankson 2000). Most of the farms and agricultural projects in the peri-urban areas of Accra have either been relocated or shutdown while many rural residents have been displaced and compelled to look for alternative work in the city's informal sector. Similarly, hundreds of livestock herders who for several decades have reared their animals in the peri-urban settlements of Accra are being increasingly forced out of their settlements as rangelands are converted into residential areas, retail shops, factories or for other commercial purposes. Hundreds of herdsmen and livestock owners as well as their households have been compelled to move out of the Accra-Tema-Ashiaman area to the nearby Ho and Afram Plains in search of new settlements (Tonah 2022; cf. Ubink 2008).

5.6 Mining, Land Degradation and Poverty

Ghana has been engaged in industrial and artisanal mining activities for more than a century. The country has over 20 large-scale mining companies and more than 300 registered small scale mining groups and 90 mine support service companies as well as thousands of artisanal miners. Some of the major minerals that are mined in the country include gold, diamond, manganese, bauxite, limestone, iron

ore and salt (Teschner 2012; Akabzaa/Seyire/Afriyie 2007). Mining activities have traditionally been done by the state, private companies and groups of individuals. While the state and private companies, both foreign and local, tend to mine on a large scale using more modern technologies and equipment, there are hundreds of individuals and groups engaged in artisanal mining relying mainly on labour-intensive, and very rudimentary tools. In the last two decades, artisanal and small scale miners have come under increasing criticism for the negative effects of their activities on the land, water, forest, the general environment and the health of the miners and the community members where their mining activities are located (Bansah et al. 2018; Hilson 2002). Small scale and artisanal miners have been blamed for indiscriminately siting their operations within residential areas, especially in rural communities, thereby destroying rural settlements, lands and forests. They have also been accused of illegal entry into and citing of mines in forest reserves, diversion of river courses, use of dangerous and unapproved chemicals in their operations thereby polluting the land and water bodies (Ofosu et al. 2020; Ontoyin/Agyeman 2014).

Generally, mining activities, whether by large (multinational) companies or artisanal miners have displaced thousands of residents, deprived them of their sources of livelihood such as farming and fishing, endangered their health and left behind a devastated and polluted landscape and environment (Ofosu et al. 2020; Tom-Dery/Dagben/Cobbina 2012). Although the benefits of mining to individuals and communities as well as the Ghanaian state are numerous, mining activities in Ghana have displaced more than 30,000 residents from their places of residence and deprived thousands of rural inhabitants of their livelihoods (Cobbinah/Amoako 2018). In old Salman town in the Ellembelle District of Western Region, for example, 2,154 persons were displaced because of the commercial extraction of gold ore. A new settlement had to be constructed for the displaced inhabitants in 2012 (Abankwa et al. 2020; Aboagye 2014). Similarly, Induced or forced displacement has accompanied various mining projects. For example, between 1990 and 1998, more than 30,000 people were displaced in the Tarkwa district due to gold mining operations. According to Akabzaa and Darimani (2001), at least several hundred people each year are resettled in the Western Region as a result of mining development in Ghana.

5.7 Banishment and Displacement of Persons Accused of Witchcraft

In Ghana, the belief in witchcraft and persons with supernatural powers is quite ubiquitous. During the pre-colonial era, people accused of witchcraft, or declared as witches, were executed publicly after going through a trial by ordeal, (Drucker-Brown 1993; Goody 1970). Attempts to ban the practice of witchcraft accusations and the accompanying trial by ordeal during the colonial period were only partly successful, since the practice continued at secret locations across the territory or were held in secret (Mutaru 2019; Adinkrah 2015). Today, there are hundreds of

people in Ghana who have been accused of witchcraft and banished from their homes and communities by their partners, relatives and neighbours.

Though both men and women are accused of witchcraft, the vast majority of them are women, especially the elderly. Widows, childless or unmarried women are vulnerable to being branded as witches especially when they do not meet expected gender stereotypes. Women accused of witchcraft are typically blamed for any misfortunes afflicting their co-wives, nuclear and extended family members. These may include allegedly causing sickness, droughts or fires, cursing a neighbour or based on flimsy accusations like appearing in someone's dream, being talkative, assertive or provocative. Persons accused of witchcraft are often denied their basic human rights, such as the right to food, the right to physical well-being, the right to free movement and even the right to life and often have to flee their communities (Igwe 2016; Schauber 2007; Drucker-Brown 1993).

In Southern Ghana, most of the alleged witches are banished from their communities and compelled to seek refuge in 'prayer camps' where they undergo rituals of exorcism organized by pastors and traditional priests (Palmer 2010; Adinkrah 2015). In Northern Ghana, on the other hand, persons accused of witchcraft are often beaten and may be killed by their relatives and neighbours, while others are forced to flee to one of the numerous 'witches camps' or sanctuaries located across the region.³

6 Conclusions

This paper has examined the nature, causes and consequences of displacement, refugees and migrants in Ghana from a largely historical perspective. Although the focus was mainly on internally displaced persons in the country, we argued that events and occurrences in Ghana with respect to population displacement are closely connected with the socio-cultural, political and economic situation in the West African sub-region where people have moved to and from for several centuries. Hence, we also examined the phenomenon of cross-border displacement of people in West Africa, with particular reference to how it affects the people of Ghana and their neighbours.

The paper established that displacement has been a common phenomenon in Ghana and indeed the West African sub-region since the pre-colonial period when land was widely available and movements from one traditional area to the other was relatively easy. During this period, widespread internecine and inter-ethnic conflicts did create considerable displacement of the population. Furthermore, slavery and its associated raids and warfare was a major source of forced displacement

³ There are 10 such camps or sanctuaries for victims of witch hunt in Northern Ghana. These are at Gambaga, Gushiegu, Gbintiri, Nabule, Gushiegu Ghetto, Gushiegu Town, Kpatinga, Tindang/Gnani, Kukuo, Duabone, and Banyasi. These camps hold hundreds of people, mostly women, and are often located at sites of famous earth shrines (Riedel 2016; Schauber 2007).

among the weak, clan-led groups in the savannah zones. Colonialism reduced the spate of inter-ethnic conflicts and raids and its associated trade in slaves. Nevertheless, colonial policies such as the imposition of taxes, forced labour and unequal promotion of economic development in the colony also promoted the forced and negotiated displacement of the inhabitants; albeit at a much lower level in comparison with the pre-colonial period.

The post-colonial period did initially produce a number of internationally displaced persons, migrants and refugees across West Africa as a result of the frequent expulsion of foreign nationals from the national territory by the newly-independent states. However, this problem appears to have abated since the 2000s following the failure of such expulsion exercises and the renewed emphasis on the importance of cross-border trade and cooperation among ECOWAS countries. Besides, in recent times, violent conflicts, recurrent drought and poverty associated with climate change are among the major factors responsible for internal displacement and forced migration in Ghana since 2000.

Generally, Ghana has had more challenges dealing with internal displacement than international migrants and refugees. This is because the number of international migrants and refugees in the country has been comparatively low. The generally stable political, social and economic situation in the neighbouring countries has reduced the incidence of international displacement and refugees. However, this is likely to change if measures are not taken to tackle the phenomenon of climate change and Islamist conflicts in the Sahelian countries that are engendering conflicts, and impoverishing farmers and pastoralists in West Africa. So far, the number of international migrants and refugees from Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso moving to Ghana and the coastal countries in West Africa remains low. This could however change if adequate measures are not put in place to resolve the conflicts and environmental degradation that confront the Sahelian countries.

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