



Moving to the mines: Motivations of men and women for migration to artisanal and small-scale mining sites in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo



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ABSTRACT

Artisanal and small scale mining (ASM) sites in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) present livelihoods opportunities within an evolving security situation, thus offering the potential for economic and physical security. This paper presents survey data detailing reasons why men and women in eastern DRC migrate to ASM sites, with a specific focus on the extent to which insecurity wrought by the DRC's decades long conflict influences individuals' migration decisions. It draws from research performed under a World Bank-Harvard Humanitarian Initiative research project. Following the literature review on decision-making related to ASM and migration and its applicability to the research context of eastern DRC, the article first presents basic demographics of the 998 men and women surveyed. It then details participants' specific motivations for migration and groups them as push or pull factors. Finally, the article looks at the relationship between migration and the relevant migration and security variables separately before creating a multiple regression model to see how these variables inform migration decisions collectively. Participants largely migrated to ASM sites for the purpose of seeking money and/or employment. Security – specifically the presence of an armed group at one's reception site – also informed migration decision making, yet it did not negate the role of economic factors. This is the first paper the authors know of that examines gender-specific motivations for migration to ASM sites as well as how insecurity influences decisions to migrate to ASM sites.

1. Introduction

1.1. Exploring motivations to entry into artisanal and small-scale mining in sub-Saharan Africa

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) is a labor-intensive industry that requires limited investment and skills to participate (Banchirigah and Hilson, 2010; Bryceson and Jönsson, 2010; Geenen, 2013; Geenen and Radley, 2014; Hayes and Perks, 2012; Jönsson and Bryceson, 2009). ASM provides full-time, seasonal, and supplementary livelihoods to approximately 9 million people in sub-Saharan Africa (Hayes, 2008). Recruitment of miners and others working with the mines is often done through family networks and friendships (Geenen, 2014). While it is difficult to track migration into and out of ASM sites because of poor population data on mining

settlements, some few examples have been recorded which illustrate how a strike can impact the population of a new ASM site. Consider, for instance, Jönsson and Bryceson (2009), who document a village in Tanzania that grew from approximately 1600 residents to more than 10,000 in the matter of a few months after gold was struck.

In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, ASM has overtaken smallholder farming as a primary livelihood activity (Banchirigah and Hilson, 2010). Research on rural livelihood diversification on sub-Saharan Africa suggests 'agricultural poverty' has fueled the rapid growth of the ASM sector (Hilson, 2010). In effect, the rise in popularity of ASM in sub-Saharan Africa is a direct response to the untenable state of smallholder agriculture (Banchirigah and Hilson, 2010; Hilson, 2010). The attractiveness, productivity, and consistency of returns of farming has declined in the past decades in places like the DRC, Tanzania, and Ghana for a multitude of reasons, including

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damaging governmental economic policies; displacement and looting from conflict; and a lack of interest in or skills for agricultural work (Bryceson and Jönsson, 2010; Geenen, 2014; Hilson, 2010; Hilson and Garforth, 2013; Jönsson and Bryceson, 2009; Kelly, 2014). In contrast, Werthmann (2009) wrote that ‘Mining camps...offer economic and social independence’ (p. 18) in Burkina Faso, while Kelly et al. (2014) describe ASM sites in eastern DRC as ‘economic engines’ (p. 100). The rise in popularity of ASM in sub-Saharan Africa is a direct response to the untenable state of smallholder agriculture (Banchirigah and Hilson, 2010; Hilson, 2010). Additionally, an artisanal or small-scale mine is accessible to marginalized groups, like women, youth, and internally displaced persons, thus bringing in people who may have previously lacked employment opportunities (Bryceson and Jönsson, 2010; Hilson, 2009; Hilson and Banchirigah, 2009; Kelly, 2014; Kelly et al., 2014).

Some reflections have been made about what drives people from traditional livelihoods into mining. The motivations for engaging in ASM is a much debated topic, which largely reflects the fact that ASM fits within each separate economy differently depending on the context in which it operates (Geenen, 2014). While the two common narratives – that people are fueled by a ‘get rich quick’ mentality or are working in mines temporarily to supplement their agricultural work – apply to some, they miss the true breadth of motivations of people working within ASM settlements (Hilson, 2010; Jönsson and Bryceson, 2009). Largely, motivations are framed within the following models: 1) distress-push: diversification of livelihood activities driven by desperation and desire to escape poverty; 2) demand-pull: diversification driven by desire for greater economic return; and 3) rush-type: ‘get rich quick’ entrepreneurship (Hilson, 2009, 2010; Hilson and Garforth, 2013; Kelly, 2014). Given this diversity, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa has argued for a four-category classification system for different types of miners: gold-rush miners, permanent miners, seasonal miners, and poverty driven miners (Hilson, 2010; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2003).

Some have further proposed that people’s motivations are neither singular nor static nor universal. As Perks (2011) writes in the case of Orientale province in eastern DRC, ‘Artisanal mining may be not only buffering economic shocks and stresses, but also may be equally a part of a long-term livelihood diversification strategy for households’ (p. 1116). Hilson and Garforth (2013) find that a mix of push and pull factors lead people to incorporate ASM into their livelihood activities in Ghana. Similarly, in South Kivu province of eastern DRC, 54.6% of miners included in a survey reported their main reason for working in gold mines was because of the “possibility to earn money,” while 40.3% said the “lack of alternative employment” was their primary motivation (Geenen, 2014). Banchirigah and Hilson (2010) note that some farmers start working in ASM to escape poverty through diversification, but end up viewing ASM as their primary source of income rather than a supplement. Geenen (2013) finds that artisanal miners both see the mines as an opportunity to strike it rich as well as a key, or perhaps the sole, livelihood option available. In her case study of South Kivu in eastern DRC, Kelly (2014) proposes a similar model – distress-rush – that sees how elements of both distress-push and rush-type create an entrenched system in which mining is a primary source of income.

1.2. Establishing factors for migration in conflict and non-conflict settings and their applicability to ASM

Individuals and households make calculated migration decisions, comparing the benefits and costs of residing in a new site versus those of staying where they are and then choosing the one that best corresponds to individual needs and priorities (Bohra-Mishra and Massey, 2011; Ibanez and Velez, 2008; Jönsson and Bryceson, 2009; Wouterse and Taylor, 2008). Traditional migration is largely driven by economic factors and the potential for economic improvement. A multitude of factors inform people’s decision making, including:

income at origin and reception sites; planning horizon; the presence of contacts at a reception site, particularly family members; the attractiveness of the job market in each site; access to information about a reception site; level of education; level of risk aversion; attractiveness of job market at each site; and location-specific assets at origin site (Bohra-Mishra and Massey, 2011; Engel and Ibanez, 2007; Fischer et al., 1997; Greenwood, 1997; Harbison, 1981; Ibanez and Velez, 2008; Jönsson and Bryceson, 2009; Plane, 1993; Wouterse and Taylor, 2008; Yap, 1977). Gender also informs migration decisions, particularly in relation to family roles. Women are less likely to migrate because of reproductive activities; their responsibilities in providing care for children and the elderly; and their roles in farming (Posel, 2002, 2003; Todes, 1998). In some places, men are driven by employment opportunities while women migrate for family reasons (Cerrutti and Massey, 2001). Gubhaju and De Jong (2009) suggest that gender should be viewed as a stand alone determinant of migration decision making, yet also considered in conjunction with age and marital status.

Migration decision making is discussed in some literature on ASM. Jönsson and Bryceson (2009) find that the initial decision to mine in Tanzania was driven by adversity push factors and proximity to home. However, for those who saw ASM as a career rather than just a source of supplemental income, further migration to new sites was informed by economic pull factors. After independence in DRC, many Congolese who were previously excluded from colonial outposts moved to mining sites in South Kivu in search of access to social services and job opportunities (Geenen, 2013). As with other migration decisions, miners calculate the costs and benefits of moving to a new site, which carries heavy risks as not all strike it rich in new sites and they often have poor information about new sites (Jönsson and Bryceson, 2009; Kelly, 2014). Despite these unknowns, the prospect of economic growth and prosperity drives migration to new ASM sites (Fischer et al., 1997; Jönsson and Bryceson, 2009).

Displacement, or violence driven migration, alters traditional migration decision making in that it is induced by the threat or presence of violence, which reduces the ability of individuals to rationally assess migration options (Bohra-Mishra and Massey, 2011; Czaika and Kis-Katos, 2009; Engel and Ibanez, 2007; Ibanez and Velez, 2008; Mowafi, 2011; Raleigh, 2011). In many situations, households experience sharp losses of welfare from displacement, including disruption of health and education services, as they are less able to plan and prepare before moving (Ibanez and Velez, 2008).

Insecurity – caused by both natural and man-made crises – has been shown to be a key factor in promoting migration around the world (Bohra-Mishra and Massey, 2011; Czaika and Kis-Katos, 2009; Engel and Ibanez, 2007; Gottschang, 1987; Ibanez and Velez, 2008; Lindley, 2010; Morrison and May, 1994; Schultz, 1971). The eastern region of the DRC, which has been in an ongoing state of insecurity for the past two decades, is a prime example. A rotating list of state and non-state armed groups has taken advantage of poor governance and infrastructure to exploit the population and land for valuable resources. This has led the DRC to have the fifth biggest IDP population in the world (White, 2014). For more than a decade, the number of people displaced in the DRC has fluctuated around two million. The peak IDP population was 3.4 million people in 2003 (White, 2014); as of March 2015, at least 2,857,400 people were displaced in the DRC (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2016). White (2014) writes that the chronic nature of the conflict has created a ‘culture of displacement’ (p. 4), where in people are ‘conditioned to be on the move’ (p. 7) in order to survive.

Broadly, the decision to displace depends on several factors, including: violence levels and perception of insecurity at origin and reception sites; economic opportunities in each site; migration costs; access to services, both healthcare and education; family networks; and socio-demographic characteristics that shape one’s level of risk aversion (Bohra-Mishra and Massey, 2011; Crisp et al., 2009; Engel and

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