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Poverty, Income Inequalities and Migration in the Global South

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Introduction

The relationships between migration, income levels, poverty and income inequalities are a common and widespread theme of discussion in migration studies. International agencies often stress this entangled connection, by highlighting how evidence indicates that migration reduces poverty (Murrugarra et al., 2011), and that migration represents an important coping mechanism for shocks, such as natural disasters, deforestation, economic turbulence (Murrugarra et al., 2011; UNDP, 2021; Kóczán & Loyola, 2018). Moreover, in the last decades the attention on remittances and their role in reducing poverty and potentially levelling income inequalities has been widely considered. In the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, one of the constitutive points to reach Goal Number 10, which is dedicated to

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the reduction of inequalities within and among countries, refers to migration, and in particular to the facilitation of "orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies" (UN, 2030 Agenda, 23).

In this chapter we discuss whether migration can play a role in reducing income inequality, by helping increase incomes and contribute to poverty alleviation, or whether it is a very selective phenomenon that tends to exacerbate inequalities. South–South perspectives are included in the analysis, albeit through a critical approach, drawing attention to the vast existing literature on the topic and focusing on migration dynamics seen in three corridors that represent our case study (Burkina Faso–Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia–South Africa, Ghana–China).[1]

The corridor perspective can help in disclosing some questions that may arise while producing a theoretical work on mobility. Carling and Jolivet (2016) define corridors as "frames of observation devoid of empirical assumptions and independent of the level and direction of activity within them" (Carling & Jolivet, 2016, 44). This means that they are useful conceptual frameworks to analyse both the presence and the absence of migration, its stagnation. Corridors don't have a predetermined direction, and consequently they also involve returns in the analysis. A temporal dimension is central in defining the changing characteristics of a migration corridor (Carling & Jolivet, 2016). We must underline, though, how this corridor perspective should be problematised: it is important to critically reconsider the absence of "empirical assumptions" (Carling & Jolivet, 2016, 44), by recognising the constitutive contributions made by different experiences in the corridors, made by people's lives, choices, challenges.

Our review of the literature suggests that the relationships between migration and poverty and/or income inequality are complex and highly variable. In fact, as mentioned by McKenzie (2017, 13), "contrary to simple theories of income maximization and popular perceptions, migrants are not overwhelmingly drawn from the poorer households within a country, or poorest countries". This is to say that poverty and income inequalities influence in various and contradicting ways the decision to migrate, due to a myriad of variables that we will analyse here. Also, the effects of remittances and returnees in the areas of origin have sometimes unexpected outcomes. As we will see, in fact, while remittances can often reduce poverty, for example at the household level, they have a less clear and straightforward relation with income inequality.

Who Migrates?

While trying to unpack the relationship between migration, poverty, and income inequality it has become clear that we need to focus attention primarily on those who make the decision to move, with the aim of untangling how this decision is often a collective one, even if this aspect can be sometimes relegated to the background. Migration, indeed, is a family, community, collective decision even if the migrant is only one person (see also Mazzilli et al., this volume). Often this first move can be followed by the migration of other family members, or of other co-villagers, highlighting once again the collective dimension of the migration experience.

In asking the question "who migrates", we have found out that those who move are, normally, not the poorest. But what does this mean in analytical terms?

The poorest of the poor seldom have the possibility to migrate (Crawley, 2018). As noted by Carling, "migration is restricted by poverty, illiteracy, lack of education and the absence of long-term planning in the lives of people that live from hand to mouth" (Carling, 2002, 5). This may be seen as a factor increasing inequality because access to migration is not evenly distributed (Black et al., 2005; Carling, 2002). This perspective is supported by various scholars, asserting that migration from the poorest countries is normally directed towards neighbouring countries (Flahaux & de Haas, 2016), and that the poorest are likely to maintain a local mobility, or regional at most, and primarily within a country (Skeldon, 2002). In this sense, a focus on South–South mobility can help provide a better understanding of these dynamics.

Other studies support this point, by providing examples that relate to the so-called inverse U-shaped pattern between income levels and emigration rates, which have proven to be low in the poorest countries, and rise until an income per capita of around $6000, and then start to fall (de Haas, 2010; McKenzie, 2017). Indeed, as noted by de Haas, migration is a strongly patterned choice, because people's individual choices are constrained by structural factors, and because migration processes themselves cannot follow a conventional equilibrium model following functionalist theory (de Haas, 2010, 5). The cross-sectional relation represented by the inverse U-shaped pattern suggests that reducing poverty may actually induce more people to migrate (McKenzie, 2017).

There are several explanations for the existence and persistence of this migration pattern in relation to poverty. We elaborate on this pattern through the analysis of crucial variables, which can help to build a critical approach on the reading of the profile of the migrant, that can be read also in relation to poverty and income inequality.

Migration is always *costly*. The project to move in search of a better job and better life opportunities always involves an economic effort that can vary greatly in relation to contexts and personal conditions, but that always exists. That is to say that the poor are more likely to move when migration costs are low (Bakewell, 2009). Households experiencing an increase in income due to, for example, remittances, can see their members migrating more. *Aspirations* are also considered an important variable by many scholars; de Haas (2010) has been particularly attentive in connecting them to capabilities and making them a substantial element that characterise the decision to migrate. More complicated is determining whether, and how, aspirations are related to poverty and income inequality, and how this eventual connection is developed. Doquier et al. (2014, in McKenzie, 2017) found that poorer and less educated people are partially less motivated to migrate, but much less able to turn eventual aspirations to migrate into reality, due to migration costs but also to other variables, like *education*.

Another important factor of connection between migration, poverty and inequality, education and aspirations are represented by *family networks* and the possibility of gaining *information* about opportunities abroad and routes to take. If poorer people migrate less, they will have a lower level of access to a well-structured network abroad that can not only provide reliable information, but also imagination and dreams: migration decision-making process is highly informed also by intangible and subjective factors (Hagen-Zanker & Hennessey, 2021).

We shall try to understand, now, what is distinctive of income inequalities in shaping migration, by providing reflection, critical readings and practical examples from our three migration corridors.

How Do Poverty and Inequality Influence Who Migrates, and Why?

Is the mere presence of income inequality able to affect an individual's desire to migrate? It is clear that relative deprivation matters (Bakewell, 2009; Stark & Taylor, 1989), and that inequalities within sending areas are crucial in generating migration (Black et al., 2005).

McKenzie (2017) provides a straightforward equation to combine these aspects: high inequalities and the increase of inequalities in a certain area are going to create more poor people, and this dynamic is most probably going to decrease the migration rate because poor people cannot afford/do not prefer to migrate.

These reflections are supported by some of the findings of our analysis of migration dynamics in the Burkina Faso–Côte d'Ivoire corridor, where several scholars assert that poverty is a constraint to migration, because costs and risks can be faced normally by those who have a certain economic security, people need money and information to move (Dabiré, 2007; Mouhoud, 2010; Wouterse, 2008). Nevertheless, there can also be positive effects of poverty and inequality as migration drivers, as demonstrated for example by Piché and Cordell (2015) in analysing migration patterns in the same corridor: the authors note that recognising the condition of poverty and deciding to change could act as a driver for migration. In this case, the role of aspirations in changing or ameliorating one's own personal/group condition is quite relevant. At the same time Lachaud (1999) affirms that those who move from Burkina Faso are normally peasants coming from poor rural areas, often young men (Black et al., 2005), who undertake a labour migration journey that is quite common in the historical relation between the two countries involved in this corridor (Tapsoba et al., 2022).

The Burkina Faso–Côte d'Ivoire corridor operates in the short distance, and therefore is more likely to involve "poorer" migrants. This corridor represents a long-standing practice of migration: moving to Côte d'Ivoire is a common strategy to improve one's economic situation, a trajectory that has its roots during colonial times (see also Dabiré and Soumahoro, this volume). Indeed, present-day Burkina Faso served as a labour reservoir for the more developed Côte d'Ivoire during the implementation and development of cocoa plantations (see Piché & Cordell, 2015). This historical practice of mobility has survived and adapted during time, representing also today a viable solution for many Burkinabè workers. This corridor could represent a good way forward for poorer migrants. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge the historical dimensions of this corridor and consider the colonial and postcolonial labour mobility process as inherently caused, and perpetuated, by economic inequalities between the two countries. One critical reflection that could arise from the reading of the specificities of this corridor, still vital and vibrant, and of the persistence of economic inequalities between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, is that migration between the two countries could act as a leveller of poverty, at the micro-level, but not necessarily as a leveller of economic inequalities.

The Ethiopia–South Africa corridor represents another, different migration dynamic. This is an intra-continental, medium distance migration corridor that is relatively recent compared to other more rooted migration phenomena

(Ethiopians to Europe, North America, Middle East) (see Estifanos & Zack, 2019), and it stems from the collapse of both regimes, apartheid in South Africa and the end of Derg's military rule in Ethiopia. It involved, at the beginning, mainly men searching for a secure place during political oppression and, subsequently, election turmoil, but then it became a viable destination because of economic opportunities both in the formal and the informal market (Estifanos & Zack, 2020; Landau et al., 2018). This corridor offers many examples of the crucial role played by intermediaries, namely smugglers (providing security, protection, border crossing), but also social networks (which reduce risks and costs of migration, finance the trip, pay ransoms and provide emotional support and social connections) (see Adugna et al., 2019; Jones et al., this volume). It is possible to observe that income inequality intersects with irregularity: in a context of relative wealth, one can better confront with the possibility (often the need) to undertake irregular roads. Capabilities and aspirations must also be understood in relation to spirituality and the role of local churches in the country of origin, which have contributed to the creation of a "spiritually animated migration agency" (Feyissa, 2022, 37) that has proven to be relevant in determining migration decision-making and risk assessment (see also Feyissa et al., this volume).

Migration between Ghana and China is a long distance, intra-continental route and a corridor that requires a more expensive migration investment. As a result, those who move between the two countries are normally well educated and highly skilled people. Obeng (2019) for example notes that at least 40% of African migrants in Guangzhou (China) have had a tertiary education (see also Bodomo & Ma, 2010). Another peculiarity of this corridor is its double direction: we can observe both Ghanaians moving to China, and Chinese moving to Ghana, which can help us unpack some crucial questions on the relationship between income inequality and migration. Chinese started moving to Ghana in late 1950s (Ho, 2008), while Ghanaians initiated to migrate to China in the late 1990s–early 2000s (Obeng, 2019). For this corridor, there is evidence that highlights how the role of the household and the social network is fundamental in overcoming income inequality for those who want to leave, but also in increasing income inequality in relation to those "left behind", because there is the tendency in investing in the migration of only one individual or only one group of people, due to the high cost of the experience (trip, documents, accommodation). Indeed, this is rarely an irregular route. As noted by a recent study (Teye et al., 2022), even if Chinese migration to Ghana is initially motivated by the possibility of prosperous economic opportunities for investments and employment, then many Chinese migrants decided to stay, or to return after a period back to China due to a combination of factors, in which other variables count: the presence of a social network, the peaceful environment, the ease in accessing the migration route due to Ghana's geography and its favourable migration policy (ibid; see also Teye et al., this volume). This means that migration dynamics related to income inequality can be fully understood in their intersection with other forms of inequalities and other variables.

A Reflection on South–South Migration in Relation to Inequality

A South–South perspective has proven to be an insightful way to understand and problematise the developmental effects of migration in both countries of origin and destination (Crawley et al., 2022), especially because new patterns are observable and new data are available (De Lombaerde et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, the Global South, and South–South migration, are complex and potentially misleading definitions, which may be useful if understood and used while taking into account the historical dimensions involved in their creation (i.e. colonial period), the political construction of these categories and the limitations embedded in their theoretical application (see also Fiddian-Quasmiyeh and Carella, this volume). It is very difficult, indeed, to identify what is distinctive of South–South migration, because it involves a huge variety of movements, and the "South" is constituted by highly diverse countries, as demonstrated by our focus on three profoundly different corridors. We can identify the South with developing regions, but still the definition remains problematic (see Bakewell, 2009). Probably, South–South movements can be better understood when we focus the attention on a regional dimension, as highlighted by some critical theoretical approaches (Bakewell, 2009) and also by other works that may not be so openly critical about the definition, but ultimately use a regional perspective while talking about South–South mobility (Hossain et al., 2017).

While carefully considering the delicate and complex nature of this categorisation, we can use it to understand if there are specific features that pertain South–South migration, and if this theoretical effort can help us unpack some dynamics concerning inequalities.

In addressing South–South mobility, we must recognise that migration is a characteristic of people's livelihood, especially when we analyse cross-border migration, seasonal migration (Bakewell, 2009). Other important elements characterising Global South livelihoods are connected to the relative high level of informality, low incomes, uncertainty, and limited rights for workers (see Stark & Teppo, 2022). It seems plausible that South–South migration, that is generally less remunerative compared to South–North mobility but also less costly, can be accessible to a higher number of poor people (World Bank, 2019; see also Schewel and Debray, this volume), and consequently enhance livelihood security through income diversification (Bakewell, 2009).

Many analyses underline the importance of the role played by porous borders in the South in characterising people's movements (Campillo-Carrete, 2013; De Lombaerde et al., 2014; Hujo & Piper, 2007). Still, we need to unpack why the role of borders may be so relevant. As stated elsewhere, especially in reference to African borders (Bakewell, 2009), we are not referring to a supposedly volatile, artificial, inconsistent nature of borders created during colonial times, but to the dynamics of weak border control, and the relatively low state capacity in monitoring and registering movements (see also Campillo-Carrete, 2013). Borders do matter: it may be easy to cross borders among neighbouring countries of the Global South, but it may be also difficult to live outside one's country of citizenship (Bakewell, 2009), as demonstrated for example by the condition of exclusion from basic rights (*apartidie*) lived by a consistent number of Burkinabè migrants in the neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, various recent South–South migration patterns are taking place over a longer distance, such as the case of Ethiopians choosing South Africa (which has proven to be more and more irregular due to lack of documentation and stricter border control), or the migration in the Ghana–China corridor (which can normally happen regularly with a consistent economic investment). This means that, in conditions of limited options for regular movement, people will rely more on informal networks and ways of moving, searching for the assistance of families and intermediaries. The condition of uncertainty and the high level of informality in border crossing could also enhance the potential for smuggling and, ultimately, for trafficking in persons.

In this context of relatively weak regional governance and weak regional organisation with respect to the facilitation/regulation of people's mobility (De Lombaerde et al., 2014), the condition of migrants is often neglected, together with the respect of their human rights and labour rights in countries of destination. In spite of a growing interest in migration across the Global South, there is still a need for a systematic consideration and a comparative reading of the politics of state migration management (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019). Inequalities, indeed, can also result from increased barriers to migration, including poor labour conditions and a lack of rights for migrants and their families (Crawley et al., 2022), both in countries of origin and destination.

Lastly, we would like to underline another aspect that connects South–South migration flows to poverty and income inequality. The context of political instability, insecurity and, potentially, conflict can definitely represent an incentive to migrate, and can add important variables to the increase of income inequalities among people on the move, but also among people who receive migrant communities. We refer especially to refugees, who often move to nearby developing countries (see Bakewell, 2009; Hammond, 2004; Hujo & Piper, 2007) and often settle in precarious, unorganised, and destitute spatial and social conditions.

How Does Migration Influence Poverty and Inequality in Countries of Origin?

Impacts of Remittances

Remittances play a crucial role in changing pre-existing patterns of inequalities, even if the impact that they can have at different levels (individual, household, national) and the relevance of the temporal dimension (former/recent migrants) in the same household/village requires a critical approach and a multidimensional analytical perspective. While talking about remittances, we must recognise that an important role is played also by the mechanisms through which resources are remitted in South–South migration dynamics (see also Asiedu et al., this volume). Ratha and Shaw (2007) observe that the cost of remittance transfers among countries in the Global South is higher than those of resources remitted from the Global North to the Global South, due to a lack of competition in the remittances market. This critical factor involves a wide range of social institutions, including hometown, religious, ethnic and village associations that can play a crucial role in channelling remittances not only to individual and families, but also to community-level investments and initiatives (e.g. *mouride* in Senegal, see Riccio, 2005). So, financial institutions (formal and informal) have a great weight in influencing the inequality-reducing or reinforcing effect of migrant remittances (Black et al., 2005), especially if the expenses are high.

In general, there is clear evidence that remittances can reduce poverty (de Haan & Yaqub, 2010). It is more complicated, however, to understand whether, and under what circumstances, remittances can effectively lead to investments in education and health (e.g. de Haas, 2007; Hujo & Piper, 2007; Ratha et al., 2011) and so produce tangible macro-level effects.

McKenzie (2017) affirms that even if reported remittances have soared over the last three decades, no noticeable changes in economic growth or poverty rates are apparent for the countries that send the most migrants and receive most remittances. The largest impacts of migration occur for the migrants themselves and their families, and the gains from moving to a more developed country (South–North migration) are immediate and large (McKenzie, 2017). The absolute gains are even larger for highly skilled workers (ibid.). Kóczán and Loyola (2018) report that while there is a large literature on the poverty-alleviating impact of remittances in countries of origin (e.g. Acosta et al., 2006; Loritz, 2008), their effects on inequality are much less clear (Kóczán & Loyola, 2018, 4). For example, Margolis et al. (2015) find that remittances have no significant impact on inequality, but that they reduce poverty by 40% in Algeria.

Evidence from the Burkina Faso–Côte d'Ivoire corridor can help explain this trend. Zourkaléini and Kaboré (2007) affirm that Burkina Faso has a high number of migrants per household. This permits, through remittances, the amelioration of various aspects of the household's living standards through investments in construction, schooling, facilities (e.g. construction of new latrines). Lachaud (1999, 2005) provides analysis on the importance of remittances coming from workers who have migrated to Côte d'Ivoire, in reducing rural and urban poverty, especially in the urban contexts, by reducing the exposure to economic vulnerability of the weakest social groups (unemployed, independent workers, farmers) (Lachaud, 1999). Furthermore, he underlines that in rural areas remittances can help reduce poverty and also inequalities, but that due to the resources remitted inequalities can actually widen in urban context (ibid.). Another variable that Lachaud introduces is the Ivorian conflict: by considering the political upheaval that happened in 1998 and 2003, it was possible to determine how this had caused an increasing loss of remittances coming from Côte d'Ivoire, due to the change and, sometimes, the arrest of the migratory flow of the Burkinabè (Lachaud, 2005). This means that the contribution of remittances can be variable and contradictory.

Temporal dimensions can help us to understand the impact of remittances on income inequality: remittances can exacerbate existing inequalities if they are sent to the wealthier families, which "pioneer" migrants normally come from; they can increase feelings of deprivation among those left behind (Skeldon, 2002). Findings from the Ethiopia–South Africa corridor confirm this trend, suggesting that remittances are creators of income inequality in the country of origin, because families receiving remittances can invest in new activities, in education (especially to private schools), in building new houses (see also Feyissa et al., this volume). This possibility enhances inequalities, giving rise to episodes of land speculation that entail exclusion from access to land and decent housing solutions (Feyissa, 2022). Early migrants from Ethiopia could benefit from a more regularised transit, and are normally better established so can invest more, especially in the country of origin, by sending back a growing amount of remittances, and investing in land acquisition and construction. When they go back home, they have the economic and social influence to organise a better network, that can have a relevant impact also in political terms. Moreover, they can go back and forth from Ethiopia to South Africa much more easily than later migrants, because the latter often do not have regular permits and papers (Estifanos & Freeman, 2022; Feyissa, 2022).

Inequality in the area of origin can also depend on a combination of generational approach, aspirations, and the cost of migration. Among the youngest, "not migrating" could be perceived and represented as a stain of exclusion and even shame (Estifanos & Zack, 2020). In this case, inequality can increase due to the mechanism of migration and remittances of resources. Some of these young people, in what Estifanos and Zack (2020) significantly describe as a "desperation to migrate", stole money from their family members, or sought help from micro-credit associations through loans, that must be given back. And, finally, there is a tendency to consider migration and especially remittances as a marker of social status (ibid.).

Remittances may also feed into desire for further migration. Increased households' income (due to remittances) seems to facilitate the financing of some of the costs related to out-migration of a family member (Hagen-Zanker & Leon Himmelstine, 2014). There may be remittance dependence at the household level (Hujo, 2013; Hujo & Piper, 2007), as demonstrated by evidence from the Ethiopia–South Africa and Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire corridors. In poorer economies, those left behind may experience "chronic poverty" (Khotari, 2002 in Skeldon, 2002). So, poverty can be influenced in positive ways by migration, especially at the micro level, while the evaluation of the impact of migration on inequality is much more complex and challenging. In other words, we must consider that remittances can give rise to new inequalities and exacerbate existing ones.

Impacts of Outmigration on Poverty and Income Inequality

While reflecting on the impact of outmigration, we confront once again the need to incorporate a temporal dimension, or the "generational" approach, into our reading. Migration can increase and then decrease inequality in sending countries over time, because "pioneer" migrants can come from relatively richer households than later migrants, who can benefit from falling costs of migration (Kóczán & Loyola, 2018). There can be a positive link between outmigration and inequality in sending countries with a more recent migration history (Stark et al., 1988 in Kóczán & Loyola, 2018): people can be stimulated to migrate due to the various factors already mentioned in connection with remittances (facilitation in covering migration costs, sharing aspirations and information on the migration routes), and their remittances, in a first phase, can help in reducing inequalities. Afterwards, as we have seen, inequalities can increase: those who move first, gain most, and the divide between them can intensify. But how far does this inequality become structural? By interrogating Ethiopia–South Africa corridor dynamics, we can see that "these inequalities, which partially emanate from the differences in the migration experiences of former and recent migrants, are reinforced by a combination of socio-economics, cultural and structural factors prevailing in the present day informal economy in South Africa" (Estifanos & Freeman, 2022, 69). So, we might suppose that it is exactly this set of combination that can make income inequality structural. Some groups, like recent migrants and in general the youngest, find themselves in a position of vulnerability and dependence, which might exclude them from overcoming their condition of poverty.

Immediate gains brought by migration in the country of origin must be compared with the impact in the economic setting of the absence of the person who has migrated, that is to say that we have to take into consideration the income that migrants would have earned if they had not left (McKenzie, 2017). It is useful to consider other possible negative effects, such as labour shortages in the community of origin (Hujo, 2013). Evidence from the Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire corridor demonstrates that migration could have negative effects on the availability of agricultural labour in the country of origin, especially if migrants stay away during the rainy season (Black et al., 2005). It might be relevant to distinguish between seasonal and more permanent migration, and their possible outcome in the country of origin. In South–South mobility dynamics, long-term migration can undermine the demographic and economic viability of the community (Skeldon, 2002), but it can also enhance it, for example by reducing pressure on the youth labour market and improving possibilities for those who stay. For example, migration from Burkina Faso does not necessarily result in remittances but reduces consumption pressures faced by sending households (Black et al., 2005).

More recent analysis on the same corridor highlights the fact that migrant households are not necessarily better off than non-migrant ones (Tapsoba et al., 2022). Even if the local perception of migration experiences is generally positive, the fieldwork results seem to demonstrate the contrary: migrant households are less able to cope with daily basic expenses (ibid.).

How Does Migration Influence Poverty and Inequality in Countries of Destination?

Socio-Economic Conditions of Migrants

Often South–South migration dynamics are characterised by higher levels of informality (Bakewell, 2009). Many of these movements are identified as irregular, sometimes in terms of the journey, but more often in terms of the permission to reside in the destination. The possibility of migrants accessing services, rights and legal protection can have an important impact on income inequalities among themselves, and between migrant and non-migrant communities. As suggested by Hujo (2013), the absence of social policy towards inclusion can enhance poverty among migrants. Social policy is, in fact, recognised as a powerful tool for poverty reduction and social development, especially in Global South countries which are dealing with more entrenched poverty and higher levels of inequality (ibid.). Studies on Côte d'Ivoire as a country of immigration highlight how the introduction of programmes of professional training could develop a viable social policy towards inclusion, that can enhance the access to decent employment, and the development of agricultural policies. Burkinabè and other migrants, indeed, are mainly directed towards the agricultural sector, which is revitalising after years of conflict (OCDE/CIRES, 2017). Notwithstanding, migrants in Côte d'Ivoire still lack citizenship rights, and this is also true for those residing in the country for generations. Due to political upheaval that happened in various phases of the post-independence history of the country, and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments in connection with the political manipulation of the *ivoirité* (see Cutolo, 2010), the Constitution had been frequently amended through the Nationality Code, preventing a rising number of people born in Côte d'Ivoire, especially those who have Burkinabè ancestor, to acquire Ivorian citizenship (Adjami, 2016). This condition of *apartidie* causes harsh inequalities related to access to social services, education, political life and regular work, so much so that migrants often get stuck into the informal sector. The issue of *apatridie* can be the cause of a condition of structural poverty suffered by migrants. Their consequent exclusion from the formal sector can create competition with locals for the access to the informal one, increasing income inequalities between migrants and non-migrants (see Soumahoro & Bi, 2022).

The Ethiopia–South Africa corridor provides similar evidence regarding access to rights: migrants without the possibility of acquiring regular status and/or regular residence permit cannot access the formal labour market and are often forced to rely on the informal sector.

This raises the question of whether the informal sector is necessarily less remunerative than the formal one. There are studies that suggest that informality is not necessarily less remunerative, and international organisations like International Labour Organization (ILO) have recognised that the informal sector is a real, valuable source of income for many African countries because it provides after agricultural sector the greatest number of jobs (Traoré & Ouedraogo, 2021). Even if informal economy has been defined as "the *real* economy in Sub-Saharan Africa" (Stark & Teppo, 2022, 2 emphasis in original), it is always presented and managed by governments as a state of exception, raising issues about privilege, exclusion and inequality (Stark & Teppo, 2022). Indeed, it is evident from our analysis that informality is almost always associated with vulnerability and a lack of social and political rights, which makes it a potential source of an entire set of other inequalities. Another interesting issue is whether informality itself is a generator of income inequalities. It might be argued that the two variables are not necessarily correlated, especially if most migrants, or the vast majority of workers (both migrants and non-migrants) in a specific sector rely on informality. New evidence from the corridors, especially in relation to migration between Ethiopia and South Africa, can help understanding this. Recent Ethiopian migrants also always work in the informal sector and find themselves in a condition of vulnerability and income inequality compared to early settled migrants, because the latter have better access to rights, together with the better access to capital (Estifanos & Zack, 2020). Early settlers/newcomers' relations are often based on income inequality, and this can increase income inequality inside migrant communities: Ethiopian migrants often rely on ethnically based networks of settlement in South Africa (borders/bosses relation) where economic exploitation of late comers takes place (see Estifanos & Freeman, 2022; Estifanos & Zack, 2020).

When migrants have a better economic condition when compared to locals, their presence in the country of destination can almost certainly increase income inequality. In the Ghana mining sector, for example, Chinese migrants find themselves in a relative better situation compared to Ghanaian workers, they can assert themselves and gain access to resources easily (Botchwey et al., 2019). They have the economic possibility of exploiting the high levels of corruption among officials in Ghana to secure access to mines and avoid fines; they often pay lower daily rates to Ghanaians employed in the mines controlled by them (ibid.). This creates inequalities with local miners and local communities, both from an economic point of view and also in social terms. There is evidence of the Chinese capacity of constructing a powerful social and economic network that has an impact on the possibility of manipulating local laws in Ghana, regarding, for example, the import of equipment and forex exchange, that make Chinese migrants earn additional economic power (Ho, 2008).

Inequalities between earlier settlers and newcomers, who often lack sufficient funds to start their own business and work as paid labourers (Botchwey et al., 2019) are present, and the relationship between earlier and recent Chinese migrants in Ghana can also be critical due to prejudice and suspicious attitude of the former towards the latter (Lam, 2015).

On the other hand, migrants can represent a potential leveller of local inequalities, as demonstrated by the case of Chinese migrants and their relationship to the *kayayei*, young Ghanaian female migrants coming from the North of the country, who work as head porters in the capital city, Accra, in a condition of exploitation and vulnerability. Chinese entrepreneurs and workers employ them, and the *kayayei*, from their side, try to take advantage of this space of action granted by other "foreigners" to expand their role and construct their social space and place (Giese & Thiel, 2015). Recent work on this corridor (Teye et al., 2022) challenges misconceptions and myths of the Chinese presence in Ghana, highlighting that the profile of Chinese migrants in Ghana today does not conform with the common stereotype of the single men working with Chinese constructors or in manufacturing, nor with the Ghanaian media representation of single, young, lone men coming for "short-term economic gains through illicit trade or exploitation of natural resources" (Teye et al., 2022, 206). As noted in this work, the profile of Chinese migrants has profoundly changed through time, "from male-dominated and state-propelled to individual independent migrants of all ages and gender distributed in all sectors of the economy" (ibid., 231).

Consequences of Migration on Socio-Economic Conditions in Countries of Destination

The migration corridors considered in this chapter demonstrate that there can be very different outcomes of South–South migration in countries of destination. As already noted, migration between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire illustrates that migrants can stimulate the economy, can boost the labour market, and help increase production especially in the agricultural sector. Complex social consequences for the life of migrants and their families do exist and have been analysed in the previous section.

Migration between Ethiopia and South Africa has controversial outcomes, especially from a social perspective. Often migrants find themselves competing with the local poor population to access the labour market, especially the informal one, potentially worsening poverty and income inequalities. Episodes of xenophobia against migrants coming from other African countries are rising, together with insecurity and violence. Gebre et al. (2011) report a growing pressure on foreigners who try to establish themselves in the local market. There is, indeed, a widespread belief that income-generating opportunities for South Africans would lessen if resources had to be shared with migrants (ibid.).

Findings from the Ghana–China corridor, however, portray a very different situation. While we must consider that a small number of migrants moving with limited resources can have only a minimal impact on poverty and income inequality, as in the case of Ghana–China migration, it is useful to consider how the China-Ghana trajectory involving migrants coming in with some resources can represent a real chance for job creation and the increase of local business. Botchwey et al. (2019) find that collaboration in between Chinese and Ghanaian miners has resulted in mutual benefit: Chinese bring the technology and have access to mines through concessions or bribery, and from their side Ghanaians with license can work more and better.

Chinese entrepreneurs are often acknowledged as those who economically exploit the condition of general poverty in Ghana, and incidentally allow low-income households to buy new and low-cost goods. Marfaing and Thiel (2013) point out, however, that is seldom recognised how opening access to this kind of low-cost items can allow aspiring entrepreneurs to enter this market, by lowering the entry barriers. Unemployed and youth who were normally excluded from this kind of entrepreneurship can now afford to purchase goods from Chinese stores and re-sell them in the streets (ibid.). Moreover, these authors note that Chinese entrepreneurs' migrants often employ young people, who are normally less able to enter relevant network that facilitate employment opportunities. Even if these chances to enter the job market are clearly perceived by Ghanaians as volatile and seldom represent a decently paid opportunity, it must be recognised that by doing so Chinese entrepreneurs are providing new pathways into urban markets' strategies (ibid.).

If scholars report a positive and mutually benefitting relation between Chinese entrepreneurs and their employees in Ghana, in terms of reduction of income inequalities and the possibility of ameliorating social position, the same can be said of the relationships between same-level entrepreneurs. As noted by Opoku Dankwah and Valenta (2019, 1), relations between Ghanaian traders and their Chinese counterparts in Ghana may be described as "complementary, collaborative and competitive".

There are, of course, several difficulties in this relationship, especially in terms of prejudice, stereotypes, and the production of narratives of "otherness". Mohan and Tan-Mullins (2009), for example, report that different Chinese businessmen affirm that the biggest problem with Ghanaian productivity is "culture", since Ghanaian workers are perceived as unreliable ("they always disappear for funerals"), and poor infrastructures like regular power failures and the lack of public transportation can only exacerbate it (Mohan & Tan-Mullins, 2009, 596).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have proposed a critical reading of South–South migration and its relation to poverty and income inequality, by highlighting the main problems, challenges, and possibilities in relation to different dynamics happening in three migration corridors (Burkina Faso–Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia–South Africa and Ghana–China). Despite the difficulties in tracing some commonalities in South–South corridors, which are characterised by very different historical, social, economic, political and historical conditions, we suggest some critical analysis and points for discussion.

Our main analytical question, that of whether migration can play a role in reducing income inequality or whether it is a selective phenomenon that tends to exacerbate it, has been answered critically by providing different views and readings on forms of mobility, the profile of the migrant, the transit, conditions in the countries of origin and destination, and the role of remittances. We suggest that poverty and income inequalities can be better understood in their intersection with other variables and other forms of inequality, like age, gender, access to education, access to social networks, access to safe routes and rights in the country of destination.

This contribution provides a multifaceted and complex image of South–South migration dynamics in relation to poverty and income inequality, which could help in developing new theoretical and empirical questions for future research.

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Notes

1. The research has been undertaken as part of a Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub work package on Poverty and Income Inequality, which has involved research fieldwork completed in three South–South migration corridors: Burkina Faso–Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia–South Africa and China–Ghana. More at www.mideq.org.

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