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## Research Brief

# The migration industry in Ghana

In recent times, the decision to migrate has moved from an individual level to a household level which is much complex due to the many social interactions within kinship networks and beyond. Middlemen and recruitment agencies have a significant and widespread role within migrant labour markets around the world occupying the “middle space” between migrants and the state. These groups often act on behalf of states seeking to outsource border controls, conspiring with employers to exploit and commoditise migrant labour.

Our research will start from the premise that the term migrant includes people with different kinds of migration statuses who move in and out of being legal/undocumented; trafficked/in control; refugees/voluntary migrants. The research will recognise the dependent nature of the migration industry and migration governance and note that, the migration industry is shaped by changes in the policy environment, and governance context which is in turn shaped by the migration industry.

### Research questions

This research extends our investigation of the migration industry at the local level to the international level to find out how both policy environment and political regimes affect the industry. It will look at agents, migrants and their families in Ghana and beyond with a focus on journeys to the Gulf States and through the Middle East and North Africa region to Europe. The study will also investigate how issues like gender, ethnicity, race and age in terms of how they shape movement, their impacts within the household and how they affect the power relations between migrants and their households. The role of information and communication technologies cannot be underestimated when it comes to soliciting information about migration. Most people on the move gather information using social media and this study will examine the role of information and communication technologies in the exchange of information and the flow of money at different points of the journey.

### Potential contribution of this research

This research will help to disaggregate the degrees of exploitation, coercion and deception involved at different stages of migrant’s journeys and the role of brokers in that. This information will help to refine the understanding of the “good” and “bad” parts of brokerage. This improved understanding can inform governments’ efforts to prevent trafficking and slavery and also protect the vulnerable in ways that are likely to be more effective than blanket bans on middlemen and brokers. The findings will also be useful to the government of Ghana in its efforts to regulate the migration industry and combat trafficking of persons and smuggling of migrants.

### About Centre for Migration Studies

The Centre for Migration Studies is located at the University of Ghana to undertake research, teaching, training, capacity building, policy assessment, development and dissemination in the area of migration. The Centre for Migration Studies

is the first such Centre in the West African sub-region and is seeking to be a regional leader in learning, teaching, research and capacity building through short-term training programmes in specific areas. Students at CMS enrol in Master of Arts, Master of Philosophy, PhD and Sandwich programmes in Migration Studies.

#### Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana

**Principal Investigator** – Professor Mariama Awumbila,  
Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana  
Email – [mawumbila@ug.edu.gh](mailto:mawumbila@ug.edu.gh)

#### Co-Investigator

Dr. Priya Deshingkar, University of Sussex  
Email: [P.Deshingkar@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:P.Deshingkar@sussex.ac.uk)

#### Co-Investigator

Professor Joseph Teye, Centre for Migration Studies,  
University of Ghana  
Email – [jteye@ug.edu.gh](mailto:jteye@ug.edu.gh)

*Emmanuel Quarshie - Communications and Research Uptake Officer, Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana. For more information:*

[equarshie55@gmail.com](mailto:equarshie55@gmail.com)

<http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/>

<http://migratingoutofpovertyghana.com/>

<http://cms.ug.edu.gh/>

P. O. Box LG59, University of Ghana,  
Legon, Accra, Ghana.

