



Migration and development dynamics in Golf City, Ghana

Golf City has seen significant investment in industrial, infrastructural and utilities projects, yet an emphasis on private development has led to significant socioeconomic inequality.

In-migration for agricultural and business opportunities has transformed the broader Golf City community, with most young adults (75%) being internal migrants.

A lack of planning and investment in the community has led to significant inequalities and limited livelihood support for many young adults.

While international migration is a common aspiration, it is perceived as a distant option. Most young adults (72%) expect to stay in Golf City in the next five years.



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Photo: Marie Godin for MIGNEX.

Golf City is an urban centre in Greater Accra, Ghana, located on the outskirts of the major port city of Tema. It consists of three main sub-communities: Golf City, Bethlehem and Rasta Village.

Tema Development Corporation (TDC) acquired the land for Golf City in 1956, with a 125-year lease.¹ Since then, in-migration and private development have transformed this historically agricultural location.

The three sub-areas were not intended for residential purposes and most of the land has

been sold to private investors. A paucity of planning and public infrastructure, alongside demographic expansion, have led to significant socioeconomic inequality. Poorer residents lack access to education, health services, formal housing and employment. More than half of young adults (54%) surveyed as part of this MIGNEX research consider it very difficult to find a job in Golf City.

Major developments – including the construction of a motorway, the West African gas pipeline and an international railway line – are perceived to have not benefited local people, and in some cases have led to increased physical fragmentation of communities.

This case study brief is based on fieldwork and survey data. The MIGNEX team also conducted research in Gbane and New Takoradi and carried out a review of migration-relevant policies in Ghana.²

Migration from Golf City

International out-migration from Golf City is common. Most surveyed young adults (74%) have family or friends living abroad.

The majority of young adults (79%) indicated that they would migrate to a richer country if given the necessary papers, with many viewing this as an opportunity for employment, family remittances and cultural exchange. However, international migration is

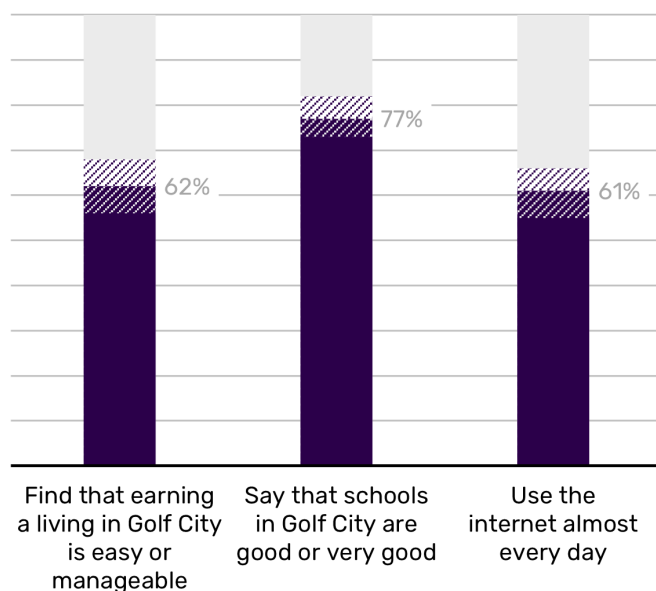


Figure 1. Indicators of development

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

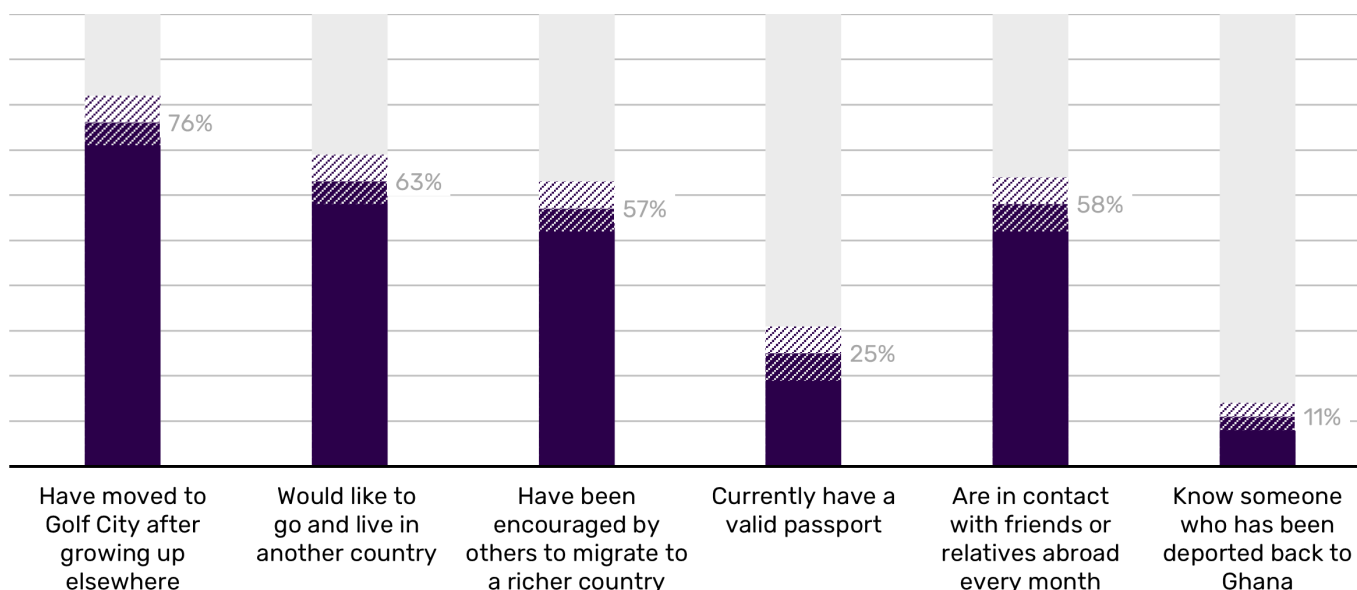


Figure 2. Indicators of migration dynamics

Source: MIGNEX survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

not as common among young adults as it used to be: only 43% of surveyed young adults have seriously considered migrating abroad in the past year.

Migration via regular routes is perceived to be very difficult and there is widespread concern for the dangers of irregular migration. As such, international migration is not a feasible option for many young adults and the decision to migrate is largely influenced by one's socioeconomic status.

Among those who are educated and who have permanent jobs, the desire to migrate abroad is not strong. Instead, many wealthier residents aspire to move within the Accra region to towns with improved amenities.

Those who lack livelihood opportunities are more likely to migrate internationally, often to work in Gulf countries.

The transformation of Golf City into a residential area with a higher cost of living has forced many long-term residents to migrate internally to more affordable communities in Greater Accra, such as Afienuya and Appolonia.

Migration aspirations

Many residents are hopeful for the future of Golf City, while acknowledging the challenges that persist in the community.

Recent improvements in private infrastructure, growth in the hospitality sector and the construction of a new private

university are considered promising signs of development. In-migration is also a source of hope, as international and internal migrants tend to support the local economy.

However, significant inequalities, a lack of social protection and high unemployment rates are key concerns for young adults. The collapse of many businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic has created further uncertainty for local livelihoods.

Among surveyed young adults who would prefer to stay in Ghana versus migrate abroad (37%), the majority (76%) would rather migrate internally than remain in Golf City. Half of surveyed young adults (50%) have seriously considered migrating internally within Ghana in the past year.

In-migration

There are significant levels of both international and domestic in-migration to Golf

If one has a good job and earns a reasonable amount of money, life here is manageable. Those who do not earn any substantial amount of money to take care of the household may desire to migrate abroad.

Focus group participant

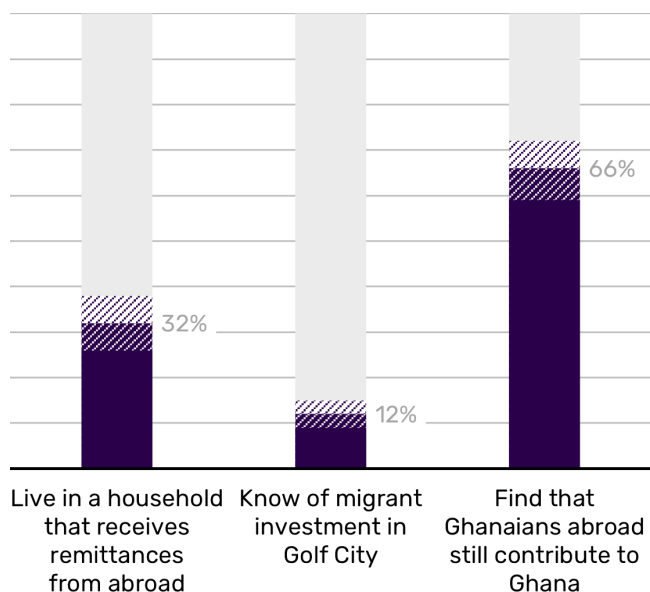


Figure 3. Migration–development interactions

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

City. Most young adults (75%) surveyed in Golf City are internal migrants.

After acquiring the lease, the TDC permitted farmers from regions across Ghana, including Tema, Accra and Madina, to cultivate the land. These long-term residents have been impacted by recent developments in the area. Golf City's proximity to the prominent business areas of Tema and Accra means that people have migrated there for business or livelihood opportunities. Many live in Golf City and commute to work outside the community, thus contributing to its transformation into a dormitory town with a higher cost of living.

International migration from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region also takes place. Migrants from Benin and Niger work in the Tulaku Cattle Market in Golf City for short periods. However, many residents perceive the market as not benefiting

locals, with concerns that profits are siphoned out of the community.

Lastly, foreign nationals and wealthy Ghanaians often reside in Golf City during business trips. While this has boosted the local economy of the previous decade, it has not resumed yet due to the pandemic.

Links between migration and development

The majority of surveyed young adults (76%) have monthly contact with migrant family or friends. Yet few (12%) know of migrant investments and remittances are an important source of income for just 1% of households. This in part relates to high levels of domestic in-migration, as diaspora investment is more likely to be directed towards the places where in-migrants grew up.

There is some foreign investment in Golf City. However, this tends to be private and does not benefit the wider community. For example, several hotels are jointly owned by foreign investors and Ghanaian diaspora members. Likewise, some of the most expensive private schools in Golf City, which encourage in-migration from across Ghana, are owned by foreign investors. Such investments have led to further inequality and exclusion as the wealth gap widens.

Notes

1. Asabere P. (2007) The demise of the rent-controlled public housing programmes of Ghana. *Urban Studies* 44(10): 1919–35.
2. Fieldwork consisting of key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations was carried out by Marie Godin Leander Kandilige, assisted by Theophilus Kwabena Abutima and Richard Tsatsu in June – July 2021. A face-to-face survey of 500 randomly selected residents was conducted by Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana in October – November 2020.

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MIGNEX – Aligning Migration Management and the Migration–Development Nexus – is a five-year research project (2018–2023) with the core ambition of creating new knowledge on migration, development and policy. It is carried out by a consortium of nine partners: The Peace Research Institute Oslo (coordinator), Danube University Krems, the University of Ghana, Koç University, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Maastricht University, ODI, the University of Oxford and Samuel Hall.

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