

ABSTRACT

This study examines the nexus between climate change, migration, and trans-local livelihoods in the Nandom District of northern Ghana, a climate-vulnerable region heavily reliant on rain-fed agriculture. Guided by an adapted Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and a trans-local livelihood perspective, the research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating long-term climatic data (1984–2022), household survey data, qualitative interviews and focus group discussions from the MiTriWa project (2022–2023). Analysis of rainfall and temperature trends revealed a climate system characterised by high interannual variability, recurrent droughts, and gradual warming. Rainfall has become increasingly erratic, with frequent negative anomalies in recent years, while rising temperatures have intensified evapotranspiration and soil moisture stress. These findings, corroborated by local perceptions, highlight the growing instability of agrarian livelihoods in the district. In response, migration has intensified, shifting from traditional seasonal flows to more permanent forms since 2009. While climatic stressors contribute to this mobility, migration is shaped by multiple factors, including livelihood insecurity, youth aspirations, education, and household obligations. Statistical analysis confirmed a weak but negative correlation between drought years and out-migration, underscoring that climate acts as an indirect driver mediated through socio-economic vulnerabilities. The study further established that migrants maintain strong trans-local ties, with 98% sustaining relationships with their origin households. Remittances, knowledge transfers, and reciprocal exchanges constitute key mechanisms through which migration supports household resilience. However, outcomes are uneven; better-educated migrants are more likely to achieve upward mobility and invest productively, while younger and less-educated migrants often face precarious urban livelihoods. The findings advance migration development debates by demonstrating that migration in Nandom is not a linear response to climate change, but a multidimensional adaptation strategy embedded within household economies, social obligations, and aspirations of modernity. Trans-locality emerges as a critical livelihood system, enabling risk diversification and resilience, yet also producing differentiated outcomes shaped by education, gender, and life-course factors. The study concludes that policy interventions should integrate climate adaptation, rural livelihood support, and urban protection measures, while recognising migrants as central actors in sustaining household welfare. Theoretically, it contributes to migration scholarship by reframing trans-locality as a form of distributed household governance that combines economic, social, and symbolic capital across spatial divides.