

The Role of Labor Migration to Neighboring Small Towns in Rural Livelihoods: A Case Study in Southern Province, Zambia

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Abstract: Securing a livelihood in rural Africa is a distinctly complex process involving interactions between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors and between urban and rural activities. In addition to subsistence agriculture, farmers are often engaged in non-agricultural activities that provide important income sources in both rural and urban contexts. Although migratory labor is recognized as an important source of non-agricultural income, it has not been adequately considered in terms of livelihood diversity and access to various types of activities in the areas from which workers migrate. This article analyses the role of labor migration, especially to neighboring small towns, in relation to the complexity of livelihood strategies within the village. Field research in Southern Province, Zambia, revealed a great deal of variability among households in terms of strategies to maintain and improve their livelihoods. The article proposes that labor migration to neighboring small towns is crucial for livelihoods in rural areas for two main reasons. First, labor migration functions as a coping strategy when drought occurs. Second, migration is a livelihood choice based on an interrelation between access to other livelihood strategies and other social factors within the village.

Introduction

In contemporary Africa, securing a livelihood in rural areas has become progressively more complex over the last several decades.¹ As a result, it is increasingly difficult to describe and analyze accurately the state of affairs in its entirety in terms of interactions among social and economic sectors and geographical territories.² In most rural areas, agriculture has been the primary source of livelihood for most people. However, agricultural production is often supplemented and sometimes sustained by other social and economic activities to adapt and

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cope with variable environmental conditions and social and economic changes. Increasing pressures and opportunities resulting from recent economic liberalization and globalization have led to diversification in securing a livelihood becoming the norm.³ Some researchers have noted that non-agricultural activities typically are increasing in importance for rural livelihoods and that rural populations are becoming less agrarian with each passing year.⁴

While non-agricultural activity has markedly increased in importance as a necessary component of rural livelihoods in recent times, labor migration has a long history in Africa, and has had a major influence on rural societies and economies since the colonial era.⁵ In many African countries, labor migration first arose with the recruitment of rural farmers into the mining sector and plantations.⁶ In this sense, labor migration was introduced to farmers in a structural policy-related context. Although much of this recruitment was involuntary at that time, it had a major effect on rural societies and economies and impacted livelihoods in both positive and negative ways. A large research effort has been directed toward analyzing the impact of labor migration on the home villages that migrants leave to find work. These impacts include remittances, which are considered a critical financial benefit of labor migration, and the effects of labor shortages on social organization.⁷

At the same time, the primary concern of most migration studies has been on the reasons inducing people to move. The well-known framework for understanding the causes of migration has been the "push-pull" perspective, examining factors such as increasing population pressure, scarcity of land, and income disparity between urban and rural areas.⁸ The theories based on this perspective consider the migrating actor as an economically rational individual. In the late 1980s and 1990s, an academic movement known as "New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM)" criticized earlier migration studies for overly emphasizing the structural and historical factors involved in migration, and producing an individualistic view. Oded Stark stressed that most households have kept their social and economic ties with areas in which labor is performed and remittances are sent from. Consequently, he argues that the unit of analysis should be the family or household rather than individual, which previous thinking had recognized as a single rational actor and decision maker in the act of migration.⁹ More recent studies influenced by NELM have analyzed labor migration as a household strategy in a more holistic framework. However, these studies typically attempt to understand the causes of migration within the framework of the 'push-pull' perspective, and their primary focus tends to be restricted to income differences between urban and rural areas, a shortage of land, agricultural failure, and the absence of employment opportunities in rural areas.

These previous migration studies have paid little attention to the conditions of livelihood diversity and complexity in the areas from which migration occurs. As mentioned

above, the sources of livelihood in rural areas are extremely diverse. Since the early 1990s, a number of studies concerned with livelihood diversification in rural Africa have emerged, in a framework known as the "Livelihood Approach."¹⁰ One scholar defined livelihood diversification as "the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and to improve their standards of living."¹¹ He emphasized the importance of diversification not only in regard to income sources, but also for access to income. A focus on access to strategies and assets related to securing income are thus important factors in examining rural livelihoods. Some case studies have indicated that income differentiation can be both a cause and a result of livelihood diversification and increasing non-agricultural income opportunities.¹²

In situations where farmers are able to choose several ways of making a living in a given rural area, labor migration may not necessarily be the last resort. The decision-making process underlying labor migration may be more complex than previously believed. It is essential to reconsider the choice to migrate for labor under conditions where other options for sustaining their livelihoods are available, what the relationship is between other livelihood activities and labor migration, and how labor migration is integrated into rural society.

This article aims to clarify the role of labor migration in relation to livelihood diversity in rural areas. It will present a wider framework for understanding the causes and impacts of labor migration for rural societies and economies. Additionally, this article has a particular focus on the role of labor migration to neighboring small towns. Studies of migration and rural-urban interaction have traditionally focused on large cities. Small and intermediate sized towns, however, have been considered as having a critical role both for rural and urban development.¹³ Through analyzing the interactions between small towns and rural areas, this paper will elucidate their role as the destinations of labor migration. Moreover, it will provide a framework for understanding present-day rural Africa as an open system involving extensive interactions with small urban areas.

Methodology and Data

This study sought to produce a comprehensive understanding of social and economic systems in rural Africa, based on field work carried out in two villages in Lusitu Ward in Siavonga District, Southern Province, Zambia over two study periods, totaling sixteen months: August 2006 to March 2007 and August 2008 to March 2009.

The research methodology employed in this study included both interviews and participatory observation. I lived with local residents in the study villages and conducted interviews with heads of households (n=45), focusing on demographic change, social and

economic activities, and the agricultural situation.¹⁴ Thirty-seven people who had experienced labor migration, but resided in the village at the time of research, were identified for participation in interviews, regardless of age, sex, and social status. These thirty-seven people typically had experienced migration a number of times, resulting in a total of eighty-eight collected cases. Interviews were in-depth, one by one discussions about the migrants' destinations, durations, motives, and work experiences. For the purposes of analyzing interactions among small towns, fieldwork was also carried out in a neighboring town, Siavonga. In addition to informants in the village, people who migrated from the study area and stayed or resided in the town were interviewed about their lives.

Most migration studies define labor migration as short-term, typically under a year. In this study, however, labor migration was not defined based on the length of time migrants spent away from their villages, because even migrants who spend several years away may be expected to return home. Even if migrant laborers no longer send remittances to their relatives at home, they may still be asked for assistance in case of hardship. Therefore, this article defines labor migration as migration undertaken with the aim of getting employment (earning an income) in the destination towns and cities. This attempt to include long-term migration allows for an examination of how migrants' sentiments towards their hometown can be changed by the length of stay in their new residence.

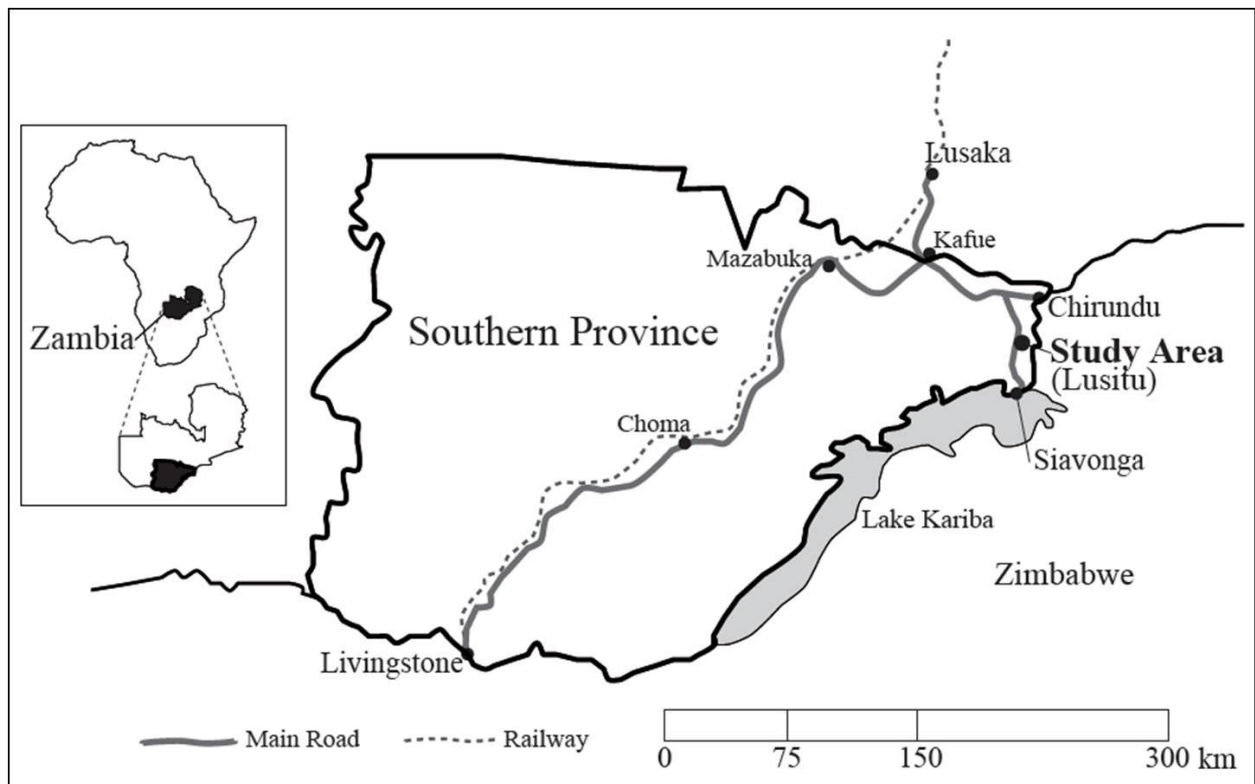
The data analyzed here, as mentioned above, comes from people who had returned to their home village after their migration experience. However, in the field study conducted in Siavonga, some workers in the process of migration were interviewed. Some migrants were still in their destination cities and had the option to return to their home village. Thus, both positive and negative sides of migrants' experiences could be investigated.

The following two sections provide a brief background of the study area and describe the livelihood activities undertaken by local people in detail. Next comes a section on the characteristics of labor migration in the study area and the conditions that made labor migration to small towns possible are presented and analyzed. The section that follows discusses the different roles and importance of labor migration among households with relation to rural livelihood diversity and access to it. Lastly, this study argues for an integrated perspective on labor migration from the point of the access to livelihood strategies and the social situation of each individual and household. It concludes that more attention should be paid to the daily interaction between the neighboring small towns and rural areas.

Brief Background of Study Area

The study area, Lusitu, is in the Siavonga District of Southern Province (Map 1),

approximately 150 km south of Lusaka along a paved road.



Map 1: Location of study area.

The Tonga constitute the primary ethnic group in the district and are dominant in the Southern Province. The study area in this paper was selected for two major reasons. First, Zambia has a long history of labor migration, which has occurred on a large scale beginning with the colonial era. However, the migration trend has changed in last twenty years. Since the 1920s, when copper mining began in Northern Rhodesia (present Zambia), the Copperbelt has been the major area for population influx.¹⁵ After independence in 1964, the capital city of Lusaka developed and began to constitute a major migration destination. The urban population rate in Zambia has increased from 21 percent in 1963 to 29 percent in 1969, and then to 40 percent in 1980.¹⁶ Most of the urban population was concentrated in the Copperbelt cities and Lusaka. However, this migration trend has changed since the late 1970s, when Zambia experienced a severe economic crisis due to the decline of copper prices and the sudden rise in oil prices, and also because of a national economic structure unaltered since the colonial era in its dependence on copper. In 1983, the Zambian government agreed to implement Structural Adjustment Programs, including raising the price of maize meal. These policies hit the living conditions of the urban population, especially those with low

incomes, and depressed the migration flow to major cities. In the past twenty years, net in-migration to urban areas as a whole has declined, particularly in the 1990s.¹⁷ In this situation, alternative migration trends have emerged. Some studies indicated that population movement from urban to rural areas predominate rather than from rural to urban areas, partly because of return migration, and that some small and intermediate regional cities have experienced a new influx of migrants.¹⁸ Therefore, in this changing trend of migration history in Zambia, it is important to see how small and intermediate towns work as the destinations of migration for rural people instead of the large cities.

A second reason is the relevance of the changing migration patterns to the study of livelihoods at the micro level. In the study area, people had originally resided along the Zambezi River before 1958. As the Kariba Dam, which was the largest artificial dam in the world at that time, was constructed by the colonial governments of then Northern and Southern Rhodesia, the local population was forced to leave and move to Lusitu.¹⁹ Because ecological conditions in the region were ill-suited for agricultural production, the local population has developed ways of compensating for the resulting food deficit.²⁰ The Southern Province can be divided into five general topographical and ecological regions: the plateau, the valley, the escarpment, the Kafue flats and the Barotse plains.²¹ Lusitu is in the valley region. Annual precipitation in the valley ranges from approximately 630 to 800 mm. Figure 1 illustrates inter-annual variability of precipitation in the study area from 1974/75 to 2005/06.

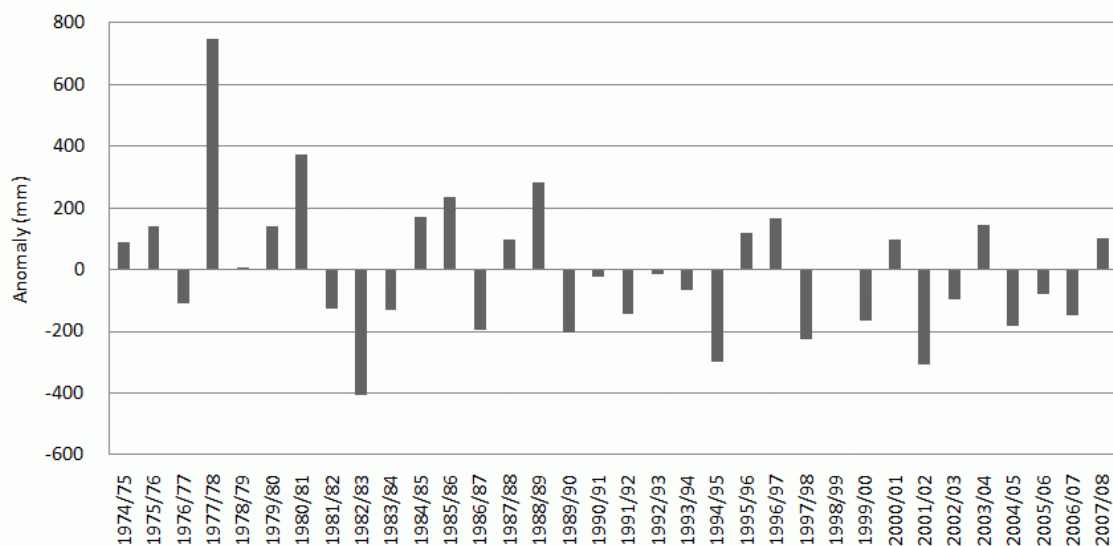


Figure 1: Interannual variability of precipitation anomaly at study area since 1974/75 to 2007/08.

Notes: Rainy season in Zambia starts from November to March.

Average rainfall in this period is 630 mm.

Data is missing in 1998/99.

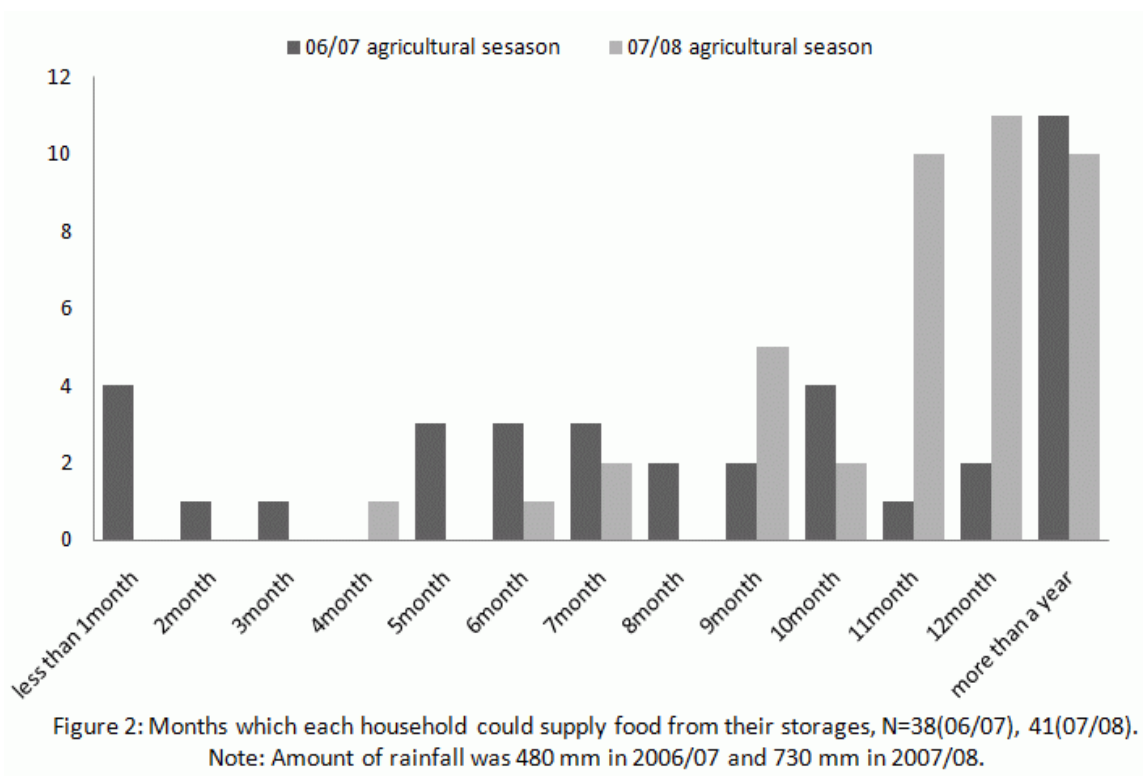
Some characteristics of Tonga society related to the issues in this article are that the Tonga did not have strongly centralized organizations and the "villages are not necessarily enduring units with stable populations tied to particular localities."²³ In the study area, this Tonga trait is observed pronouncedly because the resettlement caused by the Kariba Dam construction and its impact on society, such as national support and foreign aid from donors, NGOs, and churches after resettlement. In the study area, the number of "villages" has increased from five when they were resettled in Lusitu to twenty in 2008. Because the unit for receiving food aid is the "village," people sought to receive more aid through segmenting the villages to smaller scale. Therefore, the village does not have a strong meaning as a social unit, and social relationships are spread widely in the region. In terms of inheritance, the Tonga practice matrilineal descent, but some other features, such as residence and bride-price, echo a patrilineal system.²⁴ Even in terms of inheritance, however, half of the land held by households were inherited by the father. Additionally, the land tenure system in the study area is that each individual or household that wants to cultivate new land needs to ask the headman and the chief for an allotment but instead only need to report after cultivating the land. The Tonga, especially in study area, therefore live within a loose and moderate matrilineal society.

Livelihood Situations in Study Area

Agriculture and Food Security

Even with inadequate conditions for productive agriculture, such as fluctuating rainfall and poor soil fertility, all households studied were engaged in farming for subsistence food production. Though some households had other sources of income, they had not abandoned agriculture. Maize is the primary staple food in most parts of Zambia. It is widely produced throughout Southern Province, both commercially and for subsistence. However, the sparse and fluctuating precipitation in Lusitu makes the region problematic for maize production. Instead, people primarily cultivate sorghum and pearl millet, which are more drought tolerant than maize. Mixed planting of different types of sorghum, pearl millet and maize can disperse the risks of production failure. Farmers commonly plant various kinds of cereals including five varieties of sorghum, pearl millet, and maize. These crops vary in maturation period, required amount of water, and taste. Each household studied had chosen a different combination of crops. Because of low rainfall, some households changed their plans from sowing maize to sorghum in the beginning of the rainy season in 2006/07.

Figure 2 shows the months that each household could keep the food from their storage in 2006/07 and 2007/08.



It is apparent that most households were unable to supply sufficient amounts of food throughout the year in 2006/07 (480 mm rainfall). Only thirteen were able to feed themselves successfully throughout the entire year. In the following 2007/08 season (780 mm rainfall), however, stored food in most households lasted for eleven or twelve months. In both years, however, there were some households that could keep their food more than a year. On the other hand, some households reported that they typically experienced hardship even when rainfall was relatively high.²⁵ Therefore, they felt the need to obtain additional food or to earn cash to maintain their livelihood.

In the study area, farmers combined multiple kinds of food crops, and this flexibility is one method of risk divergence and management in this challenging agricultural environment. From the point of food security, it was indicated that food production and self-sufficiency in the study area were greatly influenced by rainfall, but there was some critical variation among households.

Various Ways to Earn Cash and Coping Strategies for Drought

Cotton is a major cash crop in the study area.²⁶ Planting cotton has a low initial cost, because cotton companies lend seed and agrochemicals to set up the crop. They then deduct the costs from farmers' earnings at harvest. Households that planted cotton receive their income in May or June. In 2007/08, the average income from cotton was 928,764 Zambian Kwacha (ZMK), which was equivalent to 265 US dollars.²⁷ However, income varied substantially among planting households, ranging from 23,000 to 5,049,000 ZMK (7 to 1,442 US dollars). Income from cotton also tended to vary year to year because of rainfall fluctuation. In addition, cotton requires more labor than other crops in terms of weeding and spraying. Therefore, some households fail to harvest enough cotton to cover their costs. Villagers reported that they commonly began planting cotton in one season, but stopped in the following season if they did not earn enough profit.

Remunerative employment was the most stable and secure income source reported in the study area. There were three general types of employment in the area: formal, casual, and self-employment. Teachers and millers are examples of formal and casual employment. Millers, for example, could receive about 100,000 ZMK (29 US dollars) monthly. Examples of self-employed workers include carpenters, shop owners, and traditional beer sellers.

Wage labor, termed "piecework," was the most common way for villagers to earn cash. Piecework is a system in which comparatively wealthy households (e.g., those with a regular or seasonal salary, or growing a large area of cotton) employ others when they require workers for agricultural or non-agricultural work. For example, weeding, picking cotton, collecting poles and brick-making for building, and construction of houses and shops were

all considered piecework. In addition, some respondents suggested that if someone experienced financial trouble or a shortage of food, they were likely to visit wealthier households and request work in exchange for either money or food.

Piecework was considered open to every person with a desire to work. However, there were some differences in the amounts paid for different types of piecework. For example, weeding was accessible to anyone, including children and old women, but it was considered the lowest-paid and most labor-intensive work. Some villagers felt that frequent weeding piecework caused competition for labor between subsistence farming in preparation for the following year and working for cash or food to meet short-term needs. On the other hand, some higher-paid piecework jobs required technical skills and knowledge, such as construction and painting buildings and welding. Because these jobs are specialized, only some households could engage in higher-paid piecework.

In addition to the requirement of specialized skills and knowledge for certain jobs, social relationships and negotiation were reported as key factors in gaining access to piecework. When wealthier households were also facing financial difficulty and were unable to employ as many workers as usual, piecework was difficult to obtain. Social networks in the study area extend beyond the village boundaries. People frequently visit relatives and friends living in other villages. This expanded network of relationships served as a means of providing and gaining piecework over the wider area. Therefore, people with wealthy relatives, in-laws, and close friends enjoyed an advantage in obtaining piecework.

The pursuit of a livelihood, particularly in times of drought, included selling livestock, requesting food from relatives or neighbors, hunting and gathering, and obtaining food aid. The Zambian government, international organizations and nongovernmental organization (NGOs) provide various types of aid in the study area. Governmental aid to rural areas, especially to small-scale farmers, increased following the establishment of the Poverty Reduction Programme in 2001.²⁸ Moreover, many programs have focused on Lusitu, both because it is drought-prone, and because it is easily accessed from the capital. Food aid has been directed to this area in the past during times of drought. However, only two to three households in each village were able to receive food aid of a sufficient quantity to maintain livelihoods.

Differences among Households

Various ways to earn cash and cope with drought were found in the study area. Households combined these strategies. At the same time, there were indications that some strategies were restricted by certain factors. Households using multiple strategies were analyzed by dividing them into four categories, according to whether they had a reliable

income source and cash crops. Table 1 shows how the four groups were classified in this study. Table 2 lists characteristics of each group.

Table 1: Classification of household group

Non-agricultural income / Agriculture	No reliable income source	With reliable income source
Only for family consumption	A	C
Cash crop production	B	D

Table 2: Characteristics of each household group

	Number of households (Female headed)	Ave. age of head of households	Ave. number of household members	Mean size of land holdings (ha)	Number of cattle holders
A	28(14)	44.1	4.6	2.0	3
B	7(0)	51.9	7.1	4.6	3
C	5(2)	36.0	5.4	2.6	1
D	5(1)	38.4	9.0	7.0	4
Total	45(17)	42.6	5.6	3.1	11

Note: The unit of land holdings was by the household and it was measured by using GPS.
A – D show the classification of household group (see Table 1).

Group A, households engaging only in subsistence agriculture, accounted for approximately 60 percent of the studied households. Households in this group had the lowest number of household members and the smallest area of land. Some households did not produce enough food to be self-sufficient. It was thus necessary for these households to

supplement their food supply by earning cash. They also required cash to purchase everyday commodities such as soap, salt and cooking oil. Thus, these households were typically engaged in frequent piecework and other coping strategies to obtain food and cash. Households in group C also did not plant cotton. However, they stabilized their livelihoods through a reliable income source. None of the households in this group were engaged in piecework in 2007 to 2008. Some group C members even became employers of pieceworkers.

Groups B and D possessed larger areas of land and largest size household. This enabled these households to plant cotton as a cash crop. However, because income from cotton was still influenced by rainfall and the input of labor, if households in group B failed to harvest enough to make profit, they were required to engage in piecework, livestock selling and other strategies. In contrast, households in group D were the most stable households among the groups. These households typically combined cotton cultivation and a reliable income source with subsistence agriculture in large fields. They were distinctly differentiated from other households in terms of income, which enabled them to provide other households with employment opportunities.

In summary, it is evident that not all households were able to access reliable non-agricultural income sources, which is considered the most secure way of guaranteeing livelihood. There were substantial differences in livelihood stability between groups A and B, and C and D. For example, group A can be considered as the most vulnerable group in terms of assets and access to ways of earning cash because there was no guarantee that they would be able to earn enough from piecework alone. On the other hand, access to non-agricultural reliable income sources enabled group C and D households to maintain stable livelihoods. However, it was clear that these differences in livelihood activities and income could provide the opportunities to earn cash in the village.²⁹

Characteristics of Labor Migration from the Study Area

General Characteristics

Of all the cases (N=88) described by informants who had experienced labor migration, 77 percent were male and 23 percent were female. The average age at their first departure was twenty-two. Figure 3 shows the destinations of migrants by year.

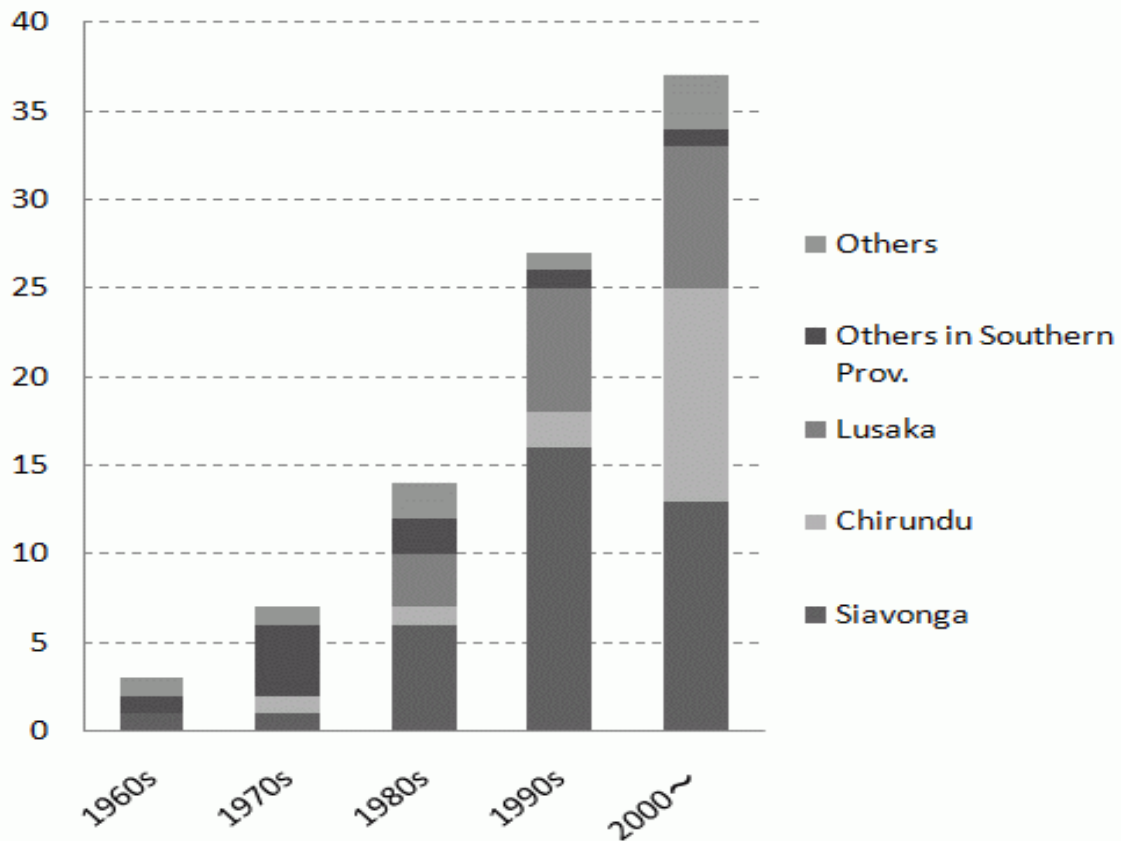


Figure 3: Destinations of labor migration by years (N=88)

In the 1960s and 1970s, most migrants travelled to large cities in the Southern Province, such as Mazabuka, Choma, and Kafue (cf. Map 1). During this time, the data shows that employment in the formal sector and public works accounted for approximately 60 percent of employment.

Since the 1980s, the number of migrants to Siavonga has increased. After 2000, migrant destinations were almost completely confined to three major cities: Siavonga, Lusaka, and Chirundu. Transportation from Lusitu to Lusaka is relatively convenient, taking three hours by bus. Despite the convenience of transportation to the capital, however, Lusaka has never been the most common destination. Siavonga and Chirundu have attracted increasing numbers of migrants in recent years.

Of those who had migrated to Siavonga in the 1980s, 50 percent were engaged in fishing, but after the 1990s, housekeeping and gardening became an increasingly common source of employment for migrants. Of the cases that had migrated to Chirundu, 64 percent were engaged in daily employment, such as drawing water and carrying commodities to market. Figure 4 shows the length of stay in three major destinations, Siavonga, Lusaka, and Chirundu since the 1980s.

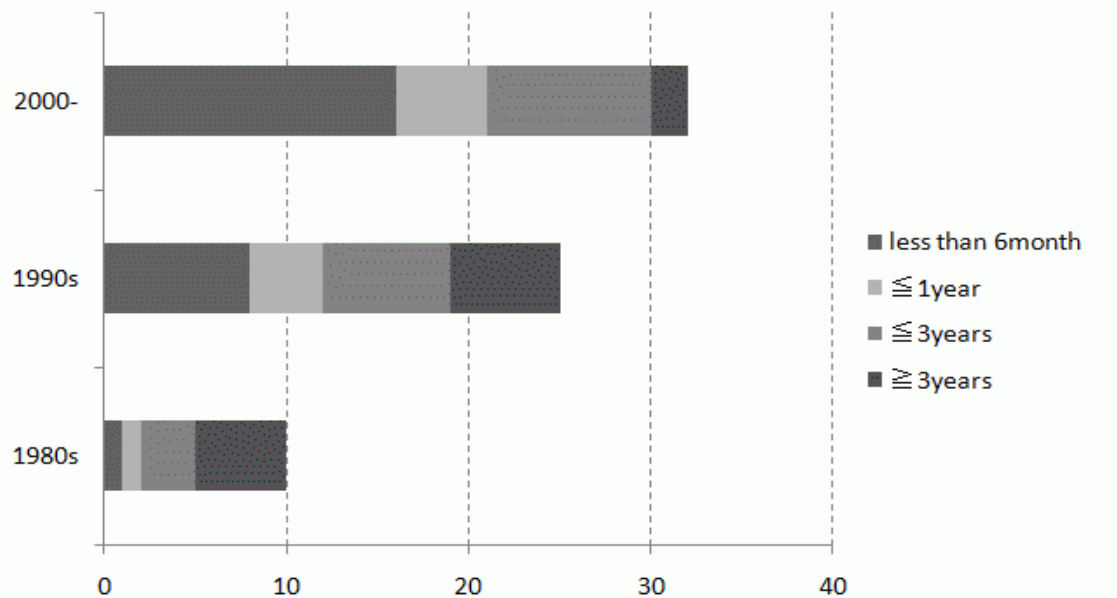


Figure 4: Length of stay in major destinations (Siavonga, Lusaka, and Chirundu) after 1980s. (N=70)

It can be seen that cases where migrants stayed less than one year constituted nearly or over 50 percent in 1990s and since 2000. On the other hand, half of the migrants in this study stayed more than one year at their destinations.

Small Towns as Destinations: Siavonga and Chirundu

Labor migration to Siavonga from our study area started to increase since the 1980s and to Chirundu especially since 2000. What attracts people to these small towns?

Siavonga is the district capital and functions as the center for administration and post and banking services. In 2000, the population of Siavonga was 9,690.³⁰ Buses running from Lusaka to Siavonga meant that Siavonga was easily accessible from Lusitu. Migrants frequently travelled by bus, which cost only 15,000 ZMK (four US dollars), which is less than half of the fare to Lusaka, at the time of research.

Fishing was the largest industry in Siavonga, primarily located along Lake Kariba. Small sardines (*Limnothrissa miodon*) known as “kapenta” in Zambia and Zimbabwe, were imported to Lake Kariba from Lake Tanganyika in 1968. Kapenta fishing has become a lucrative industry since the 1980s, and there are also some white entrepreneurs. At the time of fieldwork there were approximately thirty kapenta fishing companies registered with the Ministry of Fisheries.³¹ The major kapenta companies provided substantial employment in Siavonga. In addition to the Tonga people, some people from the Lozi and Bemba groups (from the Western and Eastern Provinces) who were previously engaged in fishing along the Zambezi River also migrated to Siavonga.

In 1992, Siavonga was separated from Gwembe district and become its own district.³² With the transfer of the administrative function, the number of formal workers living in Siavonga increased. With the increase of relatively wealthy Zambians working at the district council, the bank, and the electricity company, the demand for housework and gardening labor also grew. Such employment opportunities became abundant. Migrants could regularly obtain this type of work by going door to door. In addition, the tourism industry has recently expanded, which in turn led to increasing of work opportunities in the service and construction sectors.

The proportion of migrants to Chirundu increased from the late 1990s. Chirundu is located on the border of Zambia and Zimbabwe. Its population was 9,540 in 2000 census.³³ It is at a distance similar to that from Lusitu to Siavonga. Chirundu is a major border town in Zambia where trucks carrying materials from South Africa and other countries stop.³⁴ Development in Chirundu as a town began after 1991, when the new government introduced market liberalization.³⁵ It has banks, a post office, and a large market. Many employment opportunities exist in Chirundu—workers can earn small amounts of money by drawing water and carrying commodities to market. For this reason, the proportion of female migrants is higher in Chirundu when compared with other urban areas. Even widows and young girls with limited education are often able to obtain employment without difficulty.

Informants commonly referred to two major differences between Siavonga and Chirundu. The first relates to transportation. Some migrants mentioned that if they did not have money for transportation, they could go to Chirundu on foot or by bicycle using a local unpaved road. The second concerns the environment. Some migrants reported a preference for Siavonga because Chirundu is noisy due to traffic. Moreover, HIV/AIDS is prevalent in Chirundu because of prostitution associated with truck drivers.³⁶ On the other hand, Siavonga is adjacent to Lake Kariba and is seen as having a calmer atmosphere. Siavonga currently attracts an increasing number of foreign and national tourists who come to enjoy sightseeing and holidays beside the lake.

In addition, Siavonga has a number of advantages with regard to housing and employment. People in the study area generally have relatives and friends living in Siavonga, who can sometimes help newcomers with food and housing while they find employment. Furthermore, the presence of numerous relatives and other migrants from the same area already in the town means that migrants may obtain employment and information more easily through social networks. This is particularly true in the case of housekeepers and gardeners, where employers typically ask workers leaving their jobs to find a replacement. Thus, employment opportunities are commonly accessed through social networks.

Furthermore, people in study area have often visited Siavonga and Chirundu before they first migrate. School-aged boys and girls visit their relatives in towns during from school holidays. In addition, many single women visit towns when they are released from agricultural work. From this daily mobility, migrants often know neighboring towns well before they depart. People are commonly familiar with the future destination of their labor migration, and they have often developed social relations in neighboring small towns through previous visits. Respondents reported that this reduces anxiety about where to sleep and how to navigate these small towns when they arrive.

The Variability of Duration: What Made Migrants Stay Longer?

The research pointed out that both short-term and long-term labor migration are regular occurrences within the study area. Short-term labor migration reflects an increase in migration to neighboring towns. Migrants to these towns can easily quit their jobs and return to their homes for farming if they wish. Some migrants reported the concern that if they travelled to cities far from home it would be difficult to find transport money to return home if they lost their jobs. Another factor affecting the length of stay is the increase in housekeeper and gardener employment. If workers decide to quit their jobs, or obtained information about friends of employers searching new workers, they could introduce other migrants and newcomers to jobs. Migrants may be able to find employment through this type of social network, meaning that employers do not need to search actively for new workers, since former employees find replacements, and newcomers come to them requesting employment. Thus, employers typically do not prevent workers from leaving their employment, and the arrival of substantial numbers of migrant workers contributed to the loosening of employment restrictions. This in turn generates a labor market in which migrants can circulate between village and town, or change their jobs at short-term intervals.

What then made their duration of stay fluctuate? One reason appears to be related to the economic situation migrants experienced in towns. All informants interviewed in Siavonga (N=9) had resided in the town for at least five years. The average worker had been engaged in 2.4 jobs since migrating. Respondents had typically changed their jobs to seek more favorable conditions. Of these types of employment, housekeeper and gardener accounted for 45 percent, and jobs at hotels and guesthouses for 27 percent.

Salaries were found to vary according to occupational category and the number of years of continuous work. For example, for housekeeping and gardening positions, the number of years of continuous employment correlated with increases in salary. Thus, employers tended to set lower initial salaries, and, after identifying workers as reliable, they improved the conditions of employment. In hotels and guesthouses, on the other hand, employees are

required to have additional skills and knowledge. In this sector, English language proficiency and experience in service industries impact on salaries to a greater extent than the length of continuous employment.

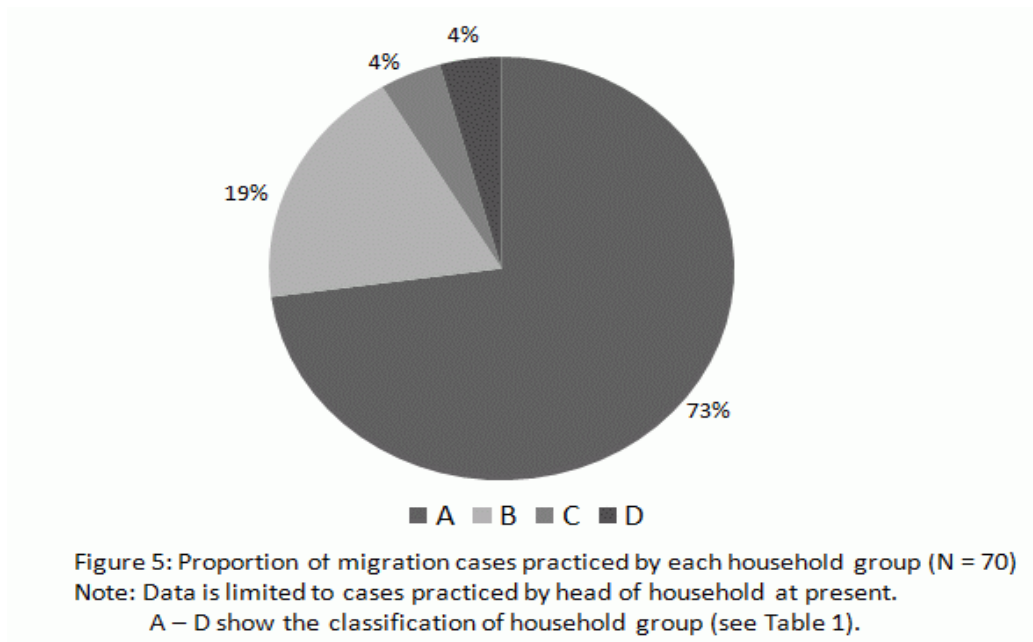
Life in towns, as distinct from the village, brings a greater requirement for money, since the food eaten each day must be purchased. In the case of household No. 3 in Siavonga, the respondent reported household earnings of 154,000 ZMK (forty-four US dollars) a month, with expenses calculated as 120,000 ZMK (thirty-four US dollars) in the same period, not including school fees required seasonally. To sustain a comfortable life in town, it is perceived to be crucial to extend opportunities by collecting information about vacancies and new employment possibilities. The length of stay in these destinations strongly depended on whether migrants were able to find appropriate employment sufficient to sustain their livelihoods. If not, decisions were often made to return home where food can be provided from their land. If sufficient employment was obtained, however, stays were commonly longer than expected at departure. In addition to this practical reason, changing attitudes and feelings of identity regarding home villages also impact on the duration of stay in migrant destinations. Cliggett's anthropological work in the Southern Province indicated that the duration of migrant stays is indefinite and variable. She argues that as stays in the destination become longer, responsibilities to assist home become lower. This is further reinforced in the event of spouses and children also shifting to the destination town. Informants reported that they first migrated alone and then brought their wives and children to town once they could earn a reliable income.³⁷

Relationship between Livelihood Possibilities in the Village and Labor Migration

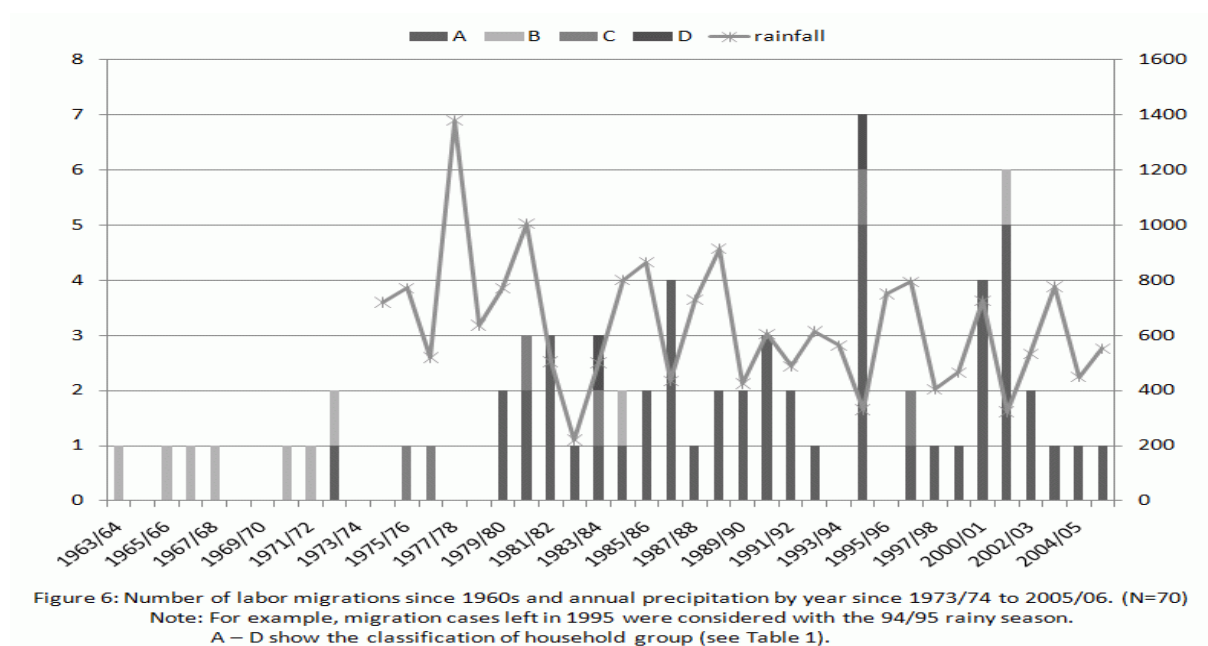
This section presents a further analysis of the results of the previous two sections with a focus on access to earning a livelihood.

Labor Migration as a Coping Strategy with Drought

Figure 5 shows the proportion of types of migration associated with each category of household which was indicated in Table 1.



Households with reliable income sources, groups C and D, generally did not experience labor migration. Most migrants were from groups A and B, who engaged in subsistence agriculture, cash crop production, and other irregular income sources. Figure 6 shows the number of cases sorted by year of departure, along with rainfall data in study area.



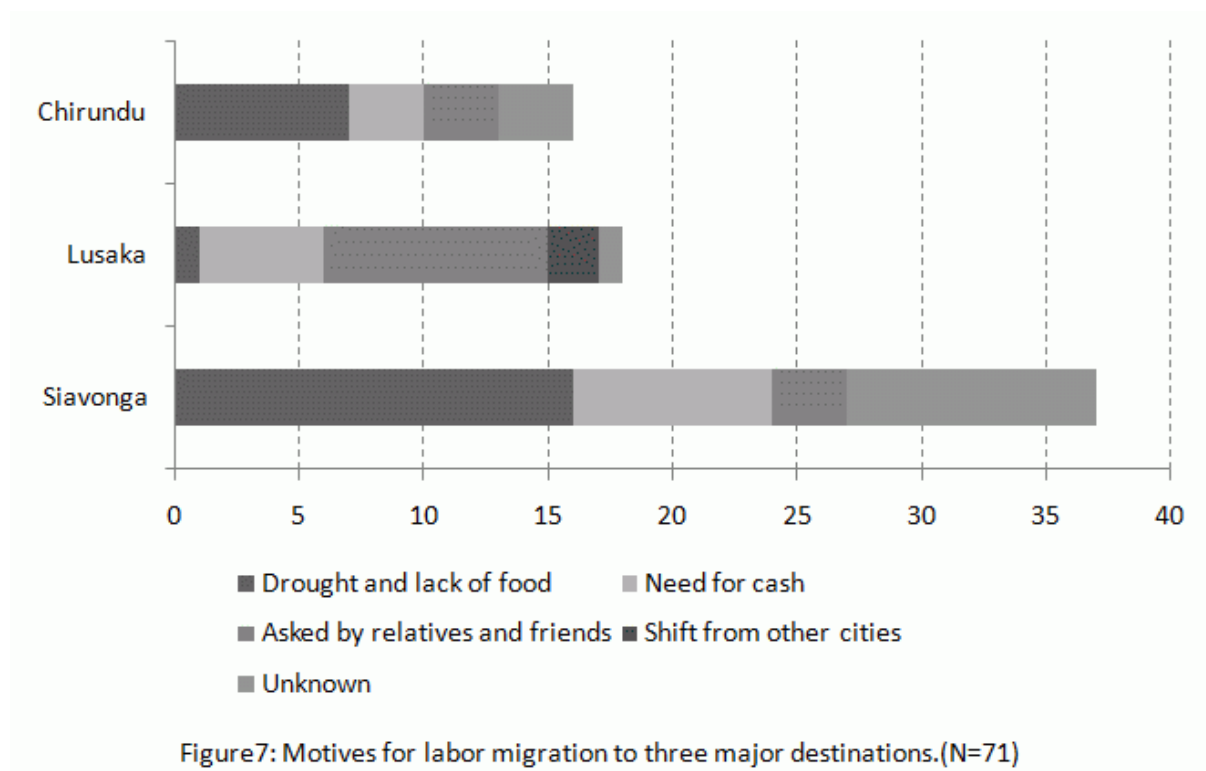
It can be seen that the number of migration cases increased both in 1994/95 and 2001/02.³⁸

In circumstances where a population’s livelihood largely depends on natural resources,

ecological risks and shocks such as drought or soil erosion have a great impact on socioeconomic systems. Such a situation can generate a large incentive for migration.³⁹ Especially in arid and semiarid areas, increases in the number of migrants are evident from both short-term and long-term consequences of drought.⁴⁰ In the present study area, precipitation was 330 mm in 1994/95. Farmers still recall how poor the harvest in this season was. Similarly, in 2001/02 the rainfall was only 324 mm. Respondents who migrated in these years typically gave reasons related to drought and lack of food as motivations for leaving in search of work. Drought and crop failure clearly seem to be the key motives for migration. Of my study groups, it was primarily households in group A that migrated to cope with harsh situations.

However, there are other livelihoods for coping with these aversive events, as explained above. Piecework, livestock selling, hunting and gathering, mutual assistance, and food aid were all reported as coping strategies in this study. In fact, even when drought occurred, some households in group A were not distressed enough to induce migration. Selling livestock is one important coping strategy commonly seen in times of drought. Household No. 10 reported the sale of five goats and thirteen pigeons in 2007 for this reason. Because of these sales, they were then able to purchase enough cereal to avoid food shortage. Household No.3 was given food aid from November to March, meaning they did not need to leave the village. Thus, differences in the necessity and importance of labor migration as a coping strategy arise with variation in the level of access to other coping strategies conducted inside the village.

Of those coping strategies, labor migration appears to be seen as the easiest and least restrictive option. Figure 7 shows the reported motives for migration to three major destinations: Siavonga, Lusaka, and Chirundu.



It is clear that when migration was associated with drought-related motivation, migrants tended not to choose the capital, but preferred neighboring small towns. As mentioned above, the choice of neighboring small towns was seen to enable people to migrate at the lowest cost both economically and mentally, due to the geographical closeness, social networks, consequent benefits in terms of employment opportunities, and familiarity through daily mobility. Therefore, labor migration, especially to neighboring small towns, was revealed to play a critical role for coping with drought, especially for those who were lacking access to other coping strategies in the study area.

Decision Making Process for Labor Migration

It remains evident that a number of cases of migration to neighboring small towns in this study cannot be solely explained by ecological causes or harsh economic circumstances. Some households migrated away from the village even when the harvest was good. Apart from drought-induced migration, other motives presented in Figure 7 were "need for cash" and "asked by relatives and friends." The motive "need for cash" includes cases where respondents were seeking money for bride-price, or for buying clothes and other commodities.⁴¹ From these interviews, those cases were typically related to an unexpected and unusual social event, such as a marriage or the sudden death of family member, and lack of support from parents.⁴² Some decisions to migrate resulted from a sudden need for

cash caused by these types of social affairs and accidental events.

The motivation “asked by relatives and friends” includes cases where a person was asked by relatives or friends to move to destinations to work, or where employment was arranged in advance in another town. Some informants responded that they did not plan to leave, but they decided to do so after being asked by relatives or friends. This can be considered as a problem of opportunity and a result of access to urban employment through their social relationships.

The above two types of labor migration conducted in unusual situations, however, should be considered in relationship to other methods of obtaining cash in the village. For example, in the case of household No.19, the eldest son was able to get non-agricultural wage labor in both the dry and rainy seasons. He has barely found it necessary to ask wealthier households for jobs but rather has been offered work by them. He responded that he does not need to go to town, because he can get piecework in the village. In addition, the respondent in household No.11 reported an earlier labor migration, but he now had connections with a piecework provider locally and so no longer needs to go to town to work. These stories indicate that working in towns does not necessarily have a special place in the lives of all villagers. Rather, labor migration can be a selective process through the interaction of specific problems, accidental events, or requests by relatives or friends.

Migration to nearby towns carries advantages in terms of sending remittances and maintaining relationships at home. When working in a nearby town, migrant workers can send money through acquaintances returning to their home village. Additionally, family members from the village can visit and request money relatively easily from migrants. In the current study, there were a limited number of households receiving remittances regularly. Keeping children in town can still function as a safety net, however, which may help at home in times of hardship. People engaged in short-term and low-wage jobs sometimes cannot send remittances to their homes. In these cases, migration still has an indirect effect of reducing consumption at home. Smoothing household consumption can be a consequence of labor migration, and an increase of short-term migration in times of drought is partly because of such a household strategy.⁴³

Lastly, it should be noted that recent changes in lifestyles are affecting the changing status of labor migration to small towns. In the study area as well as in other rural areas in Zambia, the number of cellular phones has increased dramatically in recent years. In 2006, when I first visited the study area, few people owned cellular phones. In 2009, however, this proportion had risen to 13 percent of the population, and this prevalence continues to increase. The growing number of cellular phones enables people to communicate more easily and frequently with relatives and friends in towns. Consequently, information

regarding employment can rapidly reach people in the village, and people are able to move with greater assurance.

Conclusions

Agriculture is not the only source of livelihood in Africa's rural areas. As such, increasing research attention has been paid to non-agricultural income sources and their relationship to urban areas. Despite the importance of rural labor migration, however, it has been examined as separate from the rural context. This paper examined labor migration in relation to conditions of livelihood in rural areas, an issue that has not been adequately addressed in former migration studies. In this study, special attention was paid to the role of neighboring small towns.

In such a variable situation, local people have developed many strategies for earning money and coping with food shortages. Labor migration is one of these essential strategies. In particular, migration to neighboring small towns such as Siavonga and Chirundu was found to be important for vulnerable households that could not use other strategies inside the village because of a lack of assets or access to local employment.

Another role of labor migration is one of influencing livelihood choices. Even in group A, the main participants in labor migration, some households did not experience migration. This was possible because of the existence of other income sources even in rural areas. In the study area there was an income gap between households perpetuated by the reliable non-agricultural income sources available to some households. Wealthier households did, however, provide others with cash earning opportunities. Households that were able to secure high-paid piecework through social interaction with wealthier households had less need to leave the village for work. Thus, in usual conditions, labor migration was not the only way to earn cash but rather is selected in relation to other strategies and circumstances, for example, marriage, lack of support from parents, and contingencies such as the sudden death of family members or relatives who they had relied on. This type of labor migration did not essentially correspond with household strategies but rather was an individual choice for making conditions better. Therefore, considering livelihood diversities in rural areas, labor migration is an important coping strategy in terms of drought for vulnerable households. At the same time, however, it was selected in relation with access to other livelihood activities and circumstances people faced at that time.

The factors that appeared to make labor migration accessible were also examined in this paper. First, the development of regional towns offered rural people opportunities for employment. Zambia's national development policies, such as market liberalization and decentralization, affected the development of Siavonga and Chirundu since the 1990s.

Second, the wide social networks of local people and daily mobility between rural areas and small towns lessened the stress migrating to these towns and remaining in them. Lastly, the geographical location of the study area is critically important. These three factors were perceived as enabling workers to migrate at the lowest cost, both mentally and economically, and made the option of labor migration easily accessible to rural people.

It is clear that labor migration, especially to neighboring small towns, has been deeply connected with rural society. It is essential to analyze all of these factors together with livelihood conditions and to assess access to each strategy in rural areas. Doing so indicates that it is necessary to consider a wide range of influential factors to gain any adequate understanding of labor migration. Additionally, the central focus of Zambia's internal migration studies has been on labor migration to the large cities of Lusaka and the Copperbelt. This study, however, suggests that these new types of urban-rural interaction and the presence of a regional labor market should be recognized and reflected in a regional development policy.

Lastly, there are some issues that need further research and analysis. For example, this study has not analyzed how access piecework and labor migration are regulated by Tonga social organization such as the matrilineal uncle-nephew relationship. Moreover, the inheritance of assets such as land and cattle in the study area tended to be more along patrilineal lines. Ongoing research will be conducted to understand better such social relationships.

Notes:

- 1 Bryceson, 2002; Bryceson and Jamal, 1997; Ellis, 1998.
- 2 De Haan, 1999.
- 3 Barrett et al., 2001.
- 4 Bryceson and Jamal, 1997, p. 3.
- 5 Adepoju, 1995.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 For remittances, see Lucas and Stark (1985), Hoddinott (1994), and Cliggett (2005), and for the response to labor drain from rural areas, see Richards (1939), Mabogunje (1989), and Hampshire (2006).
- 8 Boserup, 1965; Todaro, 1969.
- 9 Stark, 1991.
- 10 Chambers and Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998; de Haan and Zoomers, 2005.
- 11 Ellis, 1998, p. 4.
- 12 Dercon and Krishnan, 1996; Reardon, 1997.

- 13 Baker and Claeson, 1990.
- 14 This paper defines “household” as a unit of consumption of food from the storage, therefore, households would refer both to the nuclear family and the extended family, depending on each sample case.
- 15 Copperbelt is now the name of the province where copper and other metals are found. Before the copper mines opened, Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia) had been considered a labor supplying region to Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) and South Africa.
- 16 Potts, 2005. According to Potts (p. 588), from the 1960s to 1980s, Zambia had maintained the highest urbanization level among other southern and eastern African countries except for South Africa.
- 17 Ibid. Actually, the Zambian government set aside the Structural Adjustment Program in 1987, but after the change of government in 1991, the new government has implemented SAPs, and their impact has become pronounced.
- 18 Nchito, 2010; Ogura, 2009; Potts, 2005.
- 19 The total resettled population was approximately 70,000. For information about the effect of resettlement on Tonga society, see Colson (1960).
- 20 For information about the livelihood and environment of people in Lusitu before construction of the dam, see Scudder (1962) and Colson (1960).
- 21 FAO, 1993.
- 22 Ibid. In the study area, I found the same characteristics in food security as this report.
- 23 Colson, 1951, p. 41.
- 24 Cliggett, 2000, p. 127.
- 25 Of course, it is clear that many factors are considered to influence agricultural production, including the size of land holdings, the stability of labor inputs, and related social events.
- 26 Some households sell an improved type of sorghum to the seed companies, but a number of households cannot sell their harvest because they need to keep sorghum for consumption and also generally have an insufficient surplus.
- 27 All Zambian currencies were converted at the exchange rate in August 2008; one US dollar equaled ZMK. The price of cotton was 1220 ZMK/kg in 2007/08.
- 28 IMF, 2007.
- 29 Note that these results are based only on observations in the 2006/07 period. Further research and quantitative analysis are needed to show transitions in social and economic status over time.

- 30 CSO, 2003. According to CSO, the annual population growth rate of Siavonga District over the period 1990-2000 was 4.6 percent, which was the highest growth rate among the Southern Province districts.
- 31 Some major companies owning many boats were founded by whites (generally from South Africa and the United Kingdom). After 2007, the number of small fishing companies founded by Zambians increased, but employment opportunities provided by these new companies remained limited.
- 32 The separation from Gwembe District was related to the amendment of the Local Government Act No. 22 in 1991 by the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD), which won the election in 1990.
- 33 CSO, 2003.
- 34 According to Raballand et al. (2008), most of the trucks operating on the international routes via Chirundu are owned by South African and Zimbabwean companies.
- 35 There were two reasons why Chirundu as a border post had not developed by 1991: the border was closed because of the war in Zimbabwe until its independence in 1981; and, after 1980s, Zambia had descended into economic crisis.
- 36 Family Health International(2000) reported that the largest sources of informal income in Chirundu was sex work, which supports about 500 people (including visiting sex workers).
- 37 Cliggett, 2000.
- 38 In this study, cases left in 1995 were considered as the result of the effects of the 1994/95 rainy season.
- 39 Henry et al., 2004.
- 40 Findley, 1994; Hampshire and Randall, 2000.
- 41 The Tonga have a common practice of bride-price whereby the groom's family gives cattle to the bride's family, especially to the father. Nowadays, it is paid even in cash.
- 42 Cligget (2000) also indicated that conflict with parents, especially fathers, could affect sons' departure from the village.
- 43 Findley, 1994.

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