

Migrant Remittances, Food Security and Multi-Local Households: Ghanaian Labour Migration to Qatar

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of migrant remittances on food security among multi-local households within Ghana and Qatar, focusing on the experiences of Ghanaian labour migrants. Through a mixed-methods approach comprising household surveys in Ghana and in-depth interviews with migrants in Qatar conducted from March to June 2023, the paper explores how remittances influence the food security status of recipient households and the socioeconomic conditions of migrants. The findings suggest that remittances play a critical role in enhancing household food security in Ghana by enabling better access to food and improving dietary diversity. Migrants prioritize sending money for basic needs, notably food purchases and education. However, the pressure to remit can adversely affect the migrants' own food security in Qatar, leading to compromised nutritional choices and reduced food intake. The study concludes that while remittances significantly contribute to improving food security in Ghana, they also pose challenges to the well-being of migrants, highlighting a complex interplay between economic support and personal sacrifice within transnational familial networks.

Keywords

remittances, food security, multi-local households, labour migration

Suggested Citation

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Cover Image

Migrants in a second-hand-goods market in Doha, Qatar. Credit: Shadow of Light/Shutterstock



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Introduction

The growing volume of international global remittances has led to a significant body of research examining their impact in the Global South (Adams 2011; Azizi, 2021; Benhamou & Cassin, 2021; Connell & Brown, 2015; Feld, 2021). The literature has generally emphasised the positive impact of remittances on economic growth, education, housing, and healthcare. Remittances are also widely credited with improved livelihood opportunities and poverty reduction (Fonta et al., 2022). However, only recently has attention turned to the impact of international remittances on food security in low and middle-income countries (Ebadi et al., 2018; Seydou, 2023; Smith & Floro, 2021; Sulemana et al., 2018). The emerging case study literature suggests that there are several ways in which remittances potentially enhance the food and nutritional security of recipient households. First, as a major source of income for recipient households, remittances can increase their ability to pay for basic needs such as education, medical care, and food. Recent studies in Asia (Moniruzzaman, 2022), Central America (Mora-Rivera & van Gameren, 2021), and Africa (Abadi et al., 2018) show that food purchase is an important use of remittances and recipient households are relatively more food secure than non-recipient households. In Ghana, work on international and internal remittance impacts has consistently reported positive effects on household income, welfare, and food security (Adams & Cuecuecha, 2013; Adjei-Mantey et al., 2023; Akpa, 2018, Atuoye et al., 2017; Quartey, 2006, Sam et al., 2013; Suleman et al., 2018). However, as Thow et al (2016) observe, remittances can also be spent on unhealthy foods and contribute to the epidemic of overnutrition.

Second, remittances to rural households are a potential source of funds for investment in boosting agricultural production and productivity, enhancing the ability of rural households to grow more of their own food and mitigate food insecurity (Cau & Agadjanian, 2023; Dedewanou & Tossou, 2021; Regmi & Paudel, 2017; Szabo et al., 2022; Xing, 2018). IFAD (2023) estimates that recipients either save or invest 25 per cent of the money they receive, and that one-quarter of these savings (US\$25 billion annually) goes into agriculture-related investments. In the case of Ghana, Adams & Cuecuecha (2013) show that the bulk of remittances are spent on food, housing, education. However, there is some case study evidence of agriculture-related investments. For example, Eghan & Adjasi (2023) show that the varied effects of remittances on agriculture depends on crop type and other economic activities of farming households.

Third, remittances play an important food security-related role in mitigating the negative impacts of sudden-onset and longer-duration economic, political, and environmental shocks (Ajide & Alimi, 2019; Bragg et al., 2017; Coulharde & Generoso, 2015). Migrant remittances also tend to increase in volume in response to sudden shocks and to family in conflict settings (Bettin & Zazzaro, 2018; Le De et al., 2013; Rodima-Taylor, 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic remittances were initially expected to decline precipitously but many migrants 'defied the odds' and increased their remit-

ting (Kpodar et al., 2023). The 'shock-absorbing mechanism' (Ajide & Alimi, 2019) of increased remittances can play an important role in building resilience to food insecurity during recurrent or episodic crises and shocks (Gianelli & Canessa, 2021; Obi et al., 2020; Zingwe et al., 2023).

Finally, there have been several calls to pay greater attention to the food security impacts of food remitting which can include transfers of purchased foods from migrants to their homes and transfers of agricultural produce from their home areas to their migrant destinations (Crush, 2013; Crush & Caesar, 2017, 2018). Although difficult to accurately quantify, there is often a significant 'hidden' transfer of food between migrants and their home areas in particular migration corridors such as between South Africa and Zimbabwe (Sithole et al., 2022; Tawodzera & Crush, 2016). In rural Northern Nigeria, Barnabas et al. (2024) found that households receiving food remittances were more food secure. Similarly, in one district in Ghana, there is evidence that food remittances contribute to the welfare of households (Apatinga et al., 2022). However, both studies focus on internal remittances and there has been little investigation of possible remitting from West Africa to migrants abroad.

This paper expands upon the existing literature that explores the complex relationship between migration and food security in Africa by presenting findings of the remitting behaviour of Ghanaian labour migrants in the Gulf country of Qatar. Following Porter et al. (2018), Steinbrink & Niedenfuhr (2020), and Anderson-Djurfeldt (2021), we suggest that the concept of translocal or multi-nodal households is a useful starting point for framing the remitting motivations of Ghanaian migrants. The paper explores the links between migration and food security by addressing the following questions: (a) What are the characteristics, determinants, and patterns of remitting by Ghanaian labour migrants in Qatar? (b) How do recipient households utilize remittances, and do they improve the food security of those households? (c) Does the pressure or obligation to remit have negative food security consequences for migrants in Qatar; and (d) Is there evidence of food remitting between Ghana and Qatar and, if so, what form does this take? To answer these questions the paper draws on the findings of a 2023 survey of migrant-sending households in Ghana and in-depth qualitative interviews with Ghanaian migrants in Qatar.

Overview of Ghanaian Labour Migration

Ghana's long history of post-independence international labour migration has unfolded over several overlapping phases. Immediately after independence in the 1960s and 1970s, a small number of professionals, primarily students who went abroad for educational purposes, and others who trained as civil servants (Anarfi et al. 2003; Peil 1995). The late 1970s and 1980, saw the migration of trained professionals, such as teachers, to other countries in Africa where their expertise and skills were highly valued. Within the West African subregion, Nigeria became a popular destination for Ghanaians especially during the oil boom. However, in 1983,

the Nigerian President Shagari signed an executive order deporting all West African migrants from the country. Over two million migrants were deported, including one million Ghanaians (Daly, 2023).

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, skilled and semi-skilled Ghanaians began to emigrate in large numbers to destinations outside the continent including North America and Western Europe (Arthur, 2016; Asiedu, 2010; González-Ferrer et al., 2013; Schans et al., 2018). Most migrated in response to the economic crises and structural dislocation in Ghana that accompanied structural adjustment programmes. These were implemented by the military government seeking to reverse economic decline and a massive balance of payments deficit (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000). The 1990s also saw the outmigration of migrants to new destinations such as Australia, North Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia (Andall, 2021; Kandilige et al., 2024; Obeng, 2019). Across all these phases, the decline in economic opportunities, depressed living standards, and the quest for improved livelihoods, triggered the emigration of migrants.

In the last two decades, the Gulf region has emerged as an important destination for lower-skilled male and female Ghanaians who have taken advantage of the voracious demand of the Gulf states for the importation of temporary labour migrants. On the supply side, the movement has been driven by the high rate of unemployment, low remuneration, and heightened poverty that many Ghanaian households face within the country (Atong et al., 2018). The movement of labour migrants to the Gulf region has been facilitated by a proliferation of brokers, recruiters, and work placement agencies who hire low-skilled and unskilled migrants as domestic workers, security guards, construction workers, and drivers for employers (Awumbila et al., 2019a; Deshingkar et al., 2019). Several studies have revealed the poor working conditions and exploitative nature of employment of temporary Ghanaian labour migrants in Qatar and elsewhere in the Gulf (Atong et al., 2018; Awumbila et al., 2019a; Kandilige et al., 2023). Others have documented the misrepresentation, abuse, harassment, and other difficulties that labour migrants face during their journey to and from workplaces in countries like Qatar (Apekey et al., 2018; Awumbila et al., 2019a; Deshingkar et al., 2019). Other studies have focused on the reintegration experience of returning migrants (Awumbila et al., 2019b; Rahman & Salisu, 2023).

While data on migrant Ghanaian labour in the Gulf is scant, it is clear that the Gulf states of Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar have become a popular destination for semi-skilled and unskilled male and female Ghanaian labour migrants (Atong et al., 2018; Awumbila et al., 2019a; Rahman and Salisu 2021). Recent studies show that about 75,000 Ghanaian labour migrants are working in the Gulf, of which an estimated 27,000 are in Saudi Arabia, 24,000 in the United Arab Emirates, 8,000 in Qatar, 4,500 in Bahrain and 3,500 in Oman (Rahman & Salisu 2023). However, these may be underestimates given that not all migrants move through registered channels. The remitting practices in the Qatar-Ghana migration corridor and the impacts of remittances on food security of stretched or trans-local

households in Ghana and Qatar have not been addressed hitherto by researchers. The following sections of the paper therefore present the findings of research conducted in both countries in the period March to June 2023.

Methodology

Data collection for this study was carried out in Ghana and Qatar from March 2023 to June 2023 using a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology. In Ghana, a face-to-face households survey was conducted with 200 migrant household heads in Accra and Kasoa. The survey collected data on the socioeconomic characteristics of the household and household head, the factors influencing the decision to send migrants to Qatar, remittance receipt and use, and household food security experiences. A total of 58 in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted in Qatar. These interviews focused on a range of questions which covers the socio-demographic information, earnings, nature of work, savings, remittances, patterns of food consumption and household food security. Both the survey and in-depth interview participants were recruited using purposive snowball sampling.

Cash Remittances

The survey found that 80% of the 200 households surveyed in Ghana receive cash remittances from relatives in Qatar while only 20% do not in the last year. However, the amounts sent to the household in Ghana were relatively small (Table 1). About 44% of households receive GHS2500 (USD186) or more per month. A further 22% receive between GHS1500 and GHS2,500 (USD113 and USD186), while 16% receive between GHS1,000 (USD74) and GHS1,500 (USD113) and about one quarter receive less than GHS1,000 (USD113). The survey also found that cash remittances are not sent home regularly. Only 11% of the households received remittances more than once a month. Another one-third received them once a month and the remainder a few times a year.

Table 1: Amount of Remittances Received Per Month

	Frequency	Percentage
Less than GHS500	2	1
GHS500–GHS1,000	17	27
GHS1,000–GHS1,500	25	16
GHS1,500–GHS2,000	20	13
GHS2,000–GHS2,500	9	6
GHS2,500–GHS2,500	4	3
More than GHS2,500	68	44
Total	155	100

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the recipients of remittances from Qatar. More than two-thirds were immediate family members and a further 25% were members of the extended family of the migrants. This is strong evidence that migrants in Qatar are embedded in translocal or multi-local households with nodes in both Ghana and Qatar. Translocality was very evident during the in-depth interviews in Qatar

when respondents were asked about their motivations for remitting. One migrant described the principle of reciprocity within their translocal household in this way:

I believe it's necessary to share my success with my family, no matter how small it may be. Back in Ghana, when I needed help, they supported me, so it's only fair to reciprocate and support them now. I don't get worried when I send them money because I always budget for things I need here and the rest for my family back home. Which they can share among themselves. (Interview No. 29, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

Another mentioned his obligation for the family's survival in Ghana, seeing himself as the family 'breadwinner' and provider:

I send money every month to my wife and child. Monthly, I send GHS800 and support my siblings when they are needed. I am the man, the breadwinner, and the father. They cannot survive without me. Besides, it is my responsibility to provide for them as the man and father of the house. The money is used for household food purchase. (Interview No 8, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

The in-depth interviews provided insights into why, despite their best intentions, migrants are not able to send large amounts of cash or are unable to remit on a consistent and regular basis. The frequency of remitting is clearly affected by their precarious socioeconomic situation in Qatar, including the availability of jobs and the constant fear of unemployment:

I try to remit the family regularly, even though there are times when I cannot do so due to financial constraints, just like last month's ending. I pleaded with them that they will hear from me when things go well. (Interview No. 29, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

During the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, there were many job opportunities in the construction industry. Many migrant workers originally sponsored by companies moved to 'freelancing' to allow them to work in this and other sectors and

earn more money. However, since the World Cup, employment shutdowns have left many Ghanaian labour migrants stranded. Migrants, especially the freelancers, are now unemployed, with their savings spent on food and accommodation. They have very little money with which to support their multilocal families:

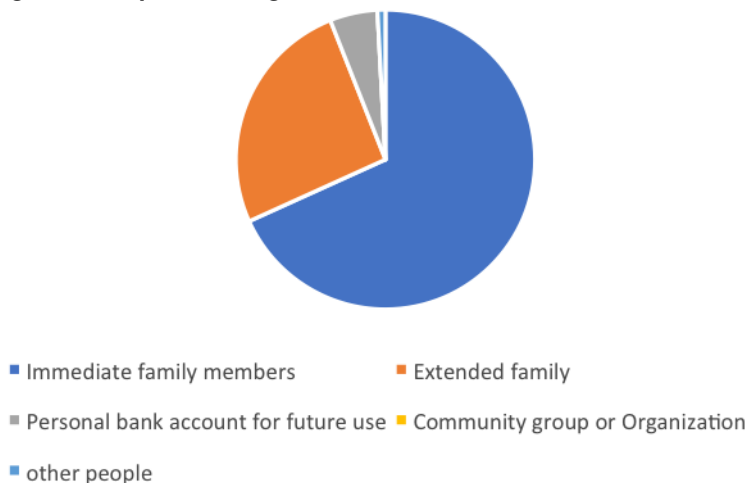
It has been seven months since I sent money to my family, but I explained to them that things have been difficult, and they understood my situation. The first 14 months in this country was peaceful and different. There was a lot of construction jobs available due to the 2022 World Cup. I survived, I had something to depend on, and could consistently send every month to the family, but this whole mess started when I moved from the company to freelance before the World Cup. Life has been complicated after the World Cup. A lot of jobs have shut down. (Interview No. 17, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

My earnings in Qatar have been minimal after the World Cup, I haven't been able to send enough money home to benefit the family for some time now. I couldn't even repay all the loans I took to come to Qatar. The land I used as collateral was seized and sold. I feel so disappointed in myself. I focused on getting my ID, so I didn't spend much on food. I hope they will pay me for the two weeks of work arrears, which should be 1400 Riyals or half of it so that I can use that to survive. (Interview No. 34, Qatar, 9 June 2023)

Another migrant recalled that they sent remittances to Ghana every month when they were employed but now that they were unemployed, they had to fend for themselves first:

I am unemployed; I don't send money home and manage what I have for my stay. But previously, I used to remit every month whenever I was paid my basic salary. Why should I send money to someone when I am unemployed and unsettled? They know how generous I am, but they would have to pardon me for now. I usually don't get help from anyone. (Interview No 27, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

Figure 1: Recipients of Migrant Remittances



A migrant with family members in Ghana and Europe, told a similar story about the impact of unemployment on their ability to remit:

I regularly send money to my family back home. But now I'm unemployed, they know about my situation and have adapted. My other siblings in Italy help the family when one of us is lacking, especially during festive seasons; since we are Muslims, we send them money. My siblings also support the family when one of us is facing difficulties. Currently, I don't have any job, so any money I sent home will push me into a food crisis. I didn't have this problem previously when I was working. My brother here often helps me when I'm in trouble. Only my family members know that I'm not working. People might comment negatively when they realize you are not doing well here. (Interview No. 28, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

The reference to coordinated assistance from family members in Italy suggests that some migrants in Qatar are members of more complex multi-local households with nodes in Ghana, Qatar, and elsewhere.

Food Remittances

Remitting to family in Ghana includes transfers of food and non-food items. The primary difference between cash and non-cash forms of remitting is that cash involve a one-way flow from Qatar to Ghana, whereas food is remitted in both directions. As many as 51% of migrant-sending households received food and other items from household members in Qatar. These food items are crucial to the immediate needs of the households (Baako-Amponsah et al. 2022; Kuire et al., 2013). Although non-food items such as clothes and building materials such as paints were transferred from Qatar to migrant households in Ghana, food was the common item sent. Most migrants rely on other labour migrants including friends and relatives returning to Ghana to send food to their families. However, some transfers are more organized. One respondent who runs a restaurant business in Doha emphasized that food was cheap in Qatar, and they ship food to Ghana to share among their friends and relatives. Food and non-food remitting occurs on an

individual basis but is also an organized business as his account illustrates:

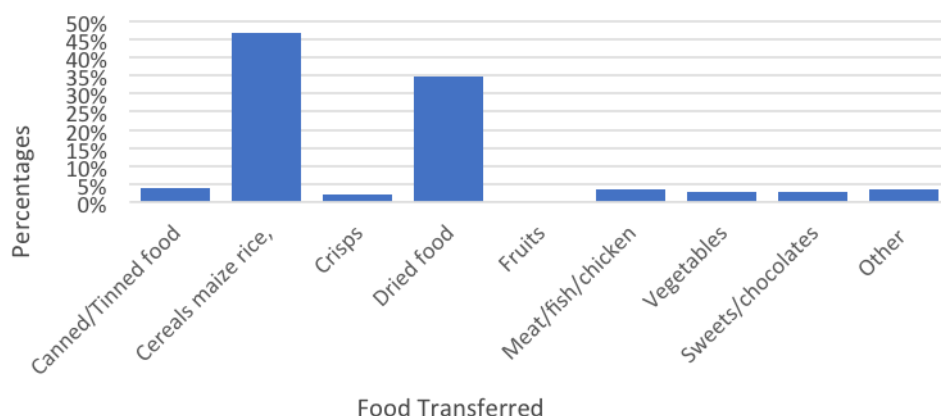
Some of us here export some food home since some food items, such as white rice, are relatively cheaper. My father sitting over there [referring to a man sitting at the restaurant who is in the shipping business] is very much involved in such business. He collects the goods including cooking oil, white rice, cookies and flour, clothes and electronic gadgets people want to send to relatives in Ghana, charges them and ships on their behalf. Also, we import local food such as konkonte, local peanut butter, gari, corn dough, some dry fish, etc., to run the restaurant business here. However, we are careful not to send more food than we end up with nor bring more than we can afford since it might impact our finances and our ability to cook and sell adequate and preferred food to the public. (Interview No. 52, Qatar, 16 June 2023)

The households of migrants in Ghana also send food to their family members in Qatar. The survey found that about 46% of surveyed households sent cereals to their migrant members in Qatar during their contract period which is normally two years. More than 34% sent dried food, including dried fish and powdered foods (Figure 2). Cereals such as corn dough, konkonte (dried ground cassava), and dried fish are important staple foods in Ghana, and not available in Qatari markets and grocery stores. Food remittances from Ghana are often transported to Qatar by other migrants:

I don't receive gifts from anyone here, but I do ask my friends returning to Ghana to collect certain foodstuffs for me, such as konkonte and red oil, which they sometimes forget at the airport. (Interview No. 36, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

Migrants returning to Qatar also bring food back with them for their friends and relatives. Some migrants send cash remittances to family members in Ghana for them to buy food and send it with friends going to Qatar. However, personal conveyance of food and other items (such as medicines) runs the risk of confiscation by customs officials:

Figure 2: Food Transferred to Migrants in Qatar



Nobody here gives me food to eat. The only thing you will receive from someone here is some biscuits and things of that sort. If I need help, I send money to my wife to buy food items and give to my friends returning from vacation in Ghana to bring to me. I get foods like shito (black sauce), groundnut paste, Gari and some medications like amoxicillin. That's all. People won't agree to bring over heavy foods to you here. Sometimes it comes at a cost. A friend of mine that I used to work with went to Ghana from here, and when he was returning, I told him to come along with malaria treatment and some foodstuffs, but he came to narrate to me that it was seized and thrown away. All because he put it in his handbag. So those are also some of the challenges we are likely to encounter. (Interview No. 24, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

I sometimes receive shito (black sauce) and others from home. When someone comes from Ghana after vacation, I give them money to purchase items we don't have here for us. Sometimes, they bring dry fish, peanut butter because the ones they sell in the grocery stores are not suitable for peanut butter soup. They are sugary, but sometimes they don't even bring all you send them to buy, you lose your money, and you are forced to find alternatives. (Interview No. 40, Qatar, 12 June 2023)

Figure 3 shows the frequency with which food is transported to migrants in Qatar by those who send food remittances. Many of the respondents, about 90%, indicated that they sent food to Qatar sparingly thus 'a few times a year', 'once a year' or 'occasionally, less than once a year' while 10% regularly transferred food i.e. at least once a month. This indicates how costly and difficult it is to transfer food outside of Ghana, as previously demonstrated in Southern Africa (Crush and Tawodzera, 2017).

Food transfers from Ghana are of strong cultural significance to the Ghanaian migrant in Qatar. For the migrant, eating traditional Ghanaian food is comforting, nostalgic, and reminder of their identity and home (Locher et al., 2005). Respondents noted that they do not rely on Qatari and other foods in the grocery stores because the food is unenjoyable and considered unhealthy. Instead, migrants cook in a way that mimics their culturally preferred foods, with many requesting important Ghanaian foods.

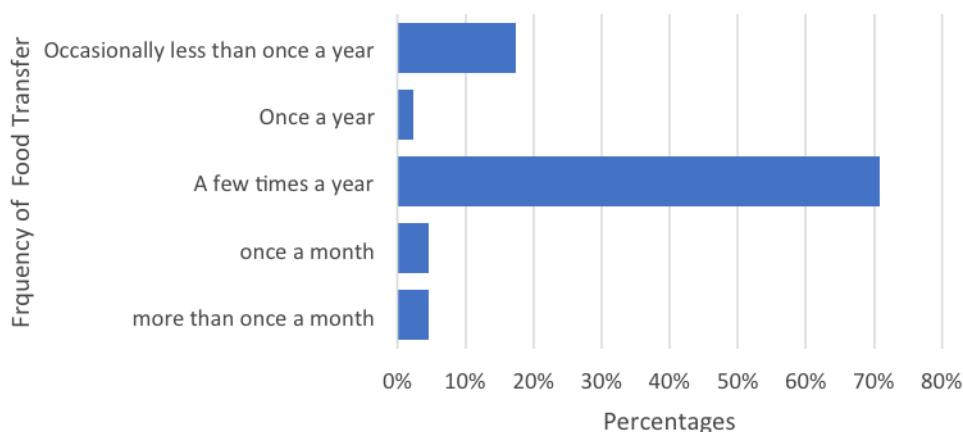
However, respondents noted that food transfers impose costs, and some might not receive what they sent money for. For example, a male respondent who is a long-term resident of Qatar and relies on staple foods from Ghana noted that:

Remittances and Household Food Security in Ghana

Cash and food remittances had a marked impact on the food security situation of migrant-sending households in Ghana. As many as 73% of the respondents in Ghana indicated that remittances are 'very important' to their household, and another 18% indicated that they were 'important.' These findings are consistent with other studies that have examined the crucial role of cash and food remittances in improving household food security in the Northern, and Upper-East regions of Ghana (Baako-Amponsah et al., 2020; Karamba et al., 2011; Kuuire et al., 2013; Sulemana et al., 2018)

The cash remittances received by households are used to maintain and improve dietary diversity and, more importantly, food consumption levels and the household's ability to purchase sufficient quality food to meet their nutritional needs. The survey findings indicate that the most common use of cash remittances is food purchase 27.04%. Investment in children's education (in the form of school fees) is the second most important use 17.90%, followed by financial transactions in the form of savings and repaying loan) with 7.78% and 5.84% respectively. Clothing 5.45 % and other household emergency use such as funerals 4.09% seventh and eighth important use of remittance. Migrants take the opportunity to build houses whiles abroad as such the next use of remittances is used to purchase other building materials 3.11% and pay for the labour 2.92% of remittances. Also, a significant portion of the remittances

Figure 3: Frequency of Transferring Food to Migrants in Qatar



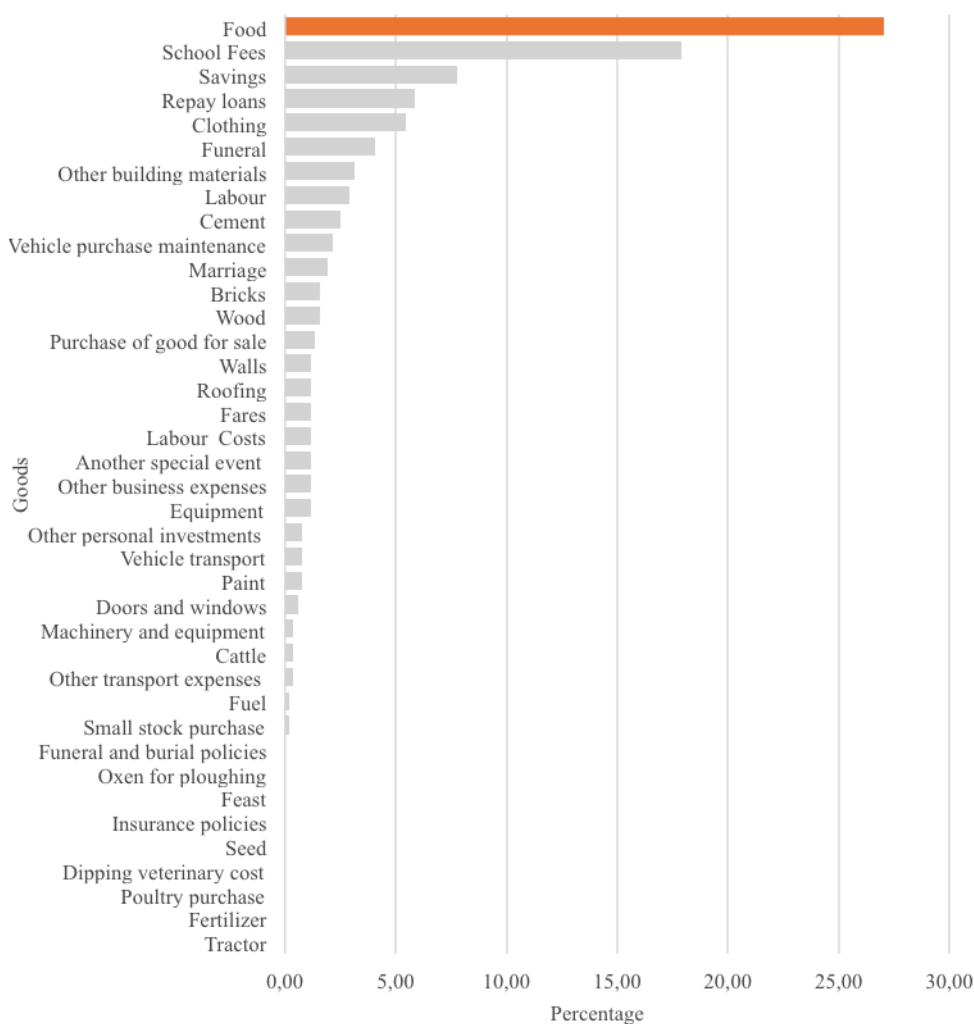
is spent on main construction materials including cement 2.53%, Wood 1.56 %, bricks 1.56 % and many others. But in between, these uses, remittances are used to purchase and maintain vehicles 2.14% and for marriages 1.95%. These findings about the prioritizing of remittance expenditure on food purchases are consistent with the findings of Pendleton et al. (2014), Venditto (2018), and many others (Crush and Caesar, 2017, 2018). None of the respondents invested remittances in improving rural agriculture, although a handful did purchase cattle with remittances.

Evidence from the qualitative interviews with the migrants in Qatar provides further insights into the diverse use and general importance of migrant remittances. The payment of school fees and educational support was a constant refrain in many of the in-depth interviews. In addition to food and clothing, approximately 19% of the survey participants used remittances for education. Therefore, remittances significantly increase investment in education. As Gyimah-Brempong and Asiedu (2015) suggested, a strong link exists between remittances and human capital formation. They note that international remittances significantly increase the probability that families will enrol in their primary and high school education in Ghana and that children's education is a primary reason for migration to work in Qatar:

I send money every month to my family, about 1500 Cedis, to support their education. If it means sending the last amount of money on me, I will do whatever it takes to give them a better education and dreams. My kids and wife are why I am working, and I must take good care of them. I even have this education I am talking about well-planned out as well. I have learned that Ghana's educational system doesn't meet the desired standards, especially at the university level. I plan to enroll my children in vocational training after they complete junior high school, like being a mechanic, mason, fixing air conditioners, etc., which would make them better than their mates. This way when he travels here in the future and earns even 1,800 riyals, equivalent to to Ghc4,000, his mates will still be at the university waiting to graduate, but he would be in a better status than them. (Interview No. 30, Qatar, 8 June 2023)

Another respondent noted that the school fees of his younger sibling are non-negotiable regardless of his own employment and food security status:

Figure 4: Use of Household Remittances



I send money to my mom for upkeep and to care for my little brother, who is still in senior high school. I am not financially stable; I sometimes struggle to eat, especially when sending money. I still have to think about my family's well-being, especially that of my little brother, who is still in school. It would go a long way to prevent him from indulging in certain practices to get money when he is not getting enough at home. (Interview No. 26, Qatar, June 6, 2023)

However, the interviews confirmed that a major benefit of remittances is the improvement of household food security:

My wife told me they buy foodstuffs such as yam, gari, rice, vegetables, and other household supplies. (Interview No 8, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

I send money to the family in Ghana every month. I send 900 Cedis purposely for their food. They use the money to buy foodstuffs, including rice, beans, yam, chicken, etc. Rice is the most essential food in my household because of my kids. They like rice a lot. I want to give them a good life; it is my responsibility, and I fully embrace it. (Interview No. 5, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

I ask my mother what they need at home at the end of every month. I tell my aunt, who owns a 'provision shop' (mini grocery shop), to make the list of items such as milo, soups, cereals, soaps, rice, oil, cowbell coffee and tomato pastes. Package them and give them to my mother. So, she might package groceries of about GHS300; then I will send her GHS800, and she takes her money and gives the rest to my parents. I give them about GHS500 to my mother for their monthly upkeep and my son's feeding fee. My child's feeding fee is about GHS15 a day plus her lunch of about GHS5. (Interview No. 1, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

As well as improving the food security of the household, remittances thus play a role in the extra-household food security of school-age children through school feeding programmes. One respondent drew attention to this dual role as follows:

See my phone, someone just called me. I don't send food to Ghana, but I send money to my parents and kids monthly. It is a must every month. For siblings, I remit occasionally. They use the money for feeding fees at school and household food consumption. (Interview No. 3, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

In some cases, remittances spent on food purchase are used to supplement local household income:

My mother is not working, but my dad is a commercial driver, so sometimes he supports the family every month, too. He adds to the money and uses it to buy foodstuffs such as plantain, cassava, rice,

vegetables including garden eggs and other items on his way home after work. (Interview No. 3, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

A single mother noted that the food security of her family in Ghana had improved since she migrated to Qatar for work:

Life has been difficult, but things have improved since I came to Qatar. I am able to send some little money to my family, which has, to some extent, paid their rent and supported household food purchases and consumptions and the family in general, though the salary is not much. You are not able to save. Most of the money goes into household expenditure every month. I have been unable to do anything since all the money goes to essential household expenditures, such as sending money to feed my kids and paying the rent for them whenever it is due. (Interview No. 1, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

Another respondent noted a similar improvement in his ability to provide food for the family in Ghana since migrating to Qatar:

At least, I have been earning some monies to support and provide food for my wife and kids and even started a project, something I wasn't able to do in while in Ghana. (Interview No. 5, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

The capacity of migrants to remit on a regular basis is clearly key to sustaining household food security over time. If there are any delays or irregularity, the household must adjust accordingly:

I am able to send money back home to Ghana once a month, but it sometimes delays when I am not paid; in that case, they have to adjust and find alternate way to feed at home until I am able to remit to them when I am paid. The money I send them is mostly used to pay bills and school fees, so they appreciate it and my effort. (Interview No. 54, Qatar, 17 June 2023)

An additional use of remittances with longer-term food security implications is investment in small income-generating business in Ghana. Respondents stressed that these small businesses generate income for the household to manage the household food situation at a time when they have not been able to remit to the household:

I regularly send money to my mom and girlfriend in Ghana at the end of every month for her food. Also, I helped my mom reopen her collapsed bar to provide her with a source of income and food. You know the job here is erratic, especially when you are on a free visa. Besides, you can be sacked at any time. Now I carefully manage how I send money to ensure that I save and support my family without leaving myself stranded here. (Interview No. 49, Qatar, 15 June 2023)

Some respondents noted that helping the household set up a small business relieves them of the pressure of caring for their children and extended family members. As one female migrant noted:

I don't send money to my family often. This is because my sister has her own business, which I helped to set up; she benefits and gets her income for food from the returns, so I don't have to work to support household food consumption. Helping her monthly as well as my son would put a huge burden on me. Instead, I send my son 300 riyals (900 Cedis) monthly. Sometimes, when I don't remit, my sister supports my son too because she has the business; she takes money from me for food purchases and other household needs until I can remit to them. (Interview No. 22, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

Another female respondent described how she was able to rent a store for her mother to sell some goods instead of on the streets:

I stayed with my mother when I was in Ghana, selling second-hand clothing on the streets. However, there have been changes in the entire household; I have now rented a store for my mother, which will support her even when I don't send her anything. (Interview No. 19, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

Migrant Remittances and Food Insecurity in Qatar

While there is a growing body of research on the impact of remittances on household food security in the literature, only a few have examined the impact of remitting on the food and nutritional security of remitters at their place of destination (Crush & Tawodzera 2017; Osei-Kwasi et al. 2019; Headley et al., 2008). As members of multi-local households, the remittances of migrants to their households in Ghana could negatively affect their own food security in Qatar, forcing them to adopt various coping strategies. However, some migrants in Qatar were quick to deny that remittances to multi-local families in Ghana impacted their own food security. For example:

Sending them money doesn't affect me here because I plan to keep some 100 Riyals on me for a month, which I use for basic expenses here. Still, even with that, I don't use all the 100 Riyals. I sometimes spend only 50 Riyals in a month. After all, I don't spend much here because I don't buy any clothing, and with food, I rarely make orders: I just go to the restaurant and eat at the work cafeteria even though I don't like it at times. (Interview No. 48, Qatar, 14 June 2023)

More common was a constant reference to the fact that migrants deprive themselves of nutritious and diverse foods to save money in order to remit to their multi-local family members. A single mother in her mid-20s, who is also the

breadwinner for her family in Ghana, emphasised that she has less to eat after remitting and has to adopt various strategies to survive:

When I send the money home to my son and siblings, it also impacts me here, but I can't complain; if I don't do it, who will? I have to manage. It's not like they are using the money to do anything for me but for their consumption. If I want to eat what I want, I might need 500 riyals every month, but with my responsibilities, it is impossible. I must eat smaller and the same meals all the time. (Interview No. 4, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

Another respondent echoed the difficult situation after sending remittances:

My family is always appreciative of the little financial support. I send them regularly every month when I am paid, which makes me happy. Sometimes, sending money home puts me in a difficult situation here, especially when we are not paid early. I sometimes take foodstuffs such as rice from my friends and pay for or replace it when I am paid. (Interview No. 51, Qatar, 15 June 2023)

Dietary monotony as a response to remitting was quite common. A single mother in her late twenties with three younger siblings explained that she has an enormous responsibility to her family so only keeps about 150 riyals of her basic monthly salary of 1500 riyals for her own food and miscellaneous expenses; however, she still had to sacrifice by eating rice all the time:

Remitting money to my family in Ghana sometimes impacts what I eat. I don't send all the money: sometimes, I leave about 150qa (from my basic salary of 1500) on me for upkeep and food, which is not enough, but I 'manage' it all the time. I am eating the same kind of food all the time. For instance, I eat one way: rice with no variety all the time because I want to manage the money. (Interview No. 1, Qatar, 31 May 2023)

As she noted, "I could have enjoyed much better food and lived comfortably if it was all about me."

A male respondent in his late twenties said that he eats beans all the time to cope with the financial pressure and burden that comes with assisting members of the multi-local family:

Sending money impacted what I ate; honestly, it was beans and gari that I usually like to eat because, per my calculation, it would have been difficult and lost for me to eat other foods. Someone owed me, so I relied on that to purchase food. (Interview No. 16, Qatar, 4 June 2023)

To cut down on living costs in Qatar and free up funds to remit, many migrants share the same rented housing space

and kitchen with a degree of community living and solidarity. Shared cooking also cuts down the cost of food. Although some Ghanaian labour migrants work for companies where food is provided, they prefer to join their colleagues to cook and eat as a group:

I don't have any job after the World Cup, so any money I send home will force me into a food crisis. In difficult times here in Qatar, my brothers in this room often help me. Even when we were all in the company and were provided food, we didn't like it because it was difficult to eat and hence, though not allowed in the company building, we still prepared food as a group and eat. Every member in the room contributed money that we all used to buy foodstuff to prepare the meals. (Interview No. 28, Qatar, 7 June 2023)

Conclusion

This paper uses qualitative, in-depth interviews conducted in Qatar and household surveys conducted in Ghana to examine the impact of migrant remittances on household food security in Ghana and Qatar. The findings of this study show that Ghanaian labour migrants' remittance positively affects household food security and welfare in Ghana and food insecurity among labour migrants in Qatar. Migrants in Qatar remit cash and goods to their households in Ghana. Respondents in the in-depth interviews and surveys appreciated how migrant remittances in food and money catalysed sustained household welfare, including food security. The study found that migrants remitted money more regularly compared to food.

The study findings also show that migrant cash remittances alleviate household food insecurity and improve household welfare through food purchases, payment of children's school and feeding fees, and start-up businesses among labour-migrant households. Therefore, the study finding agrees with other studies in the literature by Choithani (2017), Karamba et al. (2011) and Zezza et al. (2011) that suggest that migrant remittances improve household food consumption and nutritional security. However, there is a reverse transfer of food, mostly dried and traditional staple foods such as konkonte, shito, corn dough, dried and smoked fishes such as herrings, salted tilapia, and groundnut paste, which is not available in Qatari grocery stores and markets, are sent from migrant household in Ghana to them in Qatar. But migrant remittances to families in Ghana reduce the disposable income of migrants in Qatar. Migrants are burdened with responsibilities, so they have very little disposable income left after remittances and expenditures.

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