

## Migration and Fishing in West Africa

West Africa is renowned for high levels of internal and international migration and mobility. Literature on West African artisanal fisheries constantly emphasises the importance of multiple types of migration in exploiting this critical resource which contributes substantially to national economies and local protein consumption. Yet systematic searches of demographic bibliographies indicate that demographic research has completely ignored these fishing migrations. This paper considers why demography has apparently been uninterested in these substantial population movements and the critical gaps in the artisanal fishing literature in conceptualising and understanding some of the more demographic dimensions of migration.

Initially most fishing migrations were a response to fish movements and these 'within production system' migrations partially explains their invisibility to demographers. Recently, fishing migrations have evolved and are more akin to labour migration with fishermen exploiting the development of new markets, currency differences or availability of subsidised resources in choosing destinations. Nevertheless fishing migrations remain largely rural-rural and thus do not enter into the dominant spheres of demographic interest. Furthermore most conventional demographic data collection through censuses and surveys does not permit identification or separate analysis of fishfolk population dynamics.

Even less is known about the dynamics of migration into and out of fishing. I consider why data on such migrations are important both from the perspective of the fishing sector and the viability of coastal eco-systems, and for understanding demographic dynamics and income diversification in many rural African contexts. I examine various research domains where communication and collaboration between the two research fields would be valuable and productive: in particular the multiple relationships between migration and environment, dimensions of migrant integration into host communities and recent observations of high HIV prevalence in diverse fishing communities worldwide.