



# Migration and development dynamics in New Takoradi, Ghana

Built for those displaced by the expansion of an industrial port, New Takoradi is a town shaped by private sector investment. Migration aspirations are high as many young adults struggle to make a living.

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New Takoradi is experiencing protracted stagnation due to a lack of job opportunities. Over half of young adults (53%) consider it difficult to earn a living and feed a family.

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International out-migration is viewed as a way to escape poverty. Most young adults (86%) would migrate to a richer country if given the chance.

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There is substantial irregular migration. Almost half (44%) of young adults know of someone who has been deported – or have themselves been deported.



Leander Kandilige  
Marie Godin  
Hannah Murray



Photo: Marie Godin for MIGNEX.

New Takoradi is a coastal town in Sekondi-Takoradi city, Western Ghana. It is situated near Takoradi, the regional capital, with an estimated population of around 45,000.<sup>1</sup>

New Takoradi is a satellite community, created to accommodate those displaced by the \$1.5 billion Tema Port Expansion Project.<sup>2</sup>

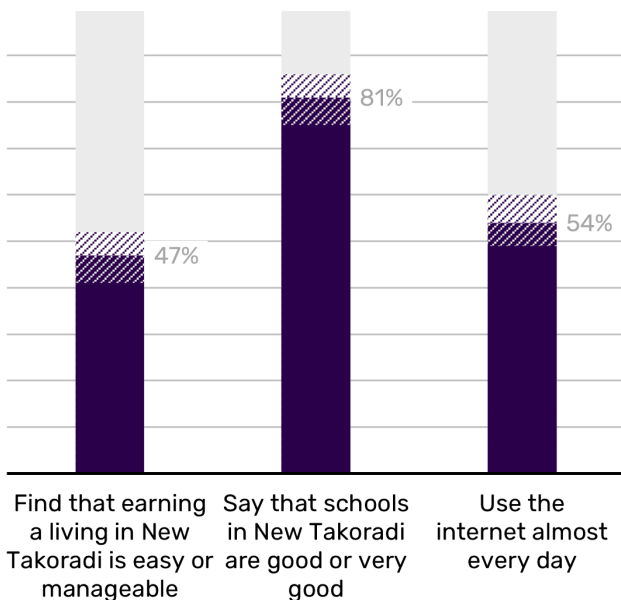
Despite numerous development interventions and investments– including partnerships with international oil and energy firms, the reconstruction of the market circle and harbour – New Takoradi is experiencing

protracted stagnation due to a sustained lack of job opportunities.

The area has traditionally relied on artisanal fishing as a major livelihood. This has declined in recent years; negatively affected by the development of the new port, the use of semi-industrial fishing boats, unavailability of premix fuel and new regulations on artisanal fishing. Many perceive industrial activity to have increased unemployment and extreme poverty levels.

Over half of young adults surveyed (56%) have attained upper/senior secondary education or higher, though 66% consider it very difficult to find a good job. One quarter (25%) of young adults are unemployed. Over half (53%) consider it difficult to earn a living and feed a family. Seasonal out-migration is increasing as many seek new livelihood activities outside the community.

This case study brief is based on fieldwork and survey data. The MIGNEX team also conducted research in Gbane, Golf City and carried out a review of migration-relevant policies in Ghana.<sup>3</sup>

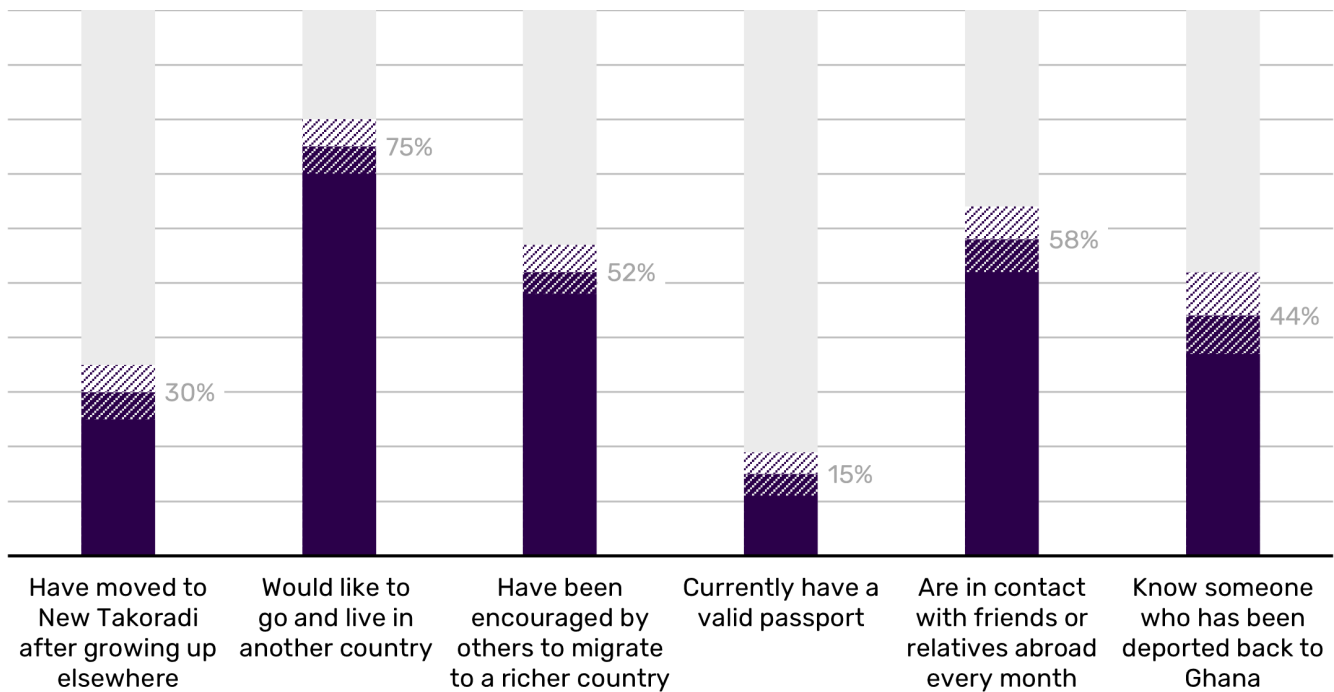


**Figure 1. Indicators of development**

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

**Migration from New Takoradi**

International migration is often perceived as necessary to improving livelihood prospects and escaping poverty. Most young adults surveyed (82%) have family or friends living abroad.



**Figure 2. Indicators of migration dynamics**

Source: MIGNEX survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

New Takoradi became known as a hub for stow-away migration due to its proximity to Takoradi harbour. However, stowing away has reduced over time due to tightened security at the port. This has led more people to consider the journey through Libya, despite the high risk.

Many young adults have close ties with male migrant family or friends who have been trapped in Libya on their journey to Europe. Over half of young adults (51%) know someone who died on their way to another country. Some 40% know someone who has – or have themselves – been injured on the way to another country during the past five years.

At the time of research, there was some migration to Qatar, and other Gulf countries, due to job opportunities in the construction sector ahead of the FA World Cup.

Women tended to travel less far for work, most often embarking on seasonal migration to Ivory Coast and/or Liberia for domestic work and trading. Yet overall, very few young men (5%) and young women (3%) have lived abroad for at least one year.

Nearly one fifth of young adults (19%) in New Takoradi have returnee migrant family or friends, especially from Europe. A significant number (44%) know of someone

who has been deported – or have themselves been deported – from abroad.

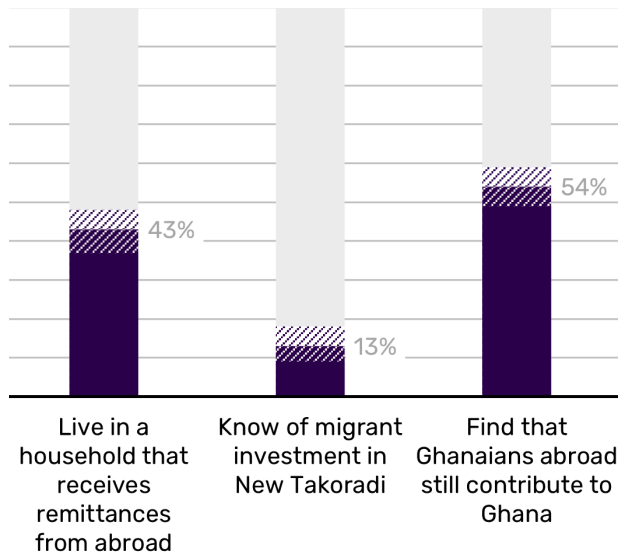
Yet, most returnees do not settle in New Takoradi due to a lack of space in the town. Instead, many relocate to neighbouring communities: Anaju, Adenta, Kwasiementim, Aseke.

### Migration aspirations

Many young adults see international migration as a necessary evil if they are to earn a living and take care of household members. The expansion of the harbour has negatively impacted the local fishing community, and many feel the government has failed to support local trade. Most young adults surveyed (75%) would prefer to leave Ghana in the next five years. Yet many are aware of the high financial, psychological, and physical costs. Over half (61%) expect to stay in Ghana over the next five years. The perceived feasibility of international out-migration has also decreased over time.

*If the system is a very good one, no one would consider migrating irregularly because you either survive or die on the journey.*

Focus group participant



**Figure 3. Migration–development interactions**

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

In part due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to closed borders, increased border security, and a reduction in the number of vessels that arrive at the port.

### Internal migration

Most young adults surveyed (72%) know of someone from New Takoradi who migrated within Ghana in the past five years. Most often, to other urban centres: Takoradi City, Accra, and Kumasi.

Some highlighted difficulty when migrating internally due to the stigma of being from New Takoradi, a community with a reputation for criminal activity. Young adults, especially men, find it challenging to secure jobs in other regions of Ghana due to lack of trust from employers. Despite this, among those young adults who prefer to stay in Ghana (25%), the majority (84%) would rather leave New Takoradi and migrate internally.

Over half (56%) have seriously considered migrating internally in the past year.

### Links between migration and development

There are strong transnational ties in New Takoradi. Most young adults (78%) have monthly contact with migrant family or friends. Around half of young adults' households with migrant family members, relatives or friends (52%) received remittances in the past year, though just 2% stated that they were the most important source of income

Collective remittances from diaspora members fund the annual Takoradi masquerade, Ankos, a large-scale carnival for which many return home. Diaspora members pick the names and fund the production of costumes, often named after European and American destinations. The festival is also patronized by Ghanaians from other regions of the country. The festival sheds a positive light on both internal and international migration. There are many international private sector development projects yet they are not perceived to have benefitted the community. The lack of livelihood expansion, and negative impacts on local trade have led many to view migration as the last option to escape poverty, despite the high risk.

### Notes

1. Data draws on MIGNEX Key Informant Interviews.
2. Based on data from the State Interests and Governance Authority.
3. Fieldwork consisting of key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations was carried out by Marie Godin Leander Kandilige, assisted by Kingsley Baffoe and Karen Ahli Edinam in November – December 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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