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The Contribution of Migrant Remittances to Local Development in the Rural Commune of Allakaye, Niger

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Abstract

Migration, although a phenomenon viewed negatively by many countries, is a driver of development in developing nations. This article thus focuses on studying the contribution of migrant remittances to the development of the rural commune of Allakaye. A mixed-methods approach, predominantly qualitative, was used for data collection in the field. The results of the fieldwork indicate that the funds sent by migrants contribute to the development of the rural commune of Allakaye through investments in education, food, and household economics.

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Introduction

According to K. Diarra (2021), international migration is not a new phenomenon. It has existed in various individual and collective forms, driven by a constant quest for subsistence or socio-political protection. In this sense, migratory movements are a global phenomenon, falling squarely within the realm of transnational mobility and are complex. This is why they are at the heart of the debate at world summits (Valletta Summit, UN, EU, 2015). According to UN estimates, in 2013 the world had approximately 214 million international migrants, 49% of whom were women, and over 740 million internal migrants. It is important to emphasize that these people leave in search of more favorable living conditions. However, it is important to clarify that West Africa is a migratory space that has been the subject of intense debate due to its favorable geographical position,

oriented towards both the Atlantic Ocean and the Maghreb countries. Thus, Niger, like other countries in the sub-region, is one of the countries where migration is at its peak. Migrants in their host countries send remittances to their families for various purchases. This study focuses on Allakaye, a commune in the Bouza department of the Tahoua region of Niger.

The survival of households in this commune is heavily dependent on remittances from migrants. Following structural food crises in Niger in general, and particularly in this commune, heads of households attest that remittances from migrants are a coping strategy in the face of these shocks or disasters. They allow for less pressure on family granaries, thus helping families survive the lean season when they must maintain a precarious balance (H. Mounkaila, 2002; Y. Zourkaleini, 2004).

In order to understand the contribution of migrants to the development of the commune of Allakaye, the following question arises: what is the contribution of remittances from migrants to the development of the rural commune of Allakaye? Having posed this question, the objective of this research is formulated as follows: to determine the contribution of remittances from migrants to the development of the rural commune of Allakaye.

Materials and Methods

In this study, a mixed-methods approach is used to thoroughly examine the contribution of migrants in the commune of Allakaye. This approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods. In this case, the method is predominantly qualitative, with particular emphasis placed on interviews.

Sampling

Allakaye is a commune experiencing significant migration. On average, two people per family migrate, representing a large segment of the population, driven by a strong desire to leave in search of a better life. The rural commune of Allakaye has 80,280 inhabitants spread across 65 villages and hamlets. It is also important to note that the rural commune is divided into two sectors: the plateau sector and the valley sector.

Previous work by [Aboubacar \(2005\)](#), and [Aboubacar \(2015\)](#) has shown that remittances are significant in the municipality, flowing through both formal and informal channels. However, the informal channel is the most frequently used by migrants in the villages, as previously noted.

Therefore, using purposive sampling, we opted for snowball sampling, which involves being directed by a participant (A) to other participants (B) involved in the survey. In this context, out of the 65 villages and hamlets under the municipality's jurisdiction, we selected 2 villages and 20 households, with 10 households per village.

Results and Discussion

Remittances and Local Development

Household survival in the rural commune of Allakaye is heavily dependent on remittances from migrants. Following the structural food crises in Niger in general, and particularly in this commune, household heads attest

that remittances from migrants are coping strategies in the face of these scourges. They help alleviate pressure on family food stores, allowing them to survive the lean season when families must maintain a precarious balance ([H. Mounkaila, 2002](#); [Y. Zourkaleini, 2004](#)).

According to 80% of household heads, there is a genuine link between remittances and local development, as their concerns are addressed without waiting for aid from a financial partner or a project that is slow to implement its program. Furthermore, in the event of a food crisis like the one in 2005, remittances helped facilitate trade between merchants and migrant families, since having a migrant in a household signifies solvency and thus provides access to food. The telephone has been an important tool for the socio-economic development of the community, responding in real time to the various requests of relatives remaining in the villages ([J.P. Olivier de Sardan, 2008](#); [P. Lavigne Delville](#); [A. Aghali, 2010](#)). However, some household heads (20%) believe that the funds sent by migrants abroad are insufficient to contribute to the local economy.

Remittances and Education

Primary education also benefits from remittances from migrants. Indeed, the two groups mentioned above contribute by providing primary schools with desks and benches. Many primary schools have a shortage of desks and benches, as many students attend classes on mats. This initiative is worthwhile because the situation faced by many schools hinders effective learning.

This initiative by migrants has also been highly praised by the Allakaye Primary Education Inspectorate and, more broadly, by the Ministry of Primary Education, the Promotion of National Languages, and Civic Education. Remittances from migrants contribute significantly to financing children's education and, to a lesser extent, improve their school enrollment.

The heads of households involved in this study affirm that remittances from migrants in the rural commune of Allakaye contribute to improving the education system through the creation of school infrastructure, school supplies, snacks, uniforms, and the payment of fees under the cost-sharing policy for education initiated by the Nigerien government (ROCARE, 2010), as shown in the following table:

The information in this table illustrates the link between remittances and education. All these funds are paid by

heads of households or parents in accordance with the cost-sharing policy for education. In addition to the costs associated with this policy, remittances from migrants are also used to purchase land for rural secondary schools, such as the one in Tadoupta, which was financed by migrants from that village. Furthermore, due to a shortage of textbooks in secondary schools, a new community organization called "Groupe Cigaban" in the rural commune of Allakaye has stepped in to support the government's efforts by providing books in limited or nonexistent quantities. This initiative symbolizes the challenges facing the commune's development. The channel used to purchase this equipment is membership fees paid by members located in various countries via ICT. It is a virtual group in which all international and internal migrants, as well as some local elites, contribute their modest share to the development of this community.

In addition, the table below explains the nature and value of the books made available to secondary schools (middle and high school).

In addition to providing school supplies, another online group called "Allakaye 100%" is constructing four (4) mud-brick classrooms with corrugated iron roofs to address the classroom shortage at the Allakaye Secondary School. The funds are being raised by this group, which is primarily composed of migrants. The contribution may seem small, but it is very important because the State, through the Departmental Directorate of Secondary Education, has commended this highly commendable initiative, which aligns with its policy of ensuring quality education under acceptable conditions for the development of human capital.

Fund Transfers and Economic Growth

Regarding this issue, heads of households struggle to grasp the connection. However, the key to economic growth is essentially the payment of 2% in taxes (see graph No. 8). However, it can be said that remittances reduce poverty by significantly improving household living conditions in terms of meeting food and clothing needs, as well as enabling some productive investments that foster economic growth. At the microeconomic level, remittances from migrants are a source of revenue for the municipal administration through tax payments, according to interviews conducted with municipal authorities. For the 2017 budget, taxpayers paid over 29,000,000 CFA francs, a substantial sum that can help

lay the groundwork for the socio-economic development of the municipality.

Remittances and Poverty Reduction

Regarding the link between remittances and poverty reduction, the main responses provided by heads of households revolve around meeting the population's basic needs, including access to healthcare through consultations, improved access to drinking water, and the acquisition of business assets for some households. Indeed, a clear difference exists between households receiving remittances and those that receive little or none. This difference is reflected in housing quality, access to imported food, and means of transportation. It is rare to find a family in the commune without a modern means of transport.

All the heads of households surveyed in this study receive remittances through various channels, but the informal channel, namely the telephone booth, remains the most frequently used by migrants to send money back to relatives in their villages. ICTs have thus facilitated the flow of money in the commune, as many households have been able to meet their expenses with a simple phone call, especially during periods of food crisis (J.P. Olivier de Sardan, 2008).

This chapter reveals that heads of households recognize the importance of remittances in improving their living conditions. This study revealed that there are, on average, two (2) migrants in each household. The funds mobilized come from the migrants' efforts, using every available resource to save and send a portion back to their relatives in their villages. The various strategies employed by the migrants involve taking on multiple jobs, easily earning a decent living. The main destinations for migrants in West Africa are Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Guinea. Some migrants go to Cameroon and Gabon in Central Africa. Libya and Algeria are also destinations chosen by some migrants, not to mention Belgium, Germany, and the United States.

Discussion of Results

All household heads surveyed in this study receive remittances through various channels, but the informal channel, namely the telephone booth, remains the most frequently used by migrants to send money back to relatives in their villages.

Table.1 Household Heads' Responses on the Contribution of Migrant Funds to Local Development

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	16	80
No	4	20
Total	20	100

Source: Field data, January 2025

Table.2 Student Enrollment by Cycle and Fee Amount

School Year	Cycle	Enrollment	Girl	Boy	Fee/Student	Amount
2016-2017	Secondary (middle and high school)	2628	615	2013	2000 F	5 256 000FCFA
2016-2017	Primary	17 995	6174	11 821	1000 F	1 799 500f
Total		20 623	6 789	13 834		7 055 500

Source: Primary Education Inspectorate (Allakaye) and Bouza Departmental Directorate of Secondary Education 2016-2017

Table.3 Book Allocation to Secondary Schools

Grade	Subject	Quantity	Unit price	Total Price (FCFA)
Middle School (Grade 3ème)	English	120	1750	210 000
Terminale D	Mathematics	3	3500	10 500
	Physics-Chemistry	3	6 000	18 000
	Biology	3	12 000	36 000
	Life and Earth Sciences (SVT) Past Papers	2	25000	50000
	Physics and Chemistry (PC) Past Papers	2	2 500	5000
	Mathematics Past Papers	2	2 500	5 000
Terminale A	French	6	3500	21 000
	Philosophy	10	4500	45 000
	English	10	3500	35 000
	African Literature	6	2500	15 000
	French Exam Papers	6	2500	15 000
	Philosophy Exam Papers	6	2500	15 000
	English Exam Papers	6	2500	15 000
	Stamp	1	10 000	10 000
Total		185		460 500

Source: Cigaban Group, Rural Commune of Allakaye, December 5, 2017

ICTs have thus facilitated the circulation of money in the community, as, thanks to the telephone, many households have been able to meet their expenses with a simple phone call, especially during periods of food crisis (J.P. Olivier de Sardan, 2008). Migration has proven to be an effective survival strategy, as all households depended on it. The various strategies employed by household heads involve having a migrant, a reliable source of money, to cover all expenses, especially those related to basic needs. Many households are at risk of disappearing without migration due to the commune's geographical location. Situated on a plateau, off-season farming is impossible, unlike in some other regions of Niger. This is why heads of households have a positive view of remittances, which have enabled them to meet their most pressing needs.

In conclusion, the general observations of the researchers during this study focused on basic infrastructure such as housing, transportation, economic investments, and the beginnings of significant urbanization. Key aspects of the general observation of each village and hamlet in the rural commune of Allakaye included the host countries of migrants, data collected from telephone booth operators with estimates of the amounts transferred, the number of pilgrims per year in each village, and the symbolism of migration. This observation revealed that some villages and hamlets are more affluent than others. Remittances from migrants are significant, and heads of households are demonstrating that they are a driver of local development. Indeed, thanks to the various strategic approaches employed by migrants, the rural commune of Allakaye is experiencing socio-economic development through the creation of basic infrastructure, including the construction of homes for personal use or rental. A head of household's success stems from their young migrant's ability to provide them with acceptable living conditions. Other positive aspects of remittances in the commune include the establishment of classrooms, a health center, the acquisition of land for a junior high school, and social investments such as expenses related to religious holidays, pilgrimages, and lavish gifts for relatives, all of which testify to a migrant's economic success. Furthermore, heads of households are establishing a link between remittances and poverty reduction. In this commune, many heads of households possess assets they can sell if needed. Household strategies include purchasing animals or other material goods as a means of securing funds. While it is difficult to measure a household's vulnerability, wealth can be identified by the volume of remittances, the quality of clothing worn, food stocks evidenced by the number of storage granaries,

and, above all, the household's ability to meet urgent needs.

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