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The Ghana TransNet research program² that I head is an interdisciplinary program interested in understanding how having a migrant overseas, in the Netherlands, affects migrants' network members living in Ghanaian cities and villages and also vice-versa, how the way migrants structure their lives in the Netherlands is affected by the linkages they maintain with people 'back home'.

Following African oral tradition, I would like to begin by telling a story from which I will draw three lessons on the topic of migration and development. This is a true story but I have changed the names to protect people's privacy.

Joy was a community nurse in Ghana for 10 years before coming to the Netherlands in 1995 to join her Ghanaian husband. She became pregnant before regularising her stay. She had complications during her pregnancy and had to receive specialised care. Her medical bills rose rapidly to a total of about Euro 900 of which she was only able to pay a fraction. The doctors who assisted her, knowing her situation, decided to overlook the remaining costs. Joy was extremely grateful for this act of kindness and was very eager to begin her life in this hospitable country. Within two years she regularised her stay and found a job in elderly care. I met Joy for the first time when she was making a last attempt to get her Ghanaian nursing certificate validated in the Netherlands, after being six years in the lowest ranks of elderly care. The agency charged with this task had already rejected her request once but said if she could produce more certificates, documents and exam scores from Ghana, that they would reconsider their decision. I was involved in carrying some of the documents to Ghana so that they could be legalised by the Dutch embassy. Much coordination is necessary between Ghana, a country in which documentation is not easy to come by, and the Netherlands, in order to produce all the documents necessary. This can often lead to frustrating attempts for a migrant who needs to rely on someone back home to take the time from his or her daily occupations to travel to the capital city and wait in long

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² www2.fmg.uva.nl/ghanatransnet

lines. Reaching the necessary people in Ghana via telephone is also not always straightforward. Due to the numerous transactions necessary to get her documents legalised, Joy missed the deadline to have her nursing certificate officially validated. She thus had to continue at the lowest rank of the elderly care in which she essentially cleaned people's houses. 'Cleaning windows, cleaning windows, this is not what I studied for!' In my subsequent visits in the year that followed, Joy complained with increasing frequency about her dissatisfaction with what she was doing and how that affected her self-esteem.

At the same time Joy's daughter, Angelina, by now 7 years old, was encountering difficulties in elementary school. She had to repeat one year and her teacher insisted that Angelina go to a speech therapist. Joy and her husband did not feel their daughter needed speech therapy but they followed the teacher's advice. After a series of visits, the therapist concluded that Angelina did not have a learning disability. The teacher rejected this conclusion and insisted that Angelina continue to go to therapy. At this point Joy and her husband were extremely annoyed. The therapist suggested that they change Angelina's school because even she found the teacher's behavior out of proportion.

These two encounters, one with a Dutch state that imposes virtually impossible conditions for someone from a developing country to satisfy in order to gain accreditation, and the other with what she perceived to be a racist teacher in the public school system, brought Joy to the conclusion that there was no future for her and her family in the Netherlands. She confessed that at 45 years of age and after all that she had invested in creating her life in the Netherlands, she did not feel like moving to another country and having to start all over again, as if she were a young adult. She had been through that and knows how much energy it takes. Nonetheless, she decided to try her lot in the UK where, she has heard from fellow Ghanaian nurses there, it is possible to have one's Ghanaian nursing diploma recognised by the authorities.

This move had financial consequences, as she needed to pay for her trip and housing in the UK, and would not have income for the time it would take her to find a job. In fact, her husband in the Netherlands had to use all his savings to support her and took on an additional night job. This additional spending also had consequences for Joy's relatives in Ghana. Joy and her husband were supporting a nephew through school in

Ghana, and as a consequence of Joy's move, they were not able to pay the school fees for the remainder of the academic year. By the end of our fieldwork no one in Ghana had been able to pay the school fees and the child was taken out of school.

Joy's story is one of progressive disengagement from Dutch society and a diminished ability to be engaged with Ghana. It begins with her gratitude towards the Netherlands for the medical help she received, her eagerness to practice her profession once she got her staying permit and ends with her having low self-esteem and disillusioned about her and her daughter's future in the Netherlands. At the same time, Joy's ability to be engaged with people in Ghana was reduced, as she had to stop funding her nephew's education.

Ironically this was taking place in a period when the Netherlands was experiencing a shortage of nurses and began a policy of actively recruiting nurses from South Africa. Joy is now, two years after her move, permanently employed as a nurse in the UK and is receiving training to upgrade her skills. Angelina has received the distinction 'pupil of the term' in recognition of her high motivation and good grades.

I have selected Joy's story because it exemplifies aspects of people's stories that we heard time and again. I would like to focus on three particular lessons of relevance for migration and development. First, is that migrants are engaged in at least two countries at the same time and this double engagement does not have to be in opposition to participating in the receiving country society. The Bank of Ghana reported that remittances flowing into Ghana amounted to US\$ 1 billion in 2003. That is roughly 10% of Ghana's GNP. Additionally, we found that approximately 65% of remittances from Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands were carried into Ghana, thus bypassing official banking channels. This means that the Bank of Ghana figure is largely underestimated. We found that Ghanaian migrants send a large portion of their remittances home for various uses ranging from starting businesses to constructing houses and from helping their families with health and education related costs to making donations at ceremonies such as funerals or to churches. However, while they did that they also spent on items in the Netherlands such as paying for school fees and child care, paying insurance premiums, buying or renting houses or apartments, purchasing cars, and paying income, housing and city taxes. All of these are items that attest to people's participation in Dutch society. This double engagement is a reality

in migrants' lives and migration and development policies need to at the very least acknowledge this reality and preferably go a step further and facilitate the ability of migrants to be doubly engaged. Rather than encourage migrants to be only oriented towards their home countries, this facilitation rather increases migrants' feeling of satisfaction with their lives in the Netherlands and thus encourages their participation in Dutch society.

Second, what happens *here* affects what happens *there*. Joy's ability to be engaged with Ghana, by funding her nephew's education, was affected by her need to leave the Netherlands in search for a better life. Migration policies in the Netherlands thus influence the development potential of migration. Consequently, ministries involved with migration issues such as the Ministry of Justice need to collaborate closely with the development division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The policy document 'Development and Migration' published by these two ministries in 2004 in which the claim is made that there is no incoherence between Dutch foreign and security policy, development policy and human rights policy and migration policy is not true. For example, just a few months after the report was published the 'Raad van State' (the highest administrative court in the Netherlands) judged the methods employed by the Dutch consular office to deny visas to Ghanaian citizens as unconstitutional because they were violating what the Dutch constitution considers to be basic rights that all people have. More recently, the policy statement on migration and development of the World Connectors³ that I helped to draft and which resulted in the powerful letter in the NRC (February 3, 2007) by Ruud Lubbers, Halleh Ghorashi and Naema Tahir, is a step in the right direction. There it is argued that the Dutch migration policies should acknowledge migrants' transnational lives and identities (i.e. their double engagement), facilitate migrants' participation in Dutch society and allow for the circulation of people, allowing migrants to practice their transnational lives and identities.

Finally, here I spoke of a relatively highly skilled migrant. Concerning these kinds of migrants, we need to make it easier for them to employ their skills in our country. I do not know how many Ghanaians have left the Netherlands for greener pastures but in our sample of respondents, those who left during our research project were all but

³ www.worldconnectors.nl

one, highly skilled people. What can the Dutch government learn from this? In this example, the UK proved to be better able to make use of Joy's skills than the Netherlands. To this effect, we should seek to simplify procedures for the validation of foreign-earned degrees as well as provide more accessible opportunities for upgrading one's skills, such as Joy was offered in the UK.

However, it is important for us in the Netherlands to realize that we also need lesser skilled migrants. Private child care, elderly care and cleaning jobs are largely conducted by lesser skilled migrants, many of whom have not been able to regularize their stay. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation and the Dutch state is not receiving any taxes. Acknowledging that we need these migrants, means that we need to make it possible for them to work legally in the Netherlands. This would, related to the first lesson, allow them to be doubly engaged and lead more satisfactory lives. It would allow them to earn money, part of which they send back home in the form of remittances, pay Dutch taxes and travel back and forth between the Netherlands and their home country. In so doing, they contribute to the development of their country while participating in Dutch society. Finally, this group of migrants is not contributing to the brain drain caused by the flight of highly skilled migrants, and which is a serious concern of many developing countries.

Just to close, I would like to make the point that when we speak of migration and development it is important to keep in mind the distributional patterns of remittances. In the case of Ghana, we have shown that 96% of overseas remittances go to central and southern Ghana while the poorest parts of the country are in northern Ghana⁴. This suggests that the attention that is now being given by development organizations to doing development with and through migrant organizations should rather be redirected to doing development projects in those areas of countries where there are no international migrants and where need is greatest.

⁴ Mazzucato, V., B. van de Boom and N.N.N. Nsowah-Nuamah 2005. Origin and destination of remittances in Ghana. In T. Manuh (ed.) *At home in the world? International migration and development in contemporary Ghana and West Africa*, pp. 139-152. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.