

Starting Over upon Return?



To those affected by the European Union's border regime, living or dead.

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 25 (1) -

'If they beat you and you collapse, they pour water on you until you wake up, and then they continue beating you. [...] I knew that my mum back home was suffering, and if they deported me now, I don't have anything. I'm returning with all the suffering sticking in my bones. If I die, I would like it. [...] When I touched Ghanaian soil and stood there just like that, I cried again. I worked so hard and went through so much trouble to get money. I wanted to have a good life, but now even though I'm back in Ghana, I don't have anything, not even a bag—just the clothes I wear. I cried. One of the IOM staff asked me why I was crying. I just said that it is not easy. If I tell you the things I'm going to face at home, it's not easy. He asked me why. I said, 'My mum owes much money at home, and I don't have anything, and I'm going home.' So, I cried. [...] Upon return, I was initially thinking about the debts and the struggles I was facing for another time. I recalled the time before I left my home. Back then, I had my room, could afford the rent, had a small TV and enjoyed my life at a humble level. However, upon return, I had nothing. [...] If I think of my life in Libya, seeing sick or dead people, I feel that sense of freedom today more than ever. I don't want to leave again. I'm happy every day. Sometimes, my neighbour asks me whether I'm also sad sometimes. She says that she sees me always happy. I don't let sorrows linger in my mind again. The hardship I mastered in the past gives me no reason to be sad today. I saw the most devastating things one could imagine. Therefore, nothing can harm me no more. So, every day I'm happy. People who didn't travel and don't have money will start thinking. They don't know how awful life can be. I stayed in prison for a whole year with no money. Today, if I wake up in the morning with no money, I don't care. For me, it's just one day. That's no reason for me to worry. Even if I didn't eat from the morning to the evening, I don't care. I experienced times even worse than that. In prison, we were constantly hungry. We almost ate parts of our mattresses. The situation in the desert is the same. If you don't eat for two days, you cannot get up because you are too weak. Today, if I wake up with hunger, it doesn't affect me. However, those who didn't experience that and wake up in the morning without having anything to eat are severely affected. I know how it is to get nothing or eat uncooked noodles. Either you eat it or not. All that made me extremely resilient. That's why I'm so happy today. I have something to eat. How can I be sad? Even though I'm not rich and my life isn't the best, I don't have any feelings of poverty. [...] I do think positively about my future. I know that I will become a big man one day. That's why I'm working hard and trying everything to have a better future.'

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List of Abbreviations

AFDOM	African Development Organisation for Migration
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
CFA	Communauté Financière Africaine
CYAM	Centre for Youth Advocacy for Migration
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
EUTF	European Union Trust Fund for Africa
GBD	Great British Pound
GHC	Ghanaian Cedi
GIZ	<i>Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit</i> German Agency for International Cooperation
GJPC	Great Jamahiriya Peace Club
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JHS	Junior high school
KB	Kwesi Brekum
LYD	Libyan Dinar
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NDC	New Democratic Congress
NPO	<i>Nederlandse Publieke Omroep</i> Dutch Public Broadcaster
NPP	New Patriotic Party
SHS	Senior high school
TV	Television
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USD	US Dollars

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- Ghanaian Transit Returnees' Perceived Life Realities -

Author

John Contenius
Master's Thesis
Human Geography: Globalisation, Migration and Development
Student number: s1026033
Nijmegen School of Management
Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands
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Supervisor: Lothar Smith
Cover Photo: John Contenius

1. Introduction

The snapshot at the beginning of this thesis comes from Ebenezer Bae. He recounts his experiences as an undocumented migrant in Libya in his early 20s, how he felt upon returning to Ghana, and the desperate situation he found himself in. Previously, his ambition was to reach Europe hoping for a better life for himself and his family. Instead, he crossed the Saharan Desert. Following several traumatising incidents, Ebenezer was picked up on the Mediterranean Sea and arrested by the Libyan coast guard. After one year of torture and agony in the notorious Grayan detention centre, he was brought back to Ghana in 2017 under an Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme. Funded by the European Union (EU) and launched by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), he received financial assistance to establish his own business in his hometown Drobo. Today, he is not only the father of a daughter, but also a successful micro-entrepreneur despite the economic consequences of the corona pandemic. In addition to his work as a mason, he repairs and sells mobile phones and accessories. His services are widely appreciated, well-respected, and his business is steadily expanding. Ebenezer's return story is one of success which is why he became the face of IOM's No Place Like Home campaign. However, his snapshot gives an idea of what he and others once had to endure in Libya and the precarious situation transit returnees face after arriving in their country of origin.

In many cases, transit returnees mentally suffer from what they have endured. As a result, some of them become criminals or drug addicts. Others break down because of the stigma of being a loser. Debts, feelings of guilt, and the lack of prospects deepen their despair. Some are even disowned by their families, whereas others do not return to them at all. In short, not everyone finds a happy life regained like Ebenezer. Mohammed Mumuni is one such counterexample. Irrespective that he was on the same plane and returned with the same AVRR programme as Ebenezer, his return story is not printed in any glossy brochure. Both met in Grayan prison and shared a cell with dozens of others. However, Mohammed's life proceeded differently after they parted ways at Kotoka International Airport in Accra. Until today, he has to share a room with his brother, is jobless, and depends on other people's allowances for clothes, food, and other essentials. Once, he wanted to improve his life and that of his family by migrating, but asked what has changed for him ever since, he only self-ironically refers to the hair on his head. He explains with a chuckle that nothing has changed for him except his hair, which turned partly grey. However, it remains a rare moment of reserved cheerfulness. For the rest, he remains hopeless, suffering from traumatic flashbacks during the day and nightmares at night. As identical as Ebenezer's and Mohammed's stories of return are, as contrasting are their perceived life realities upon return.

Apart from the institutionalised return, many migrants return independently, some even multiple times. Ali Alhassan is one of them. He started four migrations from Ghana and spent accumulated twelve years abroad. Ali tried several times to reach Europe from Libya and Morocco. His living situation is similarly fragile to that of Mohammed. Notwithstanding all his efforts and the received

family support, he remains socially isolated and has to fight against the feeling of powerlessness. According to his statement, his faith has prevented him from developing suicidal thoughts. Nonetheless, he describes his life as a daily struggle.

Down to the present day, the EU and its member states have invested approximately 490 million euros into the AVRR programme EU-IOM Joint Initiative on Migrant Protection and Reintegration (International Organization for Migration, 2021b). Through this programme alone, more than 42,000 migrants have been returned from Libya to their countries of origin in recent years (International Organization for Migration, 2023). Furthermore, there is an unreported number of unassisted returned migrants. Nonetheless, behind the statistics stand unique individual fates. The names of the people are Ebenezer, Mohammed, Ali, Moses, Georgina, Adam, Charles, Aziz, Odum, Faruk, Mawiya, and many others are mentioned in this case study. This work identifies a few names behind the numbers and narrates some of their stories. It goes back to their childhood and describes what once motivated them to undertake one or more migrations. In addition to their experiences before migration and en route, the focus lies mainly on how they fared after their return. This research provides insights and enables an understanding of the perceived life realities of Ghanaian transit returnees. They frequently deal with shattered dreams, trauma and marginalisation, and the impact of social networks, solidarity, optimism, self-efficacy, hope, and the love of freedom and life. This research indicates characteristics and meanings, reveals patterns and dynamics, and describes challenges but potentials which characterise transit returnees' perceived life realities likewise. The case study allows them, as well as their relatives and friends, to be heard. Their experiences and perceptions upon return in the context of AVRR and beyond are the central topic of this research, which unfolds its significance in numerous societal and academic debates. The politicisation of migration, and return migration in particular, in the 21st century is not only of societal relevance but also a scientific imperative for enabling substantiated and evidence-based debates and policymaking. A comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of return can only be developed, the consequences of policy measures analysed and long-term effects understood through in-depth research. In this vein, it contributes to objectifying the emotionalised discourse as well as to overcoming prejudices and stereotypes.

1.1 Societal Relevance

Over the past 50 years, the share of international migrants in the world population has remained relatively stable (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021, p. 23). However, since 1970, this number has risen by 1.3 per cent to 3.6 per cent in 2020. In comparison, the political salience of migration has noticeably increased (Castles et al., 2014). The discourse on immigration from African countries, in particular, was socially constructed in Europe in terms of *securitisation* (Aslan, 2022). Since it was perceived as a threat which allegedly challenged the cultural, socio-economic, and political status quo in European countries, accelerated in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the US World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, an intensified politicisation of migration policies has accompanied this securitisation. Beginning with the *quest for control* during the

economic regression in the early 1970s, the first European countries began to make efforts to curb undocumented migration and to prevent the abuse or circumvention of immigration regulations and policies. After the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, migration and asylum policies have fallen under EU governance (Castles et al., 2014).

Following the so-called migration crisis in 2015 and a further intensifying politicisation of immigration into Europe (Hutter & Kriesi, 2021), the return and readmission of migrants became a priority for EU migration governance (Uzelac, 2019). In the same year, the Valletta Summit on Migration established the European Union Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), a key instrument of European migration policy, which guaranteed African countries EU development cooperation funds in the billions. In return, these countries were supposed to prevent undocumented migration towards Europe and take back those who were unauthorised. The European Commission describes this practice as “effective sustainable return, readmission and reintegration of irregular migrants not qualifying for protection” (European Commission, 2015). Thus, European migration policy focuses on deterring migrants employing return and readmission in cooperation with so-called transit countries (Castillejo, 2017). In this regard, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration was established with EUTF funding “to save lives, protect and assist migrants along key migration routes in Africa” (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2022). It aims to support returning migrants to “restart their lives in their countries of origin through an integrated approach to reintegration that seeks to address returnees’ economic, social and psychological needs while at the same time including communities in the reintegration process” (International Organization for Migration, 2021a). Until today, more than 100,000 migrants have benefited from the programme (International Organization for Migration, 2021b). Most migrants returned from Libya (International Organization for Migration, 2023a).

However, returning from Libya is fraught with enormous challenges, as already suggested. Migrants are exposed to massive human rights violations in this country. While trapped in Libya, they are particularly vulnerable and unprotected against threats from various sides. In this situation, migrants are usually compelled to return to their home country. Most of them return to an environment which once induced them to leave. In addition, there are personal, financial, and mental burdens resulting from the interrupted migration cycle, which makes the situation particularly unfavourable. Given these significant hurdles, the EU’s self-declared AVRR goals (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2022) seem unfeasible in practice and require being compared with the actual experiences and realities of transit returnees.

As a result of a one-sided, distorted, and in parts manipulative discourse in Europe on international migration, perceived as a problem to be solved, the return from transit countries is considered to be of high political and societal relevance. However, this topic is not only in Europe under debate but primarily critical for the migrants themselves and the receiving side. The actual people affected, whom the AVRR programmes claim to protect and support, were not involved in the negotiations on the design of such migration management instruments. This necessarily

demands to focus on their perspectives as well. Beyond the macro level of the receiving countries on account of the economic and socio-cultural dimensions, the return of migrants from transit countries, such as Libya, also has remarkable effects at the meso and micro levels. Alongside the individual transit returnee and their family and immediate environment, it affects the entire social network, such as the neighbourhood and community.

This research focuses on the perspectives of all those directly concerned. This includes the transit returnee and the groups of people from the immediate and extended environment. These insights are equally useful to the respective parties at all three levels of analysis. The research findings serve policymakers, practitioners, transit returnees, their relatives, and the immediate and extended environment alike. The case study provides a better understanding of the challenges and potentials. It reveals the respective people's and groups' role with their behaviour, activities, and measures. In addition, the research findings uncover the consequences of the EU's externalised border regime for undocumented migrants. The changed conditions en route and the previously mentioned adverse effects for undocumented migrants in Libya and beyond are described. The transit returnees' testimonies reveal human rights violations by state and non-state actors ashore and afloat. These conditions are directly related to European migration policy, which is why their accounts are particularly relevant.

1.2 Scientific Relevance

In 2000, King described return migration as the “great unwritten chapter in the history of migration” (p. 7). However, it has gained importance in the academic discourse ever since. One reason might be the politicisation of return and readmission described above. In the context of AVRR, the number of studies on this topic has considerably expanded to date (United Nations Network on Migration, 2022). Nonetheless, research on inner-African return from transit countries remained in its infancy (Carling et al., 2011). For example, the Handbook of Return Migration (King & Kuschminder, 2022) pays little attention to this sub-field. Until today, the number of scholars researching transit return within the African continent, such as Sylla and Cold-Ravnkilde (2022), who examine return migration from North Africa to Mali, or Alpes (2020), focussing on return from Libya and Niger to respectively Nigeria and Mali, is limited. Given this underrepresentation of transit return, this case study follows on from it and contributes by outlining additional empirical cases.

While focusing on a previously less explored group of returnees, the research conceptually draws on existing research (Cassarino, 2014; Kuschminder, 2017; Pennington & Balaram, 2013). Transit returnees in the context of AVRR and those without institutionalised assistance are considered. In addition to one-time transit returns, people who undertook repeated journeys in the sense of circular migration are taken into account as well. Adopting a holistic approach, it does not solely refer analytically to the migration cycle, but focuses on the entire life cycle. At the same time, it attempts to detach itself from the Eurocentric perspectives on reintegration and its performance

assessment. Instead, the main focus lies on the perceived life realities of the transit returnees and their biographies. Their perspective as well as the one of their social network will be given special consideration. Hence, a transit returnee-centred and comprehensive understanding will be developed, enriching the scientific discourse due to its depth and scope. This case study dedicates particular attention to the interdependencies and linkages between the motives and decision-making processes for migration; the experiences in transit; the relevance of the social network; the significance and development of the mental state; the post-return behaviour; and the experiences with AVRR measures which allows identifying characteristic patterns and dynamics. While this research is primarily practice-oriented, delivering policy considerations, it draws on and expands existing findings of the academic debate, such as those of Setrana (2017) and others as well. Alongside its positioning within the theories and taxonomies of return migration, it also sheds light on aspects, such as drivers and decision-making for migration, including thresholds; circular migration; the respective nexus of migration with religion, gender and masculinity; trajectories and place-making en route and after return; transnational identities and social networks as well as livelihood strategies.

1.3 Outline

This thesis exceeds the usual length by a noticeable margin. The reason for this stems from the complexity of perceived life realities, which are always highly individual and multidimensional as well as subject to dynamic changes. In order to ensure an in-depth analysis going beyond the mere description of phenomena and their characteristics, a holistic view of the returnees' life courses and their environment becomes indispensable. Only in this way, the root causes of negotiation processes and reciprocal effects of life realities can be explored. A comparison of return stories reveals similarities and differences requiring biographical contextualisation, knowledge of the past, and of the living environment. Such an integrated view enables a holistic understanding of what it means to return, how perceptions of life realities unfold, and how different cases relate and engage with each other.

After introducing the research topic and discussing its social and scientific relevance in this chapter, the following *Chapter 2 Conceptualisation of Return Migration* presents various theoretical concepts for migration studies. These approaches are then applied to return migration in *Section 2.1*. This is crucial for the classification of the respective cases into the corresponding taxonomy of return, the contextualisation of the research findings in the academic debate, and the basis for theoretical reflection. *Section 2.2* discusses practice theory, which is the analytical lens through which the research objective and the research questions are later examined and answered. In the next chapter, the conceptual model is assembled from the various (return-)migration theories, concepts, and foci using practice theory. *Chapter 3 Research Design* establishes the objective and, as the name suggests, conceptual model (3.1) by employing selected migration theories and concepts as well as the practice theory approach before the questions of the research (3.2) are derived from it. Both form the conceptual research design,

which defines what is to be achieved through this research. The research objective narrows down the topic and sets the thematic focus of the work. The research questions sharpen the set focus and describe in detail what factors are addressed specifically. In combination, the reader is provided with access to the thesis which is indispensable in order to approach, categorise, and understand the cases. At the same time, the sub-questions structure and guide the reader through the thesis, thus facilitating an understanding of the findings. Subsequently, the further course of the chapter elaborates on the adopted research strategy and operationalisation (3.3). As the research objective and the research questions specify *what* is to be examined with this study, the research strategy and operationalisation determine *how*. Building on a critical reflection of these (3.4), the limitations of the research are unveiled in order to localise the empirical results. Following this, the four cases of the case study are featured in *Chapter 4 Setting the Scenery – Transit Returnees’ Life Courses*, to develop an initial understanding of the main informants’ life courses. The chapter serves as the backbone of the work upon which the following chapter with its research results rests. *Chapter 5 The Sum of Its Parts and Beyond – Discern Life Realities’ Intricacies* draws the findings along the themes of migration (5.1); social networks (5.2); livelihood strategies (5.3); and AVRR (5.4). In the final *Chapter 6 Conclusion*, the findings to address the main research question are condensed into a meaningful conclusion, from which a reflection on theory (6.1) and policy considerations (6.2) arise. The chapter concludes with possible connections for future research (6.3).

2. Conceptualisation of Return Migration

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical basis for situating first migration and subsequently return migration within the context of migration theory approaches. The first part describes how migration can be conceived through the lens of different theoretical schools. Building upon this, these theoretical concepts are applied to return migration to outline the theoretical foundation of the research and to contextualise the research findings within the academic debate (*Section 2.1*). At the end, *Section 2.2 Practice Theory as a Meta-theoretical Framework* presents the conceptual framework of this research and thus the analytical lens through which the Ghanaian transit returnees' life realities upon return are examined. Together with the theoretical concepts presented earlier, the conceptual model is subsequently developed from this in the following chapter. This chapter neither maps the entirety of the past and present (return) migration debate nor does it delve into it in depth, instead providing a first introduction and insights into the basic approaches for an approximation to the chosen conceptual model. This chapter's grounding remains essential in order to understand the thematic focus of this work and the chosen meta-theoretical perspective, thereby enabling the research findings to be analysed accordingly. It provides a general positioning and contextualisation of the topic as well as a theoretical embedding.

2.1 Theorising the Migratory Process and Return Migration

Castles et al. (2014) discuss migration as the interplay between *macro* and *microstructures*, which are connected through various *meso structures* such as social networks. Macro structures refer to structural factors, while microstructures include the migrants' behaviour, family background, and mental constitution. In fact, the migratory process is a complex, multifactorial, and dynamic phenomenon. However, this knowledge only gained widespread acceptance in the explanation of migratory processes from the 1980s onwards. Prior to this, structuralist concepts dominated the field of migration studies. These were based on push-pull models, which used economic, geographical, and environmental factors to explain why people were pushed from one place and pulled to another. For example, *neoclassical migration theory* describes how people migrate from a low-wage region to a high-wage region due to economic and geographical differences. Those approaches which focus exclusively on the macro level are unable to adequately elucidate the various trends and phenomena of migration and tend to view individual migrants as passive without agency. One approach based on neoclassical theory is the *new economics of labour migration* (NELM). It describes the decision to migrate as a household decision. The migration driver is again purely economic, namely that it is easier to accumulate capital elsewhere or that alternative sources of income can be tapped for financial diversification. According to NELM, this benefit-maximising consideration does not take place at the individual level, rather the decision to migrate is made as a household, usually as a family decision. However, empirical studies equally show that a migration decisions can likewise be reached as the opposite of a collective household decision, practically against the household. Migration may also occur as an individual strategy

arising from intra-household conflicts and inequalities from which the individual member tries to emancipate themselves (De Haas & Fokkema, 2010). This expresses that the individual migrant has agency, which is negotiated at the meso and micro level. At this point, *migration network theory* emphasises the significance of social relationships and contacts before, during, and after migration. These social networks can serve as a resource of social, economic, and human capital and thus make migration in its various facets possible and analysable. *Transnational theories*, which describe the transcendence of territorial borders of nation states in the context of economic globalisation, follow on from here. The simultaneous cross-border connections to several places not only has implications for the migrational process, but also for the identities and belonging of migrants (Gregory et al., 2009).

Overall, it can be noted that the different migration theories and concepts start at specific levels of analysis and focus on different aspects. The same applies to return migration. According to neoclassical migration theory, return migration occurs when the described cost-benefit calculation does not add up because the actual migration costs are higher and the income opportunities are lower than expected (Cassarino, 2004). Since NELM emphasises relative deprivation as an additional dimension driving migration (Castles et al., 2014), return results from sufficient income activities abroad and the resulting accumulation of capital. Both NELM and neoclassical economics interpret return migration within a success/failure paradigm. In interpreting return migration, the *structural approach* draws a more nuanced picture. A differentiated spectrum of return typologies opens up by incorporating social and contextual dimensions, which are influenced by situational and structural factors. Cerase (1974) was the first to define return typologies, which relate the different situational and contextual experiences of returnees in the host country to the reality anticipated by them in the country of origin and the decision to return there. Building on this, Gmelch (1980) expanded the observation and focused on the period after the return and the agency the returnee has during the resettlement phase. In contrast to neoclassical economics and NELM, structural approaches emphasise the returnee's impact upon return. This impact depends not only on the experiences abroad but also on the situation in the country of return and the changing conditions during the period of absence. The agency upon return is to be seen in the context of local power structures in social and economic terms. From a structuralist perspective, the returnee and the environment in the country of origin have alienated, inevitably excluding a positive return experience. At this point, the structuralist assumption is that migrants abroad maintain no relationship with their country of origin (Cassarino, 2004). In response, as already introduced, transnationalism does not subscribe to a strict separation between migrants and their origin country. Instead, migrants keep in touch with people from their country of origin while abroad and maintain relationships with established contacts en route after their return. Regarding the migrant's identity changes with regard to their cultural roots – or from a structuralist perspective, alienation – this phenomenon is embedded in a transnational context. Instead of a conflicting dichotomy, transnational identities describe the combination of multiple identities resulting from migration experiences (Vertovec, 2009). Upon return, there exists not an

irresolvable conflict of identities. However, the migrants negotiate their identities which does not necessarily mean that this process is free of conflict. Furthermore, transnational mobility emphasises the circularity of migration. In this regard, return is not automatically the end of a migration cycle, as structuralist interpretation suggests. In the transnational view, return is a movement which does not preclude future migrants' mobility (Cassarino, 2004). Looking at the footing of transnational contacts, it is common heritage according to transnationalism. From this, transnational activities, networks, communities, and identities are derived (Levitt, 1998; Al-Ali et al., 2001). In contrast, the social network theory does not see the basis originating from individual attributes but rather "stemming from the commonality of interests and available at the level of social and economic cross-border networks" (Cassarino, 2004, p. 265). In addition, returnees are embedded in a variety of other relationships. Analysing the network structure and the returnees' network practices reveals the nature and form of the network's influence on the returnee's behaviour. The network provides guidance and offers strategies from which interests and agency originate. Crucial to this is the relational position of the returnee within the network, which must be captured analytically (Cassarino, 2004). How the analyses takes place in this research is explained in the next section.

All discussed theoretical schools have different perspectives on return migration, focusing on different aspects and dimensions. It becomes evident that the individual returning migrant needs to be contextualised in their individual configuration and predominant factors need to be identified. With this in mind, Cassarino (2004) has focused on the pre-return phase and the level of return preparedness of the individual migrant: "There exist various degrees of return preparation that differ in terms of *resource mobilisation* and *preparedness*" (p. 271). Along these two variables, the return preparation of returnees is shaped. Resource mobilisation includes material and social resources, while preparedness describes the *willingness* and *readiness to return*. The former can be measured by the degree of voluntariness and the latter can be determined based on resource mobilisation. Thus, a mutual complex arises, embedded in the

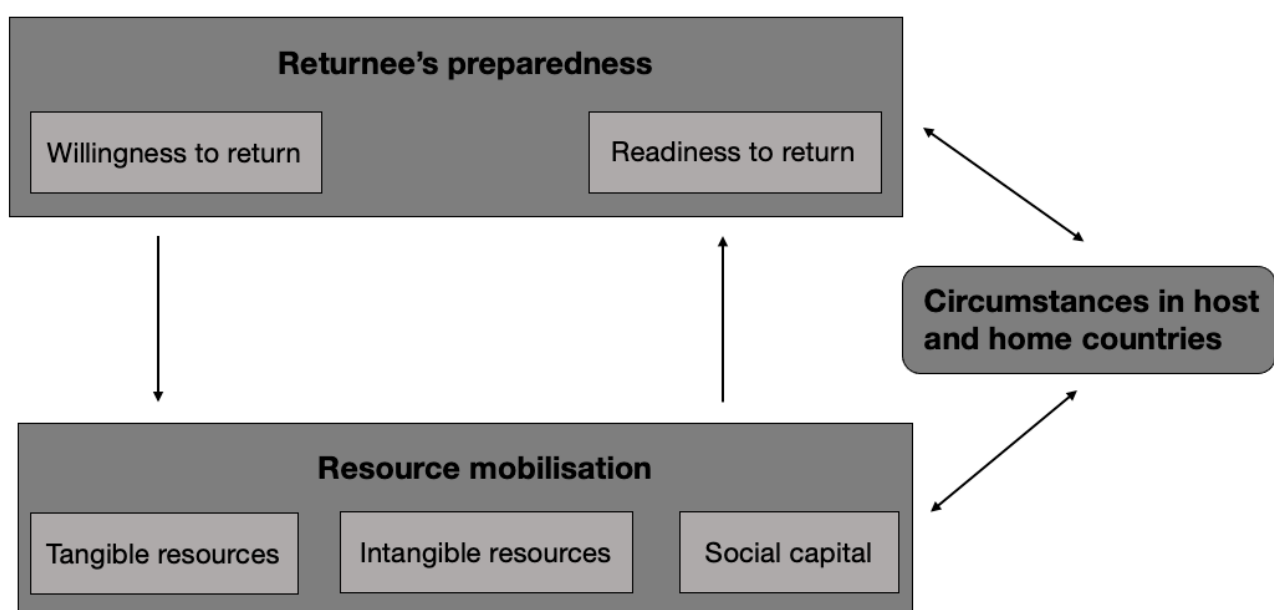


Figure 1: Return preparation (Cassarino, 2004, p. 271)

context of circumstances in the host and origin countries (see *Figure 1*). Based on this, Cassarino (2014) defines three categories of return according to the level of preparedness, migration cycles, and return motivations. The first category includes “returnees whose high level of preparedness allowed them to organize their own return autonomously while mobilizing the resources needed to secure their return” (Cassarino, 2014, p. 161). Coupled with a return motivation owing to adverse conditions, the second category encompasses an incomplete migration cycle and low level of preparedness. The third category of returnees has no form of return preparedness, as the migration cycle was abruptly interrupted, and the return to the origin country takes place without their own decision-making power (see *Table 1*).

Level of return preparedness	Migration cycle	Return motivations
High	Complete	Decided owing to favourable conditions
Low	Incomplete	Decided owing to adverse conditions
None	Interrupted	Compelled/forced

Table 1: Levels of preparedness and migration cycles (Cassarino, 2014, p. 163)

This conceptualisation allows for predictions regarding the returnee’s agency upon return. However, with regard to the return motivation, the distinction between one’s own decision due to adverse conditions and being compelled remains imprecise. Given the fragile situation, particularly of undocumented migrants, a more nuanced differentiation is required. In practice, this requirement can be illustrated by the example of migrants returning through an AVRR programme, such as those of IOM. IOM (2023b) defines voluntary return by taking into account freedom of choice without any form of pressure and based on an informed decision, which entails valid and objective information. When the alternatives are marginalisation, detention, or deportation, it is contested whether or not the return is genuinely voluntary, as the name of the programme and the definition suggest: “Voluntary return is instead offered as a less painful alternative [...] and it is generally impossible for the returnee to make an informed choice about the country to which they are returning” (Webber, 2011, p. 103). In reaction to this inconsistency, Pennington and Balaram (2013) distinguish between *spontaneous* and *assisted* as well as between *chosen* and *compelled* return. The first anticoincidence describes whether or not the return was made of one’s own volition (spontaneous) or under an intervention by authorities (assisted). The second distinction refers to the circumstances and context in which the return decision was embedded – whether or not without coercion or pressure (chosen) or as a result of adverse conditions (compelled). In spite of this clarification, a precise and commonly agreed return taxonomy is still missing. This leads to such or similar terms appearing in the return migration literature (e.g., Majidi, 2012; Oeppen, 2012). Due to different categorisations, scholarly inquiry faces the challenge of theorising different phenomena and dynamics of return migration (Mensah, 2014). Some scholars follow a deductive approach instead of induction, adapting their categorisation to their case study instead of vice

versa (e.g., Carling, 2004). This procedure expands the range of terminologies and contributes to the challenge of theorisation. Beyond the consideration of voluntariness, return migration is also examined, typologised, and categorised from other perspectives (Kuschminder, 2017), which will not be further discussed within the scope of the study. As a matter of fact, the conceptual framework for this case study in terms of return terminologies draws on Cassarino (2014) and Pennington and Balaram (2013), as introduced already.

2.2 Practice Theory as a Meta-theoretical Framework

Overall, it can be shown that the different migration and return migration theories, concepts, and typologies are each based on varying levels of analysis and focus on different aspects. Some are complementary, others opposing (Massey et al., 1998). The complexity of migration implies the lack of an all-encompassing approach doing justice to this complexity without any weaknesses or omissions. Instead, there are a number of perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation. One such analytical lens is *practice theory*, which is not a migration theory per se, but a meta-theoretical approach employing the theories and concepts presented. The focus lies on understanding the interplay of structures and migrants at the meso-level. At the beginning of the previous section, Castel et al. (2014) introduced the mesostructure as a mediation level between macro and microstructure, as the interplay of institutions and migrants. However, practice theory goes one step further and understands the mesostructure as a level at which structures and migrants interact through practice. As the name suggests, this not merely allows one to learn what role meso-level structures, such as social networks, play, but above all *how* they do so. In this sense, practice theory is not a simple synthesis of existing theories and concepts, but a general-level theory avoiding static and one-dimensional explanations and instead enabling a real understanding of the individual case. On the contrary, it is about the critical application of theories within a framework which understands social processes as constituting life realities (O'Reilly, 2012). The origins of practice theory lie in *structuration theory*, whose pioneer Anthony Giddens always saw duality instead of dualism in structure and agency: "Structures are constituted through action and [...] action is constituted structurally" (Giddens, 1976, p. 161). Four key concepts can be drawn from this approach after considering various arguments by other authors (Stones, 2005): *external structures*, *international structures*, *practices*, and *outcomes*.

The *external structure* refers to the things appearing to the agent, or in our case transit returnee, as objective, detached, and external, existing before the transit returnee acts. They are autonomous from the transit returnee, but have causal influence, both enabling and constraining for actions, and become relevant for the transit returnee as soon as they enter the agent's horizon, even if the agent is not aware of them. Here, the *upper structural layers* refer to framework-setting phenomena, such as global power shifts or policy agendas.

On the other hand, *proximate structural layers* describe aspects which are part of the wider context of action for the transit returnee, such as laws, norms, local events or the natural

environment. In addition to external structures, confronting the transit returnee from the outside, so to speak, there exist *internalised structures* as well. The transit returnee's internalised structure is the habitus in the Bourdieu sense, in other words the totality of how someone sees, thinks through, experiences, and traverses the world qua socialisation: "They include skill, knowledge, and personal resources (or human, social and cultural capital) – the extent to which agents can change things because they have the power and resources and the extent to which they will try to depending on how they understand the situation and the norms they have internalised" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 21). The *conjuncturally-specific internal structures* characterise those that emerge as knowledge of and reaction to a specific situation (external structure) (Stones, 2005). An example would be the return migration after an interrupted/incomplete migration cycle and the returnee's knowledge or perception of the social environment and its general and specific perception and attitude, the direct reactions and immediate behaviour of others to the return, the power relations they will find (their own role and the role of others); and how the transit returnee themselves reacts and behaves in confrontation with all this. In addition to external and internal structures, *practices* are another concept of practice theory: "Practices are the daily actions of agents in communities of practice" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 106). In this regard, agency is made up of the elements "habitus, practical considerations given the wider and immediate context, and projection" (O'Reilly, 2012). Projection here means the ability to think about alternatives to the current status quo by means of experience and knowledge in order to set and pursue goals. Although these are culturally embedded, they are not predetermined. Coupled with the practical considerations given the wider and immediate context and the transit returnee's habitus, this creates agency, such as livelihood strategies and post-return behaviour. All this happens in the setting of the communities of practice, whose members embody and enact the external factors through roles and positions and thus constrain and enable the agent through conjuncturally specific external structures. In the case of the transit returnee, for example, the community of practice is the family circle with all its hierarchies, roles, rules, norms, and expectations, into which the transit returnee must fit and behave in their (new) role. In terms of practice theory, this practice would then be the outcome, which O'Reilly (2012) describes as "the reproduction and transformation of social life into newly (re)shaped external and internal structures, dreams and desires" (p. 104).

In this chapter, neoclassical migration theory, NELM, migration network theory and transnational theories were discussed as fundamental approaches and perspectives on migration and return migration. In the field of return migration, a dedicated focus was placed on transnational identities, mobility, and networks as well as the categorisation of return. Based on certain underlying assumptions, each perspective emphasises different aspects and dimensions, some of which may even contradict each other. Hence, the returning migrant needs to be contextualised within their unique individual configuration. This requires the identification of the predominant factors influencing their experience as well as its interplay and evolution through individual practice. For this particular research, practice theory offers the most suitable approach. Practice theory allows for insight into the reciprocity of structures and migrants through practice. It enables a real understanding of the individual life reality, as it asks not only what aspects are significant,

but *how* they are relevant. In the next chapter, it is precisely this logic of practice theory, which is utilised as a conceptual model in relation to the research objective. The conceptual model in this research is the link between the practice of transit returnees and the research objective, meaning the comprehension of the resulting reality of life. It specifies and spells out the key themes and foci of such representations, which characterise the perceived life realities. Subsequently, research questions, research strategy, and operationalisation follow making the conceptual model the essential backbone of the research design, as it bridges the gap between general theory and concrete empirical reality.

3. Research Design

In this chapter, the research design is presented. It consists of two parts: the *conceptual research design*, which determines what is to be achieved through the research, and the *technical research design*, which describes the realisation of these goals (Verschuuren & Dooreward, 2010). *Section 3.1 Research Objective and Conceptual Model* and *Section 3.2 Research Questions* comprise the conceptual design. In *Section 3.1*, the research objective is defined. Discussing the *external* and *internal goals of the research* lays the foundation for presenting the research questions derived from the conceptual model in *Section 3.2*. Following the theoretical context and the general analytical approach presented and discussed in the previous chapter, the thematic angle and focus of the actual research design will be specified against this background. *Section 3.3 Research Strategy and Operationalisation* leads into the technical part of the research design, where the method and research material are introduced. In this vein, the conceptual and methodological components of this research are integrated rather than separate entities, since the technical research design is derived from the conceptual research design with the conceptual model as its key element. Finally, in *Section 3.4 Research Reflection*, the approach and execution of the research are critically examined and findings which go beyond the research objectives are highlighted.

3.1 Research Objective and Conceptual Model

An informative research objective entails both the *external goal of the research*, which describes the contribution of the research and defines succinctly what the expected outcomes of the research are, and the *internal goal of the research*, which specifies the information which will be used to achieve the external goal (Verschuuren & Dooreward, 2010). In this section, the external and internal goals are described in the form of the research objective.

The research objective is to enhance the understanding of Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived life realities upon return. As a result, this practice-oriented research contributes to the improvement of AVRR policies. However, the disclosure of the perceived life realities of Ghanaian transit returnees not only provides considerations for policymakers, but also indirectly reveals theoretical knowledge. This will be accomplished by providing insights into the impact of selected factors and their interaction through practice. The focus lies on six factors: the transit returnees' (1) motives and decision-making processes for migration; (2) experiences in transit; (3) social network; (4) mental state; (5) post-return behaviour; and (6) experiences with AVRR measures, particularly those implemented under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. These six factors stand in a causal relationship to each other and interact through practices for each individual transit returnee and their perceived life reality upon return. It should be mentioned again that the six factors and their interaction are only a particular part of reality, which is considered in this research and not the all-encompassing totality of all factors

constituting life reality. The conceptual model (see *Figure 2*) shows the assumed causal relationships of those six factors as a schematic representation.

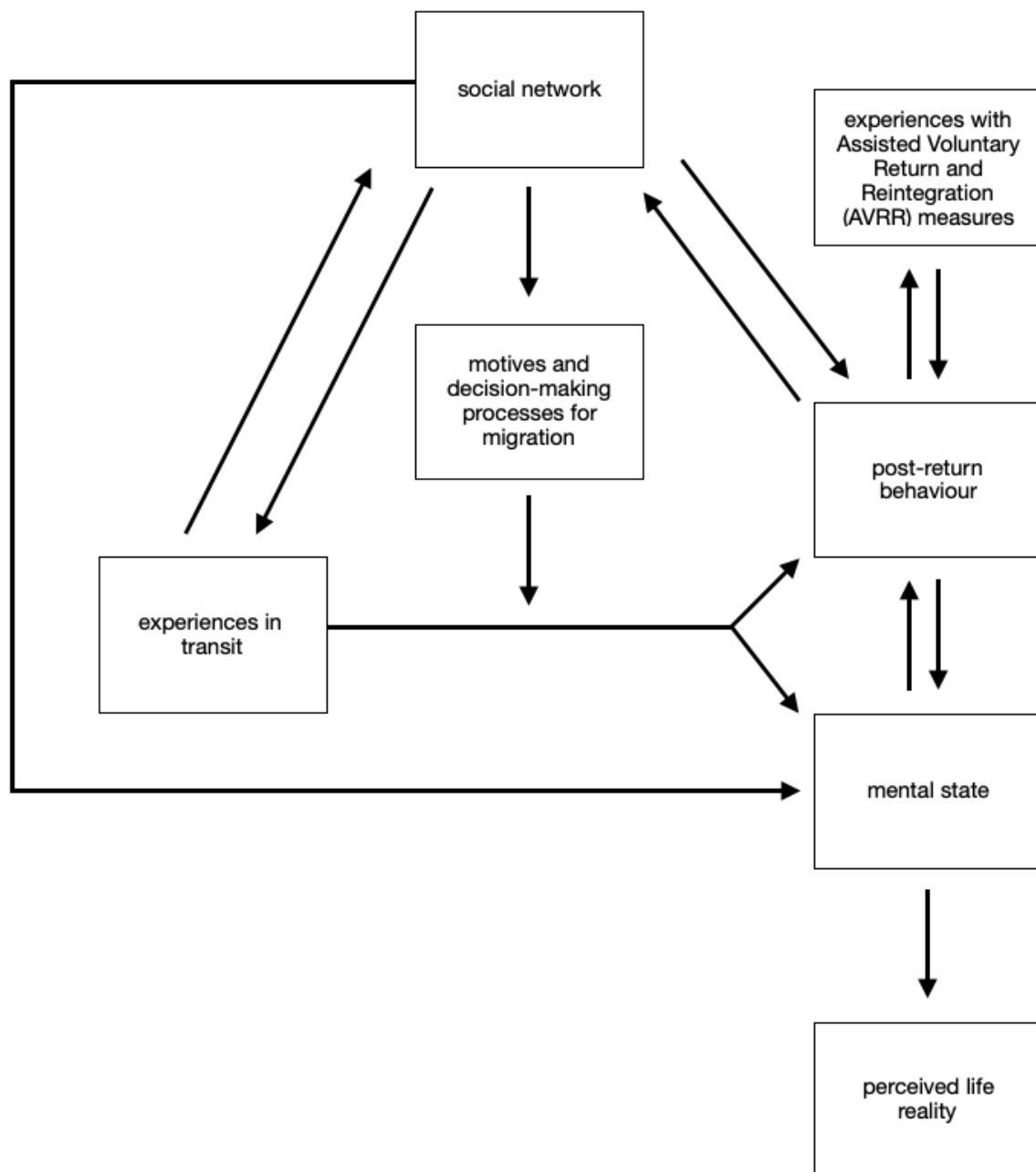


Figure 2: Conceptual model of Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived life realities

On the one hand, the motives and decision-making process refers to the former drivers for the one migration or the repetitive migrations for the individual transit returnee and (future) migrant at that time. This includes all aspects which were decisive for the transit returnee to decide to start the migration. Generally speaking, it describes the initial situation that made them move. The subsequent decision-making process traces the path to the decision and the associated preparation for migration. Both the motives and the decision-making process can be significantly influenced by the social network, whereby actors or groups, such as individual relatives or the entire family, may take on an active or passive role. With the migration or multiple migrations and the experiences in transit, the social network changes accordingly. New contacts are established

abroad, old contacts become less important and a network of transnational relationships develops. The social network transforms not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively with the experiences in transit. Remittances behaviour is potentially a decisive aspect of this. Migrants communities formed in transit and contact with relatives in the country of origin change over the distance. In this context, experiences in transit refers to all experiences gained by the individual migrant from the start of migration to the day of return. For undocumented migrants, moving and living in transit harbours many dangers and offers different kinds of deprivation with all its consequences. Both the direct social environment on the ground and in the home region are involved in this. They are directly or indirectly affected. At the same time, the social network may influence the experiences in transit as a resource provider. From the experiences in transit, the mental state upon return is deduced as well as the post-return behaviour. The motives and decision-making process have an interacting effect. Thus, the experiences in transit in the light of the motives and the inclusion of the social network may moderate the post-return behaviour to the extent that the failure to achieve the migration goals makes the transit returnee hesitate to return to the family or to behave accordingly in other ways. The same applies to the mental constitution in the assumed scenario, which is also shaped accordingly depending on the involvement of the social environment. However, the social network directly influences the mindset upon return directly as well. Here, the mindset also includes transnational identities. Depending on the reception by the social environment to which the migrant returns, it can have a positive, meaning motivating and protective, as well as a negative, meaning demoralising and accusatory, influence on the mental state. Similarly, the transnational network also has an effect on the transit returnee's mindset. There are reciprocal relationships between the mental state upon return and the post-return behaviour, between the post-return behaviour and the social network, and between the post-return behaviour and the experiences with Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) measures. Under AVRR measures fall all institutionalised measures for the return and reintegration of the transit returnee. The word "experiences" with such measures is intended to broaden the lens from the services as such to include communication, information, and processes, such as the application processes for registration for return in the transit country or for financial support after return on the country of origin. Post-return behaviour, for example, is based on the expected benefits in the context of an AVRR programme. At the same time, the financial support provided can significantly influence the agency of the transit returnee. However, this applies to the the expected, yet absent institutionalised support, which influences behaviour as well. There is another feedback effect between the social network and post-return behaviour. In order to address the previous interrelationship, trusted people from the transit returnee's immediate environment potentially offer practical assistance and have a motivating effect on them with regard to the AVRR services application process. In principle, the social network is of major importance for the behaviour of the transit returnee, as they are dependent on its support on the one hand and must behave in relation to their social contacts on the other. Depending on the mental state, on which, as already mentioned, the social network can have a significant influence, agency unfolds from it as well. A certain mindset enables corresponding post-return behaviour. Conversely, actions, their results,

and consequences have an effect on one's own (self-)awareness. The perception of one's own living environment and situation, in other words the perceived life reality, is based on this awareness.

In addition to the aforementioned factors, other influencing variables can be considered likewise as relevant. Additional relationships and patterns of causal effects might also be identified among the selected factors. Good arguments could certainly still be found as to how everything is ultimately connected with everything, but due to limited capacities, this study focusses on the identified factors and their effects. The research objective, namely the perceived life reality of Ghanaian transit returnees upon return, remains the guiding outcome. Accordingly, the sub-questions are formulated and lead towards this outcome.

3.2 Research Questions

Accurately translating the research objective into research questions is a challenging task which significantly impacts the quality of the research results. Moreover, research questions have a steering function and help to identify the research material to be examined. Apart from the steering function, another quality criterion is efficiency. Research questions are efficient if they generate a high degree of knowledge and genuinely contribute to achieving the research objective. The combined answers to the sub-questions should provide the information needed to answer the central question. At the same time, sub-questions structure the research (Verschuren & Dooreward, 2010).

In this practice-oriented research, *descriptive knowledge* is produced by answering the sub-questions and the central question. The sub-questions reduce the central question by employing such knowledge. The derivation of the central question and sub-questions based on Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived life realities was done using the method of *unravelling*. This taxonomy brings out different dimensions, aspects, and sub-aspects of the mentioned perceived life realities. Building on this, the research focuses on six themes presented as *factors* containing causal relationships forming a conceptual model in *Section 3.1*. From these, the following research questions are derived:

Overall: *What shapes Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived life realities upon return?*

The main question aims to trace perceived life realities and thereby gain a better understanding of the individual experience and perception of reality. While the target group of Ghanaian transit returnees can be identified on the basis of nationality and declared migration experience, a number of different possible perspectives open up in defining perceived life realities. In general, the reality of life is a combination of concrete experiences and circumstances which characterise a person's perception. The focus in this thesis centres on the migration-related experiences and

circumstances potentially significant for the individual transit returnee. What experiences a person has (with whom), how they perceive them, what personal significance they assume and how those experiences converge, influence each other, and unfold their (changing) effect and meaning under what circumstances in a specific context is highly individual. The factors which shape the reality of life are manifold, necessitating a narrowing down. In the previous section, the six selected factors have already been named. In this section, such aspects are transformed into sub-questions. Their respective role in answering the main question and their relationship to the other sub-questions are explained as shown in a similar way in the previous section.

- Motives and decision-making process for migration: *What are Ghanaian transit returnees' motives and decision-making processes for migration, and what relevance do they have for their post-return period?*

The first part of the twofold question concerning the motives and decision-making process for migration is based on the period prior to migration and return. In the second part, a line is drawn to the relevance for the time after the return and thus the influence on the individually perceived life reality. In this respect, the migration drivers are potentially relevant, as they determine the individual goals associated with the journey. The non-achievement of such migration goals may influence the perceived reality of life upon return. In addition to one's own disappointment and financial loss, relatives or other people may have been actively or passively involved in the motives and decision-making process and are therefore equally disappointed. In another imaginable scenario, migration may not have been a household strategy in its direct sense, whereby the non-inclusion of the family in this case might have consequences, albeit different ones, which are equally effective for the time upon return. The second part of the question explores what these consequences are and how they unfold in practice. According to the migration motives and design of the decision-making process, the social network is constituted and assumes its corresponding role. The questions of who from the social network was a migration driver in what form, who was an active or passive part of the decision-making process and who possibly even facilitated it financially, are relevant for the role of the social network and its particular members after the return. The same applies to the transit returnee's mental constitution. In the scenario of migration as a household strategy, the failure to achieve the corresponding goal has a different impact on the mental constitution compared to the scenario when the motives for migration and the decision-making process are organised differently, rather clandestinely. Being accountable only for your own fate is different from having to take responsibility for the disinvestment and wellbeing of others and thus disappointing their hopes. Both social network and mental constitution are not only in a reciprocal relationship with each other, they are likewise major influencing factors for the transit returnee's agency, from which the post-return behaviour is derived.

- Experiences in transit: *What are Ghanaian transit returnees' experiences en route, and how do such experiences influence their post-return period?*

The experiences during the migration phasing up to the return are formative for transit returnees, especially for the immediate time following their return. This question addresses the shaping experiences en route, how they unfold, and what influence these experiences have on the post-return period. During the time abroad, the social network changes both quantitatively and qualitatively with the experiences. For example, new contacts are established with whom there is still exchange after the return, whether abroad or within Ghana. At the same time, the events of money scarcity or other disruptions en route may result in a shift in contact or – whether intended or forced – a break in contact with the established social network in Ghana, thus shaping it in the long term. Remittance behaviour may alter contacts as well. Depending on the motives and the involvement of relatives in the decision-making process for migration and the subsequent experiences en route, relationships with certain people can change both positively and negatively. Similarly, the experiences in transit, including the circumstances leading to the return, may have a lasting mental impact. The futile attempts to fulfil one's own hopes and meet the expectations of others associated with the migration are distressing. In addition, the specific experiences of life-threatening situations as an undocumented migrant on the move through the Sahara, on the Mediterranean Sea or in a civil war country such as Libya with structural discrimination, humiliation, marginalisation, and torture can be sources of character changes or even trauma. In summary, it is self-explanatory that the experiences en route potentially lead to psychological consequences and influence the mental constitution upon return. The interdependence of the time abroad, the experiences gained there, and the migrant's behaviour during this phase on the one hand and the social network on the other is equally decisive for the agency upon return.

- Social network: *What role does the Ghanaian transit returnees' social network play with regard to their perceived life realities upon return?*

In particular for transit returnees, who may be in a very critical psychological, physical, and financial situation, the social network signifies an essential resource for navigating through all three dimensions. By social network, all individuals or groups who have a passive or active influence on the returnee are understood. These may be family members and friends, but also neighbours, colleagues or distant acquaintances from various contexts, both at home and abroad. Depending on the motives and decision-making process and the experiences en route, a certain starting position may be created as to whether or not the social network and its attitudes have an empowering or adverse effect on the returnee's wellbeing and the respective reality of life. However, *how* the social network is actually composed at the time of return, *how* it behaves in relation to the returnee, what role it plays, and thus *how* it shapes the perceived life reality upon return, is addressed by this question. The specific meanings and effects of the different relationships for the returnee, whether encouraging or adverse, are described. Depending on the

level of supportive or dismissive attitudes towards the returnee, the social environment remains an important factor influencing the returnee's psychological constitution and the way how they experience their perceived life reality accordingly. A protective, loving, and caring social network may provoke different perceived life realities than a stigmatising and ostracising environment which brands one as a failure or criminal. In addition to the direct psychological consequences, a decisive aspect at the action level is whether or not and to what extent the returnee is embedded in their social network as an integral part or member of it. Hence, the social network as a potential resource is a determining factor on different levels not only for the mental state, but also for the agency and the actual post-return behaviour.

- Mental constitution: *What characterises and shapes Ghanaian transit returnees' mental state upon their return?*

This question is dedicated to the transit returnee's mental state upon return, primarily from their own perspective. While the first questions describe the motives and decision-making process for migration, the experiences en route, and the social network, this question answers *how* these factors, along with others such as religion, interact and affect the mental condition in the post-return time. On the one hand, external factors, the situational environment, circumstances and their effects are determined and, on the other hand, the character traits are identified, which are likewise shaping the mental state. In the latter case, for example, a rather hesitant, (self-)doubting, and passive personality type develops a different mental state compared to a transit returnee who is more optimistic, open-minded, and self-confident, even if he or she is confronted with comparable external factors. One's own self-efficacy is derived from this psychological constitution, which then fuels their agency and post-return behaviour.

- Post-return behaviour: *How do Ghanaian transit returnees behave after their return, and what are the determining factors?*

This question concerning transit returnees' post-return behaviour explores how the time in transit, the social network, and the psychological condition interact to determine the level of action upon return. However, here again, in addition to the mentioned factors, other elements and underlying conditions are investigated as well. How they are mutually dependent, for instance not only how the attitudes and reactions of the social network affect the behaviour of the transit returnee, but also vice versa and how the transit returnee reacts on their own initiative or in response to the social network is addressed. It is conceivable that stigma could lead to relocation and loss of contact with certain people. In another scenario, in which the core family and close friends have a supportive and motivating effect, the transit returnee develops a high degree of self-efficacy, which enables them to marry, learn a new job or make use of institutionalised reintegration offers. In this context, individual factors are not examined in isolation but, as with all other sub-questions, various aspects are considered together and how the transit returnee enact

these in the specific post-return phase through practice. There is also a specific focus on the AVRR measures and how the transit returnee behaves in confrontation with it.

- Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration: *What impact do Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) measures have on Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived life realities upon return?*

A number of Ghanaian transit returnees benefit from AVRR measures provided by IOM. These measures are intended to support migrants in their return and reintegration into their country of origin and thus positively influence their perceived life reality. This research examines the AVRR measures implemented under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration and investigates if such proclaimed ambitions are met in reality. In this regard, the question about the effects of AVRR measures first identifies the measures implemented by IOM as such. In doing so, the immediate consequences and effects of the provided services are analysed, including the associated administrative processes. Here again, the role of the social network, the mental state, and the behaviour of the transit returnee are taken into account. These factors may be decisive, for instance, for the success of the application process for financial support. Once financial assistance has been provided, this in turn potentially has an impact on the transit returnee's behaviour, mental state, and social network. Hence, this question determines what effect AVRR measures have. Together with the other sub-questions, insights are gained for the refinement of existing and future AVRR programmes. In other words, the question's dedicated focus on AVRR is the reality check on how intended measures work in practice and what aspects should be taken into account (even more, additionally or differently) for the sake of transit returnees.

3.3 Research Strategy and Operationalisation

An appropriate research strategy is required to meet the research objective and answer the research questions. Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010) define a research strategy as "the coherent body of decisions concerning the way in which the researcher is going to carry out the research" (p. 155). This practice-oriented research follows the epistemological logic of discovery, as it dialectically searches for phenomena, characteristics, developments, and causal relationships significant for Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived realities after their return. The six themes have already been identified, presented, and translated into a research objective and research questions. This defined the field of interest for understanding the perceived life realities upon return. The chosen methodological approach to address the six themes and to work the conceptual model out is that of a *case study*. According to Vennesson (2008), a case study is "a research strategy based on the in-depth empirical investigation of one, or a small number, of phenomena in order to explore the configuration of each case, and to elucidate features of a larger class of (similar) phenomena, by developing and evaluating theoretical explanations" (p. 226). By definition, the case study is the most appropriate approach when it comes to understanding the realities of Ghanaian transit returnees along the aforementioned themes and its

configuration as described by the conceptual model. In this research, four cases are compared with each other with the aim of mapping a certain diversity of return trajectories, which promises a gain in knowledge and simultaneously guarantees a certain degree of validity for theory building and policy considerations. The focus of each case is the life course of one Ghanaian migrant who voluntarily returned from Libya to their country of origin in 2017. Each of the four cases is named after the respective transit returnee who altogether serve as the core group of this research. While the main attention is given to the perceived life realities after the return in 2017, previous migrations and return experiences are likewise taken into account. The four cases reflect a suitable and balanced number without being overloaded or redundant. However, not only the four transit returnees serve as informants, but their direct social environment and other stakeholders are equally included.

The research methods used were *participant observations*, *semi-structured individual*, *focus group* and *expert interviews*. This study generated, compared, and interpreted findings using the *hierarchical method*, a *comparative/collective*, and an *interpretative case study*. During a multi-day trust-building phase, initial observations were documented in field notes and informal conversations were made. The social environment of the transit returnee was considered as well. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were held with the transit returnee (see *Annex 1*) and their social network (see *Annex 2*). Finally, informants from the social network were selected based on observations and information provided by the transit returnee.

As already stated, the perceived life reality of the respective transit returnee is at the centre of interest. Nonetheless, for a comprehensive understanding of the perception, it is necessary to encompass the circumstances which may be the root cause of it as fully as possible. Across all six themes, the social environment plays a decisive role, which requires interviews and observations to be carried out complementary to those with the respective transit returnee. This data collection beyond the transit returnee serves as substantiation, contextualisation, and validation of the findings. Furthermore, potential thresholds and, above all, potentials for the wellbeing of the transit returnee lying outside the perception of them can be discovered as well. Some people from the social environment are occasionally transit returnees themselves or have gained further experience in dealing with other transit returnees, which likewise adds to the gained insights. This is particularly relevant for the post-return behaviour as well as the associated AVRR measures – if implemented – from which policy considerations can be derived.

Aside from *individual interviews*, *focus group interviews* were conducted and most of the interviews were audio recorded (see *Table 2*; *Annex 3*). The focus group interview in the context of Ali Alhassan's case took place with him and five other transit returnees who discussed their experiences after their return. In the Mohammed Mumuni case, a focus group interview took place with three neighbours from Mohammed Mumuni's community and a discussion with another group of four from his social environment. Another focus group interview was held with a

		Recorded interviews		
		Individual	Focus groups	Duration
Case	Ali Alhassan	23	1	14:24:39 h
	Mohammed Mumuni	16	2	7:59:23 h
	Ebenezer Bae	21	0	13:26:49 h
	Moses Gafah	9	1	9:31:42 h

Table 2: List of recorded interviews per case

befriended couple of Moses Gafah who were likewise transit returnees from Libya and reported on their own experiences upon return and gave information and assessments of Moses Gafah's return story. In addition, *ero-epic interviews* were conducted during the entire research period. The

transcribed interview material was imported into ATLAS.ti and later coded (Cope & Kurz, 2016). In total, 1526 quotations were generated and 163 codes were assigned, semantically categorised, and clustered into themes (see *Annex 4*). With regard to the AVRR measures, *expert interviews* were conducted with practitioners and scholars, ensuring both *triangulation of methods and sources* to gain "an overall and holistic picture of the research object" (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010, p. 179). Within the context of institutionalised reintegration assistance, this is particularly relevant in order to better comprehend the donor's perspective in addition to the beneficiaries' experiences and to incorporate the voices of scholars in this field as well. In this way, the gap between (disappointed) expectations and potentials on the side of the transit returnees and the (intended) measures and opportunities on the side of the funding organisations is captured in greater detail. The policy considerations addressed to the latter can then be formulated in a targeted manner, which at best can help to bridge this gap.

		Mode of return	
		Spontaneous	Assisted
Voluntariness of return	Chosen	Ali Alhassan (2014 & 2017)	Moses Gafah (2017)
	Compelled	Moses Gafah (2014)	Ali Alhassan (2007 & 2011) Mohammed Mumuni (2017) Ebenezer Bae (2017)

Table 3: Main informants' return typology per migration

The taxonomy of the three types of *migration cycles*, according to Cassarino (2014), forms the initial entry point of this research and the basis for the selection of the four cases. Applied to the return stories of the cases, the migration cycle following the return from the transit country Libya can therefore be classified as *incomplete* or *interrupted*. Based on this, Pennington and Balaram (2013) distinguish between different terms and typologies in voluntary return. As earlier stated, the four main informants for each case were selected as they represent a certain variation of this return typology (see *Table 3*) in combination with the number of migrations and returns as well as

the reception of institutionalised reintegration assistance (see *Table 4*). In the first case of Ali Alhassan, he returned twice chosen and spontaneously and twice assisted and compelled. In the second case, Mohammed Mumuni returned assisted but compelled, without comprehensive reintegration assistance, as he was still in the application process at the time of the study. In the third case, Ebenezer Bae returned assisted and compelled as well. Unlike Mohammed, he received reintegration assistance. In the fourth case, Moses Gafah returned first with his wife compelled and spontaneously and once again, after a second migration chosen and assisted with his wife and two children. In contrast, the entire family subsequently received reintegration assistance.

		Reintegration assistance		
		<i>Full</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>No</i>
Migration(s)	<i>Single</i>	Ebenezer Bae (2017)	Mohammed Mumuni (2017)	Moses Gafah (2014) Ali Alhassan (2007)
	<i>Multiple</i>	Moses Gafah (2017)	Ali Alhassan (2014 & 2017)	Ali Alhassan (2011)

Table 4: Main informants' return trajectory per migration

However, this differentiation should only be seen as a first starting point for the selection of the cases, whereby the analysis is conducted along, across, and beyond such general theoretical framework. The final conclusions do not follow the logic or organisation of the introduced taxonomy. This categorisation is more of a semi-dependent variable than the full explanation of perceived life realities. As already stated, it is a point of departure for further dismantling, differentiated discovery, and determining the causal interplay of aspects unfolding their complexity in the individual case. By comparing these cases at a later stage of the study, similarities and differences are revealed, regardless the questions of the number of migrations, whether or not and in what form reintegration assistance was provided or what the mode and degree of voluntariness of return was. However, at the beginning of the research, the question is what cases the research should concentrate on in order to unpack this complex dynamic. In this light, the outlined taxonomy provides a good starting point and orientation to know which respondents to select for a solid sample for discovering the underlying more in-depth characteristics and its configuration. Beyond the discussed different return processes, the main informants also differ in how much they received reintegration assistance, the number of migrations and returns, and personal characteristics (see *Table 5*), creating different conditions and perspectives upon return. Furthermore, they have differing personalities and character traits, which played a role in the selection procedure as well. The cases were chosen using the principle of *purposeful maximal sampling* (Creswell, 2008). To ensure the comparability of cases concerning the research objective, a period of approximately two years since the last return was chosen as an additional *criterion* for the analysis time point. Furthermore, these transit returnees who benefited from an AVRR programme were supported by the same programme to ensure the comparability

of experiences with the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. Since the story of Moses Gafah likewise represents a deviant case and the one of Ebenezer Bae is characterised by *intensity*, the selection results in a certain *combination of sampling types* (Miles et al., 2020). For the given reasons, the deliberate choice to focus in-depth on the life courses and return stories of the selected sample promises to provide differing insights, reflects the complexity of the perceived life realities in scale and scope, and does justice to deliver *external validity* in the utmost possible degree.

	Gender	Religion	Age	Ethnic group	Place of residence	Country of return	Number of returns	Migration duration	Year of (last) return
Ali Alhassan	Male	Muslim	34	Dagomba	Tamale	Libya, Morocco	4	12 years	2017
Mohammed Mumuni				Wala	Takoradi	Libya	1	1 year	
Ebenezer Bae		Christian	25	Akan	Drobo			2 years	
Moses Gafah			44	Ewe	Weija		2	13 years	

Table 5: Basic information on main informants per case

For the written presentation and analysis of the data, the approach of Creswell (2007) was chosen. *Chapter 4* provides a detailed description for each case, following a *within-case analysis*. The subsequent chapter presents a *cross-case analysis* based on the themes of motives and decision-making (5.1.1); experiences in transit (5.1.2); social network (5.2); mental state (5.3.1); post-return behaviour (5.3.2); and AVRR (5.4). Finally, *Chapter 6* presents the conclusion from which the reflection on theory (6.1) as well as policy considerations (6.2) are derived.

3.4 Research Reflection

Without delving deeply into epistemological reflection, it should be noted that while objectivity and value neutrality are crucial in social sciences and should be pursued in research, it is equally evident that achieving all-encompassing objectivity remains unfeasible. Nonetheless, the aim for researchers should be at least to minimise their own biases (Weber, 1904). In the case study research method, one challenge lies in describing social phenomena that are always complex and multi-causal while attempting to uncover underlying meanings, patterns, and relationships that are as objective and transparent as possible (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). In this research, such limitation is countered in the best possible manner using the practice theory approach, by a nearly anthropological in-depth analysis, which takes the entire life course into account, as well as in terms of the range of informants and the thoroughness of the conducted interviews. After

identifying the key themes of a case, interpretation is required to go beyond mere description and to approach the deeper meaning and significance. This is not a neutral process (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006). With an awareness of the limitations of objectivity in capturing and interpreting the real world, I followed the understanding of Zahar (2009) for my fieldwork: “Our observation of ‘facts’ is clearly informed by the way in which we view the world but that as we go about collecting these ‘facts’ we need to exert a conscious effort to avoid gross distortion to make them fit predetermined categories” (Zahar, 2009, p. 194). In pursuit of this endeavour, fieldwork was conducted and the chosen approaches will be reflected upon whereas the limitations and disadvantages of the research are discussed below.

In general, the case study approach has the potential disadvantage of the aforementioned *low external validity* (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). Concerning the extent to which the findings can be generalised, the research provides valid knowledge from which these policy considerations are derived. In other words, the in this sense worth addressing findings are filtered regarding implications for AVRR policies. It should be emphasised that these policy considerations only identify aspects, which need to be considered for the wellbeing of transit returnees. These policy considerations do not solve problems per se and are no specific calls for action, which is why they are called considerations rather than recommendations.

Regarding the research material, access to and selection of the main informants are sensitive. The selection process of this research unveils a gender bias, as almost only male-identified individuals were included, and perspectives of other gender identities are missing. Additionally, there are further limiting factors in the selection of the main informants, which prevent a comprehensive representation of the perceived life realities of Ghanaian transit returnees. The selected individuals have returned to their familiar social environment. At the same time, there are known cases of transit returnees who do not return to their pre-migration context, either by choosing a new location to avoid being confronted with family and friends or because their social environment has rejected them. In the presented cases, this phenomenon of clandestine return is not accounted for.

IOM Ghana facilitated contact with the transit returnees Ebenezer Bae and Moses Gafah. At first glance, bias is expected in these cases regarding the theme of AVRR. In fact, the contacts with beneficiaries were pre-selected by IOM. Therefore, it can be expected that the chosen beneficiaries tend to articulate positive perspectives regarding the AVRR programme and IOM as an organisation. In the hope of receiving further assistance, Ebenezer appeared to be particularly prejudiced. He is part of various IOM campaigns and his reintegration story is portrayed as a best practice for publicity purposes. While he explicitly expressed his bias during the interview, Moses’ responses can be considered highly authentic since he criticised the AVRR programme and IOM in sharp and sometimes vulgar tones, not conforming to their proclaimed ideals. In addition to the access to the main informants, the limited research time constrained the number of contacts with their social environment as well. Several potential informants were absent during the research

stay. Thus, the research material only reflects the social environment present in Ghana at that time. No interviews were conducted with people outside Ghana, resulting in an underrepresented transnational social network. Nonetheless, due attention was paid to transnational relations as far as possible. Regarding the interviews, the short trust-building phase of a few weeks with each main informant is another limiting factor. Additionally, the interview language was occasionally English, which is not the interviewees' first language. The majority of the social environment was interviewed in their local mother tongue using an interpreter. Both aspects have its influence on the respondent's answering behaviour.

Apart from the obvious language barrier, it is essential to consider the phenomenon of transit return in the subjective perception of the affected person or their social environment as a failure. Thus, the degree of personal involvement on social, economic, and emotional levels is high, potentially making it challenging for the interviewees to express themselves adequately or not wanting to do so out of emotional distress (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). In all cases, such limitations are present. For example, some interviewees had to cry during the interview, which the researcher had to take into account. At the same time, the researcher's challenge was not to become emotionally involved or develop sympathies or antipathies, which may endanger the scientific-critical distance. Moreover, some questions and topics require a certain degree of abstraction and reflection, which can be challenging for some interviewees. For example, the interview with Ali's mother had to be interrupted because it turned out that she was not cognitively able to answer the questions due to a stroke. Furthermore, the interviewees have some relationship with each other or with others in general, which affects the bias of their answers as well. For instance, Ali's aunt explicitly stated that she did not want to express her full opinion because she feared it could strain her relationship with her sister. Despite the researcher's repeated emphasis on the absolute confidentiality of the conversation, the informant did not change her response behaviour since she assumed that potentially third parties could overhear the conversation. However, all interviewees were given maximum freedom in their choice of the interview location and other circumstances. Another limiting factor is social desirability. In the particular context, a certain degree of social desirability or conformity can be assumed in all cases, increasing the risk of obtaining strategic answers. For example, the information provided by parts of Moses' family that they welcomed him with open arms or that they have always maintained an unburdened and close relationship with each other was simply incorrect.

Beyond interviews, there are likewise various challenges with observations. During the observation time, the observer can be perceived as a kind of intruder, which may cause people to behave differently than usual, thereby jeopardising the quality of the collected data (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). As a researcher with white skin colour, conducting an undercover observation remained incompletely in vain in this context. However, in terms of observations and interviews, it is necessary to generally reflect on one's role as a male researcher, in his late 20s, with white skin colour and whereas privileges particularly in a post-colonial country. In addition to the mentioned characteristics, many others potentially influence the data collection. During the fieldwork, the

informant's projection of stereotypes onto the researcher became implicitly and explicitly apparent in their statements. For example, Mohammed formulated in the interview the expectation that he would receive an invitation letter from the researcher to Europe, which he meant jokingly, but still demonstrated such projection. Ali stated in the interview, without deeper knowledge of the researcher, that he wanted to be like him in the future. Furthermore, the idea was sometimes verbalised that the researcher had influence on the work and behaviour of IOM, which is an equally misguided projection.

A fundamental breaking point of interviews as a research method is obtaining a reliable picture of actual behaviour. In contrast, observation is a suitable research method that best captures actual behaviour. Therefore, both complement each other (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). However, an essential flaw of this research is that all themes to be examined are partially or entirely in the past and, at the same time, mostly behaviour-based. This dilemma was attempted to be defused through comprehensive data gathering, but could not be fully resolved. In this regard, an example previously addressed is the reception of transit returnees after their empty-handed return. Due to social desirability, no informant admitted that they received the returnee adversely, although the returnee himself reported such reactions. While some informants mentioned negative reactions of others, they allegedly always acted supportively. This example methodologically illustrates the greatest weakness of this research, which should not be concealed or swept under the carpet. In other words, the basic problem remains, you weren't there, you can only be told about it as comprehensively as possible.

Anonymising informants' identities in social science research is important for ethical considerations, individual protection, and for promoting honest responses for valid findings (Babbie, 2016). In this research, informants were comprehensively informed about the subject and potential publication of this research work. Most informants agreed to the use of information about their person, usually comprising only their first names and age. Such informants who did not consent to be named were anonymised.

Furthermore, the term *transit returnees* was established in this case study. However, the use of the term *transit* in this context is solely intended to distinguish these migrants and returnees from those who have a completed migration cycle (as discussed in *Section 2.2*). "Transit" is not intended to be a component of a dichotomy between *legal* and *illegal* migration, as this oversimplifies the complex social and cultural dynamics of migration and disregards the agency and creativity of migrants themselves (De Genova & Peutz, 2010). Thus, on the one hand, the trajectories of transit returnees are presented in detail for a nuanced understanding (*Chapter 4*) and contextualised (*Section 6.1*). On the other hand, the term *undocumented* instead of *irregular* or *illegal* migration, return, or migrants is intentionally employed (Anderson, 2013).

Within the scope of this research reflection, some findings emerged during data gathering which are not directly related to the research objective. In the subsequent, five findings regarding undocumented migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, which are worth mentioning, especially with regard to future research, are highlighted.

The first remarkable similarity is that all four life stories had previously experienced a certain economic shock in relation to their subsequent migration, which abruptly changed the financial situation of the familial household. From an economic perspective, all main informants or their families felt the effects of globalisation in different ways. Each of them reported heightened economic pressure in different sectors, which negatively affected the prosperity of their families and was described as a driver for later migration. The shifts in the global markets and in its production and supply chains for oil, textiles, rice, and cashew have impacted the financial reality and its corresponding thoughts on migration ambitions in the respective cases.

Along the migration route, the migrants' placemaking at certain hubs can lead to the establishment of communities according to the respective origins of the migrants. These communities sometimes have a hierarchical organisation, division of labour, and its own infrastructure along with social rules. They fulfil an essential function for migrants in many respects.

According to the informants, there were no unaccompanied women among the migrants en route, except for some Nigerians, which appears to be remarkable at first glance. The interviewees in this research could not explain why no Ghanaian women migrated, but Nigerian women did. This form of gendered migration behaviour is another side finding of this research.

In addition, Ebenezer's reports on crossing the Mediterranean Sea are noteworthy as well. He reported that before leaving the Libyan coast, their immediate destination was not the European mainland but international waters. Their intention was to be picked up there by a marine rescue team, which could not be implemented only due to the intervention of the Libyan coast guard. Subsequently, human rights violations, so-called pull-backs by the Libyan coastguard, took place and further massive violations by Libyan authorities on the mainland were committed.

Despite the physical and psychological hardships caused by migration, which are attributable to the EU's border regime, the opinions of most informants who migrated in this way are remarkably affirmative on the EU and its migration and border policies. Among those surveyed, it is common sense that the current border regime should be strengthened and implemented rigorously. At the same time, a majority also called for more controlled and targeted immigration. Negative attitudes towards the EU and its actions, under which those interviewed directly suffered in the past, were not expressed.

Chapter 3 presented the theoretical framework and methodological approach of this research. The practice theory applied to the Ghanaian life realities upon return from transit focuses on the six themes, namely the transit returnees' (1) motives and decision-making processes for migration; (2) experiences in transit; (3) social network; (4) mental state; (5) post-return behaviour; and (6) experiences with AVR measures. Visualised in the form of the conceptual model, these six factors stand in a causal relationship to each other and interact through practices for each individual transit returnee and their perceived life reality upon return. On the basis of the derived theme-related research questions, the aim of the research is to understand the ramifications through the described individual practices of the respective transit returnees and to identify corresponding characteristics. The life courses of four transit returnees serve as an empirical foundation, whereby their social environment is likewise considered in detail as part of the sample. Mainly in-depth interviews were conducted and observations were carried out. For an accurate understanding of the respective perceived life realities and the underlying highly complex, always individual, and constantly changing characteristics and its configuration, an intensive examination of the life courses of the respective transit returnees is indispensable. *Chapter 4 Setting the Scenery – Transit Returnees' Life Courses* lays the foundation for this and introduces the lives of the individual protagonists. This introduction is a prerequisite for understanding the subsequent findings, which are presented in the following chapter. The four transit returnees Ali Alhassan, Mohammed Mumuni, Ebenezer Bae, and Moses Gafah will be introduced, starting with their childhood and youth, their socio-economic and family background, living environment, their hobbies, their personality and character traits, and their migration trajectories.

4. Setting the Scenery – Transit Returnees’ Life Courses

“What is important for the reintegration depends on the individual perspective. Everybody has their condition in which he comes down. You must understand the person’s history and background to understand why things are one way or the other upon returning.”

~ Aziz ~

This chapter introduces the backbone of the case study, namely the four cases. In the opening quote, the transit returnee Aziz points out that every life reality upon return is unique since every transit returnee brings their conditions and backstories. According to him, addressing each transit returnee’s personal history and background is an indispensable precondition for understanding the subsequent time and the distinctiveness of each reality. For example, the stories of Mohammed and Ebenezer vividly illustrate that the same starting point upon return for two people who once ended up together in the same prison cell for one year and were brought back by even the same plane can yield highly differing readjustment processes. Hence, biographical insight into each individual’s life is required to gain a holistic understanding of the conditions and to reconstruct their behaviour empathically. In short, a transit returnee can be many things.

If there is a lack of knowledge about the past, the present will remain inexplicable. Each life story is qualitatively and quantitatively far-reaching that one could fill an entire novel about each transit returnee merely with what they experienced during their migrations. In all due conciseness, this chapter seeks to capture the basic information about the four transit returnees, Ali, Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses, which is relevant for setting the scene and an introductory understanding of their stories and the research results based on them in the next chapter. It provides a starting point for the descriptive analysis. In each case, the time before the migration and during the time en route as well as in transit are content-wise similarly described. In addition to biographical facts and leisure activities, family backgrounds and local contexts, initial light will be shed on the transit returnees’ experiences, interpersonal relationships, mindsets and livelihood strategies, and the processual developments of all these. Such aspects and the related findings will be processed and analysed in greater detail in the subsequent chapter. The four portrayals do not include quotations and references and follow roughly the same structure for improved readability as described in the last sentence of the former chapter. Thus, *Chapter 4* delivers the information elaborated on in *Chapter 5*.

4.1 First Case: Ali Alhassan

Ali Alhassan is a 34 years old Ghanaian Muslim. He was born and raised in Changli, a neighbourhood in Tamale, the Northern Region’s provincial capital. Changli is predominantly composed of people stemming from the ethnic group Dagomba. Most of the inhabitants are farmers. Despite the surged poverty and unemployment rate in recent years, the neighbourhood is characterised by unity among the people. They indicate the low formal education level as a circumstance, which makes it harder to escape the hardened general situation. However, some

youth enjoy better formal education than former generations, positively shaping local living conditions.

Before Ali migrated, he used to play basketball in his free time. Due to this hobby and his body stature, most people call him by his nickname, Jordan, after the former professional basketball player Michael Jordan. Even beyond his former basketball team, Keep Fit, he is known by this name. Ali himself is a tall, slim and inconspicuous person. Apart from basketball, he is also passionate about football. In his current neighbourhood, some gave him the nickname Song, after Rigobert Song, the former Cameroonian footballer Ali likes. Apart from Jordan and Song, he is also respectfully called Baba Ali. Elder family members describe Ali as gentle since he was a child. From an early age, he shared the little he had with others. However, he was also interested in fighting and quarrels which is no longer the case today.

Ali's father, Hassan, passed away when he was ten. Hassan was once a wealthy, well-known businessman. Despite his family background as a butcher, he became a successful rice farmer selling his products internationally and even travelled to India. However, the life of the family changed abruptly. One day during the dry season, his fields burned down. Arson could not be ruled out as the cause of the fire. Aside from that, Hassan became sick, and the economic situation worsened for him and his four wives and ten children. One of his wives was Habiba, Ali's mother. She gave birth to three girls, Sadia, Nafisa, and Siba, followed by two boys, Ali and Mustafa. Thus, Ali grew up with nine other (half-)siblings in one household. After Hassan's death, Habiba moved to her mother's house with her children. At this time, Ali started to earn some money with shoemaking. He walked around and asked people to shine their shoes for a tip. In addition, Ali occasionally worked as a housekeeper, trying to get enough money to pay his school fees. Unlike some of his older siblings, he did not enjoy the blessing of early birth to benefit from his father's wealth before the situation deteriorated. Instead, Ali could not continue his formal education after completing junior high school (JHS) and joined his uncle Abdel Rashid's butchery in Sakasaka in Tamale.

Since other extended family members had travelled to Libya and Europe, Ali aspired to do the same. In defiance of his uncle's disagreement, he left Tamale for Europe in 2002. He joined an onion truck driver disguised as a co-worker going to Niger via Burkina Faso. Upon arrival in Agadez, he changed the vehicle and moved on with other migrants. The drivers lost orientation in the desert, and the group was stranded for some days before a truck passing by led them the way. Subsequently, they arrived in the Libyan village of Nburanu by night. One sleeping passenger was trampled to death when everyone got off the truck. Ali worked as a housekeeper for three months in Nburanu before moving to Sabha. Although he worked in Sabha as a dishwasher for another six months, he only received one month's salary. Ali changed his employer and was hired at a construction site for three months. Having got enough money together, he joined a truck northwards. Hidden with one other Ghanaian and one person from Mali, he endured the whole ride without having a break or food. The drivers just passed some water to drink.

After one and a half days, Ali and the two others were dropped off on the outskirts of the Libyan capital Tripoli. Ali started to work at a bakery and later for an oil company in Benghazi. Even though he worked there for six months, he received just four months' salary. Following this, Ali joined a group of seven other Ghanaians who travelled by road from Tripoli to Morocco to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. For this purpose, Ali assumed a fake Malian identity and named himself Coulibaly. On the way to Morocco at an Algerian checkpoint, Ali was brought to a police station. The police officers did not believe his Malian identity. Despite their suspicion, Ali convinced them. Eventually, he was allowed to join his migration group again to resume the journey. Soon afterwards, they reached Maghnia, the last border town before Morocco. Several African communities established themselves in self-organised units separated by their countries of origin to support each other for future migration. From Maghnia, further movement was only done by foot at night. Ali continued with two dozen other Ghanaians trying to circumvent the security forces and the civilians who could alert the police. After crossing the Moroccan border, they had to hide in a cowshed for two days. Subsequently, Ali was packed with twelve other Ghanaians in a car and brought to the Moroccan capital Rabat. This ride took longer than regular drives since the drivers had to move clandestinely. After two weeks, they were chased by the police and had to leave their car behind while running away. Barely having food, the migration group wandered around for several days. In the end, two of the group knocked at a door in a village to ask for something to eat. The villagers provided them with bread but informed the police likewise. Nobody escaped this time. They were imprisoned for several weeks and brought back to Algerian no-man's-land. In the subsequent, Ali returned to Maghnia, where he worked as a chef for four months.

For his second attempt, he used the same route with different people to enter Spain via Morocco. This time, they had to stay in the same cowshed for ten days but arrived in Rabat within three days. A Ghanaian facilitator called Isaac organised the crossing to Spain. The price was 1,200 USD. Ali called his sister Nafisa, claiming he needed the money to return home. The family sold a remarkable share of their belongings and sent Ali the requested money. Instead of returning to Ghana, Ali and other migrants were pushed by a Lampa, as the inflatable boats are called, to the sea in the middle of the night. Only two of three boats were put out to sea because of the rough conditions. Both departed boats capsized. Ali was in the second boat, which started sinking after a quarter of an hour. Following this, he was caught and imprisoned by the Moroccan authorities. Ali's friend Latif was the only survivor of the other capsized boat. Around 30 dead bodies were salvaged and presented to Ali, Latif, and the other survivors. Among those who did not make it was Latif's Nigerian girlfriend. The corpses were barely identifiable as the sea had already gnawed at them. Since the Moroccan police wanted to get rid of them as they were in critically bad physical condition, all survivors were quickly sent back to Algeria. Later, Ali made another try at crossing the sea from the Moroccan shore. Standing at the beach, he finally did not start the journey due to bad weather conditions. However, another boat took the risk. The whole migration group drowned, including Ali's friend Ibrahim. Ali stood beside him when the facilitators allocated

the people to the boats. Those who remained on the seashore were instructed to hide in the desert. Nonetheless, Ali, Latif, and others returned to the coastline to rescue those washed up by the current. By doing so, they caught the police's attention and were detained and returned to Algeria for a third time. After all, Ali undertook a fourth attempt to enter Spain by sea from Tangier in Morocco. This time, Ali succeeded, but was immediately deported to Ghana after some days in 2007 (see Figure 3).

Migration chronology by countries: Ghana - Burkina Faso - Niger - Libya - Algeria - Morocco - Algeria - Morocco - Algeria - Morocco - Spain - Ghana



Figure 3: Ali Alhassan's first trajectory (2002-2007)

Upon return, Ali lived from hand to mouth. The butcher business he tried to resume was not going well. In 2008, his friend Jakub lent him some money which was added to the little he had earned so far to emigrate again. Ali joined a truck to Drikou in Niger and took a pickup from there. The pickups were faster but equally risky. Several times, people fell off the car and broke their bones. Instead of going to Tripoli, Ali went straight to Benghazi. He worked there at a restaurant for a Libyan guy called Mohammed. Ali received a monthly salary and sent 200 to 300 USD every month to his sister Nafisa and the rest of the family. In 2010, Rukaya, a friend of Nafisa, married Ali without them ever having met in person. Then, Ali sent money to his wife in Tamale to boost her sandals-selling business. One day, Ali and a friend were imprisoned for two weeks after they returned from their workplace and were checked by the authorities. In the meantime, Rukaya planned to join her husband. She got a passport and a visa for Libya. Ali quit his job at the restaurant and started shoe-shining at a particular spot in Benghazi. However, their plans to meet in Libya did not materialise as the civil war erupted in February 2011. Black people were purposely killed and the situation became life-threatening. Ali fled to Egypt under critical circumstances and IOM evacuated him from Cairo back to Ghana (see Figure 4).

Migration chronology by countries: Ghana - Burkina Faso - Niger - Libya - Egypt - Ghana

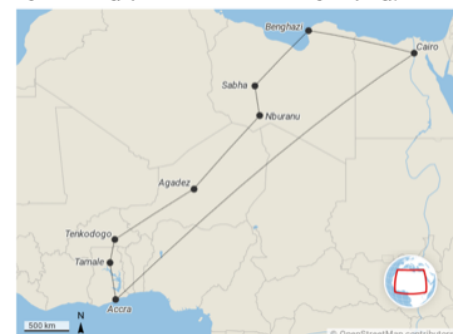


Figure 4: Ali Alhassan's second trajectory (2008-2011)

At last, Ali and Rukaya saw each other in person for the first time. They stayed at Ali's half-brother Mr Khamil's place in Accra. Ali planned to become a cattle dealer and his half-brother tried to support him in making a living. However, his wife Nawala gave Ali 2,000 Ghanaian Cedi (GHC)¹ without Mr Khamil's knowledge. The problem was that more money was needed to start the aspired cattle business. Thus, he developed the idea to work in Libya, earn some money there and return to begin his intended business. He told Nawala that someone from Benghazi called him to pick up his unpaid salary. Ali's friend Seeba explained a different route to him that he should take since Ali wanted to avoid passing through the Northern Region. The journey went off smoothly without any remarkable incidents en route (see *Figure 5*). However, after travelling through Togo, Benin, and Niger, he encountered a dire environment in Benghazi due to the civil war. Freedom of movement was highly restricted, and jobs became rare. Ali worked as a dishwasher and housekeeper. He could not send money back home as his salary was limited due to inflation. Furthermore, banks did not operate. Ali's job was hard, the salary was low, and life in a war zone was generally hazardous. For these reasons, he decided to return to Ghana in 2014.



Figure 5: Ali Alhassan's third trajectory (2012-2014)

Upon return, the circumstances were similar to those after his last return in 2011. He stayed with Rukaya at Mr Khamil's place and had the plan to become a cattle dealer still in mind. After unsuccessfully asking friends for funds, he moved with Rukaya back to Tamale. Moreover, their attempts to have children failed. This became another reason why Rukaya begged Ali to stay with her in Ghana, but Ali did not feel obliged. Without informing anyone in advance, he migrated in 2015 for a fourth time, taking the same route to Libya as in 2008. Only two Ghanaian friends in Benghazi, Seeba and Sofian, knew about his aspirations and sent him money for it. Upon arrival in Benghazi, Ali was jobless for the first three months. Apart from some housekeeping jobs, he could not find employment which met his expectations. In addition, there was no chance for him to move further to Europe. Thus, he decided to return to Ghana. Seeba and other friends financed his return flight on 22 June 2017 (see *Figure 6*).



Figure 6: Ali Alhassan's fourth trajectory (2015-2017)

Ali has remained in Ghana ever since he returned. Today, he lives with his wife Rukaya in T-Poly, a district in the suburbs of Tamale, 30 minutes by motorbike to the city centre. The scarcity of jobs defines this area compared to the past when there was a lot of construction work. Hitherto, the solidarity among the neighbours is still present. They form self-help groups to support each other in case of a problem. Nonetheless, some try to migrate to Europe, the United States of America (USA) or the Arabian peninsula.

Nowadays, Ali mostly stays at Mr Khamil's place in Accra. He supports him by undertaking housework tasks and assisting with his private drinking water manufacturing. In addition, Ali participated in a business simulation workshop to gain economic knowledge and entrepreneurial skills. Furthermore, he often joins two friends in Tema dealing with cows. If Ali stays for some days or weeks in Tamale, he mostly tries to assist at the butchery where many family members and friends work. Other than that, he is always looking for occasional jobs. Rukaya is still following her sandals-selling business in Tamale. In August 2020, both fulfilled their desire to have a child together. However, before mother Habiba suffered a stroke and his half-brother Hafiz died, both weighed heavily alongside the joy of the newborn baby.

¹ 2,000 GHC equal to approximately 1,030 US Dollars (USD) at that time.

4.2 Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni

Mohammed Mumuni is a 34-year-old Ghanaian Muslim belonging to the ethnic group Wala. He was born and raised in Effiakuma, a district in Takoradi, the Western Region's provincial capital. Effiakuma is highly diverse in its ethnic makeup. Different ethnic groups across Ghana, Liberian refugees and their descendants live together.¹ Both Christians and Muslims are next-door neighbours. People describe the living conditions as not easy but rough, rugged and chaotic. Characterised by the low formal educational level of its inhabitants and the similarly low salaries and employment rate, crime has become a severe problem. Over recent years, the number of younger generations who realise their plans to leave the neighbourhood for another place in Ghana or abroad has risen. Those who stay and follow a job are primarily petty traders or construction workers. Despite the deteriorating general situation, the solidarity is still there. As a child, Mohammed was named Gbehu, which means breast in Wala. Today, one of his friends, Aziz, sometimes calls him Shake because of Mohammed's preaching activities and his focus on Islam. However, the majority of people refer to him as Mamu. In the past, Mohammed's father, Yussif, was an incomer himself. In the quest for employment, he migrated southwards from the Upper West Region. Yussif worked as a security guard and town councillor. Later, he married Amimatu, whom Yussif got to know through a friend. Both came from the same area and had five children together. Hence, Mohammed has two older brothers, Yaya and Zakari, and two younger sisters, Alimatu and Memu. Exceptional incidents did not characterise Mohammed's early childhood. He enjoyed playing football with friends and went to the Islamic school Makalanta. Later, Mohammed faced some hardships. At the age of ten, he had a car accident and broke his arm and leg. One of his friends died. Mohammed suffered both mentally and physically and had to stop playing football. In addition, the household's economic situation worsened after their father became sick. Mohammed could not finish his JHS and started working at construction sites doing jobs in several areas, such as cement manufacturing, for three years. The family's economic situation was so precarious that their father Yussif could not afford treatment for himself and subsequently lost his life. All children live at the mother's house, and none is married yet. Only Alimatu has a daughter, but the father left her before the baby was born.

Prior to this, Mohammed did a two-year apprenticeship at his uncle Al-Hassan's fashion design shop. Mohammed became a master tailor himself in 2008. However, the order demand is highly seasonal. The most profit can be made before Eid al-Fitr, the Islamic festival of breaking the fast. However, the business could be a higher yield in the off-season. In addition, Chinese products overstocked the market and further intensified the situation, so he had to give up his job. For this reason, Mohammed followed occasional jobs at the scrapyard to help his friends to process steel, metal and other recyclable materials. Moreover, he did other jobs daily in various fields, assisting the core workers.

In the meantime, brother Zakari migrated to Libya in 2006 and returned in 2008. He earned some money there and contributed to the household income. In 2010, he left again but had to flee Libya

due to the outbreak of the civil war in February 2011. The idea to travel and earn money at another place as part of a livelihood strategy for the family was running in the family. Mohammed informed some friends and his family that he planned to go by land to Europe. On 27 July 2016, he started migrating with three other friends. These friends were Francis, who is still in Tripoli today; Sedu, who lives now in Accra; and another one whom they used to call Papa and stays in Italy today. All of them paid their connection man 5,000 GHC² each in advance, 3,000 GHC³ to travel as far as Tripoli and another 2,000 GHC⁴ to cross by sea to Italy. Mother Amimatu, brother Yaya and Mohammed's friend Faruk provided him with 2,000 GHC. En route, Mohammed had to ask his family and friend Rahman for additional money. Mohammed, Francis, Sedu, and Papa started their journey in Accra by bus to the Nigerien capital Niamey via Burkina Faso. From there, they took a car to Tripoli via Sabha, where they had to change the vehicle. As a result, the migration group split into Mohammed and Sedu in one car and Papa and Francis in the next. All arrived in Tripoli one week after departure from Accra, but the group were dispersed. Mohammed and Sedu stayed in Tripoli for another week. On their way to the coastline to put into the sea, they were caught and imprisoned by the Libyan police, which Mohammed called *kalabush*. The term *kalabush* refers to the detention of migrants in their attempts to move towards Europe. After some days, both were transferred to another migrant detention centre. They stayed at the Grayan prison for one year. All detainees were marooned and suffered severe torture. The prison guards beat them constantly, and they received only two meals a day. In the morning, they ate a small piece of bread. Later in the day, noodles without sauce, side dishes or even salt were served for lunch. Their clothes and other belongings were taken away. Thus, some had not even had any underwear left. 120 detainees shared one cell without having mattresses to sleep on. After some months, mattresses which were just foams, were provided. Three people had to share one foam. There was no medicine available. If a detainee was sick, it was avoided to call the prison guards as they would take the ill person and leave him alone in the desert. Consequently, people died and were just removed from the cell after several days. Following this, the remaining detainees fought for the empty place where the removed dead body had been before. All circumstances considered, the situation at the Grayan prison was horrible. Most of the migrants were highly desperate and cried every day. However, Mohammed never lost hope and found strength in his faith. He tried to encourage other detainees and gave pep talks to them. After half a year, IOM started to visit the detention centre. They provided mattresses, clothes, food and hygiene products, but the prison guards collected everything after the IOM officials left. Hence, the situation did not improve. Moreover, the prison guards prevented unattended contact between IOM and the detainees. Any attempt from the detainee's side was brutally punished. One day, they tried to break out and organised a demonstration-like protest, shaking and striking against the cell bars and shouting for their release. In reaction to this event, these incidents were followed by collective humiliating and merciless punishments against the migrants. One stiff penalty was to let the detainees walk on their knees under constant beatings until sheer exhaustion. Another procedure was to tie people to their hands and soles and beat them until they lost consciousness. They were then woken up by pouring water on them, and the physical abuse continued. After approximately ten months, envoys from many African embassies started to come to the prison.

Some envoys came several times to register their compatriots in preparation for future repatriation. However, certain embassies took a long time to come. The Ghanaian embassy officials were late as well. Those detainees who started the registration process were euphoric, whereas the rest became extremely frustrated. In their hope for quicker rescue, some pretended to be someone else. Sedu claimed to be a Nigerian and succeeded in his plan to be repatriated by Nigerian officials. Eventually, Mohammed and the other Ghanaian detainees returned to Accra on 28 July 2017 (see *Figure 7*).

Migration chronology by countries: Ghana - Burkina Faso - Niger - Libya - Ghana



Figure 7: Mohammed Mumuni's trajectory (2016-2017)

Upon return, Mohammed stayed at Faruk's place in Accra to recover and regain strength, as he was very slim and traumatised by his hardships. Then, after some weeks, he returned to Takoradi to live with his family again. However, his living conditions remain unchanged. Mohammed has to share a room with his brother and is unsuccessfully looking for a job.

¹ The Liberian civil war broke out on 24 December 1989 and lasted seven years. The sub-region experienced the largest flow of refugees (Owusu, 2000).

² 5,000 GHC equal to approximately 1,300 USD at that time.

³ 3,000 GHC equal to approximately 780 USD at that time.

⁴ 2,000 GHC equal to approximately 520 USD at that time.

4.3 Third Case: Ebenezer Bae

Ebenezer Bae is a 25-year-old Ghanaian Christian. He was born in Taino I, a village of 500 inhabitants in the Brong-Ahafo Region. The next bigger city is Drobo. Taino I is composed of people from the ethnic group Akan. The vast majority of the village residents are farmers, whereas the region's primary source of income is the cashew business. However, there are no job alternatives and a particular dispensation of poverty occurred in the community recently. Despite the high unemployment rate, strong cohesion and unity still characterise the rural community. The people depend on and vouch for each other in times of hardship. Nonetheless, the younger generation needs to see a bright future in Taino I, and the wish to leave for another place is omnipresent. Like the majority, Ebenezer's parents have a rural background themselves. Besides mother Joustina, father Kwaku had another woman who gave birth to two children, Isaac, and Yan-Philip. However, she did not want to marry Kwaku. At the same time, Joustina gave birth to four daughters, Akos, Filomina, Regina, and Paulina, followed by two sons, Ebenezer, and Michael. All children grew up together in one household and were raised by Kwaku and Joustina. This situation of living in a blended family was explained to Ebenezer after he became older. By then, he had a joyful childhood and loved to play football. Soon, the oldest sister Akos married and moved to Kumasi, where she still lives with her husband and four children. When his father started excessively drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana, Ebenezer was in his early adolescence. Kwaku became quick-tempered and neglected his wife and children. The tensions grew and the marriage fell apart. The mother moved out with the children and Ebenezer's uncle accommodated the family. After the uncle mediated between the parents, the mother and the children returned to the father's house, but the situation worsened again. Eventually, mother Joustina left with their children Filomina, Regina, Paulina, Ebenezer, and Michael for Drobo. Ebenezer was 16 years old at that time. He resents his father due to his misconduct and feels as much emotionally closer to his mother Joustina. Until today, Ebenezer has several nicknames. In Taino I, they used to call him Aprukusu or Ebe. In JHS, some said Labaski to him. Nowadays, he is called Accra Boy by some of his neighbours in Drobo. Since he is not too tall, others call him Akufo-Addo, the current president of Ghana. Regardless of whom he faced, Ebenezer was self-confident and never avoided any fight when he felt something unjust happened.

The family settled in an area in Drobo called Trinity/Mechanic Area. The inhabitants are industrious and live from the cashew business, but they also notice that the market is pressured here. This can be seen as a consequence of the activities of Indian business people. In recent years, they started to make their first steps in the region. Following this, people began fighting over farms, and a surge of crime targeting the neighbourhood was registered. Additionally, the unemployment rate increased. Nonetheless, most of the younger generation receives better formal education, and the immediate vicinity is still a calm place where people live together in peace. Notwithstanding the above, there is a dispute between Ebenezer's family and their neighbours over a piece of land. The neighbours claimed land to be theirs before Ebenezer's family settled there. Upon arrival in Drobo, mother Joustina started selling local food, such as Banku and Fufu.

However, Ebenezer recognised that the household was under financial pressure. Hence, he could not continue his formal education and stopped going to school in form two at the senior high school (SHS) level. Ebenezer had already started doing mason and carpentry work after school and focused entirely on that. Later, he even added roofing. He was used to working from an early age. When the family still lived in Taino I, the financial situation required everyone to contribute what they could to have food on the table. Ebenezer did lowly jobs after school, such as weeding, carrying bricks or digging holes for toilets. Beyond this, he set traps to catch rats which his mother processed to food and sold it. At this time, his professional aim was to become a soldier, but he was too small for the army and abandoned this desire later. In 2011, Yan-Philip migrated to Italy via Libya. Currently, he lives in Zebbug, Malta after unsuccessfully seeking a job in Palermo, Italy and asylum in Dortmund, Germany. Ebenezer's other half-brother, Isaac, remained in Taino I and settled there with his wife and children. Sister Filomina married and gave birth to three children. She moved with her husband and the children to a different place in Drobo. In the meantime, sister Regina experienced physical complications after she gave birth to her second child. However, her situation became life-threatening, and she passed away. Nonetheless, their father abandoned his children. From then on, mother Joustina took on the mother's role for her grandchildren, the three-year-old boy and the two-month-old girl. Immediately afterwards, sister Paulina delivered two babies, but the father ran away without leaving a sign. Eventually, the household comprised mother Joustina, Paulina with her two children, Ebenezer, Michael, and the two half-orphans. Thus, Ebenezer developed a very close relationship with his nephews. However, the whole situation burdened the family mentally and economically. Ebenezer worked day in and day out, doing several jobs and managed to rent his room near his mother's house. He tried to support his mother as much as possible and broadened his artisan skills. Sometimes, he got up at four o'clock to start working. However, the family could barely make ends meet. Eventually, Ebenezer developed the idea of travelling to Europe to improve the family's living standards. His mother agreed to that plan and Ebenezer started to save money for that purpose.

He left for Libya together with an acquaintance called Joe and three others. Joe was a transit returnee from Libya who came from the same neighbourhood in Drobo and offered to join on his migration. Today, one man from the migration group resides in Dubai, one is in Italy, and the third is called Lion, with whom the rest have lost contact. Joe himself is still in Libya to this day. Upon arrival in the Libyan capital Tripoli, Ebenezer planned to call his friend Silas. Silas had been in Libya for two years already. They wanted to work to earn some money for the crossing to Europe. The migration group left Ghana on 22 July 2015. Before taking the burdensome route northwards, they spent a few days in Accra to enjoy the local food. Equipped with fake passports and bribing the police officers at several barriers, they travelled by bus through Burkina Faso to the Nigerian capital Niamey. After five days of travelling, they changed their vehicle there. Packed in a pickup with around 30 other Ghanaians and a few Nigerian women, they moved on to Sabha. This ride took six days and was the worst part of the journey. People were crying and fighting for their little space on that pickup. Others fell at full speed. Above all, not many breaks were taken for eating and drinking. Following this, all migrants were detained in a tiny cell with 50 people and one

congested and overspilled toilet. There was not even enough space to lie down. Everybody had to remove their shirts and shoes. At that point, Ebenezer regretted for the first time that he embarked on that journey. Every morning and evening, the prison guards came with pipes to beat up those allegedly owing money to the connection men. People were flogged or put in chains and hung to beat their legs. All this took place to make their families back home send money. Ebenezer cried heavily due to that violent abuse, whereas others even died. The lack of food and water made everyone suffer. The detainees were raddled and ravaged due to the endured torture. After three days, a car from Burkina Faso to Tripoli arrived. Ebenezer and the others were allowed to join them. It took them three days due to the concealment until they arrived in Tripoli. The police pulled them over several times and demanded bribes. The situation among the migrants on the truck bed was parlous once again. The driver shot one Nigerian migrant after he had an issue with another passenger.

Upon arrival in Tripoli, Ebenezer separated from his fellow migrants and called Silas. Working with another Nigerian guy called Najah, they did masonry and plastering. Ebenezer mixed cement and Silas did the plastering. It was debilitating labour, which caused them injuries. During their job and off-time, they were exposed to dozens of racial assaults from both the police and civilians. Once in a while, Ebenezer was beaten and spat at while other ordinary people stood by, amused and applauded in the middle of the street. After a year of working, Silas and Ebenezer had enough money to cross the Mediterranean Sea. They went to Zuwara to embark on to Europe. Ebenezer paid 1,500 Libyan Dinar (LYD)¹ for the crossing and 500² for the life jacket. The inflatable boats were put out to sea at around four o'clock in the morning. Silas was allocated to a different Lampa. Ebenezer left Libyan soil with 150 other migrants. One Gambian man was the designated captain. Another migrant navigated by reading the compass. The goal was to reach international waters and get detected by rescue teams. However, the Libyan coastguards caught their boat the next early afternoon. They crossed their way with small boats and warned them they would shoot them if they did not stop. Several warning shots in the water underpinned their threats. The Libyan authorities brought them back to the land, beat them up and put them into a detention centre. All clothes and shoes were collected. One prison guard secretly offered Ebenezer to free him in return for some money. Mother Joustina sent 2,000 GHC³ for his release. Ebenezer left the prison with two other Ghanaian men. In the subsequent, he was eager to work again, promising his mother to settle the debts. Ebenezer resumed masonry work, but one day, he was caught by the police on his way back from work. At that time, he had worked for almost one month and earned 900 LYD⁴, which the police seized from him.

In the following, Ebenezer was put into Grayan detention centre, where he met Mohammed and other detainees with whom he befriended. Throughout his time in Libya, Ebenezer pretended to the Libyans that his name was Ali and that he was a Muslim hoping for better treatment. He even joined the Islamic prayers. In Grayan, some prison guards secretly passed phones to the detainees in return for money. Once again, Ebenezer called his mother to ask for money for his release. Mother Joustina had to sell her cashew farm and borrow money elsewhere to get the

requested 3,000 LYD⁵ together. Following this, Ebenezer was told to be released within three days. However, the prison boss allegedly got transferred, which was why Ebenezer did not gain freedom. Ebenezer was not the only detainee who got betrayed in that way. It happened to hundreds of others as well. Nonetheless, Ebenezer became very depressed due to the experienced deception. Brother Yan-Philip unsuccessfully tried to send his friends in Libya to pick Ebenezer up. In the face of tragic uncertainty, mother Joustina lost weight due to her sorrows. At that point, thinking of what happened and what to expect upon return made him want to die. Despite the prison guards' efforts, one IOM employee managed to talk to Ebenezer and other detainees clandestinely. They described to the English man the devastating realities they were confronted with, which made him cry. Due to the delay of the Ghanaian embassy, Ebenezer tried to pass the interview at the Nigerian embassy. However, he failed as he could not pretend the Nigerian *Broken English*⁶. After the officials sent him back, the prison guards punished Ebenezer brutally. Thereupon, he did not give up and started picking up French with the help of another detainee from Côte d'Ivoire. Since Drobo is very close to the Ivorian border, the idea was that it might appear to be an authentic story. However, Ebenezer chose a different city closer to the border and gave himself the name Ali Traoli. He claimed he just stayed shortly in Côte d'Ivoire and moved away for a prayer camp, so he tried to explain why he lost his French language. The Ivorian interviewer had severe doubts regarding Ebenezer's credibility. The inmate who taught Ebenezer French queued behind him, stepped in and started talking on Ebenezer's behalf. Eventually, Ebenezer qualified, but the Ivorian embassy delayed as well. Thus, he became highly desperate once again. His mother's situation and the debts back home lingered in his mind. He brooded over his and his family's future without getting much sleep. Furthermore, he lost weight, another side effect of his mental state. In the end, Ebenezer was brought back by the Ghanaian embassy on 28 July 2017 (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: Ebenezer Bae's trajectory (2015-2017)

Upon return, IOM provided every transit returnee 500 GHC⁷ as pocket money. Ebenezer returned to his mother's house. The people received him with joy and happiness but were simultaneously shocked about his state and the stories he shared. After some time, Ebenezer started to work as a carpenter again. Moreover, he received financial reintegration assistance from IOM to start his mobile phone and accessories business. Subsequently, he moved to a different district closer to his workplace. He has his room in Kwesi Brekum, which is reachable from his mother's house by walking in less than 15 minutes. In 2020, Ebenezer and his girlfriend Deborah became parents of a daughter.

¹ 1,500 LYD equal to approximately 1,100 USD at that time.

² 500 LYD equal to approximately 365 USD at that time.

³ 2,000 GHC equal to approximately 530 USD at that time.

⁴ 900 LYD equal to approximately 660 USD at that time.

⁵ 3,000 LYD equal to approximately 2,115 USD at that time.

⁶ Broken English is also referred to as Pidgin English and is spoken as a lingua franca across Nigeria (Faraclas, 1996).

⁷ 500 GHC equal to approximately 115 USD at that time.

4.4 Fourth Case: Moses Gafah

Moses Gafah is a 44-year-old Ghanaian Christian. He was born in Beposo, a small town in the Western Region with 1,000 inhabitants. It is located halfway between Takoradi and Cape Coast. Beposo is composed of people from the Akan ethnic group. The primary source of income for its residents is agriculture. Every Tuesday, a market lures consumers from the surrounding areas and turns Beposo into a commercial hub for various goods.

Moses' father, Kwesi, and his mother, Asajlo, are Ewes and come from the Volta Region, as do many other Beposo residents. Kwesi had 24 children from eight different wives. Back then, he was the first petrol dealer in the province and became a wealthy businessman. Despite his financial promotion, he did not foster his children's formal education. However, his child Moses was keen to continue his formal education after JHS, with which his father disagreed. While his family wanted him to learn some handiwork, Moses was into music, singing and dance and eager to start an entertainment career. Nonetheless, his father refused these ideas. After graduating, Moses stayed in Beposo, stuck in limbo for two years. Moses felt he had been treated unequally. One of the father's wives was very influential on father Kwesi. According to Moses, she and their firstborn son Vincent were the two people the father listened to the most. Today, Vincent is even the manager of the petrol station in Beposo. Moses did not accept this inner family hierarchy and often opposed his half-brother Vincent. Consequently, Moses was stigmatised as the grumbler and rebel of the family, whereas he felt neglected and deprived. Irrespective of the father's general capability to mobilise further resources to support his children during their life cycle, Moses believed that not all siblings were treated equally. Vincent received particular appreciation to the detriment of the outcasted rest. Eventually, Moses wanted to leave Beposo and abandon his family as they were, in his eyes, hindering him from fulfilling his personal goals. At 19, George, a family friend, talked him into carpentry work. George started to train Moses in Takoradi. He promised to take him to Germany in the future, where his wife lived. Moses himself left Beposo behind and did not even return for a visit. After two years, George's wife passed away and he had to return to Germany. Before leaving Ghana, he brought Moses to Kumasi, where he should continue gaining practical experiences and where he was supposed to be in good hands with George's two brothers. The brothers did not fulfil their responsibilities. Thus, Moses joined another master called Godwin. He ran a company supplying furniture to major customers. Before Godwin employed Moses, he wanted to talk to his family to get more information about Moses and to get the green light from the family's side. Thus, Moses had to return to Beposo to that end. Initially, the family refused the idea and wanted him to resume the training in Takoradi, where they would have better access to him. After a month of discussion, the family agreed. Hence, Moses stayed with Godwin for four and a half years and attended the polytechnic school. He got along with his new boss very well. This relationship was as close as it had been between Moses and George. According to Moses, Godwin greatly appreciated his work and liked him even more than his children. When Godwin bought something, he always bought one pair for Moses too. They were literally eating the same food and wearing the same underwear. Furthermore, Moses was not only

a model employee but bonded with Godwin's children, who constantly asked for him when he was not around as well. Moreover, he started to have a relationship with Godwin's first cousin Mausi. They wanted to marry, to which Mausi's parents had already agreed. Beyond Godwin and his family, Moses was in good contact with many customers. Some of them were distinguished and wealthy people. While working with George, Moses never had the chance to work outside the carpenter's shop. However, working with Godwin allowed Moses to travel to several customers within Ghana. This time was enriching for him, and it opened many doors. If he was privately in need of something and asked one of his customers for help, he got it without further questions. At that time, Moses even started visiting his family in Beposo frequently. In the meantime, George reached out to him several times and promised to send him machines to start his own business, which never turned into reality. Moses realised that only with proper equipment, which is more than just a bench at the roadside, he could achieve something in life with carpentry work. In other words, Moses was convinced that one could make a good living if he had the financial resources to carry out his plans in a certain way. Thus, he was ready to leave Godwin to take the next step independently to establish himself. In this regard, one customer, Mr Consah, revealed his plans to Moses to establish a carpentry company and to put him in charge of one sub-area of the company. Moses was supposed to be the manager for the wood processing and Mr Consah for the metal processing. These plans, including the anticipated income, made Moses brag in front of his best friend Michael. The latter secretly informed Godwin about Moses' aspirations. From then on, Godwin saw in Moses a potential competitor. He pretended in front of Moses that he had a problem with his relationship with Mausi and their wedding plans. Godwin claimed that Moses would impregnate her too early and destroy her life. Suddenly, Godwin abandoned Moses and painted him black in front of others, including Mr Consah, who also turned his back on Moses and the business idea. In the same manner, Moses abandoned contact with all the customers himself as he thought Godwin would also poison their minds. After a month of staying at his friend Ken's place in Kumasi-Odum, Moses moved back to Beposo. His family investigated to find out what happened. They believed that Moses did not respect elders. However, Godwin told them that this was not the problem. Regardless of Godwin's testimony that Moses performed to everyone's satisfaction, the family was unwilling to help Moses resume his work or support him. After three months, Moses left for Kumasi to stay at Ken's place again. He lived there together with Asamoah. Asamoah's uncle was a gold miner and owned the house the three lived in. Moses got a new job through his friend and former colleague Egyapong. His new employer was delighted with Moses' performance. However, Moses himself disagreed with the salary he got. Eventually, he resigned and worked on a daily basis trying to make ends meet.

At that time, his friend Salifu brought the idea of migrating to Europe. Ken and Salifu were friends from Beposo, respectively Dunkwa, which is in proximity. Initially, Moses did not want anybody else to know about their migration plan. Ultimately, he had to admit that he could not scramble up enough money on his own. Thus, Moses had to ask his family for some financial assistance. They gave him less than he asked for but 150 GHC¹. The family thought that Moses would just be using the money for Mausi. Seeking God's protection for his journey, he spent four months praying at

the worship centre. Finally, Moses received the Lord's voice giving him the requested guidance. His half-brother Edward wanted to join him and Salifu, but he became sick and could not bear the risk of undergoing the migration. At that point, Moses had 450 GHC² and was lacking 150 GHC, which Salifu promised to cover in case of money shortages en route.

When they started their journey, Moses was 26 years old. The last Ghanaian border town was Bawku, from where they left for the Nigerien capital Niamey via Burkina Faso. Upon arrival in Agadez, a woman wanted to link them up to a businessman going back and forth to reach Libya. Irrespective of the woman's assertions that it would not take them longer than three days to arrive in Libya, Moses refused. According to him, he heard the voice of God warning him against accepting that offer. Instead, Moses and Salifu joined the combined vehicle to Dirkou three days later. After one week there, they reached Tjrhi early in the morning. At that time, their money was exhausted. Hence, they decided to continue to Qatrun on foot. After hours of crossing the desert, they ran out of water. Salifu became very weak and was close to dying. Therefore, Moses started looking for water. He encountered a borehole with water, but he did not pass the water directly to Salifu. According to Moses, it was "the voice" telling him once again not to do so. Moses poured the water on him. Afterwards, Salifu regained strength, continued walking, and arrived at a river. Moses poured water on him again and let him drink. After some time, a car with Nigerian migrants drove by and picked them up. Subsequently, they encountered another crashed car with several injured people. Most of them had head injuries, the drivers included. However, none of the Nigerien migrants or their drivers were willing to help or even pick them up. Moses initiated carrying one injured person and asked Salifu and the others to follow his example. In the end, they managed to bring some of them to the hospital in Qatrun. Moses and Salifu moved further to Sabha and Khoms. They separated in Khoms as Salifu planned to stay, whereas Moses wanted to enter Tripoli. Both financed their journey with the jobs they did en route. In Sabha, they worked for one month and two months in Khoms. Later, after Salifu unsuccessfully tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea, he was lured by a friend to return to Ghana and to go by ship from Mauritania to Greece. Salifu worked there but was deported back after a while. He called Moses two years later to express his wish to return to Libya.

Upon arrival in the Libyan capital, Moses tried to reach out to his cousin Caroline who lived with her Ghanaian husband in Tripoli. He met the husband at Tripoli Christian Fellowship, the local parish in Tripoli. The husband worked for the British embassy and promised to help Moses move out of where he stayed at that time, which was uncompleted social housing. In the beginning, Moses started a painting job together with another Ghanaian. After he replaced a security guard at the British embassy on a temporary basis, he worked permanently for three years and three months until the uprising in 2011 started. Initially, his salary amounted to 350 USD a month. It increased slowly to ultimately 750 LYD³. As he recognised how dangerous crossing by sea was, Moses abandoned his desire to migrate to Europe. In the meantime, he hosted another Ghanaian called Gideon, who had just arrived in Libya for the first time. Through him, Moses got to know Adwoa, a friend of Gideon's fiancée. In 2006, Moses started talking to Adwoa on the phone and

Migration chronology by countries: Ghana - Burkina Faso - Niger - Libya - Tunisia - Morocco - Ghana



Figure 9: Moses Gafah's first trajectory (2003-2011)

their families visited each other. In September 2008, Adwoa came to Libya, they married and she got pregnant the following month. Occasionally, Adwoa worked as a nanny until she gave birth to their son Winfried. In the same year, she got a full-time nanny job and earned monthly 600 LYD⁴. Before Adwoa accepted her job, the couple hardly made ends meet, but they were able to save money later. They sent 2,400 GHC⁵ to Edward, who put it in their bank account. Additionally, Moses received 2,600 LYD⁶ from his boss Charlie Paiton, the councillor for political affairs. However, the civil war caused a nationwide lockdown. Despite their

hope for a soon easing of tensions, the war continued and their savings were exhausted in July 2011. The family fled to the Tunisian capital Tunis. They stayed there for three weeks until Charlie called a friend from the British embassy in Tunis, who picked them up. Before they were returned to Ghana, they were brought to another camp in Tunisia (see Figure 9).

Upon return, Moses had just 100 USD in his pocket. He stayed in Accra-Teshie at half-brother Edward's place for two months. Adwoa and Winfried stayed at her mother's house in Accra-Osu before the family was reunited, renting their place in Accra-Anyaa. At that time, Moses wanted to start a trading business selling building materials. However, this plan was not feasible with the available budget. Thus, he focused on transportation to make some money. Charlie sent him 3,000 GBD for that purpose. Subsequently, Moses purchased a car and used it as a taxi. The general idea was to bridge the time until he could return to Libya and resume his job at the British embassy. Simultaneously, Adwoa was looking for a job as well. She undertook vocational training for three months. Unfortunately, her bachelor's degree in business administration could not fill a vacancy.

After a while, Moses received a call from the third political secretary of the British embassy in Libya, Stuart Boys, who was the same person who received them in Tunis. Stuart asked Moses to return to Libya. The parents decided to leave Winfried at Moses' sister Felicia's place in Kumasi. After selling the car, they bought their plane tickets, invested some money in land and left the rest for Winfried. Upon arrival in Tripoli in 2012, Moses worked in a Libyan-Turkish restaurant for approximately five months. He was washing plates in the kitchen and helped to clean and pack stuff. Following this, he did some plastering work for two months. The cement was very aggressive to his skin, making Moses quit this job. It was a time in limbo for him. The family's economic situation was uncertain. After Moses' employer at a painting work refused to pay him, he stopped and stayed home. As a consequence, Adwoa worked in a boutique and became the breadwinner. Due to the unexpected transfer of Stuart Boys and the management officer, it took Moses one year to resume his old job at the British embassy. First, Moses was just a substitute

for one day at the British embassy. Afterwards, he and Adwoa got a permanent job there. Moses started to work in February 2013, and Adwoa started in July of the same year. The monthly household income was 2,200 USD. The money was used to buy land in Kumasi and Kasoa and to support Felicia in establishing her business in Kumasi. However, she misused the financial resources she received from her brother. In 2015, daughter Heavenly was born. Following this, Adwoa returned with the baby to Ghana to attend her father's funeral. Apart from the latter, the family's situation was hugely satisfying. They saved up approximately 6,000 USD until the second uprising arose in 2014. On top of the savings, they had a 6,600 USD salary left. At that time, they planned to wait for the ceasefire. However, the high inflation and price increase exhausted their financial means before they realised it. Moses saw himself forced to resume the painting job again. Even prior to the uprising, the living conditions were characterised by everyday harassment from the civilian population or the authorities throughout their stay in Libya. Once, Moses and pregnant Adwoa were imprisoned without reasonable grounds. Due to violent attacks and other assaults in their day-to-day life, black people had to be very careful. At this time, Moses' job at the British embassy made the police officers release them. Adwoa had a private driver to bring her to and pick her up from work. The public space was never safe for them. However, even their



Figure 10: Moses Gafah's second trajectory (2012-2017)

house did not protect them from gangs or the police. After the war broke out, the situation became more dangerous, and Moses and his family did not dare to leave their house if it was not necessary. The number of armed assaults increased. Other incidents happened that they do not want to talk about today anymore. Hence, the young family decided to return to Ghana as it was too dangerous to stay. Adwoa was pregnant at this time and they just waited until the baby Rockily was born. On 14 November 2017, Moses and Adwoa returned with their two children, Heavenly and Rockily (see Figure 10).

Upon returning, Moses stayed at Edward's place while Adwoa and the children lived at her mother's house in Accra-Osu. The family's initial plan was to settle down in the Volta Region. After seven months, the family reunited and settled in Weija in Greater Accra. Winfried and Heavenly started going to the nearby nursery and school. IOM financed the accommodation in Weija. However, Moses and Adwoa underwent a tedious process before IOM released the financial aid. In the end, Moses started to work as an Uber driver and offered his first ride in November 2018. IOM and Moses' family provided the starting capital. Adwoa is still trying to find a job, which is also one reason why they stay in Greater Accra, as the chances of finding a job might be higher in this area. Two of Moses' siblings died recently and his mother suffered a stroke. Thus, she depends on Moses' help more than ever. Besides going to church, Moses stays mostly indoors if he does not work. In his leisure time, he sometimes visits his friend Charles, who lives nearby. Moses joined former president John Mahama's election campaigns. He is a traditional voter of the

New Democratic Congress (NDC). Even though he has a monthly income from his Uber driving, Moses still hopes to move to the Volta Region, where he feels more comfortable than he and his family do now. The family is dissatisfied with the housing situation and their current socioeconomic status.

¹ 150 GHC equal to approximately 25 USD at that time.

² 450 GHC equal to approximately 75 USD at that time.

³ 750 LYD equal to approximately 600 USD at that time.

⁴ 600 LYD equal to approximately 485 USD at that time.

⁵ 2,400 GHC equal to approximately 1,620 USD at that time.

⁶ 2,600 LYD equal to approximately 2,150 USD at that time.

4.5 Setting the Stage

Following the introduction to the four different life stories and personal backgrounds underlying each case, the scene is set to develop an initial understanding of the respective perceived post-return life realities, which is substantiated in the subsequent chapter.

At first glance, all four transit returnees have in common that they returned from Libya in 2017. Some psycho-social dynamics, such as the desire for economic emancipation as a driver for migration, seem to be similar as well. Another commonality are the depriving experiences as an undocumented migrant and the negative experiences as a result of the civil war launched in Libya in 2011. The significant role of the social environment becomes evident in different ways as well. In spite of some similarities and partly comparable conditions, it remains equally apparent that the realities of their lives before, during, and after migration are highly individual and different in one or the other way.

However, it is obvious that no factor alone constitutes an individual's life reality, but rather the type and, above all, the combination of the different parameters may provide information on the actual perception after their return. This is preceded by the identification, detailed description and disentanglement of the shaping factors for transit returnees, which is undertaken in the following chapter. On the basis of the themes motives and decision-making processes for migration; experiences in transit; social network; mental state; post-return behaviour; and experiences with AVRR measures, the various experiences and practices upon return are contextualised and approximated to the respective perceived life realities.

5. The Sum of Its Parts and Beyond – Discern Life Realities' Intricacies

"What happens is: The returnee is very frustrated. You will finally see him re-migrating. It's not easy for somebody to return and stay. When you travelled, you travelled with very high expectations. The family has the same hopes weighing on you. So, If you return and you don't have anything, the family hates you. They are unhappy that you travelled, wasted the money, returned, didn't bring anything back and depend on them again."

~ Mawiya ~

Upon return, the determinants underlying the perceived life reality are not immediately apparent and often lie deeper beneath the surface. It is crucial to understand the factors that led to a person's decision to leave their home country and embark on a dangerous journey as well as the circumstances that induced their return. Therefore, it is necessary to delve into the entire life course of the transit returnee, including their childhood, family background, migration decision-making process, and experiences gained abroad as well as to reveal and trace back the factors that influenced their decision to seek opportunities abroad. Only through an in-depth exploration of their life story, a complete picture can be assembled, revealing how and why certain realities materialise in the way they do. However, fully detecting the complex influences stimulating such a process is only partially achievable. Thus, the goal is to approximate the individually perceived life reality and its interdependencies as accurately as possible.

The previous chapter sketched the life courses of the four transit returnees Ali, Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses. In this chapter, the findings of all four case studies are presented in more detail and organised according to their thematic relevance. The chapter is divided into four thematically influencing factors for the transit returnees' perceived life realities upon return. The first section (5.1) deals with the migration phase, which precedes the time before returning. Although all four transit returnees came back in 2017, their experiences after returning were very different. One factor which explains the different experiences is the time before the return. Here, individual conditions and prerequisites for this phase are derived from migration. Another factor upon return is the social network (Section 5.2). This section explains the social networks' role, disposition, and effects for each transit returnee. The unfolding livelihood strategies are characterised in the subsequent section (5.3), focusing on the mindset and activities of transit returnees. Based on beneficiaries' experiences, Section 5.4 discusses institutionalised reintegration assistance, specifically the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.

The findings about the four transit returnees are supplemented by the experiences of other transit returnees from the social environment. Each section is divided into the four cases and ends with a conclusion. According to the theme, these conclusions summarise and present the phenomena, experiences, realities, perceptions, perspectives, and opinions across all cases. In Chapter 6, the findings from this chapter are used to answer the research questions, reflect on existing theories, and provide considerations for policymakers and practitioners.

5.1 “It is a lottery” – Migration

The migration experiences of transit returnees are highly diverse. What unites them all is that the time spent in transit has a lasting impact, both materially and immaterially, and particularly shapes the period following their return. In the case of transit return, it is crucial to understand not only the migration itself, but also the motives, drivers, and circumstances which led the transit returnee to migrate in the first place since these aspects are simultaneously significant for the setting upon return. Thus, this section sheds light on both phases, the initial situation before the migration as well as the migration itself, which preceded the return.

5.1.1 “A better life for my family” – Motives and Decision-making

“Everywhere in Ghana, you see groups of guys sitting together. There are no jobs. So, you call your brothers and discuss your situation. You tell them that you cannot travel altogether. They are supposed to stay back, and you are trying as much as you can to master the situation you are all in. In the beginning, it's not to become rich. It's just to have something to eat. Then you travel outside. Some are just going to Accra. [...] Then it might not be as successful as he has expected. He might move on to Takoradi. Before you realise it, you are in Libya. Before you realise you are in a Lampa [inflatable boat], you are in Italy. Sometimes, people are not thinking right away about going to Libya. It's just that life takes you there. Through conversations and all that, you end up having this idea of travelling abroad. People from over there are calling you to come. Sometimes, it's not your idea, but this hardship we are facing might push you. Our brother Mohammed is a good example. I travelled myself, and before I returned, I heard that he had travelled. I know his character. He would never travel to Libya based on his senses. I know that.”

~ Said ~

Understanding the motives and decision-making process behind migration is essential for comprehending how and why it occurs. However, these aspects likewise determine the conditions with which the transit returnee is confronted after the return. For this reason, they are even relevant for the post-return phase. The migration choice must be viewed in a particular context and a specific situation each transit returnee once faced. What conditions prompted them to leave their home country, leave their family behind, and embark on a costly and risky journey? Deciding to make such a momentous choice is not taken lightly and it has far-reaching implications, as it gambles with people's lives both directly and indirectly. For each transit returnee, these determinants for migration are personal, time-dependent, characterised by spatial narratives and procedural successions, and carried out in specific culturally charged family contexts. Only the accurate monitoring of these factors, their contextual classification and interplay allied with an individual family and life history, can explain why this person, of all people, set off northwards. Although external factors influence migration stories, they are individually transmitted and depend on internal dynamics hardly visible to outsiders at first glance. Hence, there is more to the picture than meets the eye. To deliver convincing answers that allow for a better understanding of both the migration and the following return stories, one must investigate the transit returnees' life circumstances before migration and their biographical trajectory through life. This encompasses the neighbourhood where the transit returnee grew up and their socio-economic and familial background. In most cases, each migrant who becomes a transit returnee is not detached from

the social context. Behind and around them are many people, such as parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and others, who make up an entire network that influences the transit returnee throughout their life course from early childhood and beyond. Moreover, they are part of an environment that allowed or even urged them to emigrate and in which the transit returnee is expected to return afterwards. Divided into five subsections, this subsubsection includes the socio-economic background of the transit returnees, their families and communities, motives and drivers, the decision-making process, and the preparation for migration. In addition, emphasis is laid on the actors involved; interdependencies; dynamics and developments along these processes; decisive factors; characteristics and perceptions as well as similarities and differences between the four cases.

5.1.1.1 First Case: Ali Alhassan

Regarding Ali's environment where he grew up, the dominance of income-generating activities in the agricultural sector and the cohesion¹ among the neighbourhood's inhabitants stemming from the same ethnic group Dagomba² was previously mentioned. Despite the willingness to help each other³, the ability of the people to show solidarity is contested⁴. Successively, Changli's balanced informal social welfare net of mutual self-aid was shaken.⁵ While most people do not possess the required resources, the magnitude of formal education gained importance.⁶ Those who get the chance to receive formal education can better their own and their family's living standards. By developing the community, they are commonly perceived as agents of change.⁷ An alternative way of acquiring relative prosperity and prestige can be found by getting work in a foreign country. Therefore, migration is considered the desirable way to escape the blind alley of hopelessness. In summary, the general narrative composed of the ingredients of an overall adverse economic situation paired with the need to adapt to changed conditions in the labour market and formal education as the rising chance to change jobs to that end accurately describes Ali's life story. If the financial means for gaining school qualifications are missing, migration appears to be the perceived alternative, as Mr Khamil refers to the situation of his half-brother Ali:

"Things didn't work out well for him. In his case, he didn't get the chance to go to school to a level that can make him fit into a job. When Ali went to school, our father became sick and eventually died. That's why Ali never had the opportunity to go far. He even tried to enter the secondary school level, but he couldn't finish it for financial reasons. So, he made up his mind to travel to Libya."

~ Mr Khamil ~

The previous chapter outlined the father's successful activities in the agricultural sector. However, the economic decline and later death rapidly worsened Ali's familial financial situation.⁸ Unlike his older half-siblings, such as Mr Khamil, who went to university, Ali was doomed to start earning money for his family instead of schooling:

"Before my father passed away, I wanted to further my education. Instead, I had to start a shoemaking job and skip school because I couldn't buy school books. I went to the market and asked the people there if I could shine their shoes and collect money for that service. We have an area which we used to call Tishigu. It's an area with many bars where drinks are served. I was there every morning to ask people whether I could shine their shoes. I was doing any job. Sometimes

people called me, and I was doing some housekeeping. [...] So, even before my father died, my personal life deteriorated sharply."

~ Ali ~

Even before their father's death, Ali painfully noticed the economic decline. Back then, he compared himself to other schoolmates who were better off:

"At that time, it was very difficult. My father was the breadwinner. At the time he was alive, there was food in the house. Nevertheless, I saw my classmates buying some toffies and biscuits, which I couldn't afford. Seeing that, I asked myself why I didn't have the money for that. I couldn't buy it. So I just ate at my house and went to school. When the school day was over, I just had one meal."

~ Ali ~

Upon his father's death, he had to enter the butcher business as a teenager instead of joining the SHS:

"At the JHS level, I started to pay my school fees. I did this when I was a teenager. So, I bought my books and other learning material with my money. However, I just left the JHS and joined my uncle at his butcher house. At that time, I told him I had finished JHS, but I didn't know who was taking care of me. My uncle said not to worry and that I could start doing the butcher work."

~ Ali ~

Psychologically, this feeling of dual inequity was a severely formative experience for him. Outside the family, Ali felt discriminated compared to other fellows of the same age. Within the family, he was disadvantaged compared to his older half-siblings, which his half-brother Mr Khamil admits in the following:

"I was lucky enough that I got my education and training before all that happened. So, I was okay to take care of myself from then on. Ali and the younger ones weren't as lucky as I was, and others were born before me. The death of our father was definitely a pushing factor for Ali to migrate."

~ Mr Khamil ~

Looking at his older half-siblings, the conceived injustice appeared even more haunting as Ali witnessed in early childhood how attractive and enjoyable his future could have been. It triggered the feeling that his anticipated prosperous future had been stolen. Hence, Ali did not want to resign to his fate of being deprived, whereas the butcher activity did not yield enough profit to replace the father as a breadwinner. Nonetheless, he was vocationally expected to follow the butcher work since it was his family legacy.

In the former quote, Mr Khamil indicated the father's death as a socio-economic pushing factor for Ali to migrate.⁹ Eventually, the patrilineal successor agreement was realised in Ali's family. According to gender and birth order, he was supposed to provide for his widowed mother and siblings. This responsibility was left unsaid but implicitly clear to him. This intra-familial successor mechanism of the first-born son assuming the father's role after his death is commonly practised and reappears in the other three cases as well. Thus, the familial and economic pressure lay mainly on Ali's shoulders, leading to the decision to migrate in the quest for income-generating activities elsewhere. In particular, the mother's situation drove him, which explicitly revalues his motive to migrate from an individual to a household level.¹⁰ However, Ali had no specific plan for where to find what kind of job since he just hoped for more favourable conditions abroad:

"Ali travelled without having any precise idea where he wanted to land. [...] People depend on him. He has to make it in life. What can he do? The only way is to seek greener pastures beyond Tamale, which might be in Accra or other regions in Ghana or even abroad. The problem is that he wanted to do many jobs, but the jobs weren't here in Ghana. [...] It's just that he wanted to find something for himself and his people. He is the type that wants to help others. What can he do to help others? That's his main driver to travel. And that's why he always wants to try it again."

~ Mr Khamil ~

In this sense, childhood friend and migration fellow Aziz describes Ali's and his choice to migrate as a decision out of ignorance:

"Most of us took the decision to travel out of ignorance. [...] As you start the journey and your mind develops, you start to take decisions on your own. [...] When I was travelling outside, I had no idea what I was doing. It was all out of ignorance, lack of focus and planning. It was out of the view that when I was travelling out at an early age of life, I could have made it as simple as I thought. I started to travel, and even before I reached Libya, I started to regret my decision to leave my country when I was in the desert. Upon getting to Libya, I started to understand what it means to travel abroad. There, you don't have a mother or a father to take care of you."

~ Aziz ~

In fact, Ali ignored warnings from both family members who did not travel before as well as from those who had already migrated. Back then, he perceived those who warned him from abroad as untrustworthy. In his eyes, the situation abroad must be better. Otherwise, they would have returned. This monocausal logic seems plausible and appealing to everyone eager to try their luck on their own:

"Even if you are in Ghana and you call somebody in Libya, Italy, Germany, Spain or somewhere else and ask about the situation, they will tell you not to come. The situation isn't good for them over there. We thought back then that if the situation isn't good over there, why does that person not return? We didn't take them seriously and ignored what they said. We were curious to see what was there. This decision [to migrate] was just out of ignorance."

~ Aziz ~

Furthermore, the positive examples of those who succeeded in their migration outweigh the majority of those who return empty-handed and admonish potential migrants:

"One factor is what you see people bringing back. I told you earlier that there was a cousin of mine when I was eleven years old who brought back some fridges, vehicles, sound systems and more from Germany. That is where I got the idea of travelling after school."

~ Aziz ~

Beyond qualms, Ali was rather attracted by the success stories of other friends and family members who travelled and succeeded as well:¹¹

"Most of our family members did it and succeeded; others returned. Tanku just settled in Libya and didn't try to go to Europe. Others used Libya as a route to Europe. I'm sure all that together were factors that pushed and pulled him to travel northwards."

~ Mr Khamil ~

Admittedly, those people who deliver their success stories travelled through documented means. They had a visa and different preconditions than Ali would have had after his undocumented migration. This aspect needs to be taken into account. Thus, Ali and others were lured by having the optimistic attitude to be able to achieve similar income after undergoing undocumented migration:

"Even if you find a job here in Ghana, it's not enough after you pay your rent and give money to your parents and your wife. That's why people struggle to pass the desert and cross by sea, seeking a life better than here. Those who get a visa and do the documented migration used to call and say, 'My brother, come and see Europe. Everything is very nice. If you work, and even if it is just a small amount of money, it is still decent in Ghanaian money.' That's why people embark and take the risk and die in the desert or in the sea."

~ Ali ~

Apart from the desire to ease economic bottlenecks, as migration fellow Matthäus confirms, the already mentioned aspired prestige is another migration driver.¹² A deprived person can gain fame and fortune if he succeeds in arriving in Europe and sending remittances. Thus, the decision to migrate entails not only an economic but a social and psychological dimension as well. The successful migrant made a virtue out of necessity and elevated his reputation from zero to hero. Embedded in a family context, Ali's neighbour Abdul describes the desired act of release as follows:

"If you are the oldest in your family and all the hopes are on you, but there is no employment, and you and your family are hungry, they are starving, what would you do? Your own brother calls you good-for-nothing. Then, there is the opportunity to go through the desert to become someone. You go through the desert, and you either die or you survive. The latter will be a benefit to the family. What would you do?"

~ Abdul ~

Despite unsuccessful migrations in this regard, some, such as Ali and others, repeatedly try anew. As the financial resources were further exhausted, each unsuccessful attempt increasingly reinforced the pressure to fulfil his mission. In addition, more demands occurred after Ali's wedding in 2010 since his social network expanded. At the same time, having the situation in Libya in mind, he failed to catch up in Ghana after his return. As a matter of fact, Ali professes that he sincerely tried to make ends meet in Ghana. Still, he saw no perspective in his country of origin and assessed the potential in Libya more positively.¹³ His migration fellow Matthäus agrees with the opinion that there are better job perspectives and higher salaries abroad compared to the situation in Ghana.¹⁴ In the subsequent quote, he addresses another crucial aspect of recurring migrations. He pinpoints the reinforced dependence on other people the transit returnee is confronted with again. This relationship of dependence is burdensome for both the provider and the transit returnee. It is a situation the transit returnee aims to escape from:

"Upon return, I depend on other people until I get fed up with myself and travel again. There is no other choice."

~ Matthäus ~

Aside from the perceived pressure to succeed abroad and the scarcity of perspectives in Ghana, the knowledge of the means for travelling and his social network en route and in Libya were beneficial for Ali's following migrations. The latter lowered the migration costs, notwithstanding inflation. Ali acquired knowledge and contacts during his migrations which helped him to migrate more conveniently, cheaper, quicker and safer. He was in the position to use his migrational network in order to prepare for his journey and to receive aid en route. For the fourth migration, his migration fellows in Libya, Seeba and Sofian, were willing to provide him with the required

money to cover the costs. In this way, Ali was not forced to accept jobs en route, which made him less vulnerable as well.¹⁵

As already described, the planning became more sophisticated and the circle of confidants in his environment smaller over time. Before his first migration, Ali consulted friends who had travelled before to get the necessary information for his journey.¹⁶ Similar to his later migration fellow Odum¹⁷, Ali informed his mother but not the extended family beforehand¹⁸. They just gleaned it when Ali arrived in Libya. However, his mother and siblings were informed about his general idea. They were in favour of his migration aspiration even though they were unaware of Ali's plan to migrate by land.¹⁹ After the disenchanting outcome of Ali's first migration, they increasingly started opposing his future migration ambitions, which is why he hid his plans for future migrations.²⁰ The preparation and exact day of departure was always a secret.²¹ Remarkably enough, Ali concealed his migration ambitions even from his wife Rukaya:²²

"My husband thought that when he informs me, I will discourage him. That's why he left without letting me know that he was on the move to Libya. I cannot determine where the success for us lies. It could be in Ghana where we succeed. Before I knew it, my husband was already in Libya. The only thing I can do is to help him with prayers."

~ Rukaya ~

Even after his second migration and the outbreak of the civil war in Libya, she was not having enough influence on Ali to convince him to stay. Later, Rukaya knew from experience that he would try to migrate secretly again and was aware that she could not deliver arguments to make him stay. Thus, she stopped trying to convince him.²³ Nonetheless, mother Habiba's positive attitude caused family-internal disagreements, as her sister Nardia, Ali's aunt, describes it.²⁴ Other family members contested Habiba's standpoint, but she had the final word. After some time, the family as a whole disagreed with Ali's desire to migrate. They were begging him unsuccessfully to stay:

"When Ali was abroad, we heard a lot of stories that people were dying. Our mother was very afraid that something could have happened to him. We begged him to return home and try his luck here. He returned and saw that even his own sisters were not working, just doing some petty tradings. They couldn't support him in any way. This made him think again that he had to do something for these people. When you talked to him, he listened but also found explanations why he had to travel again to help the family."

~ Mr Khamil ~

In summary, Ali informed other people only if they were necessary for his migration in terms of information or finance. Exemplary for this stands the third migration in the year 2012, for which Ali secretly got 2,000 GHC from Mr Khamil's wife Nawala and asked his friends in Libya for advice:

"She [Nawala] gave me 2,000 GHC without the knowledge of Mr Khamil. We did that secretly. However, the money wasn't enough for my plan, and that's why I wanted to go to Libya again. I was in Accra at that time, and that's why I decided to call one of my friends in Libya, called Seeba because I didn't want to pass Tamale. Seeba explained to me an alternative route through Togo and Benin. He gave me the details about the stopovers."

~ Ali ~

-
- 1 "We live in unity." ~ Nardia
- 2 "We are Dagombas by tribe. We know and love each other. We are farmers and sit together like an extended family." ~ Nurudeen
- 3 "There is a lot of suffering in this neighbourhood because most of the people are unemployed. The living standard is not all that high. Nevertheless, people greet each other and try to offer help to each other. If there is the willingness to help." ~ Sadia
- 4 "Over the last generations, there has been changes in terms of solidarity. When our fathers were still, there was some kind of unity. For now, the unity still exists but the level of poverty makes it fragile. Everyone is search for his or her living and that of the family." ~ Sadia
- 5 "Since we are staying together for quite long, it's like a big family. If someone has a problem, we come together and help." ~ Sedu
- 6 "We live together in unity. However, there are a lot of people who are lacking proper education." ~ Sedu
- 7 "There has been changes. Most of the children have passed through education. Because of that, there are certain things that they are initiating in the community which brings development." ~ Sedu
- 8 "So, even before my father died my personal life already deteriorated sharply." ~ Ali
- 9 "My father's issues and his later death was the main factor for Ali to travel." ~ Mr Khamil
- 10 "He even respects my mother so much. It's all because of the wellbeing of the family. That's why he travelled." ~ Nafisa
- 11 "We had another brother who was way older and in Libya. Other friends travelled as well. That made his mind to try as well." ~ Mr Khamil
- 12 "How do you survive? The whole migration matter is a matter of the financial situation." ~ Matthäus
- 13 "For the last migration, I can say that I really tried to stay in Ghana. However, because of the job problem and my financial situation, I decided to try it abroad for another time and start my life upon return. That's why I returned to Libya." ~ Ali
- 14 "First of all, let's ask ourselves, 'Why do we travel?' There is the slogan: 'Home, sweet home.' No matter what, home, sweet home. If you are in your own country, you enjoy it more than anywhere else. Especially, in African countries. But you travelled. Okay, fine. Some people are travelling, others not. Why so? That's the question. We all sitting around this table have travelled. Upon return, I depend on other people until I get fed up with myself and travel again. There is no other choice. The whole problem causing people to migrate is the financial problem. If I know how to make some GHC, I will not travel again. After I've eaten with my children and my wife, I can put some money aside. That's perfect. I will not go out again. But how did life start upon return? I've no money printing machine. I have to get it from somewhere. From where? I don't have a job. Look at the examples we just mentioned. When you are outside doing the sanitation job, that's good. The money you get here in Ghana is less than 50 USD a month. In other countries you get 800 USD or more." ~ Matthäus
- 15 "I called Seeba and Sofian. They sent me the money and I paid the connection man who brought me to Benghazi. [...] [Later,] I didn't work in Nburanu. I just called my friends in Benghazi. They sent me the transportation money." ~ Ali
- 16 "Iddrisu went to Libya in 1988. He returned and I just asked him about the route and the situation there because I wanted to go as well. He was six times in Libya and was returned through evacuation with me together in 2011." ~ Ali
- 17 "One day, I came to my mother and talked to her, 'I want to go to Libya,' and my mother said, 'I wish you all the best.' That's what my mother told me. My father agreed as well." ~ Odum
- 18 "I didn't even know that because I wasn't in the house. I was a teacher somewhere in the rural site. I just returned from somewhere and realised that he has left. After a while, we got a call that he was in Libya." ~ Mr Khamil
- 19 "My uncle agreed on that. It was known that the road through the desert is dangerous. I told my uncle that I won't take that path. However, one day I didn't go to the market place where the butchery was." ~ Ali
- 20 "Just in 2002, they [my family] were happy that I left to better my own future and bring something for them. However, ever since, they didn't agree with my plans to try it again. Therefore, I didn't tell anyone before, nor did I in 2015 for my last migration." ~ Ali
- 21 "One day, I prepared myself, changed the money into CFA and after midnight I went to the station where the cars coming from Accra are passing to go to Niger. It was in the night between midnight and 1am. I went there with my bag with some food such as Garri, biscuits and water in it." ~ Ali

²² “I didn’t tell anyone because if I tell them [my family], they wouldn’t let me go.” ~ Ali;
“I just tried to gather some money and left without telling anyone.” ~ Ali

²³ “Personally, I wasn’t worried because our living standard at home wasn’t good. I couldn’t find any way to convince my husband. So, I just prayed that he will be successful abroad that we can improve our lives.” ~ Ruakya

²⁴ “The final decision is based on what Ali’s mother says. If the mother agrees that he should go back and he also wants to do so, then there is no other option for us since the mother is involved in that decision-making.” ~ Nardia

5.1.1.2 Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni

Effiakuma is located in the northern area of Takoradi. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, this district is an ethnically mixed area.¹ Rough and chaotic living circumstances characterise it.² Despite an increased crime rate³, Mohammed considers his district peaceful⁴, and the cohesion and solidarity among its people still exist⁵. Nonetheless, the inhabitants perceive precarious living conditions⁶ as stressful⁷ and challenging⁸. In particular, unemployment⁹ and no access to formal education¹⁰ are described as problematic. Among those who work, blue-collar workers, mostly paid by the day, dominate the district.¹¹ Compared with Changli, the economic pressure which does not undermine the people's willingness to help each other conjoined with the increased magnitude of formal education, the socio-economic situation in Effiakuma appears quite similar. Another similarity is the commonly agreed perception that making a living hardened over generations. It caused a commonly agreed and widespread pessimism¹². In this regard, mother Amimatu¹³; sister Amimatu¹⁴; brother Zakari¹⁵; childhood friend Ali¹⁶ as well as childhood friend and migration fellow Adams¹⁷ share the same opinion. In reference to the development of the past decades, Ali's friend Mamudu specifies that the area economically lacks innovation capacities and suffers from low purchasing power.¹⁸ In response to these circumstances, Amimatu portrays migration as a way to escape the area's economic hardships. Once again, her scathing judgement of her district is a blunt answer to perceived non-existent future prospects:

"Leaving this place would be better because there is nothing good here. If you travel abroad, there are way more jobs and the salary is higher than here. The little you get there is something you can use to start something here. But living here isn't good. There is nothing good about this place."

~ Amimatu ~

Those migrants who are successful do not return to Effiakuma but to other places, which increases the neighbourhood's deprived existing situation, according to childhood friend and migration fellow Adams.¹⁹ According to childhood friend Aziz, migration ideas are discussed among peer groups of young inhabitants who find it difficult to acquire an income-generating activity. Seeking greener pastures abroad, they perceive migration as "the easiest way" in their quest for a job:

"Things are difficult here. There are a lot of guys here who travel. Right now, almost 80 per cent of the young men have travelled to Italy because of the situation here. My junior brother is also with me in Spain now. There are no jobs here and the government doesn't do a lot. The people have to live from something. They have to get their daily bread. The easiest way is to travel because there is no solution here. Just a few of them learned handwork and lived from it. They are doing like mason's work or they are mechanics or they are doing carpentry work. So, it's not that all of the young people have travelled. The majority has left the country. Just a few of them are still here."

~ Aziz ~

One example of this informal group of young people is the one who calls itself Las Palmas Club, described in more detail in *Subsection 5.2.2*. In Las Palmas Club, many have yet to migrate themselves but who are exceedingly eager to start a journey and follow the Central Mediterranean route. Mohammed reports that he extensively described his dramatic experiences to everyone. However, the young men want to avoid being influenced in their plans and prefer to make their

own experiences.²⁰ Even his foster son Peter remains unimpressed by Mohammed's stories. He sees no prospects for himself in Ghana and wishes to migrate as soon as the opportunity arises:

"Mohammed told me what he has been through when he was on the move and later in prison. He told me about people dying and all that stuff. He tells me that it isn't good over there, but as long as things aren't good here either, I would like to try my best to migrate if I get the legal means, good. But as long as money isn't there, I would like to try the illegal way even though I'm really afraid. Some go and succeed. So, maybe things will be okay if I go."

~ Peter ~

Thus, Mohammed's influence on Peter is not reaching him to make him change his mind. Instead, Peter wants to migrate "as soon as possible"²¹ and is willing to give "whatever it takes to reach Europe"²². Mohammed's childhood friend Ali reports that he also tries discouraging young people from travelling with stories of his failed migration.²³ Nonetheless, not only do negative stories from third parties not have an inhibiting effect, but even one's own migration experiences do not necessarily eliminate the motivation to try it again, as the example of Las Palmas Club member Suraka shows.²⁴ He repeatedly emphasises his and the others' determination to attempt migrating.²⁵ At a meeting of Las Palmas Club in the presence of Mohammed and others, laughter erupts upon the question of who plans to migrate. The answer seems redundant to them since they all have these intentions, as Aminu answers vicariously.²⁶ There is a genuine euphoria and group dynamic of mutual encouragement regarding the ambitions to migrate towards Europe. As a matter of fact, few made it to Europe, which motivates many others to try it themselves in the hope of being among the chosen ones. Suraka sums it up as follows:

"We are not afraid of anything when it comes to travelling. Stories of returnees don't hinder us at all. We have no or just petty jobs which don't give us much. We are very passionate about travelling. If the opportunity comes, we are not going to spare anything."

~ Suraka ~

Irrespective of his two unsuccessful migrations, even Mohammed's brother Zakari agrees with the perception of the young men from Las Palmas Club. He describes the success of migration as dependent on individual determination and fortune. Zakari portrays migration as a sort of lottery:

"Everyone has their own chances. If I don't succeed, it doesn't mean that you wouldn't succeed. I didn't stop him [his brother Mohammed] from migrating."

~ Zakari ~

Beyond Las Palmas Club, the opinion on migration and transit returnees is more nuanced. It is confirmed that everyone dreams of going to Europe. However, the dangers en route and living conditions in Europe are not as promising as many hope as neighbour Said explains:

"I can say that it's a dream for everybody to go to Europe. As far as I'm concerned, I've some small business ongoing at the moment. Even if I thought about what I was doing before, I would have just gone to Europe for the holidays. I would just choose the legal way and not, sorry to say, the illegal way. If you go to Europe without papers, you end up in camps and have to hustle before you get anything. It will take you years. Before you leave, you should assess your own situation properly. I would never take the illegal way into consideration. If there is a real chance to get a job which gives me a chance to earn more money than here, I will go. Otherwise, I just stay in Ghana because you never know how long it will take you to succeed in Europe. You never know."

~ Said ~

As it is the case for most of the families in Effiakuma, the financial situation for Mohammed's family is precarious as well. Father Yussif was a town councillor²⁷ and mother Amimatu traded cashew nuts²⁸. Due to economic challenges, Mohammed had to stop going to school and start work to support the family financially.²⁹ After Yussif fell sick, he could not afford the necessary treatment in the hospital. His father's death due to the lack of financial means was emotionally very burdensome for the whole family. It was a drastic life event that again showed them the fateful meaning of financial resources. It shaped Mohammed's perception and made him think that "only the rich people can enjoy their lives"³⁰. Beyond the emotional burden for all family members, the financial constraint became severer. All five siblings could not find a job, move out of their mother's house³¹ or marry³², which is all the status quo until today. As identified in the previous chapter, Mohammed's tailor business suffered³³ under cheaper competing products from China³⁴. Since Mohammed's parents were economic migrants themselves³⁵ before they established a family³⁶, migration was perceived within the family as part of a household strategy. Over time, the pressure to migrate piled to a degree which made Mohammed plan his journey towards Europe. The familial financial situation was the main driver, or putting it more precisely, father Yussif's death set the ball rolling as sister Alimatu describes it:

"The death of our father is definitely a factor. When our father was alive, he was arranging everything for the family. He was the breadwinner. Now, he is no more. Our mother had even started selling shea butter to get something to eat. It was a factor. I'm sure that this was one of the factors why Mohammed migrated. He was going with the perspective to help our mother so that she doesn't have to work anymore and get a good life."

~ Alimatu ~

Equally, Mohammed's childhood friend Yunusah describes the death of the father as the starting point for Mohammed to conceive migration as an option to meet the requirements to satisfy the widowed mother and siblings and "to take on the father's role"³⁷. Beforehand, the first-born son Zakari felt likewise the responsibility to support the household:

"Our father supported us when he was alive. He financed our education and supported us. Now, he isn't there anymore and the responsibilities have to be taken on by us. The little you get makes you migrate to Europe because things are easier there. So, the death of our father was a factor because we had to take care of him a lot after he passed away. There was no work here to get something to eat or to take care of ourselves and our mother. So, we had to try it to get something to bring back and to take care of the family."

~ Zakari ~

Eventually, he describes the migration towards Europe as the only solution to improve the living standard.³⁸ According to the patrilineal succession rules, which are technically sustained by Walas, one of the father's brothers is supposed to replace their dead brother as the provider. However, no uncle assumed the breadwinner's role. Instead, brother Zakari felt inclined to migrate first as he was the first-born son. His unsuccessful attempts increased the pressure on Mohammed to try his luck as well. In particular, mother Amimatu's wish seemed stronger than his own preferences. These circumstances put the family's hopes on his shoulders. Mohammed's childhood friend and migration fellow Sumaila states that Zakari's failed attempts might rather

have an encouraging influence on Mohammed to try it himself instead of deterring him from migrating:

"Mohammed's brother's failed attempts to enter Europe play a certain role because we believe that everybody's luck is different. Sometimes, people migrate and fail, which makes others rather motivated to try their own luck instead of not trying to migrate. When we see people migrating, no matter how successful they are, it motivates us to migrate as well. There are always some who succeed. Our chances in life are different."

~ Sumaila ~

Mohammed's neighbourhood friend Said confirms the idea of migration as a familial livelihood strategy, whereas the family as such is sometimes involved in the planning, but at times they are not.³⁹ Yet the idea of freeing themselves from the tense situation was already on Ali's mind when he was a little boy. At this point, it was a childlike dream of a better life⁴⁰ since "clothes to wear or the place to sleep were all a big trouble"⁴¹. Eventually, the vague idea developed into a concrete resolution to migrate for the given reasons. Mohammed consulted other friends who travelled before. A few of them advised him against migrating northwards, describing the dangerous route, the behaviour of Arabic Libyans towards black people in their country and the maltreatment he might have to face. The stories unsettled him, but Mohammed decided to embark on that journey despite his uncertainty. He just remembered the warning words of his friend Mussah when he was later imprisoned in Libya:

"I had mixed feelings about it. I had the fear that the Arabs could catch me, but I tried to push these thoughts away. [...] A guy called Mussah told me that the road is really dangerous and that life in Libya isn't good. He had been there before and returned. He said that I shouldn't try and that Arab people are very wicked. But at that time, I said, 'No, I want to go to Europe.' At the time the Arabs put me in prison, I remembered Mussah's words that he advised me not to go."

~ Mohammed ~

Beyond Mussah, more people warned him. Nonetheless, his equally cautionary friend Mamudu understands the situation Mohammed faced before departure and why he migrated despite his advice against it. He describes Mohammed's behaviour as non-negotiable since it was mother Amimatu's wish for him to migrate in the interest of the family:

"I told Mohammed not to leave because I had gone myself and told him what I experienced. But he was very worried. Nothing was going on with his family. The father died. There was nothing or no one who could feed them. He was very worried and thought that he had to go. He had no choice but to try, hustling and getting something. He has an older brother who is a construction worker, but he just gets petty money and he cannot take care of the family. The mother was worried as well. She wanted him to move forward for the benefit of the family. At least, he could have come home with something to help the family."

~ Mamudu ~

Towards his family, Mohammed was frank about his intentions. As described by Mamudu, even mother Amimatu was in favour of Mohammed's migration plans despite the two attempts Zakari made. According to herself, she felt happy and convinced when Mohammed embarked on the journey.⁴² Mohammed was keen to support his mother in order to alleviate her suffering. He recognised the burden the familial situation caused and how it affected his mother since father Yussif died:

"My father was sick and died. My mother was left alone to take care of us. My mother suffered a lot. That's why I said that our family didn't have and still doesn't have a good time. That's also why I decided to travel to improve the situation my family faces. Since my father died, especially my mother and my sisters have suffered. They are crying. If I see my mother, I try not to cry because it would make the suffering even worse. The little money we get, we have to spend it right away."

~ Mohammed ~

Hence, his migration aspirations arose from a household perspective as he professed to seek a better life for his family.⁴³ Mohammed wanted to try his own fortune. This perception is comparable to a lottery. In fact, the unfolding migration stories reveal that the chances of making it to Europe are relatively low. However, the stakes are high, but one can only know whether or not they are the winner if they join the lottery. Mohammed wanted to tempt fate in the hope of being chosen by God's grace. This ambition was reinforced by the success stories of former migrants as well.⁴⁴ The powerful impact of the doctrine of predestination appears in all four case studies. However, Mohammed's decision-making reveals this phenomenon most impressively. In theory, he acknowledges migration as a means to find income-generating activities abroad, but he never showed nor expressed any interest in migrating himself in practice. Mohammed's decision-making for migration was rather the accumulation of external influences and factors of his life situation than born out of his intrinsic eagerness to migrate to Europe. His childhood friend Ali confirms the impression of Mohammed's migration as an unforeseeable event:

"I was so close to him that I told him everything that I went through during my journey. I told him about the ups and downs on my way. But he never told me that he would even like to travel himself. So, I was very surprised he chose to go through the desert and not by ship, which is the hardest way. I was very surprised because he is a calm type of person. A type of person that wouldn't do anything that is hasty. So, I was very surprised that he went through the desert. [...] I was surprised because he didn't tell me, irrespective of how hard I told him about everything that I went through. At a certain point, I understood. Most people don't tell anyone before they travel. I wouldn't inform anyone when I'm about to leave, either. When I heard that he left without telling me, I didn't take it personally. I rather prayed that he is gonna be successful and make it there."

~ Ali ~

Thus, most of his friends were surprised when they discovered Mohammed left for Europe. In their eyes, Mohammed lacks even the required character to master the route. As his friend Rahman firmly describes, he is not perceived as the typical person liable for undocumented migration.⁴⁵ If there was only him alone he had to provide for, he would have never embarked on the journey abroad. Based on Mohammed's character and mindset, neighbourhood friend Said is very convinced of this interpretation:

"Sometimes, it's not really your own idea, but this hardship we are facing might push you. Our brother Mohammed is a good example. I travelled myself, and before I returned, I heard that he had travelled. I know his character. He would never travel to Libya based on his own senses. I know that."

~ Said ~

Thus, Mohammed took on the responsibility to meet the expectations. Said adds that certainly Muslims are expected to assume this role:

"That hardships were pushing Mohammed to travel. The senior brother isn't working, the following one isn't working, and he is the third boy in the house. You can see your brothers and your mother suffering. At a certain age, it becomes all your responsibility. Especially for us as Muslims, you have

to take care of your mother if she is weak or in need. We, the Muslims don't just sit beside you while your mother is suffering. If this gets into your mind, it won't let you sleep easy."

~ Said ~

Nonetheless, the expectations that the first-born son(s) "are supposed to take care of the family"⁴⁶ to contribute to the household income and to support their mother and siblings are not always communicated openly but reflect the unspoken expectations the family members have of each other. According to Said, the subtlety of the patriarchal succession does not reduce the force and pressure to act on the respective male family members:

"Assuming that you are the senior brother. Your mother is old, your father is old. Nobody would tell you that you have to take on the responsibility. Nobody will force you to travel. However, you are sitting down and you have to find ways how to make a living for yourself and your family. [...] You feel the responsibility yourself. This is the African culture. I don't really know about European culture, but I heard that when you become 18 years old, you take care of yourself until you get married. I heard that this is how it works for some of them. That doesn't apply to all of you, but for some, you don't carry on the family matters. You don't think of your family before you have thought of yourself first. So, why should you feel any pressure? But in Africa, that is our culture. You cannot see your brothers suffering just like that. You even have a responsibility for your friends sometimes."

~ Said ~

As mentioned earlier, Mohammed informed his family about his general idea.⁴⁷ The details about the actual planning of his migration remained confidential. Beyond his family⁴⁸, he shared his general plans with a few of his friends namely uncle George, Yunusha, Allahji, Yaya, Faruk, and Faisal from the community at Zongo, who advised him and supported him financially⁴⁹ and provided him with certain information⁵⁰. In the past years, people underwent undocumented migration by ship arriving in Spain or other European destinations. However, this option was ruled out by the people who advised him. He was told that the only realistic way leads through the desert to the sea.⁵¹ Mohammed had to sell his work equipment and abandon his room to allocate the necessary money for his migration.⁵² As mentioned earlier, he paid 5,000 GHC in advance to a so-called connection man who facilitated the migration. This connection man organised the route and paid the facilitators for Mohammed. This included the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea.⁵³

¹ "I would describe Effiakuma as a mix of different ethnic groups. There are Walla, Fanti, Frafra, Liberians who settled here because of the war in their home country." ~ Mohammed

² "It's a Muslim community. It is very chaotic. There is no order, no law. It's not easy to live here. It's rough." ~ Ibrahim

³ "There are a lot of bad guys in this area. There are weed smokers. They make living here a bit uncomfortable." ~ Mamudu

⁴ "My community is a nice environment. It is very peaceful and there is a certain sense of solidarity." ~ Mohammed

⁵ "It's all in peace. If someone needs something, we help each other out. [...] There is a certain sense of solidarity." ~ Mohammed

⁶ "Living here is very hard but what can we do? We have no other choice. We were born here but it's very hard." ~ Alimatu

⁷ "Living in this area isn't that straight. Living with the family and all that and trying to find something to eat, is very hard. It's very stressful here." ~ Adams

⁸ "However, what I've seen and experienced makes me thinking that it's not easy to live here." ~ Ali

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- 9 "Things here aren't easy. If you don't have work, it means that you have to suffer and things aren't too smooth for you. Living here isn't easy. It's very hard especially if you are jobless." ~ Zakari
- 10 "Things aren't really good here. Most of us don't have a good education. Sometimes, parents cannot even provide what is needed to send their children to school. Bad education is a big problem and things aren't going really well here." ~ Peter
- 11 "My neighbours are doing construction work. That's a really common work. You don't need a certificate for that. You can just go there and ask if you can help." ~ Mohammed
- 12 "The living standard now is worse than it was during my father's time. It's not easy now but it's okay." ~ Ali;
"Living here today is very different. Things are harder today in comparison to the past." ~ Adams;
"It was much better earlier than now because when we were younger, our parents were the ones who were taking care of us. Things aren't that smooth. It's much harder than before." ~ Amimatu;
"Things in the past weren't like this. Things are very hard today. To buy, to sell, to work, everything is hard compared to some decades in the past." ~ Zakari
- 13 "Comparing the past days with the current situation, it's harder nowadays. Things weren't like this but much better. We were able to afford certain things. It's not like it is today." ~ Amimatu
- 14 "It was much better easier than now because when we were younger, our parents were the ones who were taking care of us. Things aren't that smooth. It's much harder than before." ~ Alimatu
- 15 "Things in the past weren't like this. Things are very hard today. To buy, to sell, to work, everything is hard compared to some decades in the past." ~ Zakari
- 16 "The living standard now is worse than it was during my father's time. It's not easy now but it's okay." ~ Ali
- 17 "Living here today is very different. Things are harder today in comparison to the past." ~ Adams
- 18 "There has been a lot of changes. The government isn't helpful. Even if you have a store, the items and goods remain in your store, nobody is buying anything. The situation now is very bad if I compare it to times in the past." ~ Mamudu
- 19 "There is a lot of impact due to the emigration of young people. Those who were able to succeed, return not to this area but to a richer place to build their houses there. These people are gone. They don't go back to the same deprived environment which made them leave. However, those who return empty-handed start exactly from the level they left this area. There is no improvement." ~ Adams
- 20 "I explained everything what happened to me on my migration experience. But they all wanna have their own experience. It doesn't hinder them." ~ Mohammed
- 21 "I would like to go as soon as possible. The earlier, the better. If some tells me to go with him tomorrow, I'm ready. My age doesn't matter." ~ Peter
- 22 "It depends on the chance that comes. If the chance comes to go through the desert, fine. If the chance comes that someone supports me to take the legal way, fine. If the chance comes to take a ship, it's good. I take whatever it takes to reach Europe." ~ Peter
- 23 "I've migration experiences but mine were always with a ship. It's not easy and sometimes I tell those who want to travel that they should cancel that trip. It's not easy. Sometimes, you might face injuries and even the death. If you try to discourage people to travel, they think that you want their downfall. I travelled and didn't succeed. That doesn't mean to them that it doesn't end well for them. But I would say that all illegal travelling isn't really good. It's really troublesome." ~ Ali
- 24 "Some of our members were able to travel and they succeeded. We who are still here are also able to succeed. Even though we returned, we still wanna find some money and travel again. We really want to go back." ~ Suraka
- 25 "In the old days, people used the ship from the harbour to travel. Some have gone for like four times and returned still not making it. So, we see that it doesn't work anymore to go by ship. We have to take the way through the desert. If through the desert doesn't work, they are still passionate to go. They take any opportunity and means they can get. If someone comes to offer them the legal means, they are ready to go of course. They really want to go." ~ Suraka
- 26 "Almost everyone. Sorry that I have to laugh but everyone of course." ~ Aminu
- 27 "My father was a town councillor." ~ Mohammed
- 28 "My mother was trading with cashew. She processes it to oil as well." ~ Mohammed
- 29 "I couldn't continue after JHS because of financial problems." ~ Mohammed

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- 30 "My father was sick. If you are sick in Ghana, it's likely that you die. In Europe, you might have get a treatment but here people are easily dying. You just get your treatment in the hospital if you pay money. Otherwise, you just die. In Ghana, only the rich people can enjoy their lives. If you are poor, you suffer." ~ Mohammed
- 31 "They all live in our mother's house." ~ Mohammed
- 32 "No, we are all not married." ~ Mohammed
- 33 "It was that the business collapsed." ~ Mohammed
- 34 "Yaya is a building labourer. Zakaria is a chef but he is jobless at the moment. I was a tailor but the Chinese products overstocked the market and I lost my job. That's why I entered the road to Libya wanting to arrive in Europe. Amina is also just a retailer. Memu is also a private house chef for a director. She is still doing that." ~ Mohammed
- 35 "There were no jobs in the north. He couldn't satisfy himself. That's why he settled here trying to find something to do. That's why he came from the north to here." ~ Mohammed
- 36 "My father is a Wala. He migrate from Upper West Region to Takoradi. He couldn't find a job. However, he stayed here and raised a family." ~ Mohammed
- 37 "The father's death is really the main factor why Mohammed migrated. The father was the breadwinner. Even when the father was alive, he didn't bring that much money home. He worked as a security guard. Mohammed had to take on the father's role. It is a big challenge to provide for the family." ~ Yunusah
- 38 "If you travel and succeed, it ends well for the family. Most of your problems will be ending. Even today, I didn't go to work. I have to find something to eat. [...] Things aren't going to be better here. The only way is to go to Europe to support the family." ~ Zakari
- 39 "Sometimes, it's within the family but there are also a lot who travel without the family's knowledge. They just discuss it with friends. Nobody ever left for Libya just thinking of himself. No, it's the family behind him for who he has to try his luck abroad. If I arrive in Libya, I call a friend before I or they tell my mother that I've left. They have to know where you are." ~ Said
- 40 "When I was a child, my plan was to go to Europe. I was planing that inshallah. I wanted to take the ship from Takoradi. My wish to enter Europe is something I have in me for a very long time. It already entered my mind when I was a child." ~ Mohammed
- 41 "A lot of things happened in my childhood. Things became very hard for me. The financial situation, clothes to wear or the place to sleep were all a big trouble." ~ Mohammed
- 42 "I was happy that he is going to at least get something for the family. As already said, someone told him that he should wait for a bit and start to migrate then. I was happy but then things turned in a way we weren't expecting. We thank God that he returned safely. When he left, I was happy." ~ Amimatu
- 43 "I wanted to have a better life for my family. They should enjoy. They are all living under poor conditions. The idea was if I go to Europe, my family will enjoy." ~ Mohammed
- 44 "That's why I entered the road to Libya to make it in Europe because those who succeeded have big houses and farms now. They enjoy. That's why I also wanted to be in Europe." ~ Mohammed
- 45 "The route to Libya requires some reckless attitude to go to such places. You have to be violent at times to master the route. He isn't like that. I thought that it would be even hard form him to move from Takoradi to Burkina Faso. When I heard that he has travelled to Libya, I was surprised because everyone knows what is going on over there." ~ Rahman
- 46 "Poverty and pressure from the families to bring money home to make it in life makes people migrating. Especially, the first borns are supposed to take care of the family. When you don't have the money to do so, you are compelled to leave the country to make it outside the country to help the family." ~ Sumaila
- 47 "They [family] just knew about my and the other's wish to go to Europe. I informed my brother Zakari and my family supported me." ~ Mohammed
- 48 "Mohammed told me that he wants to travel. Someone said that there will be open routes for migration. The following year, he went. I knew that he was going but things went bad for him." ~ Alimatu
- 49 "I got 3,000 GHC on my own and 2,000 GHC from friends. These friends were Faruk, my mother and Yaya." ~ Mohammed
- 50 "Uncle George. He gave me the contact details of the connection men." ~ Mohammed
- 51 "I just thought that if I get money, I will go. A friend of mine told me that I could try it by ship departing from the harbour going to Spain. He wanted to link me up to a connection man. Yet, he told me that people are passing Libya nowadays. If I pass Libya, I will enter Europe. That's why I decided to go though the desert." ~ Mohammed

⁵² “Before leaving for Libya, I was in need for money and sold all my machines.” ~ Mohammed

⁵³ “I left with 5,000 GHC. I gave the money to the connection man’s wife. He said that it costs 3,000 GHC from Ghana to Tripoli and 2,000 GHC from there to Italy. So, I gave the money to his wife. [...] I payed the connection man before I started my journey. He arranged the whole journey for me and informed the connection men on the ground to transfer me. All was payed and organised.” ~ Mohammed

5.1.1.3 Third Case: Ebenezer Bae

Ebenezer's childhood village Taino I is characterised by ethnic homogeneity, social cohesion¹, and lived neighbourhood solidarity². However, the price decline for cashews which the rural community economically depend on, harshly affects its members. Across the region, the recent influx of Indian traders worsened the situation and caused tensions among the farmers.³ The inhabitants witnessed a surge in the unemployment⁴ and crime rate⁵. Due to the scarcity of alternative job opportunities, a certain number of younger people aim for bigger cities in the quest for income-generating activities, as mentioned earlier. The optimism for the future fades not only among the younger generation but also among older people who discern a comparatively adverse living environment and share similar views as Ebenezer's father Kwaku describes it:

"When we were young, we weren't suffering as much as the children of today. This dispensation of poverty in this community just occurred recently. When we were young, life was much easier for us. Life was good."

~ Kwaku ~

Ebenezer's mother Joustina opted to leave Taino I for the previously described reasons. Their household income relied on farming.⁶ In addition to the general economic situation, the father's alcohol and marihuana abuse strained the family financially and emotionally. Father Kwaku was unable to meet the requirements his wife and children had on him. The attempts to reconcile failed. After the divorce, Kwaku abandoned his family completely.⁷ Joustina as a single mother, had to provide for six children, two of whom were not her biological ones.⁸ After the family settled in Drobo, the financial situation did not improve but became severer.⁹ Ebenezer tried to support his mother as well as possible. He had to stop schooling¹⁰ in order to gain money for the family household¹¹. Despite his infancy, Ebenezer perceived the family situation in a way which required him to mature and support his family.¹² The experience of being abandoned by his father left its indelible mark on Ebenezer. Nonetheless, the more father Kwaku distanced himself from the family, the tighter Ebenezer's bond with his mother evolved:

"My father, I already didn't like him at that time at all. He did not take care of us. Sometimes, the family from my mother's side told me to go and stay with my father. Even when you do so and wake up in the morning, he doesn't mind if there is food or you get money to eat. He woke up in the morning and just went to the farm without taking care of us. So, I said, 'No, I cannot stay there.' If my mum is alive, how can I be with my father? My mother has no food, and how can I just sit with my father and suffer? So, we left from there."

~ Ebenezer ~

Comparing his case to Ali's and Mohammed's situation, Ebenezer's father did not pass away when he was young. However, the financial consequences of his loss in terms of being the breadwinner were likewise devastating.¹³ Similar to Ali and Mohammed, Ebenezer had to start earning money at an early age and could not continue his formal education either. The lack of financial resources was something which he perceived as unjust, comparing himself with other children of the same age. His developed perception of economic inequality resembles the first two cases as well. At an early stage, this experience was psychologically highly formative to Ebenezer, comparable to Ali's descriptions.¹⁴ The death of sister Regina who left two children, put an

additional emotional and financial burden on the family household. According to Ebenezer, her death was the result of the scarce of insufficient funds for her treatment in the hospital:

"When she [Regina] delivered the baby, she became sick after two months. My father didn't mind her, but my mother tried everything to help her. But I can say she died because of money. If my mother had money, my sister wouldn't have died. The lack of money caused her death."

~ Ebenezer ~

Mohammed described the death of his father in the same manner, which is another parallel. In addition, the tragedy reinforced Ebenezer's awareness of his father's inability to live up to his responsibilities to be the family leader as he remained absent. Losing direct and loved relatives in such an avoidable manner shapes the view of the bereaved family on money. Due to Regina's death, Ebenezer was highly affected and compassionated with his mother:

"I felt very sad. I cried a lot. It was not easy. My sister came just right before me. That made me really sad, and what saddened me even more, was the fact that she left two children. Who is taking care of these two children? Only my mum and we were left. My sister's husband doesn't take care of the children. So, that made me sad. My mother struggled. The boy was just born and the girl is just four or five years old, I think. They cannot live on their own. So, there is only my mum taking on responsibilities. Even when the time passed by, I still became sad. They started going to school and I gave them the little money I had. My mother doesn't have any work apart from cashew farming."

~ Ebenezer ~

Ebenezer developed the uncompromising wish to help his mother. He felt the unspoken responsibility as the first-born son¹⁵ to replace his father as the breadwinner¹⁶:

"I was aware of the situation of my family and I knew that my father didn't support us. I had to work hard, and my mum and I had to stick together. In our family are four girls and two boys, with me as the firstborn. Therefore, I felt the responsibility to work hard."

~ Ebenezer ~

Typically, the Akan follow the matrilineal kinship system in which ancestral descents are traced through maternal lines. Like Ali's and Mohammed's case, the inheritance order was not materialised. At no point in time, no uncle or aunt distinguished himself or herself to assume Kwaku's role.¹⁷ This status quo did not alter after he died in February 2020. The eruption of cultural family responsibilities is likewise reflected in the vanishing of Regina's husband, similar to the disappearance of the father of Mohammed's sister Alimatu's child during her pregnancy. Thus, Ebenezer and Mohammed have the failure of their brother-in-law in common. The narrative of the unshakable affection towards the mother as a leitmotif for their acting occurs in Ebenezer's and all the previously presented cases as well. Until today, mother Joustina plays an extraordinary role in Ebenezer's life. The mother's suffering provoked the determined mindset to help her in her effort to provide for the family. In the subsequent, childhood friend Emmanuel describes how the financial pressure of the parents is shifted onto the children, who then feel compelled to migrate in order to provide for the family income. As a result, the relationship of dependence from children on parents is reversed to parents on children. All hope is centred on the child who migrates:

"In Ghana, your success depends on your parental background. If your father or mother is sick, they are looking at you, the child. If you don't have anything, you have to travel in order to take care of your parents. There is almost no other option for most of the people who are then depressed and oppressed by the system. In a nutshell, if you are still here in Ghana while your parents depend on you, there is a need for you to travel outside. If you stay here in Ghana, you cannot take care of yourself or your parents. Here in Africa, the majority of parents depend on their children. If you are here and your parents are suffering, there is at least the motivation for you to travel outside, thinking that there are greener pastures for yourself and your family. So, when you are travelling, what you are telling yourself is, 'Make or break!' Either you die, or you make it. You take the decision and then you travel. Once your parents hear that you are there, which means overseas or at least in some of the neighbouring countries, they will be happy. They can put their hopes on you."

~ Emmanuel ~

Similar to Mohammed, Ebenezer's older half-brother Yan-Philip had migrated towards Europe before him.¹⁸ Both already discussed the general idea of migrating to Europe when they were children.¹⁹ Therefore, when he perceived the living situation of himself and his family as stagnating at a low level, Ebenezer recalled the idea of emigrating:

"I started thinking about leaving Ghana at the time I was struggling and doing the mason's work, carpentry work and that kind of work. I saw that the money I got was not enough. I had to share my money with my family. At the end of the day, the money was gone. So, I decided to travel. It would be better for my family and also for my personal life. That's why I took the decision. [...] I just sat down and thought about my work. I said to myself, 'If I travel, I can earn more money than right now. So, my family will be better off. So, let me save money and travel.' So, that's why I was making that decision."

~ Ebenezer ~

In addition, he felt lured by the stories of other migrants who entered Europe:

"I remember my brother's friends who are living abroad talking with him about Europe and life there. They were saying, 'Europe is good. Are you coming as well? The monthly salary if you have a good job, you can buy a house and take care of your family.' So, I decided to slowly save some money and travel to Libya to work there for a bit. After that, I wanted to go to Europe, either Italy, Germany or Spain. So, I thought if I can make it to this place, it would be better. And if you see somebody coming from Europe or those who are still in Europe and how their life is moving forward, I sat down and realised that it would help me and my family a lot to travel. So, I had to do that."

~ Ebenezer ~

Remarkably, half-brother Isaac still aspires to migrate to Europe until today. Ebenezer's and Yan-Philip's stories do not deter him. Instead, he considers the success or failure of the migrations to be partly coincidental. Failures should not discourage one from trying it again. Eventually, success depends on God as it does in life in general. In the end, one has to show God one's unrestrained will. This would allow one to migrate successfully to Europe:

"What I would say after you tried to enter Europe and you failed is simply to try again. You might succeed the next time. Even though Ebenezer returned with disturbing and sad stories, you just need to pray hard that God will see and guide you through the desert and across the sea. So, there is the need for you to try again, and that is what I actually also want to do."

~ Isaac ~

In the subsequent summarising quote, Ebenezer describes his state of mindset in the phase prior to his final decision-making process for migration. It illustrates his desperateness over the economic and emotional consequences of his sister's death, the divorce of his parents and the following father's behaviour. It becomes apparent that he compared himself with other children of his age, which is rooted in his feeling of being deprived and treated unjustly, looking at the

incidents, which occurred during his childhood and adolescence. He conceives his mother as in need of help and himself as the only person able to ease her situation:

"Initially, I was sometimes sad. I quarrelled with myself a lot. The thing that made me sad was the hustling. At that time, I was producing and carrying the bricks and blocks for the mason's work. I asked myself, 'Why? Why always me?' I used to struggle to get the money. During the time my father was still there, they had the coco farm, but he also didn't mind us. So, I asked myself again, 'No, it's not easy for me. When? When will I become a rich man?' So, that time was not easy. The whole day I was going up and down and my mother suffered. So, I had to work. I'm the man. The work I was doing was no work my mum would be able to do. Also, my junior brother is just a small boy and he cannot do this work. Only I was left. Sometimes, I woke up in the morning very tired, but still, I had to go. There were also my sister's children. They had no money either. Also, they had to go to school too. So, I had to go and work no matter how tired I was. Sometimes, I felt very depressed when I saw my friends going to school and having a better life. But if I'm lazy or smoke weed with somebody, I don't get any money. So, I sat down and just thought, 'Oh, it's not easy!'"

~ Ebenezer ~

Furthermore, Ebenezer pinpoints his gender in demarcation to his sisters and mother. His self-perception reflects a certain image of masculinity, which requires him to carry out manual labour for which the others are allegedly too young or too fragile.²⁰ Subsequently, Ebenezer felt called to be a man of action. Prior to Ebenezer's migration, Yan-Philip promised to support him and told him to wait for a bit. Still, his younger brother was too eager to embark independently on that journey without losing time²¹ which he explained to him afterwards.²² Emmanuel notes that one can call others along the route or in the destination country who can give you all the relevant information. On the one hand, this reduces the planning effort and, on the other hand, it awakens the curiosity to travel and see with your own eyes what others tell you about.²³ Thus, Ebenezer did not necessarily have to rely on Yan-Philip's information. He consulted mother Joustina and she gave her consent to the idea.²⁴ In contradistinction to father Kwaku²⁵ and other family members, she made financial contributions²⁶:

"When he told me that he wanted to travel, somehow I was against it, but he insisted that he wanted to go. Looking at the nature of the suffering we were going through, I have seven children with their father. But along the way, we got separated. The idea of travelling to Libya gave me mixed feelings. I had no money for him to pursue his idea to travel. So, we had to borrow money and I sold my cashews and other things. I thought that it was good for him to try, but I was also somehow not happy because I was very worried that something could happen to him on the way."

~ Joustina ~

Ebenezer consulted other former migrants and received information about the route and the required utensils and equipment from Joe.²⁷ No person actively discouraged him from migrating but saw in him the person who could succeed.²⁸ Ebenezer's self-assessment confirmed that opinion while being aware of the hardships en route.²⁹ Except for general information³⁰ about his intentions, he did not provide any details to anyone else³¹ apart from mother Joustina and Joe. The popular superstition about curses is widespread and confirmed in all four case studies.³² For that reason, prospective migrants try to hide their precise migration plans. Half-brother Isaac reveals that he and others hide their migration discussion from their parents.³³ In general, the danger that confidential information will be passed on is considered very likely.³⁴

"In our culture, we believe that if you want to travel, you keep it to yourself. Otherwise, they will hunt you. So, only my mum and Joe knew about it. Even when I was working with Atta, I didn't inform him. So, he didn't know."

~ Ebenezer ~

After getting his equipment, including fake passports³⁵ and money³⁶ together, Ebenezer left with the other migration fellows for Europe. The plan was to travel to Libya, aiming for a job which generates income to finance the crossing to Europe. Upon arrival in Libya, he sent word to the rest of the family through his mother. In addition, he called Atta and informed him as well.³⁷

¹ "The people who live in Taino are very kind. Especially, when there is a problem like if a person is sick, we come together and contribute something. In a nutshell, the people in Taino are very good and kind." ~ Kawku

² "In the community, there is a strong sense of cohesion. If somebody loses his father, there are still family or community members who are still there for the child. They do their best to contribute to the benefit of the child. If there is any help, they try their best. In general, we depend on each other and help each other in times of hardships."
~ Stephen

³ "The problems started about five to six years ago." ~ Abraham

⁴ "This village has no jobs for the youth. A lot of people are unemployed. You only get some petty jobs on a daily basis. If you don't have anybody to hire you, then there is only farming left. You can hardly make money and face severe unemployment problems." ~ Isaac

⁵ "Since the Indian people started to come to Drobo to buy cashew, we have some problems among each other. People started to fight over farms as a result of that. There is a surge in crime among the people living in this area." ~ Abraham

⁶ "In that village, we relied on farming." ~ Ebenezer

⁷ "My father's occupation was to be a farmer. But after the divorce he did not take care of us. He did not mind us at all. There was only my mum left. My father stayed in the village." ~ Ebenezer

⁸ "Another wife of my father gave birth. One of them is in Italy now. So, we were from one father but not the same mother. However, after this woman gave birth to them, she separated from my father because she didn't want to marry again. She saw the attitude of my father and that's why she didn't want to marry him. That's why my mother took care of them. They were two boys." ~ Ebenezer

⁹ "I grew up with my mum and my dad. When I get to 15 years my mum and my dad fell apart. After that, I stayed with my mum. She took care of me. My mum is a food seller. She sells Banku, Fufu, this kind of things. That's how she tried to take care of us." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁰ "I didn't complete my Senior High School because of money issues. So, my father didn't the care of us and therefore I couldn't afford. I had to stop SHS." ~ Ebenezer

¹¹ "My childhood wasn't easy due to money shortages. I still had to go to school but after school we had no food to eat. It was not easy at all. I cannot go to school without eating. I started doing petty jobs to get some money." ~ Ebenezer

¹² "This time was all about hustling. I didn't want to misbehave like stealing or smoking. So, I will not do that. I was thinking about the work. How to get money and hustle. I know that my family doesn't have any money and I have to fight hard to get money. So, talking about any misconduct like drinking alcohol or smoking weed, I don't know how to do that. When I lived in the village, I was with these stubborn boys who did that and I was with them but I didn't do it. Because of the way I am, this harsh and hustling stubbornness type, they like to spend time with me. So, sometimes when they went out they came over to call me. They put the weed in their bags and we went to the place where they smoke it but I didn't do it. Sometimes, they ask me, 'Why don't you join us?' And I said, 'The way I am and from my attitude, I know myself that if I drink or smoke, I will do fucking things. So, I will not do that.' That's also why they liked me. We played some football. I realised that my family is a poor family and I cannot allow to be a fool. If I start smoking or stealing, my mum will suffer. So, I have to avoid that and help my mum. That's why I left these stubborn boys behind. When I arrived in Drobo, I started thinking about my mum. For me, Drobo is the place to work hard." ~ Ebenezer

¹³ "Apart from the death of my sister [which was emotionally the worst moment so far], I would just mention the divorce of my parents after which everyone started to struggle." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁴ "The scarce of money was always a problem to me. I knew that my family doesn't have a lot of money. Therefore I always looked for work. If I don't get money today, how can my niece and nephew go to school? I was thinking about that." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁵ “All my four sisters are older than me. My brother is the last born.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁶ “Ebenezer travelled because of financial problems within the family.” ~ Atta

¹⁷ “From my mum’s family, there are many in Drobo. However, when we moved, I never stayed with those relatives. I stayed always with my mum. Sometimes, I used to see them but I was aware that they cannot help me a lot. So, I had to face the struggle and fight on my own.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁸ “My half-brother’s names are Yan-Philip and Isaac. Yan-Philip is in Italy now and Isaac is still with my father in Taino. He had married and has two or three children now.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁹ “When I was young, I always played football with Yan-Philip. He lent me football boots and any time we were going out, I was with him. Then he talked a lot about the life in Europe and his plans to travel there to achieve a better life.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁰ “Talking about Michael, he is a small boy. There are just my sisters and my mum. I had to start doing some petty work like the mason’s work. I went there on a daily basis and they gave me 10 or 15 GHC. Afterwards, I passed that to my mum. So, I started struggling. The girls couldn’t do this work. If somebody bought a plot of land and I went and weed to get some small money to help my mum.” ~ Ebenezer

²¹ “He [Yan-Philip] passed Libya in 2011. After he travelled, he heard of me that I’m hustling and that I’m a hard worker trying to learn carpentry and this kind of things. So, he told me that he likes me and that he knows that I’m a hard worker. He wanted to try as much as possible to help me. But at that time, things were not good. He didn’t get any papers. He told me to wait because he was struggling himself. After establishing himself, he promised to help me as well. I said, “No problem. I can wait. If I don’t get money from you, I can also make it on my own.” That’s why I started saving money to travel. Even when I was about to travel, I didn’t inform him.” ~ Ebenezer

²² “What I told him [Yan-Philip] is that he did everything on his own. I didn’t want to depend on him and I thought I can do it myself as well. I accept if you want to help me but I will also do everything what is in my power.” ~ Ebenezer

²³ “If you want to travel, you can easily make some calls to ask others how to carry out your journey. The people there can guide you. Then you feel the need to travel because they are getting good things there and you also wanna try and experience it yourself.” ~ Emmanuel

²⁴ “At that time in Drobo, the money I earned was spent very quickly. It was finished and not really enough. So, I told my mum that I wanna travel. My mum asked me, “Where do you want to go?” And I answered, “Libya.” She agreed and told me to save money for the journey. I should go there, work and support the family financially.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁵ “I didn’t get any information that my son Ebenezer was travelling to you Europe. During his journey I didn’t hear anything from him. I just heard that he was in Libya and hat he is back now.” ~ Kwaku

²⁶ “Ebenezer didn’t tell me anything when he was about to travel. It was the mother who had told me that he has travelled.” ~ Stephen

²⁷ “It was only him [who I consulted]. He [Joe] made this experience already and knew the route and the place over there already. He told me everything such as where you go when and what you have to buy for that. I told him that this is no problem for me. I wanted to go and I was not afraid of anything. I really wanted to do that. It was only him who influenced me to that end. He said that it’s not gonna be easy and the work we have to do is not easy neither but he saw in me a hard worker who would be able to bare all that. I agreed and told him that I’m suffering since I was a child, that I’m used to hard work and that I’m not afraid. [...] Joe told me about the food I need and other things. He told me everything to buy Garri, Kenkey, coconut milk, Shoto, pain killers, other medicine and those kind of things. So, I bought all things he told me and showed it to him. So, he agreed that we are good to go.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁸ “At that time, there was one guy called Joe. He went to Libya and returned to Ghana. So, he lived close to my mum’s place in Mechanic Area. He saw me and said, ‘Charley, you are a hard worker. You can travel to Libya. If you need to, I think you can make it there to earn some money.’ I told me that this was also in my mind. Therefore, I explained to him why I’m so restlessly working. Then he said, ‘I’ve already been there and I wanna go there again. So, if you want to, let’s go together and start soonish to embark on that journey.’ So, I said, ‘No problem.’” ~ Ebenezer

²⁹ “The only thing Joe told me is that the desert won’t be easy. If you want to cross the desert, you have to be bold. Anything can happen. You have to be bold. They can rob you, they can kill you, anything can happen. Once you enter the car to cross the desert, you shouldn’t make any distinction between friend and foe anymore. The only thing that counts is to save your own life. So, it can happen that you have to fight with your own brother. It’s not easy. Your motto is: ‘Run for your life.’ These kind of things, Joe told me and I said, ‘Okay, all these things I can do.’ And later Joe and I were fighting in the car. He told me that I should run for my life and so I did. So if you are doing something that could kill me, I will not allow you to do so. Therefore we fought in the car. These are the things he told me, ‘You have to be careful. If somebody wants to push you, you have to push him. Otherwise you are the person falling off the car. You have to be hard.’ Those kind of things he told me and I said, ‘I’ve already proven to be hard. I’m not afraid of anything. I’m ready to go.’” ~ Ebenezer

³⁰ “A month before Ebenezer travelled, he was already saying that he would travel. Actually, he didn’t say that he will be going to Libya and then to Europe.” ~ Isaac;
“He told me that his plan was to travel.” ~ John

³¹ “That journey is risky. Joe told me not to talk to people about it. So, I had to keep it secretly. So, if the time has come to go, you go.” ~ Ebenezer

³² “If they leave, they won’t tell you.” ~ anonymous

³³ “We discuss our plans to travel behind the backs of our parents. They don’t get to know about it. It’s just when we boys are meeting but not with the knowledge of our parents.” ~ Isaac

³⁴ “Normally, when we want to leave the country, we don’t make it open to others like the family or friends. We try to keep it as a secret. If you tell a friend not to tell anyone, others will get to know anyways.” ~ Sumaila

³⁵ “We prepared with the help of Joe some fake passports. You just take it from someone else and put your own picture on it.” ~ Ebenezer

³⁶ “The total amount I had to gather for the journey to Libya was 3,500 GHC. At that time, I told myself that I didn’t wanna stay in Libya for long. I wanted to use 2,500 GHC to pass the desert and 1,000 GHC to take the Lampa to pass the sea. Joe told me that I will need 1,500 to 2,000 GHC to cross the sea. Therefore I wanted to earn some money in Libya before taking a Lampa. I changed the money into CFA because in Burkina Faso and Niger they use CFA. They don’t use our GHC. So, before we started, I changed all my money apart from a small amount I intended to use from here to Accra into CFA.” ~ Ebenezer

³⁷ “Later after I left Ghana and reached Libya, I told my mum to tell the children where I am and that everything will be okay. So, they should try as much as possible to take care of the children and later I will send money to them. So, don’t worry. And I told Kelvin that I bought him a bicycle and he was happy about that. Later, I also called Atta and told him that I’m in Libya. He asked me why I didn’t tell him. And I answered that it was impromptu. And he said, ‘Okay, no problem. We are praying for you. So, you will be okay.’” ~ Ebenezer

5.1.1.4 Fourth Case: Moses Gafah

In comparison with the other three cases, Moses' socio-economic family background and motivation to migrate significantly deviates. In this sense, it makes his case distinctive. His life course is the narrative of emancipation from other people in the quest for personal independence, self-determination, and self-realisation. Despite allocating money abroad as his main motive to migrate¹, his case differs regarding the relatively better family's economic background². In fact, his father was comparatively affluent but hindered Moses in pursuing his ideas for his future.³ Thus, Moses was not driven by his family members to boost the household income but migrated out of his personal motivation and self-interest to allocate financial resources to become professionally and personally independent. He experienced several emotional let-downs from his family, friends, close associates, and superiors. From a psychological standpoint, these disappointments were highly formative for his determined mindset to gain plentiful money in order to avoid any relationship of dependence. As mentioned in the previous chapter, from early childhood, he quarrelled with his half-brother Vincent⁴ as he felt severely disadvantaged⁵. In Moses' opinion, their father had a bias towards Vincent and enabled him to fulfil his aspirations while he was refused in his ideas and needs. This experience of neglect by his father perceived Moses as unambiguously unjust. From Moses' point of view, his father was technically able to support him but did not do it because of the strong influence Vincent's mother had on him and the lack of courage to assert himself.⁶ In the subsequent years, the undesirable situations in terms of neglect and the feeling of being disadvantaged repeatedly occurred along similar lines in other contexts and relationships. In spite of his local and vocational emancipation from his family in Beposo by leaving for Takoradi, the new relationship with his master George was finished without him redeeming his promise, which was to provide Moses with tools and financial means. As a matter of fact, George's brothers neglected him as well. After Michael betrayed and Godwin expelled Moses, irrespective of the tight relationship he had with both, Mr Consah abandoned him as well. The new master did not pay Moses his entitled salary.⁷ Eventually, the desire for independence and autonomy from others became very powerful. He developed the idea and the willingness to migrate⁸ to earn money abroad to open his own carpentry shop in Ghana⁹. In his mid-twenties, his conclusion was not to rely on other persons' favour anymore and to fight as a lone wolf instead:

"I forgot about all the people I knew and said to myself that I didn't want to depend on anybody again. That's part of becoming a man."

~ Moses ~

Hence, Moses migrated not driven by a joint household motivation but solely for his own pursuit of happiness, freeing himself from his family and masters. However, the formative experience of being deprived of opportunities to compare himself with others can also be identified for Moses. From an early age, the unjust prioritisation of his half-brother Vincent¹⁰ and his father's refusal to allow him to continue his formal education¹¹ shaped his perception. Another similarity with the other cases in terms of his image of masculinity is revealed by his last quote expressing his desire

to find income-generating activities as a matter of “becoming a man” as he says. Brother Edward confirms that the man is supposed to be the provider.¹²

In preparation for his journey, Moses involved as few people as possible.¹³ The idea and the specific planning were driven by Moses’ friend Salifu.¹⁴ Prior to the start of the journey, Moses invoked all the more God and his Christian faith. Hey prayed and awaited “the voice of the Lord” instructing him for their migration:

“I spent another seven months in Kumasi before I left because the money wasn’t enough. I believe in the word of God. I was praying in the worship centre while I was looking for some more money. I was four months in the worship centre praying for protection. I wanted to hear the voice of the Lord before I started the journey. I had a lot of stories about that journey and these weren’t nice. That’s why I was looking for protection. I don’t need protection from anybody but only from God to guide me. That’s what I did. I prayed for four months and worked on a daily basis for two months. After I left the worship centre, I heard the voice of the Lord, who gave me the directions for my journey saying to do this and that. Two days after this voice appeared, there was a friend. His name is Salifu. He was the main driver for the idea for us two to travel. He came up with the idea. He was a Muslim at that time. He was waiting for me to start the journey.”

~ Moses ~

Despite his wish to keep his plans confidential¹⁵ and his efforts to earn enough money himself¹⁶, he still needed financial resources. Moreover, he had to inform his family, who mistrusted him for his intentions. Hence, the given familial financial support was not as much as Moses expected.¹⁷ It shows again that Moses’ migration motives and decision-making were apparently not derived from a collective family household strategy but exclusively serving his individual needs. Half-brother William decidedly confirms this emergence.¹⁸

After his social network expanded due to his wedding and the birth of the three children, Moses’ motives and intentions underwent a processual development from being solely individually driven towards both individual self-realisation and a later dominating household strategy.¹⁹ In addition, two of his siblings died, which urged Moses to support his ill mother as well.²⁰ Once again, the successor mandate by the first-born son in case of the father’s death is not only reconfirmed by Moses’ behaviour supporting his mother but also by his migration fellow Adam:

“My junior brother passed away and he has three children. I have to take care of them as well. Both my parents passed away. So, who is the next? I’m the one who is responsible and has to bring up the children.”

~ Adam ~

This recurring phenomenon must be addressed to understand the motives for migration and its conjoined livelihood strategy analysis. However, Moses’ initial motives to enter Europe are not exclusively decisive for understanding his migration as such but vital for understanding his post-return behaviour as well.²¹ His lone-wolf attitude and all the associated activities upon return are derived from his original motivation and vice versa, which will be later discussed. Furthermore, a certain reluctance and scepticism on the part of his family persisted for a long time due to their common difficult past. In the initial stage, his family did not support him as Moses would have wished. This condition continued after the return. The shift from an individual motivation towards

a household strategy also involved Moses' family environment over time to a greater extent. Hence, the family's perception and attitudes towards him also shifted slightly. On the one hand, they were more supportive. On the other hand, they were developing expectations to benefit financially²² from Moses' income in Libya²³. In their view, they started to hold a stake and took an active interest in his migration and activities abroad. This explains the moderate openness and willingness to support Moses upon returning but also their partly adverse opinions, whereas Moses' resentful attitude towards his family remained stable. Understanding these complex personal entanglements, their origins and developments are crucial to comprehend everything that follows. This sub-subsection serves as the starting point for the analysis in this regard.

¹ "I would say that the main reason to travel was to earn money." ~ Moses

² "When I look around seeing my friends and what their parents' professions was in comparison to my father's profession, I can definitely say that my father was in a higher position." ~ Moses

³ "My father had the resources to take care of all of his children. I wouldn't say that he was a poor man. No, my family isn't poor but the circumstances didn't allow me to continue my education." ~ Moses

⁴ Vincent is concealing the disagreements until today and suggests that his professional success is based on his individual effort: "Moses is not a rough or tough person in a bad way. He is just very calm and informed us what he wanted to do. Even though he lived in Kumasi, he returned several times to Beposo. This shows that this person has some mentality of care about his family." ~ Vincent;

"I per se, I'm also that hustler type. I just went to JHS and managed to become a manager here. It means that I also always tried to succeed in life. At least, I encouraged and counselled him sometimes. I saw something in him. I knew that he is a person that can succeed. I even encouraged after his JHS to try to find something to do to better his life. We were close even though we aren't from the same mother but the same father. At least, we were close enough. Apart from the fact that we are brothers, we are beyond that really close." ~ Vincent

⁵ "The result was that those children who were not the children of this woman were outcasted. That's what I saw." ~ Moses

⁶ "My perception is that if my dad would have been capable to take care of me meaning to afford my education which he could, it wouldn't have been like that. However, he didn't do it because he has not just a few children from one mother. There were too many children with different mothers. He couldn't treat all equally. He wanted to do it but he couldn't because he was afraid of the reaction of his social environment. I saw that theoretically he could have give every child a fair share but he didn't." ~ Moses

⁷ "Godwin told them that I was a very good worker and that he liked me more than anybody else in the shop. Anything he bought, he bought one pair for me as well. We were wearing the same pants, the same boxer shorts. If he bought some for himself, he bought some for me also. I was the only worker who travelled as much as he did. He even handed over his responsibilities to me in order to focus on other things to boost the profit. In fact, I was a very helpful person to him. When it came to the job, everything was perfect. I was out and arranged some stuff and did even the work in the shop. However, my work in the shop was better than the work of those who stayed in the shop 24/7. He liked me a lot also because of my personal attitude. I was the person who brought God to the work place. If I wasn't there, the others would just start their work without praying. Even at his private house I thought his children how to pray and some things about the bible. So, I brought change to his house but to the shop as well. After I left, things were not the same. Even his own children didn't stop asking for me. If he travelled and returned, his own children wouldn't come and welcome him. But if I returned, all his children came to me and were very happy that I was back." ~ Moses

⁸ "Moses gained this attitude to be strong and to force himself to be a hustler in Kumasi. If he would have been around here, he wouldn't have get that mindset to travel. He learned all these things and the fact that he has to make life work in Kumasi were both drivers for him to migrate. If he stayed here, he would never have travelled. That whole development in him took place in Kumasi." ~ Vincent;

"Ashantis like to travel a lot, such as going to Europe and other countries in order to excel. There, the chance occurred for him. He and his two friends made up their mind to go. They even went to a prayer camp because we blacks believe in faith and all these prayers. So, it was said that those who wanna travel should go to the prayer camp first. That's what they did. He was very determined because of his life in Kumasi." ~ William

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- ⁹ “That was the period when I planned to travel because I noticed that where I stay and where the job costs me a lot of transportation money and at the end of the month there is nothing left. I still ended up owing some friends some money. So, I decided to travel. Travelling is nothing in my mind until then because I was just thinking of how to get the resources to get the equipment for my own carpentry store.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁰ “Vincent wasn’t the first one. The first one was female but he is the first boy he and this woman had. So, my father had the resources to take care of all of his children. I wouldn’t say that he was a poor man. No, my family isn’t poor but the circumstances didn’t allow me to continue my education.” ~ Moses
- ¹¹ “He was influenced by one wife more than by any other of his wives.” ~ Moses
- ¹² “The man is the person who has to take care of your family. If you have money, you have to provide for a lot of people. If you don’t have money, everybody will suffer.” ~ Edward
- ¹³ “I was seven months with Ken. Ken never knew that I had the idea to travel. I did not tell them anything. When I was about to leave, I told them that the life in Kumasi is hard and I wanted to move to Accra seeking for a job. If it works out well, I won’t return to Kumasi. If not, I will return to Kumasi. I just called them when I was in Libya.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁴ “He [Salifu] used to visit me when I was with Godwin. After everything, he came up with the idea to travel to Libya of which he heard from where we can cross the sea to Italy, Germany and Spain. He had some people staying at these places having a good life. So, we should try our luck.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁵ “At first, I didn’t want anybody to know that I wanted to travel even not the family. But it came to a point that some little money had to be added to what I had. That’s why I had no option to let them know what I wanted to do but the plan was that nobody should know that I’m doing that journey.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁶ “That’s why I decided first to make a cut and started working on a daily basis with other employers just to see if that’s better. I managed to get some money together and started to plan my journey.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁷ “One day, Vincent called me that they used to save some money for the children when they were in school because we used to go there after school to work. The money isn’t for me alone but for all the children. It was decided by four and I got 150 GHC at that time. I just went to Beposo, took the money and went the next day to Kumasi.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁸ “It wasn’t a collective decision. He was the person who decided that he wants to travel. Then he informed us.” ~ William
- ¹⁹ “We have huge families here in Africa. It’s not like in Europe. I’m working and I have to take care of my aunts, my grandmother, my children, my wife and all these people. It’s not like in Europe where you have your wife and your children and that’s it. That’s why we Africans like to travel outside.” ~ Edward
- ²⁰ “Two of his siblings died. It seems that he is the only hope for the mother.” ~ William
- ²¹ “I wanted to work in Libya and then cross the sea going to Germany, Italy wherever and if I would be able to acquire the equipment, I just wanted to return to open my company or shop. That was my main motive but I was getting to Libya and noticed that the journey from there overseas is very dangerous and risky. That kind of perception was dripping.” ~ Moses
- ²² “This is Africa. People expect you to bring something from abroad. You don’t travel just for yourself but you are travelling for the whole family. Once you are returning, you have to expect the behaviour, such as that. Some people will never understand what it means to be deported.” ~ Mawiya
- ²³ “He thought that he could try his luck abroad and make things for all of us better. If not for all, at least for some. So, he decided to go for Libya and if possible, to Europe to try to improve our standard of living. Our father didn’t try enough to help us.” ~ Vincent

5.1.1.5 Conclusion

The motivation and drivers for migration vary from case to case. They are always multi-dimensional and potentially subject to changes over time. However, there are likewise similarities.

In some Ghanaian areas, previously reliable sources of income have been eroded. Globalising trade and commodity flows create general economic price pressure, which harms the regional textile and farming industries, among others. Ali, Mohammed, Ebenezer, and their respective families were equally affected. The trend towards the tertiarisation of the economy has resulted in a decreasing financial capacity on the one hand and an increasing significance of high-quality education and training on the other hand. However, the latter requires financial resources to graduate successfully. This adjustment was impossible for Ali, Mohammed, and Ebenezer for financial reasons and for Moses for personal reasons.

In addition to the general economic circumstances, individual strokes of fate or personal upheavals occurred. The father failed to provide appropriately in all four case studies for various reasons. In the case of Mohammed and Ebenezer, it applied to other family members as well. Once again, this increased the economic pressure on the families. No member of the extended family was able or willing to step in to support the family. Thus, the eldest sons felt explicitly and implicitly obliged to take on the provider role. For example, in Mohammed's family, Zakari saw his duty as the eldest son. After he failed, it intensified the pressure on Mohammed to respond. This shows that gender and images of masculinity and the birth order are influencing aspects. The mother's suffering and the determination to assist her and the entire family are emotionally driving forces.

Another psychological drive is the experience of being disadvantaged within the family or towards third parties without any personal responsibility and despite all efforts. These experiences can begin during childhood. In particular, Moses is an example of emancipation from allegedly unjust regimes causing the urge for self-determination and self-realisation. Simultaneously, his case shows that motivation can shift from an individual motive to a household strategy over time.

Migration and the associated idea of achieving prosperity in the form of rural exodus or towards foreign countries are acknowledged as a suitable livelihood strategy. There is the hope of being able to develop sources of income abroad. In this context, successful migration stories within or outside the family serve as role models. These success stories arouse curiosity and nourish the hope of being able to act as a change agent for the family and the community. The warnings and adverse reports do not discourage, even if the person reporting is emotionally very close to oneself or a direct relative. This phenomenon can be observed in particular within the self-help group Las Palmas Club of which Mohammed is a member. Despite all the painful stories from their own members, there is a genuine euphoria to migrating to Europe by land and by sea. The conviction prevails that migration can be successful due to determination, perseverance as well

as the corresponding fortune. In this sense, the chance to reach Europe is seen as a lottery that can only be won if one participates. Faith plays a crucial role as well. In some cases, the belief dominates that only those chosen by God will be successful. Subsequently, this motivates people to determine whether or not they are the chosen ones. The attribution of being Muslim, which demands bearing responsibilities, is also used to justify migration as a livelihood strategy. In addition, Moses hoped to receive spiritual strength and inspiration to master the migration through intense prayer before departure. At the same time, superstition about curses is widespread. In that sense, too many confidants bring misfortune, so the circle of initiates in the migration plans is kept as small as possible. Depending on whether or not the respective people are relevant for the planning and implementation of the migration, the closest relatives or friends are usually informed. They are consulted as a source of financial support or information. Thus, direct relatives are partly bypassed, and the migration planning takes place in secret. In general, the internet makes it much easier to obtain the necessary information and contacts and prepare for migration. The migration costs can either be paid in advance to the connection men, or the migration can be financed by working en route. Some possessions, such as working materials or accommodation, are sold to fund the expenses.

Unsuccessful migrations can lead to pressure for remigration. Ultimately, the fruitless quest for income-generating activities in the home country, the knowledge of opportunities abroad, and the resulting hope for a better life can serve as push and pull factors. The repeated migration is the consequence of escaping the confinement of the frustrating environment, as was the situation in Ali's case on several occasions. At the same time, migration costs decrease with each migration regarding access to financial resources abroad, knowledge and networks. Hence, it made Ali less vulnerable, and there was no need to inform his family since this would have created the potential for conflict.

5.1.2 "I saw what the value of my life is" – Experiences in Transit

"If I tell you my whole story, you can fill books with it. I saw the most horrific things and went through the most dangerous situations. I suffered, I saw the war, and people were killed in front of my door just like this. I saw people dying in the desert, dying inside cars and trucks, drowning in the sea. [...] I saw things no one ever was forced to see before."

~ Ali ~

The phase of migration and time spent abroad can last for many years. Therefore, the experiences and behaviour of the returning migrant during this period are highly determinative for their life after returning. This subsection presents additional details regarding the experiences of Ghanaian migrants during their journeys by land and sea. It provides valuable insights into the realities faced by migrants while on the move, including both the hardships and positive experiences they encounter. As all four transit returnees took a similar route using comparable means of transportation, including walking, motor vehicles, and boats as well as the psychological and physical strain they experienced is identical. Therefore, representative descriptions from the

migrants' perspectives have been selected to maintain concision rather than attempting to convey the experiences of all migrants. In particular, Ebenezer extensively recounted his experiences along the migration route, which is why his impactful descriptions are taken as an exemplary representation of the experiences of many migrants. Instead of paraphrasing or summarising, more extended quotes were used in this subsection to give the reader an authentic impression of the realities encountered en route.

5.1.2.1 First Case: Ali Alhassan

Ali's experiences en route are manifold. His four attempts and accumulated twelve years abroad comprise many encounters at various places in Burkina Faso, Niger, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, and Spain. In the subsequent, positive and negative incidents in these countries are described. The stories thematise his migration as such the experiences with authorities and local and foreign people as well as the life under civil war in Libya and unfolding developments over time. Aside from Ali, other migration fellows share their stories and perceptions as well. Their vulnerable situation exposed them to harassment of all kinds. At the same time, the willingness to succeed in reaching Europe or at least find an alternative source of income made Ali and his migration fellows endure countless hardships. They were prepared to accept any sacrifice:

"I would do any job because I just wanted to go to Europe. Even if someone is telling me to clean his shit after him and I get money for that, no problem, I would do that."

~ Ali ~

Similar to Ali, his childhood friend and migration fellow Aziz and Matthäus describe that sub-Saharan Africans find themselves carrying out humiliating jobs en route.¹ Under different circumstances, they would never consider such work since the stigma might sincerely damage their reputation:

"There are humiliating jobs we Africans do at other places. At the end of the month, we have at least something to take home. The salary will be better than doing it back in Ghana. If I'm cleaning the street in Italy, I get more money for the same job as if I were doing it in Ghana. If somebody sees me cleaning the street here in Tamale, it will become a headline. That's kind of the dirtiest and lowest job you can find in Ghana."

~ Matthäus ~

Aziz emphasises the strength and resilience one demonstrates by mastering such labour conditions. The migrant does not only prove the mental stability from which they will benefit in challenging situations in the future but they can also accept comparable jobs back home, which others would rule out for themselves.² Apart from degrading and exploitative work experiences, Ali also experienced positive ones. On his first migration, he was fairly treated at his first stopover in Nburanu and received the agreed salary on time. He worked as a housekeeper, and his income enabled him to resume his migration after three months.³ Another positive job experience recurred at the bakery in Tripoli, where he worked for six months and received monthly 250 LYD⁴. By assuming several jobs, Ali gained new skills, developed a certain degree of emotional and physical resilience, and was also able to employ former skills, such as shoe shining.⁵ In defiance

of negative experiences with people showing adverse reactions, which are still present in his mind today, Ali also remembers and appreciates the benign encounters. He recognises the value of both positive experiences and good-natured people as well as negative experiences and malicious people.⁶

Over time and across places, his social network expanded. It enabled him to find decent employment, housing and other means of living. First and foremost, the access to informal Ghanaian communities in Maghnia⁷, Tripoli⁸, Benghazi⁹, and other places en route proved to be of high value providing support and security. In the subsequent, he exemplarily elaborates on the situation in Sabha:

"Iddrisu told me that Abu Bakhar lives in a house in Sabha where you can go if you don't know anybody. They would receive you and interview you and help you find a job. I said that I would do any job. So, Abu Bakhar found a job in a hotel kitchen for me. I was cleaning the dishes. I worked at that hotel for six months. [...] [Later,] I told him that I'm just doing any job to get some money to leave Sabha. Abu Bakhar found another job for me at a construction site doing some construction work. I carried blocks and sand. I worked with them for three months and got enough money for the ride to the capital."

~ Ali ~

In addition to his contacts with Ghanaian friends and fellows whom he knew prior to his journeys, such as Lukman, Ali met plenty of other people in the described informal communities composed of Ghanaian compatriots.¹⁰ As presented in the respective former subsection, he befriended a number of people who showed solidarity with him and supported him. Thus, Ali established a transnational social network which allowed him to fall back on his future migrations. For example, in Sabha, he was employed at the same farm as he was during the first migration.¹¹ In Benghazi, Ali worked at a restaurant for one and a half years. He was put in contact with his employer by a friend as well.¹² He was socially well-connected with and within the mentioned communities en route. As described earlier, they enabled him to acquire jobs and even to change positions. In addition, his migration fellows and friends Seeba and Sofian supported him in advance of his fourth migration. This shows how Ali established a network in Libya where he was well-integrated, accepted and trusted. It met him without prejudice, and he could rely on its people. In particular, the community in Benghazi became a second home for him. It provided him with jobs, housing, food, and money. It enabled him to live a dignified life on a social and economic level. Before the civil war broke out, Ali could live in a house with other Ghanaian friends. For some months, he had a permanent and stable income which allowed him to send remittances to sister Nafisa and brother Mustafa as well as later to his wife Rukaya as previously. The Libyan labour market situation was relatively favourable for him. At any time, Ali could find a job within a few days.¹³ The electricity supply was cost-free, which is why, among other aspects, he rates the living conditions in Libya before the war as very good.¹⁴ Aside from the economic aspect, Ali gained emotional, advanced his cultural competencies and enhanced his personal development.¹⁵

In particular, towards the end, adverse conditions increasingly characterised his time abroad. Asked about negative experiences, Ali's flow of words in his reports seems ceaseless. In the

subsequent, an excerpt from the most extreme experiences en route will be presented in more detail. He “faced a lot of suffering”¹⁶, underwent highly distressing, and witnessed disturbing situations:

“Mr John, I tell you. If I tell you my whole story, you can fill books with it. I saw the most horrific things and went through the most dangerous situations. I suffered, I saw the war, and people were killed in front of my door just like this. I saw people dying in the desert, dying inside cars and trucks, drowning in the sea. [...] I saw what the value of my life is. I saw things no one ever was forced to see before. [...] I faced a lot.”

~ Ali ~

From his own experience and as an eyewitness, Ali knows about the hardships which undocumented migrants are confronted with, characterised by exploitation, violence, discrimination, and physical and emotional strains. The situation en route has changed over the years as time progressed. Ali and his migration fellows give evidence about the changes in the means of migration and the situation abroad from their first experiences in the early 2000s until today. Aziz reports that working in Europe with other people’s papers was possible. However, due to digitalisation, the counterfeiting of documents has become more difficult.¹⁷ In addition, Matthäus reports on how the EU has strengthened its border regime.¹⁸ On Ali’s first migration, the vehicles were trucks instead of today’s usual pickups. Ali recalls the crowded situation on the truck, which carried 500 to 600 passengers, according to his memories:

“They just put you like animals on that truck. If you make the mistake of placing your leg in the wrong position, you cannot put it back because another person will immediately occupy the space you left free by moving your leg.”

~ Ali ~

One can imagine the highly competitive atmosphere and the required ruthlessness. On Ali’s future migrations, pickups replaced the trucks, which reduced the number of passengers and increased the speed. The situation on the pickups was even more competitive, physically challenging and riskier, whereas severe injuries commonly resulted:¹⁹

“The pickups can take 35 or 40 people. They are faster but riskier. Sometimes, the car has an accident or people will fall down from the car. People might break their bones if they fall down. Beforehand, we shouted at the drivers to stop, and they actually stopped; we went further for a bit. The person was far away then because these pickups were really speedy. That’s how we entered Libya.”

~ Ali ~

Apart from travelling by vehicle, the migration included long hikes through the desert, mostly by night²⁰ since the movements required to be clandestine²¹. In addition, there are involuntary marches. Odum recounts how he had to continue on foot as a result of a car breakdown which posed the danger of losing orientation or being assaulted:

“I was roaming around to look after my friends. It was night and I was lost because the desert was deep. However, they saw my torchlight and picked me up. Then we went further through the desert. The back axle of our car broke. We were stranded in the desert for three days with no food. Some robbers came to rob us again. They took our money. This scarf here was because of them. They came with knives.”

~ Odum ~

The desert is difficult to navigate for the facilitators and bears the danger of becoming lost. As described earlier, it also happened to Ali's facilitator in the middle of the desert. They were stranded in no-man's-land for three days²². Finally, after two passing trucks from Libya assisted them in finding the right track again, they arrived at their destination in Nburanu.²³ One man was stomped to death when the passengers got off the pickup.²⁴ Life-threatening incidents such as these can be the source of long-term psychological damage. From Nburanu to Tripoli, Ali has crammed on a truck again. He was hidden in an animal-like position without food, sanitation or any break for one and a half days:

"The car was the same truck as I used before. They carried cement from the city to the villages. On their way back, they meet the connection man, hide some people and pass the border controls. So, they covered me with something like a blanket and put some stuff on top. That's how I went to Tripoli, which took us one and a half days. On that ride, I couldn't get down for a break or something. I just stayed at my hiding spot and they just gave me some water."

~ Ali ~

Apart from trucks and pickups, regular cars are used as well. However, even in ordinary cars, the passengers are packed in severely uncomfortable physical positions, which can lead to serious injuries if the vehicle is pursued:²⁵

"A private car there carries 13 or 14 people. They put people in the footwell and any space they had. They put people like this. They put them together like little packages. We were leaving by midnight. It was three times the distance from Tamale to Accra. They had to take hidden paths to avoid the security checkpoints. The facilitators have their scouts on the road with whom they are in contact to get information about the current situation. From Wisda to the capital Rabat it took us two weeks."

~ Ali ~

As already suggested, most of the movements are generally only possible by night, aiming to circumvent security guards, as Ali describes below based on the example of the migration to Morocco:

"They carried us at midnight to Morocco. We were 20 to 30 people. We passed by some farms and heard the dogs barking. It was around 2 am or 3 am by then. We saw security guards and their torch lights. So, we had to lie down and hide when the torchlight came closer. So, we bent down and had to get up again."

~ Ali ~

In addition, the migrants avoided carrying any belongings with them as this would have drawn the attention of the authorities. Hence, Ali and his migration fellows did not even dare to have a bag on them which was a self-protecting measure making them likewise vulnerable.²⁶ Some distances he and his migration fellows could pass during the day without hiding and others could only be mastered at night by walking off public roads. Ali and his migration fellows had to overcome several checkpoints on the move. As the authorities are highly alert, getting around by car following off-road paths minimises the chance of being discovered. Nonetheless, Ali was apprehended by the police on several occasions. At one checkpoint, Ali's assumed Malian identity was almost revealed by the authorities, which caused extreme stress to him:

"The person who checked me said, 'No, that's not you!' I didn't understand what he said in French. He told the driver to stop the bus. I had to get down and they brought me to the police station. They asked me there some questions in French, but I didn't understand. There was one police officer who

spoke English. I told him what happened and convinced him to let me go because from Algiers to that place is far. So, they let me go after one and a half hours."

~ Ali ~

In the subsequent, Ali describes a chase by Moroccan police. Eventually, they imprisoned him and his migration fellows:

"The persecutors were in two pickups. We entered the off-road area. They turned off their lights, wanting us to think that they didn't follow us anymore. Our driver slowed down. When they were closer, they turned on their lights again and our driver accelerated. It was in the middle of the night. Some people were vomiting inside the car. The driving style was abnormal. In the second town, the persecutors turned off their lights. Our driver hoped that they were gone. Once they were closer to us, they suddenly turned on the lights again. They pulled us over and told us to get down the car. We left our bags in the car and everybody tried to escape through the bush. The police officers removed the keys to our car and drove away. We nearly lost our lives. We just slept in the bush and we were extremely exhausted because we were going like that for two days. The next morning we looked for some missing people from our group. We found two guys. We climbed up the mountain. I said to go back to where the car came from because we would be lost otherwise. So, we did so. If you make a mistake or slip for some reason, you will die. It was a rocky area. On your left hand are the mountains and on your right hand the gorge. The road was very narrow. It was very risky. We walked for fully one day without seeing any houses. After a while, we saw some farms. Two people of us went there to knock at the door and the others were just hiding. One woman opened the door and was shocked to see two black people as they barely see black people at all in that area. The two of us bagged some food and water because we walked for one day. They gave them bread and some oil. We shared that among ourselves. After we ate the bread, we immediately felt pain in our stomachs, not knowing that the people who gave us the food already called the police. We were lying down to rest and saw later some police cars coming. They caught and imprisoned us."

~ Ali ~

As a result, Ali spent several weeks in prison and was abandoned in the Algerian no-man's-land afterwards several times.²⁷ This incident proves the violation of migrants' rights by authorities. At the same time, however, it also reveals the collaboration of the local population with the state authorities. He experienced such behaviour in all three North African countries he travelled to on his way to Europe. In Libya, Ali had to spend another two weeks in prison after the police caught him arbitrarily heading home from work.²⁸ With the Spanish authorities, he had not the most physically brutal experience but the one with the highest emotional impact. After he succeeded in crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2007, Ali was immediately repatriated.²⁹ All of a sudden, his entire dreams were destroyed. After being deported, the Ghanaian authorities sent him to prison as well.³⁰ Prior to his deportation, Ali describes his attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea as already psychologically stressful. In the subsequent, he narrates one exemplary experience:

"After 15 minutes, our boat capsized. It was by night, around 3 am or so. Let me retrace the story. We went to the seaside from where we entered the boats. We should wait there for the right moment. We were a lot of migrants. The facilitators woke us up in the middle of the night, saying that the time had come to go. After arriving at the point from which we wanted to start to go by the sea with the boats, they pushed us to the sea. After we capsized, the Moroccan authorities caught us and imprisoned us in the same prison where I was before again. There were three boats. Only the first two boats embarked and both capsized. The Moroccan facilitator responsible for the third boat decided not to push the boat on the rough sea. From the first boat, every single person drowned apart from one person. That one person was my friend Latif. I was in the second boat, of which everyone survived. The Moroccans recovered some dead bodies. They showed them to us. There were around 30 dead bodies. We recognised our friends and my friend Latif identified his Nigerian girlfriend. She was among those who lost their lives. You could see her body but not identify her face because the fishes were tempered already. However, Latif recognised her. Then we were quickly sent back to Algeria because most of us were sick and they just wanted to get rid of us."

~ Ali ~

This report by Ali describes not only the unlawful brutality of the authorities but also the traumatic nature of these experiences, including the loss of loved ones. From an economic perspective, Ali was constantly running out of money which demanded to find income-generating activities. Over the course of his movement, he had to accept plenty of different jobs, as already described. Finding employment as such was not difficult for him, but he was exposed to exploitation and abuse as an undocumented migrant without legal protection, such as in Nburanu.³¹ The employers were aware of the migrants' situation and knew they needed money to finance their journey. The exploitation in the labour market is a serious mental and physical burden in terms of earning financial means to foster the migration purpose as well. The widespread racism towards black people aggravated the situation significantly:

"I worked there for an oil company, as I showed you yesterday. I worked there for six months and got 250 USD. The problem was that they didn't give you the money monthly. Sometimes, you have to wait for some months. Only the white people got their salary on time, but we blacks had to wait and didn't always get our salary. After six months working, I got only a four months' salary."

~ Ali ~

Irrespective of Muammar Gaddafi's proclaimed pan-African stance, the attitudes across all societal areas differed. Thus, the lived reality for black people in Libya was featured by racial discrimination from both the authorities and the civil society, as Matthäus describes it by an encounter with a Libyan passer-by:

"One day, a Libyan woman approached me and said, 'Listen, Gaddafi might protect the blacks, but we the people hate you blacks. If Gaddafi is gone, there is no mercy.'"

~ Matthäus ~

In addition, Sharia law de facto relegated non-Libyans to a legal situation without rights:

"The Libyans are very wicked people. I know these Arabs. I've been there before. We went all through the things they do there. They have Sharia law over there. They don't know human rights. There are no rules in this country. If you have a problem with the Libyan, no matter whether you are guilty or not, the Libyan gets at least 80 per cent right and therefore wins the case. No matter what you do, you are lost."

~ Aziz ~

After Gaddafi's removal from power, the general living situation sharply worsened. Due to the war, inflation devalued the money³², banks stopped operating³³, and the offer of employment and the freedom of movement for black people decreased³⁴. Aside from the economic aspects which made life in Libya even less profitable compared to Ghana, Ali lived under the circumstances jeopardising his life as such:³⁵

"I saw it myself. If you aren't careful, they will kill you. There was not really a safe place. They were shooting from everywhere. [...] I suffered a lot because there was still war, and you had to be really careful."

~ Ali ~

Initially, Ali, his friends and others were expecting the war not to last for long. They planned to resume the life they led if the warring parties agreed on a ceasefire. However, they did not consider the severity and longitude of the war and its impact on their lives as it unfolded.³⁶ Ali

arranged the unification with his wife Rukaya in Libya, which did not materialise either.³⁷ Instead, warring factions from any affiliation threatened, assassinated or recruited black people by force. Some nationalities were targeted in particular. At that time, Ali was not safe anymore and had to flee Libya to Egypt:

“The time passed by and the violent clashes became more and more serious. People were killed, and they also gave black people guns and forced them to fight, or they targeted houses where blacks lived and killed them. So, we decided to flee to Egypt. We gathered our money and ourselves leaving Benghazi for the Egyptian border. That ride wasn’t easy, Mr John. There were soldiers and fights everywhere. So, we started in the morning at around 7 am. If it was no war, it would take you around five hours. At that time, we had to stop several times because an armed group controlled us, asking who we were. Some African nationalities were targeted and killed. The army and other armed groups were controlling the people. We were totally frisked and interrogated aggressively. We weren’t sure who they were looking for. Maybe they looked for Ghanaians. If you say you are a Ghanaian, they could have killed you, but we didn’t know. So, I just said that I’m a Ghanaian, but they were looking for particular nationalities. Luckily, the Ghanaian wasn’t among them. In the end, we arrived in Egypt and thanked God.”

~ Ali ~

Nonetheless, he returned to Libya twice more but lost hope for better times even though some Ghanaian friends had patiently awaited his return.³⁸ In summary, he spent several years on the move without achieving substantial economic improvements, if not to say the exact opposite for himself and his family.

¹ “These kind of jobs, Ghanaian would never do it in their own country.” ~ Aziz

² “The employment and job aspect in Ghana is a problem. However, we have to take matters in hand ourselves. The jobs we are doing abroad are jobs we would never do back in Ghana. [...] Some of us who went outside and had no job could easily walk around and start washing cars or being shoe shining.” ~ Aziz

³ “I should do some housekeeping and any work that arises. I agreed because I didn’t have anything else. So, I worked with that man for three months. He paid me at that time 150 LYD for one month.” ~ Ali

⁴ “I just gave them my passport and I was allowed to start the job with a three day probation period. After that, I worked there for six months. They gave me monthly 250 LYD.” ~ Ali

⁵ “I started shoe shining. One of my friends told me that I could start that business. So, I had a certain spot with a table and was shining shoes.” ~ Ali

⁶ “One good thing is that I met good and bad people. I gained a lot of experiences through that.” ~ Ali

⁷ “I joined the deportee workers and stayed there for four months or so. I cooked some food.” ~ Ali

⁸ “There are a lot of black people. It’s the last town at the border to Morocco. There is no-man’s-land in a valley surrounded by hills and mountains. We just moved into our rooms. It was at an elevation where the water was passing. There were several valley with several camps each composed of one nationality. There was a Ghanaian valley, Nigerian valley, Malian valley, Gambian valley, Senegalese valley and so on. So you know where you have to go. For our valley we have a president like a chairman and a deputy. So, somehow an administrative structure.” ~ Ali

⁹ “I worked at a restaurant for a man.” ~ Ali

¹⁰ “When I was in Libya, I didn’t know that he was there as well. So, we met there again. Our friendship became even stronger at that time and we supported each other. I didn’t know anybody in Libya when I arrived there. He was the only person. I took him as my brother.” ~ Lukman

¹¹ “I worked in Nburanu on a farm. [...] I worked with the same Libyan man as I worked with at my first stay there.” ~ Ali

¹² “He [Mohammed, boss] gave me my salary every month. In Ghana, you cannot get a job like that. Mohammed knew me because I got his phone number through a friend of mine.” ~ Ali

¹³ “It was easier to get a job in Libya. It just takes you a week or one month. There is always a person calling you asking to clean his house or doing other work. Now, it isn’t good but before it was very easy to get jobs. People just collect your number and call you to wash the car or clean the house. At the end of the day, you get paid. That’s it.” ~ Ali

-
- ¹⁴ “Before the war started, the life in Libya was better than the life in Ghana today. However, after the war started, the life wasn’t better than my life today here in Ghana. But before, there were jobs everywhere. If you rent a house, you have electricity without paying for it.” ~ Ali
- ¹⁵ “I met a lot of different nationalities. I met whites and blacks from different countries at my work and on the road. I experienced a lot and endured it successfully. The only downside is that I didn’t get the money but I gained a lot.” ~ Ali
- ¹⁶ “In general, I faced a lot of suffering. Mr John, I just wanted to have a better life.” ~ Ali
- ¹⁷ “The technological development has taken place at every part of the world. Before, you just travelled to Europe and your friend will just give you his documents to work there. You can make it very quickly and easily to start working and sending money home. People saw it how the family received money, houses were built, cars bought and stuff like that. However, this was an illegal immigrant using a wrong identity. Nowadays, this won’t be possible anymore. Assuming I don’t listen to anybody and just got to Germany through a connection man, what guarantees me that I will make it? If I seek for asylum, who will listen to me? What gives me the refugee status? There is no basis for it. At the moment, those who live in Europe with their legal documents can still make it unless you are lazy.” ~ Aziz
- ¹⁸ “The Europeans have maximised their security actions in comparison as we were used to know it.” ~ Matthäus
- ¹⁹ “Everyone survived but the car was going with high speed. Some fell down and broke something like your hand or leg.” ~ Ali
- ²⁰ “We walked five hours or so until we arrived at the Moroccan village where we stopped at the connection man’s house.” ~ Ali
- ²¹ Most of the civilian population maintain an adverse stance towards migrants and report them to the authorities: “We were just strangers but the connection man received and hid us in the cowshed. We had to bend down and remained in silence. If some neighbours would see or hear you, they call the police. The connection man bought bread with tuna for us. We just ate it and stayed there until the evening. Then he brought another round of bread with tuna. We slept there two days because they had to wait for the right moment when the security surveillance isn’t too tight before we can move. After two days the connection man woke us up to leave.” ~ Ali
- ²² “The driver and his mate lost orientation. We were stranded in the desert in the middle of nowhere for three days.” ~ Ali
- ²³ “Fortunately, two other trucks coming from Libya passed by and brought us back on the right track.” ~ Ali
- ²⁴ “One person died when we arrived at the village. He slept and people trampled him to death. He lost his life.” ~ Ali
- ²⁵ “Atakyi broke his collarbone and got some surgery in Spain. He is better now. I also got some injuries from the same car ride we were taking.” ~ Ali
- ²⁶ “We were not having anything on us because. If you have a bag, the police will know that you are on the move and then they gonna catch you.” ~ Ali
- ²⁷ “I spent two weeks in prison. They opened a garage and showed us a car asking whether we know that vehicle. And we saw it and said that this was our car. So, they gave our belongings back to us. Then I was sent from one prison to another and ended up in a prison in Wisda. They released you to the no-man’s-land and tell you, ‘My brother, never pass here again!’ They were carrying guns and fired off a warning shot. The eyes of the security forces were on you. There was no way to cross again.” ~ Ali
- ²⁸ “I remember the time in Libya when I have been imprisoned in 2011 for two weeks. I was heading with a friend of mine to a village we heard of that some jobs are available there. Then we were caught by the police and put in prison. We explained our situation that we were just looking for a job not doing anything. The police locked us up but didn’t do anything to us. After two weeks, we were released.” ~ Ali
- ²⁹ “I was pushed to the sea for another time, arrived in Spain but caught again and deported back to Ghana.” ~ Ali
- ³⁰ “Later we were deported and I was put into jail in Accra. There I explained my situation and told them that I don’t wanna migrate again.” ~ Ali
- ³¹ “I worked there for six months but I just got a one month salary of 150 LYD. The employer refused to give me the rest of my salary. He always put me off.” ~ Ali
- ³² “The inflation devaluing the money a lot. So, you didn’t get a lot of USD.” ~ Ali
- ³³ “I didn’t send money back. Besides, the banks didn’t operate.” ~ Ali
- ³⁴ “The restaurants were closed because of the war but food was still sold on the streets. So, there were still some jobs in the kitchen or as a dishwasher. After you finished your work, you had to be accompanied by your boss because you cannot move freely.” ~ Ali

³⁵ “It was because of the inflation. It simply didn’t worth it anymore because the rate of exchange with the USD was very weak. If you earned 1,000 LYD, you just got 100 USD for that. Moreover, the work we did was very hard. At the end, it wasn’t better to work hard and being abroad earning not really more than you would get back home.” ~ Ali

³⁶ “When the war broke out, I was joking with my friends that the war won’t harm us. So, we just encouraged each other that nothing will happen to us and stayed back waiting the war to end.” ~ Ali

³⁷ “I planned to let her come to me and find some work for her. The connection man was about to organise the visa for her. I sent him the money to make a passport for her and the visa. Everything was arranged but then the war irrupted and I was evacuated.” ~ Ali

³⁸ “Their [migration fellows in Libya] families tell them also to return because the money isn’t a lot and the situation there is very unsafe. If I’m talking to them, they say that they will come but I don’t know what is in their mind because the money they get is not really good. The time I told them that I want to return they also said that they want to do so and supported me to return. I saw that the situation is getting worse, the inflation is eating up your salary and sometimes you don’t even receive a salary at all.” ~ Ali

5.1.2.2 Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni

Mohammed's time en route is comparatively limited compared to the other three cases. As described in the previous section, he was on the move for a few weeks until he was imprisoned. In the interview, Mohammed was unwilling to open up a lot about the year he spent in prison and answered briefly.¹ However, after he was transferred to the Grayan detention centre, Mohammed and Ebenezer spent their time in prison together. Narrated in the subsequent sub-subsection, Ebenezer provided in his interview plenty of details about the everyday life they shared confined.

Asked about any positive impacts or anything he gained from his time abroad, Mohammed denied the question categorically. On his move, he had to call back home several times requesting money. Later, he asked for money for his release from prison, as childhood friend Rahman states.² In spite of his family's and friends' financial referrals, Mohammed was still captivated. The mental and monetary consequences for both sides were huge. However, while Ebenezer and others lost their will to live over time in prison, Mohammed maintained his with the help of his faith. He encouraged even fellow detainees, as mentioned earlier. Nonetheless, his attitude towards Arab people was lastingly shaped, developing strong prejudices.³ In addition, he concludes that the situation in Libya under Gaddafi's rule was more favourable for black people compared to the time of his experience.⁴

¹ "They imprisoned us upon arrival in Tripoli and I stayed in prison for one year. [...] I was there with nothing. We only got bread." ~ Mohammed

² "Moving from one places to another required money because they were caught by the police. That's why he needed money to be released." ~ Rahman

³ "It's all the same. There are Arab people and they are wicked. It makes no difference. Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, it's all the same. It makes no difference. The people there have the same character. One boy from my community was shot in his leg by a Moroccan. But he was lucky because IOM people brought him to a hospital and he got his treatment." ~ Mohammed

⁴ "Libya was sweet under Gaddafi. It was easier back then to go back and forth. After Gaddafi, everything changed." ~ Mohammed

5.1.2.3 Third Case: Ebenezer Bae

In the interviews, Ebenezer provided plenty of details regarding incidents on the vehicles in the desert; his time in several prisons; encounters with the police, facilitators, and coastguards; the crossing at sea; experiences at work as well as in his everyday life in Libya. In the subsequent, a few experiences from *Section 4.3* are highlighted and elaborated on.

Irrespective of the deprivations he suffered along his journey, Ebenezer embraces these experiences in terms of gaining physical and mental resilience and a certain gratitude for the value of freedom.¹ In a practical way, Ebenezer further developed and sharpened his skills as an artisan due to the various jobs he accepted.²

However, in his perception, the negative experiences exceed by far. According to his memories, the Central Mediterranean route is perilous and encompasses serious impacts both emotionally and physically for those embarking on that journey:

“The way is very dangerous. You see people on the road starving to death. Others die because of stress or because they are running out of money. Based on what I saw, I advise everyone not to take that route.”

~ Ebenezer ~

En route, the ride by pickup required physical strength and recklessness towards other passengers.³ In addition, the non-stop ride without recreative breaks while lacking space and sufficient food for the passengers caused tensions and conflicts among them:

“It was not easy. In the desert, you don’t see any house or anything like that. There was also no longer break. We drove throughout the whole night. In the morning, you alight and rest a bit. Everybody is supposed to eat, but if you are not fast, you won’t get back into the car. So, when you get down from the car, they tell you, ‘Fast, fast, fast!’ Then you start eating, and they say, ‘Fisa, fisa, fisa, fisa!’, that everyone enters the car again. That’s how it is. When we were sitting in the car, we were permanently fighting. People start sitting on each other’s legs because of the lack of space. Some people fight, and others cry. It’s not easy.”

~ Ebenezer ~

As the last quote describes, passengers constantly fight to avoid falling off the vehicle. Ebenezer made intense efforts to show ruthless behaviour:

“If you expose yourself as afraid or vulnerable or not willing to defend your position in the car, another person will push you and you will fall down.”

~ Ebenezer ~

Some passengers fell off the pickup. In this instance, the drivers never stopped of their own accord, intensifying the fight for every square centimetre. Ebenezer was even engaged in a battle with his friend Joe.⁴ The facilitator’s brutal and merciless behaviour culminated in marooning or even shooting passengers, which put the rest in fear of life as well:

"The killing of the Nigerian man happened before the police barrier. When we were sitting in the car, a Nigerian Woman claimed that another Nigerian man was sitting on her body or something like that. She was complaining and started to insult this man. Another boy hit the woman in her mouth. When that happened, we started knocking at the window, saying, 'Mudiehr! Mushkila, mushkila!' When you say mushkila, it means problem. The car stopped, and an Arab man came out of his driver's cabin and asked what the problem was. We told him that this one man beat this woman. He asked for the reason. Arab people like women. If you joke with their women, they will kill you. So, he asked the Nigerian man why he beat the woman, but the man didn't understand Arabic. So, he told him that he should get off the car and run into the desert. When he was running into the desert, the Arab man started to shoot at him. We started screaming, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!' But then the Arab man pointed his gun at us and shouted, 'Shut up! If you shout, I will kill you!' We were supposed to sit down and put our hands on top of our heads. Then we set off. From that time on, everyone was afraid. There was no more fighting in the car. We knew that if we misbehave, they will kill us. So, everybody stopped and sat full of anxiety."

~ Ebenezer ~

The vehicles have to stop at several border controls. Most importantly, the police recognised the passenger's fake identities and charged for the thoroughfare.⁵ Thus, the drivers sought off-track paths as following paved roads potentially creates difficulties for themselves. Ali described the clandestine movement along the Central Mediterranean route already. Despite the driver's efforts to circumvent the police barriers, the authorities caught Ebenezer and the rest of the migration group and demanded their bribery. After being near Tripoli, they had to wait and were locked up by the facilitators for another night.⁶ Upon arrival in Tripoli, independent of the facilitator's authority, Ebenezer had to assume physically challenging work. In the subsequent, he describes the work-related hardships he had to endure explained by elaborating on the example of working with cement on a construction site which constantly caused injuries:⁷

"We had gloves, but sometimes the cement is very sharp and cuts even the gloves. Therefore, the material entered your gloves and caused a lot of pain. In the night, it was getting cold and you had to push yourself and each other to get up in the morning to work. I couldn't even open my hand, but we were going to start working. I said to myself, 'Eh, it is not easy at all', and I asked Silas, 'Is this the way we are going to do it?' and he said, 'Yes, this is how we do it here. If you are in Libya, you have to do it.' I said, 'No problem. This is what I'm here for. So, I will do it.' In the morning, we inflated the cement paper to warm our hands to open them."

~ Ebenezer ~

In addition, Ebenezer was confronted with racial abuse on a daily basis. He perceived it as omnipresent and described an exemplary incident with a Libyan man in the following:

"In Libya, they called us black people 'Misikin'. It means in English that you are a poor person. That's what they call the black people in Libya. They know that you are vulnerable. One day, an Arab man came to me with a gun and asked me if I knew what he was holding. He thought that we were so poor in our countries that we didn't even have guns. So, I answered that I didn't know what he was holding. He asked me, 'If I give it to you, do you know how to use it?' I said, 'No, I don't know.' I thought in my mind, 'Please, give it to me and you will see what I will do.' The Arab people don't travel. So, they don't know anything about other countries. In Libya, they even don't know how to speak English. They speak only Arabic. If Arab people see us black people talking to each other, they always think that we are saying something bad about them. So, they don't allow you just to stand there and talk because they don't understand. Even after they caught us, they tried to intervene if they saw just two people sitting and talking. They don't allow it shouting and trying to disperse us. They don't do that in Europe. If I'm speaking in my language, people are just passing, but Arab people don't do that."

~ Ebenezer ~

Once Ebenezer earned enough money for the crossing, he continued his migration and was exposed to the facilitators' harsh treatment again. According to him, the migration groups of

various nationalities⁸ entered the boats by force and suffered physical violence again⁹. The called target was to reach international water to be rescued by a civil sea rescue mission:¹⁰

"We were not saying that we are getting to Italy, Spain, Switzerland or England, but what was on our minds was that once we are in international waters, we get rescued. There are many rescue boats around that can rescue us and we are safe. It is not that we are going straight to Italy."

~ Ebenezer ~

At sea, Ebenezer and the other passengers were full of fear for their lives. Despite the torture he underwent along the route, the most death-dealing moment was in this very situation:

"You can die anytime. We were just talking and said that everything is by the grace of God and everybody should just be praying. We were just saying that if you make this journey to Europe, it is an incredibly hard journey. It is not easy. So we were just talking about our time in Libya and the work we were doing. If you see how the Lampa is, it is very risky. [...] We were full of fear in a very risky situation. The only thing we were thinking about was to pray for our lives."

~ Ebenezer ~

The situation intensified after being spotted by the Libyan coastguards. The migrants were aware of the moment's dangerous character.¹¹ The coastguards shot towards their boats and returned all passengers to land.¹² Before the Libyan coastguards' appearance, a civil sea rescue boat evacuated the migrants from drowning. However, there was another urgent emergency call which made the marine rescue team leave for another migrants' boat. In the meantime, the Libyan coastguards intervened and intimidated both the migrants and the maritime rescue team.¹³ Eventually, the abuse and humiliation of the migrants continued. Apart from their underwear, all belongings were taken from them. Due to the massive traumatic violence and experiences overall, Ebenezer suffered from dissociative amnesia and forgot all the mobile phone numbers he had known.¹⁴ In particular, the imprisonments left grave marks on Ebenezer's inner life. His first time being locked up was in Sabha.¹⁵ Being confronted with the distressing situation at this place, he regretted his migration for the first time:

"When we entered Sabha, it all started. We saw a person being at this place for a whole week. I had a little bread and I gave it to him. Every morning, the prison guards came with a pipe and mentioned the names of those who owed them money and started beating them. They forced you to lay down to flog you or they put you in chains and hung you beating your legs. So, the kidnappers called the people back home and beat them migrants up to make them cry and suffer. They did this to all the people owing them money. We did not owe them money. That's why we were just sitting down and witnessing what happened. So, I said to myself, 'No, no, no, no, talking about this place, I regret it.' I saw fellow Ghanaians with bushy hair not getting food to eat. That place was horrible. It was like a prison. [...] The toilet was in that room as well, but the toilet was over spilled. Some people were crying. I sat next to a man and asked him why he was kept for so long. He said that he didn't have money and the person who called to ask for money didn't pay and other numbers he had are not going through. Even if you don't have money, they don't even let you work to earn money. So, he and others were there the whole time and they cried badly. The day we arrived at this place, the other prisoners rushed to us, knowing that we were bringing food. We had Kenkey, Gari and Shoko, and when I saw these people, I felt pity. So, I went to one guy sharing my Kenkey and Gari. At that moment, I thought that I would leave that day or the next morning. In fact, I didn't know that we would stay there longer than that. So, I shared all my Kenky, Gari and Shoko, but later I started suffering myself. There was no food. Therefore, I started begging as well. I also shared my painkillers. When I was confronted with that suffering, I started crying. It was not easy at all."

~ Ebenezer ~

The provided food was only bread in the morning and simply pasta cooked without salt. No detainee was satisfied with these two meals per day.¹⁶ Ebenezer starved and witnessing the

prison guards' brutality despondent him.¹⁷ Extorting money from the detainees and their families while applying brutal violence, which sometimes ended in death, was hard for him to bear. The migrants were treated like animals and tortured to the extreme:

"I shouldn't regret. But if you see how they are treating the people, it is like they are animals. It is not easy. Every morning, afternoon and evening, they come and beat you. Even though it is obvious that these people cannot manage to give any money, they keep on beating them. They call either a person back home or your contact in Libya. They tell them that they will never release this person but beat him until he dies. After that, they will throw him away without anyone doing anything. You can only avoid that if the person who is receiving the phone call sends money."

~ Ebenezer ~

In particular, the migrants who could not pay had to fear for their lives. However, other detainees were held to ransom regardless of their payments. It is the connection man's responsibility to communicate with the local gangs. Some connection men negotiated loans for their clients, which they had to pay off after the onward journey.¹⁸ As it becomes evident, bribery, extortion, and imprisonments are widespread instruments among some parts of the Libyan authorities¹⁹ as well as civilians²⁰ to do business on the back of the migrants and their friends and families. Later on, Ebenezer was imprisoned and blackmailed by the Libyan police instead of local gangs. He had to call his mother, who had to sell her cashew farm, to transfer the requested amount. It did not only put a financial but also an emotional burden on mother Joustina. At the latest, the core family's extensive involvement in the migration of one of their members becomes apparent if one of them starts their migration and is exposed to the described hardships.²¹ Later, Ebenezer was caught, dispossessed, and imprisoned by the Libyan police at Grayan detention centre.²² In the subsequent quote, he describes how he was brooding over the suffering his migration caused for his mother. It put him in a position of high desperation:

"Sometimes, I sat down and imagined the situation my mum was facing at the moment. If I see my mum like that, I cry. My mum had so much trouble and sorrow. She reduced her weight a lot. All because of me. She didn't hear from me. Some people were saying that I was already dead. My mum didn't know what to do. She is also owing 5,000 GHC. Her worries were about the debts and her son. I was also thinking of the money and my mum as well. Especially what my mum was going through made me sit down and cry. One of the detainees told me to stop crying and that we will leave the place. I just said, 'Charley, it is not easy at all. If I leave this place back home, I owe a lot of money. People know that I travelled. So, they will come and want to collect the money from me. Even if I don't have money, they will come and collect any money I get when it's cashew time. If I go to Ghana now, it will be the worst moment ever. My life will be as worse as ever before.'"

~ Ebenezer ~

To contact his mother, he had to bribe the prison guards.²³ In the last quote, Ebenezer estimated 5,000 GHC, which his mother had to repay to the debt holders since he was coerced at Grayan. Prior to that, mother Joustina transferred the requested 3,000 GHC²⁴ on the assumption that her son would be released within three days after the payment was received. As already mentioned, mother Joustina was deceived and her son did not regain his freedom. Hundreds of other inmates and their families had to endure this very betrayal as well.²⁵ The detainees were exposed to the prison guard's arbitrariness as the betrayals and general treatment demonstrate. The dire conditions at Grayan detention centre were unbearable. On a daily basis, the prison guards tortured and humiliated the migrants:

"Even when they said to stand up, we couldn't get up. We were falling immediately down and they were laughing. After you went on your knees to the main street, you had to lie down and roll back to start walking on your knees again. And they were beating you. They said, 'Stand up and walk!' And they can see that your eyes are twisting because you are dizzy and you fall down. They were laughing. It's not easy. Arab people are brutal and very bad. One day, they beat one guy. They tied his hands and his legs and hung him beating the soles of his feet. They beat him until he collapsed, poured water on him until he woke up and continued beating him. That's what they were used to do. If they beat you and you collapse, they pour water on you until you wake up and then they continue beating you. That place is not easy and I spent there a full year."

~ Ebenezer ~

Due to the sheer brutality, Ebenezer and others made plans to escape the prison. However, there was no opportunity for them to materialise their ideas. If the prison guards took notice of their plans, they were transferred to another cell exposed to violence which some detainees did not survive. If a person fell sick, this detainee had to recover himself or die. Calling the prison guards would mean that this person will be brought to the desert:

"They beat us a lot. Sometimes, we were talking about how to break out. If the prison guards notice that you are planning to break out, they move you to Calaba. Calaba is a big cell and they used to bring you there. It's in a big camp. It's paled by high walls with razor wire on top of it. If they say Calaba, it means one cell with a toilet, bath and a water tap. You can put 100 or 120 people in one cell. Three people had to share one foam mattress to sleep on. However, there was no foam mattress on the floor for the first at least four months. Every morning, I woke up with my body paining me. I saw so many people dying. Even in my cell, one guy from The Gambia died. He died in the morning and lay there until evening time. Just the next morning, they came and took him out. When the prison guards took him, we were fighting for his place. Talking about that place, a lot of people died. If there is a sick person, the prison guards come and say that they will bring him to the hospital, but no one will see him ever again. One of the black guys serving there came to us and said that if somebody is sick, you should pray for him but don't call the Arab people. If you call them, they will come, take the person and throw him out in the desert. They will not take him to the hospital. They are lying. So, if a person is sick, you have to pray for him and take care of him so that he recovers."

~ Ebenezer ~

All detainees had to sleep on the floor, left with sometimes not even clothes to wear.²⁶ IOM tried to improve the situation by providing mattresses, toiletries and food, but the prison guards undermined the efforts.²⁷ The prison guards tried to prevent them from talking to the detainees. Unknown to the prison guards, one IOM staff member seized the opportunity to talk clandestinely to the detainees. Listening to the first-hand reports reduced the British IOM officer to tears.²⁸ The detainees expressed to IOM their urgent desire to leave the detention centre due to the hostile situation. Ebenezer had to endure severe physical and mental torture for several months. Being isolated from the outside world and having no contact with his mother was a relentless challenge for Ebenezer himself as well as for his mother and the rest of the family.²⁹ Ebenezer lost even his vitality and will to survive. At this point, he preferred to die instead of returning home:³⁰

"At the time when IOM officials came and witnessed the conditions under which we lived, it made them very sad. One week after they gave us the mattresses, they asked us what else we needed. But we said, 'No, we don't need any mattress. We just want to leave this place. We are suffering. People are dying. There is no medicine if you are sick.' We just had salt or onions to put into the water and drink. Sometimes, I woke up crying. I said to myself, 'If I die, I like it. The situation I'm going through, the food they are giving to us, the water we are drinking, it is all not good at all. Imagine one room for 150 people. Some people are sick and we are all in the same room. So, ask for now if I die, I like it. I knew that my mum back home was suffering, and if they deported me now, I don't have anything. I'm returning with all the suffering sticking in my bones. If I die, I would like it.'"

~ Ebenezer ~

Before his migration, Ebenezer was mentally determined and courageous. Carried by his faith in God, he followed the motto “do or die”³¹. His demoralisation started in Sabha, as described above. His desperate mental condition worsened ever since. Even upon arrival in Ghana, he had to cry out of despair:

“When I touched Ghanaian soil and stood there just like that, I cried again. I worked so hard and went through so much trouble to get money. I wanted to have a good life, but now even though I’m back in Ghana, I don’t have anything, not even a bag. Just the clothes I’m wearing. I cried.”

~ Ebenezer ~

¹ “If I think of my life in Libya seeing sick or dead people, I’m feeling that sense of freedom today more than ever. I don’t wanna leave again. I’m happy every day. Sometimes, my neighbour asks me whether I’m also sad sometimes. She says that she sees me always happy. I don’t let sorrows linger in my mind again. The hardship I mastered in the past gives me no reason to be sad today. I saw the most devastating things one can imagine. Therefore, nothing can harm me no more. So, every day, I’m happy. People who didn’t travel and don’t have money will start thinking. They don’t know how awful life can be. I stayed in a prison for a whole year with no money. If I wake up in the morning with no money, I don’t care. For me, it’s just one day. That’s no reason for me to worry. Even if I didn’t eat from the morning to the evening, I don’t care. I experienced times even worse than that. In prison, we were constantly hungry. We almost ate parts of our mattresses. The situation in the desert is the same. If you don’t eat for two days, you cannot get up because you are too weak. Today, if I wake up in the morning with hunger, it doesn’t affect me. However, those who didn’t experience that and wake up in the morning without having anything to eat are severely affected. I know how it is to get nothing or to eat just uncooked noodles. Either you eat it or not. All that made me extremely resilient. That’s why I’m so happy today. I have something to eat, how can I be sad? Even though I’m not a rich man and my life isn’t the best, I don’t have any feeling of poverty.” ~ Ebenezer

² “I started picking up working with machines.” ~ Ebenezer

³ “This car can take 35 people. They put all the people with their sacks on the truck bed and mount the rest at the car. First, they called one after another, placed the people and instructed them how to sit. They place you in a row. You sit and then you open your legs that in that space another person can sit and open his legs for another person as well. For those people sitting at the edge they have to hold their luggage tight. It was not easy. That time, Joe told me that that this is the worst part of the journey. You have to be prepared for that.” ~ Ebenezer

⁴ “If a person falls down, we start knocking the window to the driver’s cabin. We shouted, ‘Muskrat!’ The car goes with high speed but they stopped if we lost a person. So, then you tell the drivers that a person got lost and you watch out for the missing person. You can look to any direction and easily see a person coming. The desert is composed of sand but at some places you find rocks. If the car collects you, it will not stop. So, you have to run and jump. Joe told me that if I push him, he pushes me as well as. No one wants to fall down. But I didn’t fall down even though Joe and I were fighting. The desert is not easy. It’s very hard at that place. You see even grown up men crying. They are crying because of their legs. It’s not easy.” ~ Ebenezer

⁵ “For some border officials it works but other will recognise that your passport is fake. Then they collect money in CFA. If you don’t pay, they don’t let you go. So, we had to pay money several times.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶ “In the middle of the night at around three to four o’clock they picked us up. When we were going, we didn’t use the road. The driver said that he wants to dodge the police barrier. He wanted to leave the road and pass through the desert or the bush way. However, the police knew this tactic and left the barrier and waited for us a bit further. When we were getting back to the road, we saw the police officers and they caught us. The police demanded money from us and the negotiation started. The driver told us that they want 100 LYD from each person. After we payed, the police let us pass. Later, when we were already seeing the skyline of Tripoli by night, we had to make another stopover because of the police being around. We slept at another house and continued the next night and arrived in Tripoli. However, we were imprisoned at a place similar to that one in Sabha. They started calling your name and gave you a mobile phone for money.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷ “The Libyan soil is different compared to the Ghanaian soil. The cement is very hard. So, you also get a lot of injuries due to that. It was not easy.” ~ Ebenezer

⁸ “We had french-speaking people but also Ghanaians, Nigerians, Moroccans, people from Bangladesh and a lot of other countries.” ~ Ebenezer

⁹ “When we were forced to enter their boats, they beat us shouting, ‘Fisa, fisa!’ This means fast, fast, go fast. When we arrived in Traona getting out of the car, they started beating us.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁰ Despite the declared objective to embark on the Mediterranean Sea in order to be rescued by a civil sea rescue mission, the correlation between sea rescue missions and departing migrants cannot be confirmed according to several studies. The elaborated cases in this research did not consider the civil sea rescue missions' activities in their migration decision-making neither. Thus, sea rescue missions do not incentivise migration per se (Steinhilper & Gruiters, 2018; Cusumano & Villa, 2019).

¹¹ "They came, crossed our way, started shooting and told us to stop. If you don't stop, they would shoot your balloon. They used to do that with others in the past already. Some people said that they will do so or also target the rescue boat. They also remove your engine. In the connection house were some people who were caught on the sea but ran away willing to try it by sea again. They shared their experience of the Libyan removing their engines and catching them. Therefore, we were aware of the difficult situation." ~ Ebenezer

¹² "When the Libyans spotted us, they started shooting in the water. Then our captain said to stop otherwise they would have killed us. If they strike the Lampa, it loses air and we would all drown. So, we said to ourselves to let them catch us and we stopped the boat. There were two little boats, one in front of us and one at our back. We returned to the place from where we put to sea. Some police vans arrived and we were put in these cars. Then they brought us to the main Libyan migrant camp." ~ Ebenezer

¹³ "On the sea, a rescue ship saved us. They tied our boat against their ship. Most of us were happy that we were about to go to Europe. We thought to be brought to Europe. Later, we heard that another boat capsized. About 70 people were about to die. The rescue boat left us to save the other people from the capsized boat. When we were left alone, the Libyan coastguard came and tried to intervene. The Libyan coastguard trend to intimidate the rescue crew and told them to stop bringing people to Europe. The rescue crew pleaded on our behalf to let them alone and just rescue us. However, the Libyan coastguard claimed that they have an agreement with the EU that no one should be allowed to enter Europe illegally. If they don't take us migrants back to Libya, they will have problems with the EU. Even though the private sea rescuer pleaded, the Libyan coastguard took us back to Libya." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁴ "At that time, they collected all our clothes including your shoes. You were left naked or just with your boxer shorts. All my stuff including my phone was taken from me. I forgot Silas' number due to how they treated us. So, I just thought that this journey is the worst. I even forgot the numbers because of the harsh treatment." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁵ "They detained us at a horrible place. It was the connection house. A lot of people arrived there. If you are in Agadez and you don't have money, they will bring you there. They used to say that it is like a credit. They will take you and after arriving in Sabha they put you in a room and then you have to call back home to ask for money. When we arrived, we were brought to a big fenced complex. You had to remove your shirt and shoes. They place we slept was like a prison heavily crowded. It was a room like this [referring to the 25 square metres hotel room] with up to 50 people. If you wanted to sleep, you couldn't lay down but you had to sit like this or other people sleep on top of each other. I spent two to three days there. When it was getting to the third day, I regretted to start this journey. I wanted to go back." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁶ "The food the prisoners get is only spaghetti. When they cook spaghetti, they don't use salt or any other ingredients like Pepe. Every prisoner has his own plate and one spoon. In the morning they give you what they call homsa. It's just a small piece from here to here. Nothing more. In the afternoon time, they give you these Macaroni but there is no salt or tomato. They give it to you and you eat it just like that." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁷ "You wake up in the morning and don't eat, in the afternoon you don't eat and just in the evening you eat a little bit. If you try to satisfy yourself, your money will be finished and the journey cannot be continued. And if you stay there, you will die. That's why we did it like that." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁸ "However, the prison guards used to say to those who already payed in Burkina Faso that they didn't pay. If you had not a good connection man, they used to do that. So, if you payed in Burkina Faso and arrived in Sabha, they used to say that you didn't pay and detain and torture you. Talking about ourselves, they didn't do it to us. We payed our money and they told us that the price from Sabha to Tripoli is 600 LYD. So, if you don't have money, you raise a credit and will be imprisoned in Tripoli again." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁹ "He told me that we will be sent from the camp straight to another prison. We won't be free again. In the past, a lot of people came and were put into prison. So, if you want to leave this place, you have to pay money. He explained me the procedure." ~ Ebenezer

²⁰ "Libyan people can also catch and detain you. They just go up and down looking for black people to catch and detain in order to blackmail some money from them. We were advised not to walk around for that reason." ~ Ebenezer

²¹ "I called my mum and the police guards said they need in Ghanaian money 2,000 GHC. I told this my mum and she started crying asking from where she is supposed to get this amount of money. I told her that I'm in prison and the situation isn't easy. My mother had a cashew farm and she was willing to sell it what she also did." ~ Ebenezer

²² "At that time, I earned 900 LYD. However, one day we came from work and spotted a police car. So, we started running away but they came and caught us again. The police collected all my money and mobile phone. Then I was locked up in Grayan detention centre. I spent one year in that camp." ~ Ebenezer

²³ “If you give him money, the prison guards pass him a phone. That’s how they make business. In Libyan prisons, they always do that business. They do you favours for money.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁴ “The Arab prison guard gave my mum a Ghanaian account number to which the money has to be send. My mum has sent the money to the Ghanaian person’s bank account. I was told that in three days time I will be released.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁵ “The prison worker said that I’m not the only one who paid and that there are money others who got betrayed but the guy just ran away. He got the money but didn’t use to come to this prison again. He collected the money from more than hundred people promising to remove them from the camp. So, there was a time he decided not to come to this camp again.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁶ “When I was in that Grayan prison, I had no clothes. They collected everything. We were just naked or wearing boxer shorts and slept on the floor.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁷ “IOM started giving us mattresses, rice, milk, yoghurt and other good things. The black prison workers told us that IOM gave them a lot of good things. But the Arab people won’t give it to us. They just took it and sold it. IOM gave us good quality blankets but the Arabs collected them. We got towels which we also used to cover ourselves. We had the opportunity to leave our cell in order to collect a mattress, shampoo and blankets and return back to the cell. After the IOM officials left, the Arabs collected everything. They said, ‘Fisa! Bring it!’ If you refuse, they beat you. They were having metal pipes as weapons when they collected the stuff. The only thing they didn’t take from us was the soap. Even the shampoo was collected. We said to each other, ‘What are they doing? We want to go. If you give us food, these Arab people will just come and collect it. We are still suffering. After the IOM officials are leaving, the situation didn’t change. We are still suffering.’” ~ Ebenezer

²⁸ “The Arab prison guards don’t want us to talk to IOM. Only the black prison workers got the chance to talk to them. But they had to pretend that everything is going well. So, they said that the food we get is good and that we are living under good conditions. But the detainees were not allowed to talk. The Arabs knew that if we talk, we would say that the food IOM gave to them was not shared with us. So, they don’t allow us to talk to IOM. When the IOM officials were about to talk to us, the Arab people just made them leaving. So, they don’t want us to talk to them. One day, the IOM people talked to the prison workers but there was one guy taking another way. He passed by and asked us and we told him everything. This IOM official started crying.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁹ “At the Grayan detention centre, I spent one year. We were beaten up a lot. For the whole one year, my mother didn’t hear from me. No phone calls. They don’t give us mobile phones. I had no more money. If you wanted to make a phone call, you had to pay money.” ~ Ebenezer

³⁰ “At that point, I wanted to die. If I go home, there are 5,000 GHC debts. They will come and take my mum’s cashew farm as well. I’m still in prison. If I die here, I like it. So, I did not try to make a phone call again. Therefore, my mother didn’t hear from me again. My mum was always crying. She talked to the pastors and they told her that I’m not dead but alive but the place where I am is not easy for me. I said to myself, ‘If I die here, I like it. I don’t wanna go home again.’” ~ Ebenezer

³¹ “When I wanted to go to Libya, I was not afraid. I said to myself, ‘Do or die!’ That was in my mind. I wanted to make it in life and that’s never easy. It is very hard. So do or die. I was not afraid of anything. You can die in the desert or somewhere else en route but I was not thinking about that. I was just thinking about how to help my family and I knew that God will help me for the journey. So, I was not afraid of anything.” ~ Ebenezer

5.1.2.4 Fourth Case: Moses Gafah

In terms of the experiences and his personal rating of the respective time abroad, Moses' two migrations divided by the civil war in Libya were of a very different nature compared with the other three cases. Similar to Mohammed, his descriptions are highly sporadic. Asked about negative experiences, Moses did not want to deliver many stories. Many incidents on the road and in Libya have traumatic consequences on him and his family, which he does not want to recall¹ or delve into deeply.

As already mentioned in *Section 4.4*, on his first migration, he saved his migration fellow's life by finding water for him in the desert.² This extreme situation strengthened his faith, which was highly advantageous for his mental wellbeing until today. In Libya, Moses successfully assumed several jobs which guaranteed him a stable income source, including a salary increase.³ Everywhere he worked, he proved to be popular with his employers.⁴ As a result, Moses' plan to migrate to Europe changed over the years. Instead, he wanted to preserve his living standards and continue working in Libya. Due to his advancing age, the idea of finding a wife and establishing a family emerged, which was a decisive change in his life.⁵ Hence, his aspiration turned into reality⁶ and his wife found a job in Libya which eased their life noticeably⁷. They sent remittances⁸ and acquired a piece of land in Kumasi.⁹ Thus, he assessed their life in Libya as positive overall.¹⁰

Nonetheless, racism was an overarching phenomenon he and his wife experienced on a daily basis. Both verbal and non-verbal abuse from ordinary Libyans happened to them. The police did not intervene but locked black people up if they lodged a complaint. Both Moses and his wife were assaulted and robbed several times. Since clearance certificates were requested, which were not issued to black people, basic public services such as hospitals were practically not accessible. Fortunately, working for the British Embassy allowed them certain privileges compared to other foreigners:

"The character of the people was the main obstacle in Libya. It was a socialist country, but there was the perception that every foreigner was a beggar. Every person being pushed from his or her home country seeking something to do is a beggar in their eyes. You know how it is if someone relates to you as a beggar. If I start talking about the behaviour of the Libyans and how they treated us, I can talk for days. Some of them are good, I would say. But if you randomly line up 100 Libyans, you won't get 20 good people. [...] The most common thing in Libya is that people beat or attack you. If something like this happens to you and you go to the police station, they will lock you up. The only thing that comes to their minds is that we foreigners want to expose their people. You have to be very careful. Otherwise, they will lock you up. Sometimes, you are even afraid to go to the hospital. They will ask you for a police report, and you cannot go unless you find a Libyan person who has the courage to stand with you and who defends you against his own people. This job with the British Embassy secured me because when Gaddafi was alive, they were very careful to touch anyone working in or for the embassies. That gave us security. Nevertheless, things happened even to me. I was captivated, but the embassy used to come and rescue me. A lot of others are going through these incidents of assault every day. Every day, there is a problem. You can just go and then they attack you with knives and take your mobile phone and the money and leave you. It's very common in Libya."

~ Moses ~

Over the course of time, their physical integrity was jeopardised. In public areas, it was not possible for them to move or stay safe.¹¹ The lack of rights and arbitrariness led to economic exploitation, which made Moses prefer to stay at home instead of following unpaid work.¹² His wife did not find an accurate job either.¹³ In addition, the salary at the embassy was highly underpaid. His employer was aware of the powerlessness Moses, his wife and other foreigners were exposed to, which they took advantage of.¹⁴ Irrespective of their rise in salary, the following outbreak of the civil war denied the accumulation of capital.¹⁵ As a matter of fact, the unfolding inflation and exploitation exhausted their financial resources.¹⁶ Furthermore, the father-in-law's funeral aggravated the economic situation.¹⁷ There were widespread expectations that the emergence of the violent confrontation in 2014 would be quickly resolved.¹⁸ Instead, the clashes continued and Moses and his wife's savings were exhausted.¹⁹ As marauding gangs wandered around and plundered people's houses, even staying at home became too dangerous.²⁰

¹ "I've seen a lot of things I don't want to talk about." ~ Moses

² "I thanked God that there are so many bare wholes in the desert. They dig many of them because they know that people are passing. So, I was looking for water and by God's grace I just found one borehole water. I took some and walked back to him. However, I didn't give it to him because the voice said that I shouldn't do so. At that time, I was an extremely devoted Christian and listened to the voice of the Lord. The voice told me that he would die. He was eager to drink the water because he was very weak. He couldn't even work. It took him ten seconds to take one step. When I arrived at where he was I just poured the water on him. From the head to the feet until the water was finished. When the water was finished, he said, 'I can walk now.' So, we continued walking as we did before to get more water. After we arrived at a river, I told him to relax, took another water and poured on him as I did before. I asked him whether he was okay then and he said that he was okay. So, I told him to drink water then. We were drinking a lot. After that, I prayed to God that a car would come. Just right after we started walking again, we saw a car coming." ~ Moses

³ "It finally changed to 750 LYD barely one year before the uprising started." ~ Moses

⁴ "I worked in a Libyan-Turkish restaurant. I worked there four to six months in the kitchen washing plates and helped them cleaning and packing stuff. I stopped working there and they were even not happy to see me leaving because anywhere I work, I do it with my heart. Anywhere I work is a problem if I leave." ~ Moses

⁵ "After I stayed in Libya for three or four years, I noticed that I already hit 30 because when I left I was 26 years old. So, I was 30 years old and I noticed that I had to get a wife. This idea came through the friend I hosted because initially my plan was to earn money, return to Ghana and fly to Europe. So, to marry wasn't part of my plan so far but this friend started talking about it and I started to recognise that there is the need for me to get a wife as well because staying alone isn't easy." ~ Moses

⁶ "My wife arrived in September 2008. The following month, she got pregnant." ~ Moses

⁷ "My wife having a job reduced the burden for me because when I was working, sometimes I had to borrow money before the end of the month. So, after she got her job, I had not to borrow money anymore. Then I started to save a bit." ~ Moses

⁸ "I saved 400 USD but I owed also 200 USD. What happened was that during the uprising, the embassy gave us a three months salary but I didn't receive it. I made them sending it home. It was 2,400 GHC which my brother Edward received and put it on a bank account while I was still in Libya. My boss gave me 2,000 LYD before he was leaving. He asked me to stay in his villa until the embassy decides to vacate everything from the house. My wife and I were staying in that house and I found 600 LYD there and called him. He said that I should keep it. So, I got 2,600 LYD." ~ Moses

⁹ "My wife got a job in a boutique. She was the breadwinner at that time until I did the replacement for one day at the British Embassy. It turned out to be a permanent job for me. After I got the letter of appointment, they were also looking for a female security guard. I tried to let my wife getting that job but it didn't work. Later, I found out that they still need another one. So, I pushed hard again and they took my wife by God's grace. So, I and her got our letter of appointments in the same month. She got her letter even two days before I got mine. I started working around January or February 2013 and she started in July in the same year. Things were very good until the second uprising in 2014. Things were improving. I received 1,100 USD which was 1,550 LYD and so did my wife. At the end of the month, we got 2,200 USD a month. We used that money to buy some land in Kumasi and two in Kasoa and I also helped my stubborn sister to establish a business in Kumasi." ~ Moses

¹⁰ “It wasn’t easy but easier than here [Ghana]. It wasn’t easy when she [wife] came because my salary wasn’t enough for us. Nevertheless, it was easier than in Ghana. [...] The life there was cool. Seeing the aspect of living condition and the economy, it was very good but when it comes to human behaviour there are so many obstacles. However, the general life in terms of economy and general living there it’s very good. As long as you are working, the life there is better by far. It was very good.” ~ Moses

¹¹ “It came to a point that we had to manage how to move in public. My wife had a particular driver who drove her to her work and picked her up later instead of taking a public vehicle. Otherwise, the chance is fifty-fifty that something can happen.” ~ Moses

¹² “After the restaurant job, I was doing some plastering for one to two months but it wasn’t good for my skin. I stopped that work and joined the painting work again. The guy I worked with kept my money and refused to give it to me. So, I stopped that and decided to stay at home.” ~ Moses

¹³ “My wife didn’t really enjoy working in Libya until we returned in 2012 and got a job for her at the British Embassy.” ~ Moses

¹⁴ “The salary was just around 400 and something LYD. It wasn’t good but I had no choice. You had to do it. I continued working and was pushing for a salary pay rise but it seems that they saw that we have no other choice anyways. Where do you go if you have a problem in Libya? You cannot go to the Libyan authorities. The embassy took advantage of that precarity and did what they like.” ~ Moses

¹⁵ “Unfortunately, the time until the upraise started was very short.” ~ Moses

¹⁶ “While we were there, things were becoming more and more costly. The living expenses were huge. Before we even recognised ourselves, our money was exhausted. So, I had to start doing the painting job again but when your work was done, they didn’t want to pay you. If you say something, they pull a gun and say, ‘Shut up! If you talk, I will kill you!’” ~ Moses

¹⁷ “During the the uprise there was not a lot left but we struggled to make ends meet there. Unfortunately, my wife’s father passed away and she had to return to Ghana for the funeral. There was not enough money left for that. So, she had to withdrawal the money we had on the bank account for the funeral and the plane tickets for her and Heavenly.” ~ Moses

¹⁸ “The problem was that after the crisis started in 2014 no one expected that it would take a long time before it will end. The embassy opened bank accounts for us to save our salary. People left their money there because they thought that it won’t take long.” ~ Moses

¹⁹ “In July, the money was finished. So, then we left.” ~ Moses

²⁰ “What they did now was to go to your house and to try to rob you there. At that point, I made up my mind to return to Ghana. That’s why we came back.” ~ Moses

5.1.2.5 Conclusion

Although all four interviewees and the migrants from their respective social networks migrated at different times and frequencies, they had similar experiences. However, differences can also be observed, with some migrating repeatedly and gathering different impressions with each migration. Furthermore, the migrants' ambitions regarding the destination and their life plans can change over time and in comparison to previous migrations. For example, transit locations become destinations or the desire to start a family may arise.

In contrast, the migration route remains stable, passing through Burkina Faso and Niger with fixed stops on the way to the Libyan coast. All interviewed migrants chose the same route, except for Ali, who migrated via Togo and Benin instead of Burkina Faso during his penultimate migration to avoid drawing attention from his social environment. Some migrants pay their facilitators in advance, while others only pay for specific legs and have to find income sources at each location to finance their continued journey.

Simultaneously, due to their criminalised status, migrants are structurally vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Additionally, they cannot carry possessions with them to avoid being recognised as migrants, which further exacerbates their vulnerability. Many have an unwavering determination to continue their migration successfully, leading them to expose themselves to dangers, endure exploitation, and make sacrifices. Consequently, they accept precarious jobs that they would not otherwise be willing to undertake. Another reason they accept such jobs is that, as foreigners travelling through another country, they are not at risk of suffering from a permanent stigma or reputational loss, as they would at home. Thus, migrants are vulnerable due to their helplessness and destitution and their intrinsic willingness to operate in particularly fragile contexts to earn money.

The migrants take on different jobs and face various work requirements, allowing them to apply their existing skills and develop new ones. This can potentially benefit both the migrants themselves and others upon their return. Both physically and psychologically, they demonstrate adaptability, perseverance, assertiveness, determination, and resilience under challenging conditions throughout the entire migration process. These qualities can have a positive long-term impact on personality. However, experiences of exploitation and engaging in unhealthy work are primarily adverse. The effects of migration experiences on mental wellbeing and behaviour are discussed in detail in *Section 5.3*.

Along the migration route, communities of migrants emerge. These offer individual migrants a place of safety in an otherwise fragile and sometimes dangerous environment. There is a high degree of solidarity and cohesion in these communities, and each migrant's social network expands over time and with each new location. This network provides practical support, such as financial assistance, accommodation, job placement, and, above all, psychological support. In

this community of destiny, a dignified life based on mutual acceptance and trust without preconceptions or stigmas is possible. These transnational networks improve life in transit and reduce migration costs. With each migration, the migrant increases their knowledge of the circumstances en route and can accelerate and make them safer through their transnational network. For example, due to their experience, the migrant knows how to behave en route, and their social network can provide them with adequate contacts for job procurement or provide direct money. Thus, many migrants could earn money and send remittances even in transit, especially under Gaddafi's rule in Libya. However, remittances must also be profitably invested or utilised. This challenge can fail for various reasons. Another added value of the migration experience arises from the acquisition of intercultural competencies, which also contributes to personal development. In addition, the deprivations, restrictions, and incidents of violence can lead to a certain degree of gratitude and mindfulness for life and one's freedom.

Nonetheless, negative migration experiences outweigh positive ones both quantitatively and qualitatively. While migration routes have remained the same over the past years and decades, migration has become more complex and dangerous due to stricter migration policies and more restrictive EU border regimes. For example, the digitalisation of biometric data has made it more challenging to conceal identity. While replacing trucks with pickups has accelerated movement, it has also become more dangerous. During the ride-on pickups, there is tremendous competition among migrants. There are sometimes even non-verbal confrontations among friends. At this point, each migrant must be ruthless to avoid endangering their own life. The improved equipment and more rigorous approach of state authorities and private gangs, groups, and militias further complicate the movement of migrants. Thus, detours must be taken to avoid these groups. Many journeys take place overnight and mainly on foot near the border to avoid attracting the attention of third parties, which is an additional risk factor. If individual migrants or groups are discovered, risky chases unfold. Under these circumstances, significant injuries can occur while on the move, and some journeys end fatally, as facilitators are at risk of losing their orientation in the desert. At the same time, migrants are also exposed to the arbitrary actions of these groups. They can be fierce towards migrants, abusing or killing them. Militias and local gangs imprison migrants inhumanely, subjecting them to physical abuse and extorting ransom money from their families back home. This not only harms the physical and mental wellbeing of the migrants but also plunges their relatives into existential crises. Even after the ransom has been paid, there is no guarantee that the migrant will be released. Some are still held captive and tortured until death. The outcome for each migrant depends on the facilitator's level of commitment to their case. While some facilitators may successfully secure the release of the migrant, others may not.

Along the coasts of North Africa, the facilitators typically force migrants onto boats at night and sometimes against their will. Some boats capsize within minutes, while others can withstand the waves for extended periods. This part of the migration journey is widely considered the most dangerous. Ebenezer referred to the international waters as the migrants' ultimate goal to reach to be rescued by private search and rescue vessels. However, the Libyan coast guard also operates

at sea and wields extreme brutality against the migrants. They prevent civilian search and rescue vessels from rescuing migrants and forcefully return migrants against their will to Libya, where they are locked up in detention centres.

In the territory of the Libyan state, police brutality is likewise a problem. They sometimes demand bribes from migrants to allow them to pass and, at other times, arrest them without apparent reason. Migrants get imprisoned, abused and all their belongings are confiscated. Authorities take them across the country's border and abandon them in the desert. When migrants are detected trying to reach the European mainland, they are particularly susceptible to brutal mistreatment and torture in detention centres. There, fake ransom demands are made as well. These detention centres are shielded from the international public by the operators. Direct contact between IOM and the migrants is prevented, and assistance measures are countered. Nonetheless, the inhumane conditions prevail, are highly traumatising and can lead to death. Diseases are rampant, while access to medical care is denied. Those critically ill will either die in their prison cell or be abandoned by prison guards in the desert. Many migrants lose their will to live under these dire conditions anyway. The isolation from the outside world, the experienced suffering, and the thoughts of desperate and heavily indebted family members at home leave many migrants depressed and traumatised. In addition, the experience of losing loved ones can exacerbate this situation further.

In transit outside the prison walls, migrants must also fear being betrayed by the police or verbally or non-verbally attacked by civilians, in addition to local gangs and militias, the police, and the coast guard. Racism against black people is widespread in North African countries. In addition to daily attacks, black people are structurally disadvantaged, for example, in the job market. In particular, after the fall of Gaddafi and the ensuing civil war, the situation for migrants deteriorated massively. Sharia law disenfranchised all non-Libyans and made them completely defenceless. All these abuses by the Arab majority society in everyday life and under the care of militias, gangs or authorities have fuelled in many migrants and transit returnees a genuine hatred of Arab people. In contrast, under Gaddafi's rule, black people lived in relative safety. Jobs were plentiful in Libya, they could live for free and access electricity, they were entitled to monthly food rations, and they could regularly send remittances. Therefore, many migrants have an overall affirmative attitude towards this life and the Gaddafi regime. However, from 2011 onwards, the situation deteriorated dramatically with the civil war. Freedom of movement was severely restricted, jobs were scarce, inflation rose, and banks stopped their services, resulting in the loss of savings. In particular, black people were targeted, killed, or forcibly recruited for the war. Some migrants hoped for an early end to the conflict and stayed in Libya. However, the civil war continued, and even the last financial resources were exhausted, leaving them penniless. Besides extortion of ransom and protection money and the generally tense financial situation, migrants also face financial distress due to other factors. In such situations, some are compelled to contact relatives and friends to ask for money, deceiving them, which can become an additional burden for all parties involved, as was the case with Ali. This example illustrates that the scope of the impact of migration

experiences extends beyond the individual migrant. The hardships described are not only an enormous physical and psychological burden for the migrant but also a severe burden for their family members. Such hardships and events represent the starting point for most transit returnees upon arrival in their home country.

5.2 “We give each other hope” – Social Network

“During our time abroad, we told each other what we were going to do with the money we would earn back home. After returning with nothing, we have to sit together again and at least give each other hope and motivation to keep on trying. [...] We also counsel ourselves, which is really important.”

~ Nurudeen ~

As demonstrated in *Section 5.1*, the social environment of transit returnees is influential or directly involved in the planning and execution of migration. Upon return, transit returnees are reliant on their social environment, which encompasses not only the core family but neighbours, friends, more distant relatives, community members, and others as well. In addition, the destitute transit returnee depends on their social network’s acceptance and support during their readjustment process. Just as migration does not occur in a social vacuum, the time after return cannot be understood in isolation from the social environment. This section examines the role of the social network, and several questions need to be answered. First, what awareness exists in the social environment regarding the situation along the Central Mediterranean route? Second, where do stayees obtain their information, and what is their level of knowledge? Third, what attitudes do they hold towards undocumented migration and transit returnees in general and the specific transit returnee in particular? Fourth, how are transit returnees received by their family, friends, and others, and what are their reactions and behaviours? Finally, what impact does the destitute return have on the social environment, and what is the relationship between the transit returnee and their social network? Each subsection will approach these questions in a similar sequence for each case. After briefly describing the neighbourhood, living environment, and family situation, the transit returnee’s most essential reference persons and the social network’s role in migration will be illustrated. Next, the transnational expansion of the network through newly established relationships and its significance for the time abroad and beyond will be discussed. Additionally, the information sources and level of knowledge as well as the general attitudes of the social environment towards undocumented migration and transit returnees will be presented before delving into the actual reactions towards the transit returnees. A particular focus will be placed on the behaviour of the immediate social environment, typically the family, as well as the role of contact with other transit returnees and peer groups.

5.2.1 First Case: Ali Alhassan

As described in *Section 4.1*, Ali has lived with his wife Rukaya in a two-room apartment in T-Poly since 2011.¹ Rukaya sells sandals at the market nearby. They had to move to T-Poly as they could not afford a place in Changli where they spent their childhood and where their families mainly live. One of Ali’s relatives permanently lends him his motorbike, which allows Ali to visit his family in Changli on a daily basis. However, as mentioned before, Ali occasionally stays at his half-brother Mr Khamil’s place in Accra.

Socio-economically, both neighbourhoods rank at similar levels. However, the inhabitants of T-Poly are composed of newcomers, whereas those staying in Changli have lived there for generations. According to Ali, the neighbours in T-Poly help each other if someone is in need of something.² Finding suitable employment is challenging in this area, neighbour Mussah admits.³ The unemployment rate and the level of poverty are relatively high.⁴ As a matter of fact, the standard of living has been declining since the day work opportunities at construction sites disappeared over the years, according to neighbour Abdul.⁵ Nonetheless, these laborious circumstances prompt the creation of self-help groups at the community level⁶, which fosters mutual solidarity instead of intensifying the pressure of competition⁷, as neighbour Mumuni confirms⁸. Ali lives door-to-door with another family. Mussah is the head of the neighbour's family and he developed a friendship with him. They share personal stories and try to support each other. Aside from his friends and neighbours, Ali's actual centre of his social life is his family. As they lived mostly in one household, Ali considers his half-siblings as regular siblings.⁹ In addition, cousins are also referred to as brothers, which reflects the tightness among family members.¹⁰ Most of the male descendants work in the butcher business, in which Ali is also active.¹¹ Since Ali's childhood, many significant caregivers for him have died. His former role model half-brother Abu-Bakhar passed away.¹² Prior to his first migration, uncle Abdel Rashid was his role model, who lost his life as well.¹³ On the day of his return in 2017, his stepmother, Mr Khamil's mother¹⁴, and a cousin¹⁵ passed away recently. All these losses affected Ali psychologically. For Ali, these human losses strengthened the value of and the relationship with Mr Khamil. In all aspects, he serves as a mentor who supports him mentally and financially. Apart from Mr Khamil, whom he also refers to as his best friend, his wife Rukaya is an important pillar in his life.¹⁶ Beyond Rukaya and Mr Khamil, Ali has the closest personal relationship with the core family members brother Mustafa, sister Sadia, sister Nafisa and mother Habiba.¹⁷ Ever since the father passed away, the cohesion within the core family became stronger and all children aimed to assist their mother in various ways, as described earlier. Over the course of Ali's childhood, he became friends with plenty of other boys of his age in densely populated Changli. His closest friends were Hamza, Yakubu, Karim, and Saani.¹⁸ There were likewise other contacts from other districts, such as Mohammed and Seeba.¹⁹ His broad social network from childhood was useful for his later migration as a few passed the same road northwards.²⁰ For instance, he knew his first migration fellows, Jacob, Mohammed, and Seeba, since some were from his extended family.²¹ Ali grew up together with them²² and even considers them as childhood friends²³. Another example is Iddrisu, from whom Ali received detailed consultation about the trajectory towards Libya and beyond. He linked him to several Ghanaian people along the route, such as Abu Bakhar in Sabha, who was supposed to assist him in finding a job.²⁴ Later in the year 2011, both were jointly evacuated from Egypt.²⁵ Afterwards, his childhood friend and migration fellow Lukman supported him financially.²⁶ They have known each other for many years and spent some time together in Libya. According to Lukman, they see each other nowadays almost on a daily basis. His children consider him as their uncle.

For Ali's first migration, he travelled together with Atakyi and Latif, among others. Both grew up with Ali in Changli and were later jointly imprisoned in Morocco.²⁷ In addition, Ali met plenty of other people of different nationalities across Niger, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt. However, due to language barriers, Ali developed deeper relationships solely with Ghanaian fellows. Along his trajectory, he encountered other compatriots at his stopover or jointly travelled with them. For example, on his first migration, Ali was hidden in the car to Tripoli with a Ghanaian guy called David and a Malian guy named Kuvani.²⁸ Once they arrived in Tripoli, Ali happened to meet Jacob in front of a supermarket and transferred him to a house in a certain district of Tripoli where mostly Ghanaian people live.²⁹ There, he met Al-Bakhar Sayibu, who is living in Germany now.³⁰ As one might imagine, the chain of encounters along Ali's journey can be continued and expanded by dozens, if not hundreds, of contacts. Hence, Ali broadened his social network over time and space. He networked with Ghanaians during wartime in Libya³¹, on his evacuation to Egypt³², in Benghazi at the oil company³³, with his respective flatmates³⁴ as well as at many other places in North Africa. Interestingly enough, he met fellows from Tamale in person³⁵ or via phone calls³⁶ whom he did not know in advance and is still in contact with nowadays. In this manner, as Ali moved from one place to another, his social contacts proved to be partly mobile as well. For instance, his migration fellow from the second journey, Atakyi, lives in Spain now.³⁷ Thus, he sustains both national as well as transnational networks. Taking the example of the earlier mentioned childhood friends and migration fellows Mohammed, Seeba, and Jacob, they separated in their trajectories as well:

"I've two people who are still in Libya. One is Mohammed and the other one is Seeba. A third one is Jacob, who belongs to my family and tried to cross to Italy and is now in the Ghanaian army. He lives in Accra. They were in that truck to Nburanu."

~ Ali ~

As mentioned earlier, his migratory social network serves multiple purposes for Ali. For example, due to transnational contacts, his transaction costs were reduced with each migration. However, the migrational network is not only crucial for the migration and the time en route but plays an important role beyond. For the time after the return and the following readjustment efforts and livelihood strategies, the contacts with former migration fellows are vital as well. The transit returnee is additionally confronted with people other than former migrants.

Prior to discussing the relevance of the contact between transit returnees, the question arises of how other stakeholders from the transit returnee's social environment react to them. Decisive for their reaction is their level of information and personal opinion on undocumented migration and transit returnees in general and the respective transit returnee's story in particular. In Ali's social environment, information about the fates of migrants en route and their return is widespread. Regarding the information source on transit returnees, mostly testimonies of people from the community are shared.³⁸ Not only do they talk about the transit returnees, but some transit returnees share their own stories.³⁹ They disclose their experiences to their family and close friends.⁴⁰ Given the large number of family members in extended families, there are direct or extended family members who talk about their own migration and what they went through in the

northern countries.⁴¹ At the same time, relatives, neighbours, and friends learn about the subsequent post-return process. The media, such as radio and television, likewise cover the topic, as Mussah⁴² and Mohammed report⁴³.

Based on these information sources, the attitudes and behaviour of the respective social network unfold. Ali's childhood friends and migration fellows Aziz, Baki, Matthäus, Mawiya, Nurudeen, and Odum can testify about their relatives', friends', neighbours' and acquaintances' reactions and attitudes upon their return in the 1990s and early 2000s which will be presented in the following. They were once rescued by the German non-governmental organisation (NGO) Cap Anamur while trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea in 2004 and deported to Ghana by the Italian authorities. This incident, followed by the arrest and prosecution of those in charge of Cap Anamur as well as the deportation of the migrants, which violated humanitarian law, attracted international attention.⁴⁴ Some deportees had migrated and returned before this rescue and deportation. In their accounts, some continuities can be found that persisted even at the time of Ali's last return until 2017 and which are also reflected in the other three cases. Parts of Ali's social environment hold a negative attitude towards the migration decision per se. People who tried to migrate to Europe are seen as ignorant. Ultimately, they would ignore the risks of migration and think that everything would be easier in Europe.⁴⁵ Ali's cousin Masahudu is convinced that with some effort, you can make it in Ghana and do not have to migrate anywhere.⁴⁶ Matthäus has a similar view by calling the decision to migrate a "failure"⁴⁷. Overall, the perception of the majority of people concerning transit returnees remains mainly problem-focused.⁴⁸ Sister Nardia describes that the transit returnee had left a vacuum within the family's social structure, which others had to compensate for. Other people have to shoulder their responsibilities, and in some cases, they have to do so long after their return.⁴⁹ Nurudeen confirms that "the gap [...] has to be filled"⁵⁰. As Ali's neighbour Abdul exemplified, it is commonly agreed that not only the transit returnee's family is adversely affected but also the community as a whole.⁵¹

As Mawiya reports from his own experience, the actual reactions were rather negative with only a few truly welcoming him.⁵² Moreover, the families are highly disappointed as the desired investment does not materialise⁵³, which is why the joy over the return is diminished⁵⁴. These circumstances pave a rocky road for the transit returnee to live together with the family again, as Nafisa describes it:

"People migrate not purposely alone for themselves but for their families as well. When they realise that things aren't going that well with them over there, they return and find it difficult because the family has expectations of them. Upon return, the family realises that things aren't that well with the returnee as well. Even though you failed, it means that nature decided for you to stay home. However, it's not easy for the returnees to live with their families again."

~ Nafisa ~

Hence, on a social level, the empty-handed transit returnees are not or are inadequately reintegrated into the family structure. Mawiya describes the lack of eye-to-eye level. Except for

the hard physical work, he was not consulted and was completely excluded from the family's decision-making process:

"You need a job to make money. Otherwise, you will be neglected. If the family takes a decision, you are out. But when it comes to hard work, they will call you to do it."

~ Mawiya ~

Since they assumed that Mawiya had brought something from abroad, there was the expectation on the family's part that he had to help them financially. However, as already suggested by Nafisa, the general understanding is that those who travel do not travel solely for themselves but for the whole family:

"This is Africa. People expect you to bring something from abroad. You don't travel just for yourself, but you are travelling for the whole family. Once you return, you have to expect behaviour such as that. Some people will never understand what it means to be deported."

~ Mawiya ~

Beyond the family, a number of people anticipate profit as well. The fact that the transit returnees themselves could find themselves in various kinds of difficulties and that they have their own problems is not considered:

"Everybody back home expects that you solve their problems whereby you just have problems yourself. You didn't bring the solution, but you returned with problems yourself. They never have that idea, though. Any person with financial problems will come to you. That one person you helped will talk to another person in need who will also visit you then. Before you realise it yourself, your money is finished."

~ Odum ~

As described by Odum, many people approach the transit returnee, even from distant places, to ask for financial assistance. Nurudeen confirms this behaviour. As a result, the transit returnee's limited financial resources are quickly exhausted.⁵⁵

Aziz corroborates this observation and adds that the circumstances of the return are not even taken into account, nor does it diminish the expectations as previously described by Mawiya and Odum.⁵⁶ According to migration fellow Nurudeen, the only thing that matters for some people is that the person has been returned.⁵⁷ Ali's brother Mustafa reinforces that there is often no understanding of the transit returnees' problems. Many do not believe the transit returnee and insist on their false perception that he should be better off.⁵⁸ They are even accused of hiding the money from their community, as Odum reports.⁵⁹ Aziz recounts from his experiences that this is, in particular, true when the person returns from Europe as he did.⁶⁰ If remittances have been issued in the past, it is expected that these financial flows will continue or even increase since the recipients of the money have adjusted themselves to this revenue. In order to secure the funding, former beneficiaries expect the transit returnee to migrate again as soon as the money stops flowing after their return:

"When I returned, one of my brothers asked me, 'When you were outside, you sponsored my children's education. Once you are back, who is going to pay now?' He wanted me to travel again."

~ Matthäus ~

However, even without remittances, a certain pressure to remigrate can arise. In the subsequent, Baki succinctly describes the hardships his family went through for him to migrate, how immense the frustration was after his return and how they urged him to migrate again:

"They [family] were just crying. I'm the firstborn. Everybody's hope was in me. They were not happy. They were disappointed. We sold everything. My mother tried to get any money she could get to support me in migration. Upon return, they told me to try it again."

~ Baki ~

The pressure to remigrate can also unfold implicitly. Mawiya confirms that the disappointment of the family frustrates many transit returnees and drives them to migrate abroad again, even without explicit invitation:

"What happens is: The returnee is very frustrated. You will finally see him re-migrating. It's not easy for somebody to return and to stay. When you travelled, you travelled with very high expectations. The family has the same hopes in you. So, If you return and you don't have anything, the family hates you. They are not happy that you travelled, wasted the money, returned, didn't bring anything back and depend on them again."

~ Mawiya ~

Ali's cousin Masahudu notices that the family not only provided financial support for the migration but that the post-return phase likewise requires financial resources. Before the return, the migrating family member was absent from their role during the time abroad, which addresses the social impact beyond the financial consequences. This has to be compensated for in all respects as well. In most cases, it is not the transit returnee who takes care of his family but instead, the relatives who have to provide for the transit returnee:⁶¹

"Some of them return and things aren't well. You have to spend your money on them. You have to spend on them to really reintegrate them into the community. Another negative aspect is that you already spent money on them for their migration and had to take care of their families when they were absent and even after return at times."

~ Masahudu ~

As Ali's aunt Nardia confirms, the transit returnees' dependency and need for familial assistance cause a severe strain on the family.⁶²

In addition to the stigma of having failed, the shame of being an alleged criminal is also pervasive. Eventually, the prejudice implies that the person must have done something illegal for which they was deported.⁶³ Another consequence of the stigma is the denial of belonging to and being a full member of society. It takes time to restore the recognition of being part of society. In the subsequent, Aziz describes such confrontations:

"If people know that you are a returnee [...] they constantly ask you, 'When are you going back? Will you go back again? When are you going back?' Once you travel outside Ghana, they perceive you as if you weren't born in Ghana. They don't see that you return home but that your home is abroad. [...] I started to become angry and rude to those who asked me these silly questions. I just asked them, 'Was I born in Europe? Am I a European? Ghana is my country. Just look at me. If I travel, I travel. If I return, I returned and stay.' So, sometimes these kinds of questions they ask you have some implications for you to go back. The reintegration will take some time until they accept you to be back home to stay and until you are free to start a new life. Nowadays, no one asks me again."

~ Aziz ~

As a result, the empty-handed transit returnees are marginalised, which makes social acceptance impossible, according to Mawiya.⁶⁴ Aziz agrees and adds that the social environment's rejection eventually leads to repeated migration.⁶⁵ Even when Mawiya found work after his return, there was no end to the mockery and ridicule. He was still labelled as a failure for not having managed to be wealthy despite his time abroad. Yet not only is he targeted by such disparagement and stigma, but also his family and friends:

"However, there was a big stigma when I started to work. My family, friends and even my other returnee friends were facing mockery because of me. How can you travel, return and do just a security job? That's what they asked because they see it as a bad job. That's why they were painting me black. But I stayed in this job and was hardworking. It paid off and I got promoted to a different job."

~ Mawiya ~

However, the recognition of the effort sets in in the long run. The acceptance of the social environment goes hand in hand with economic success.⁶⁶ Matthäus adds that respect is shown as soon as one is no longer dependent on others but can take care of oneself and others.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, this is a processual development lasting years. Immediately upon arriving, transit returnees are confronted with many forms of marginalisation. On a social level, they face explicit or implicit exclusion from the family structure and society as such. Some prejudices were already mentioned. Matthäus describes in the following that it takes many years until the basic trust in the transit returnee is restored. The image of being a loser and a criminal goes hand in hand with being untrustworthy. As a result of the suspicions that the transit returnee intends to migrate again, no one lends them money. Since everyone lives in social structures in which mutual dependence is immensely high and helping each other is correspondingly crucial, it complicates both the social and the economic readjustment. Thus, transit returnees are often reduced to and dependent on the core family and friends who migrated themselves:

"They [empty-handed returnees] are received very badly. It will take you up to five years until they will respect you. We live in a society where we are interdependent. Sometimes, you need my help. Sometimes, I need your help. If you are from Libya, no one will help you except your immediate family and your Libyan friends. If I need some capital to start something and ask others for help, they will tell each other, 'If you give him the money, he will run away! He is going back to Libya!' If I ask my Libyan friends [Ghanaian friends returned from Libya], they will give them because they know that I will never go back to Libya and that I will try my best to pay him back. However, the others just don't respect us. They are making mockeries of you. They don't respect us at all. It's not a good way of behaviour because we are still struggling. They probably change their minds after some time."

~ Matthäus ~

Uncle Sedu adds that the confrontation between old friends and acquaintances triggers additional irritation and frustration on the part of the transit returnee. Those old friends, for their part, avoid the transit returnee as described by sister Nafisa:

"Those friends who stayed back and who see themselves as more successful as the empty-handed returnee try to distance themselves from them. The old friends see themselves as something better and more successful. So, they act out their superior attitude and let the returnee feel his deprived position in comparison to them."

~ Nafisa ~

In doing so, they try to socially distinguish themselves from their unsuccessful transit returnee, representing another phenomenon of social exclusion. They do not want to mingle with socially weaker people. In addition, a certain *schadenfreude* arises among the people with a spiteful character.⁶⁸ Thus, the comparison with old friends remains rather discouraging for the transit returnees:

"Most of the empty-handed returnees become confused. They meet their old friends upon return. Those friends are way more progressed than they are. That causes some confusion. They become a burden to their families as they return without bringing anything."

~ Sedu ~

Amidst all the negative reactions, prejudices and stigmas, there are also fundamentally positive general attitudes towards the transit returnee. These attitudes are not dominated by mischievousness but by compassion. Irrespective of the prevailing lack of understanding, some understand that the person is not in a position to help others after they have been told what it means to be deported:

"There are some people who understand it. They will not come to you asking for money. Others don't know what deportation means. Once you have explained to them, the problem they wanted to tell you about has been solved."

~ Mawiya ~

Accordingly, aunt Nardia⁶⁹ and half-brother Saani⁷⁰ would react empathetically to the transit returnee's fate and one of the affected families. As they themselves may know what such a fate means for all involved, they would try to help. Sister Sadia describes that the failure of migration is not directly the fault of the migrant but rather an expression of a predetermined path by God:

"The issue is that they have returned empty-handed. It was the hope of the family that something would be brought back to the house to take care of the family and himself. However, if it doesn't happen, we consider it as destiny. This is how God wants things to happen. You can go and be successful or not. That's just destiny."

~ Sadia ~

This relieves the individual and makes it easier to maintain hope for a better future. It also eases the burden on the relatives to receive the transit returnee with a sense of gratitude and humility. God's will appears to be more deterministic than human failure. With a solid allegiance to God, the struggle with oneself appears to be manageable.⁷¹ As neighbour Mussah points out, another affirmative perspective on the transit returnee is that they potentially gain experience from which the environment can benefit.⁷²

Beyond the general attitude, the particular reactions to Ali's last return were mixed. The core family was glad he returned alive since they were previously misinformed that he had drowned in the sea.⁷³ Nonetheless, the expectation that Ali could gain additional financial means was disappointing.⁷⁴ Hopes that the situation would improve for him and the family were ultimately extinguished.⁷⁵ Accordingly, serious disagreements arose within the family as some perceived Ali's empty-handed return as a failure. In addition, there were disagreements and serious differences of opinion among the family members about how to deal with Ali. In the interview,

Nardia could not explain in detail for fear that her words would be passed on to her sister.⁷⁶ Thus, she remained relatively vague:

"Sometimes, there are fights since we are human beings. If you fight, it doesn't mean that it is forever. It won't take long that you reconcile."

~ Nardia ~

In fact, Ali was destitute and his wife Rukaya was still the breadwinner instead of the other way around, which caused rumours and irritations.⁷⁷ She financially supports him with the profits from her sandals business.⁷⁸ As a consequence, Ali was branded as a loser. Rukaya faced this narrative over her husband as well. Along the way, she had to endure lots of mockery and ridicule from her family:

"There was mockery within my family. People spoke badly about my husband. I don't let these things come close to me. If I hear something negative about my husband, I limit my own thoughts to my own thoughts because I don't wanna bother my mind with these negative things. [...] What happened was that people were saying that others returned with something and my husband did return with nothing. However, I wasn't worried because I knew that it was the war that broke out which shaped the situation. He returned with his life and that makes me simply happy."

~ Rukaya ~

Ever since he returned from his first migration, Ali deceived his family about his intentions to stay in Ghana several times. In particular, Rukaya suffered mentally from that deceptions:⁷⁹

"I just informed my family when I arrived in Libya. Otherwise, they wouldn't allow it. My wife was very confused and cried."

~ Ali ~

Despite the mental pressure and the declining standard of living, Rukaya expresses her lasting love for her husband.⁸⁰ She even declares that she would let him migrate again if it would create a solid perspective for the family's wellbeing.⁸¹ At the same time, she has become accustomed to him being absent in Accra for several weeks.⁸² However, his dishonesty when he borrowed money from his core family while he was in Morocco destroyed their trust.⁸³ Beyond the emotional damage, it put the family in lasting financial hardship. The family had to borrow money from different people and even sold their property for Ali to get him back.⁸⁴ For example, sister Sadia had to sell her store at the market.⁸⁵ Asked how the divestment and her brother's subsequent behaviour have affected their relationship, she bursts into tears and cannot speak further. This reaction illustrates the enormous strain on her and the family and how the suffering continues beyond Ali's return, as brother Mustafa vividly describes:

"There were times we were a bit fed up with his behaviour. He told us that he wanted to return home and lacked money. We mobilised the money and my sister sold almost all her belongings, not knowing that he actually wanted to go to Spain. He tried so, failed and they sent him back. Then he asked for more money. We were crying inwardly. Even though you couldn't see actual tears, we cried inside our hearts. Our hearts were full of tears. We suffered a lot even though he was back. Things were going up and down, up and down. But we thank God that he returned and is here with us."

~ Mustafa ~

Ali's family had to ask other families to mobilise money for him, which damaged not only Ali's reputation but his whole family.⁸⁶ Beyond the family's support, there is little willingness to assist. Within the extended family, there may be hidden joy over Ali's failure since they may hold grudges

against each other, as Ali's cousin Masahudu suspects.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the bonds of friendship are noticeably altered upon Ali's return. As generally described earlier, former friends who achieved relative prosperity during his years abroad now avoid or neglect him:⁸⁸

"I went abroad, and in the meanwhile, the old friends you also grew up with from the past moved on in their lives, made new friends and don't know you any more if you return empty-handed. Some of them are rich now and you cannot get even close to them anymore."

~ Ali ~

During his post-return phase, those old friends who are still in contact with him are reluctant to support him financially. Ali's failure creates mistrust in them as to whether or not the borrowed money can ever be refunded. Thus, the prejudice described above applies to Ali as well:

"I asked acquaintances and friends to help me to start my business, but they refused to help me after my history of failed migration. They said that if it was in the past, they would help me, but this time they were just sorry not to give me money. [...] There are many whom I asked for help. I called one guy and met two guys in person. I called James and met Hamza and Ibrahim. They just told me that they are willing to help but cannot do so at the moment because they had some money but just reinvested it and that I just came too late. They renovated their houses and things like that. That's what their excuses were. But that's life. You just keep on."

~ Ali ~

As a result, he only has the chance to surround himself with deprived friends since the rich only hang out with the rich, as he concludes.⁸⁹ Masahudu confirms that Ali is now embedded in an environment that is equally devoid of financial resources.⁹⁰

In addition to the practical challenge that Ali finds it very difficult to build his future without the financial help of others, the disapproving behaviour of those around him creates an inhibiting psychological atmosphere. Thus, as described by Mawiya and others, Ali internalises that he seems worthless in Ghana and of no use in the eyes of others. The lack of trust, even from his core family, aggravated Ali's lack of perspectives and fuelled his plans to attempt to make it abroad, far away from this disheartening environment. Until the family gradually realised that they had their stake in Ali's success in life, this pattern recurred several times. Over the years, the family recognised the dynamics which repeatedly inclined Ali to try his luck abroad to escape the experiences of frustration and humiliation. Ali's family started to understand that he could only feel accepted if he was included in the family life with equal rights and dignity. Nowadays, the family accompanies him intensively and tries to be closer to him:

"We, as a family, also try to be closer to him. Initially, he stayed home and made up his mind again to travel. That's the pattern for transit returnees. They return, stay at home, spend their final money and recognise that things are hard and want to travel again. When you are coming from abroad, you also compare the situation and see at least the potential that it might be better for you to be abroad. However, this time, we made him understand that he has to stay in order to move on in life. This is his home. Whatever happens, the life itself is more important. Ali hasn't even talked about travelling for a very long time. He is becoming used to the situation. We are convinced that he is now part of us. If he wants to travel, we have to make an agreement. It shouldn't be that you just pick your bag and later we get a call that you are in Libya or Morocco."

~ Mr Khamil ~

It exists a keener sensitivity towards him as well. Uncle Masahudu notes that they approached him regarding his constant journeys between Tamale and Accra. In this manner, the family allows

him to feel that he fully belongs to the family and that he is needed as well. The whole family is involved and always aware of what is happening in his life. If a family member does not hear from him for some time, they proactively contact him and ask if everything is okay or if he needs any support, as uncle Sedu describes it.⁹¹ In the subsequent period, sister Nafisa notices that her relationship with her brother becomes more intense and stronger.⁹² Previously, Ali was tolerated but neglected within the family structure. Uncle Sedu reports that this changed as well. Ali was better integrated into the family affairs, he was allowed to participate on an equal footing and was likewise given responsible tasks.⁹³ Today, Ali is an integral part of family discussions and decisions. His opinion is weighted and he attends appointments on behalf of the family. In the past, he was disregarded and this has significantly changed until today:

“Ali returned and is with me here. He is working. He is part of what I’m doing here in Accra. He is an integral part of it. Everybody is aware of his situation now. Everybody knows where he is. If he is absent, everyone knows where he is. We are calling regularly to find out how things are going: ‘Have you faced any problems? Is everything okay with you? Can I help? Do I have to come?’ If there is something to be discussed among the family, Ali is involved in so many things now. If there are programmes or important things to attend or to do, Ali is the person who goes there. If people gather, he is asked for his opinion and tries his best in whatever he can do. Initially, he returned and returned from somewhere. No one was thinking of him. Now, he is really integrated into his family and everyone is aware of involving and looking after him.”

~ Mr Khamil ~

This dialectical process of familial behaviour change unfolded over several years and is reflected exemplary in cousin Masahudu’s⁹⁴, in Rukaya’s⁹⁵ or Mr Khamil’s descriptions:

“We as a family realised that it won’t work otherwise. We had to step in. We really understood that we had to accept him. The mother complained that Ali wastes his resources as a young man. He should return and finally stay. We became aware of doing whatever it took to let him stay. That is not enough, but that’s what we can do for now. Nevertheless, this gives him hope and lets him understand that he should not travel under these conditions as he did in the past. He realised it himself. Once we are talking to him, he says so himself. He shares his stories about how close to death he was. It has been inches that he could have been part of those who died. He sees that. This shows us that he realised what had happened. I think that he left this mentality to travel behind.”

~ Mr Khamil ~

In addition, the family deliberately decided to keep Ali from knowing how many debts had been contracted nor who had sold what belongings for his migration. Such information would have put further mental stress on Ali, which they wished to avoid.⁹⁶ There is an awareness that his mental state is fragile and that he needs to be supported in stabilising himself in general but particularly psychologically.⁹⁷ In this regard, the core family played a decisive role which they actively fulfilled. They avoid blaming him and accept his request for forgiveness for the abuse of trust⁹⁸ and the loss of money⁹⁹. Sister Sadia confirms that the core family has forgiven him and supports him financially and with food.¹⁰⁰ Even Mr Khamil and his wife had been betrayed by him. Nonetheless, both of them accepted and welcomed Ali after his last return and have supported him to the extent of their possibilities until today.¹⁰¹ In addition, they recognise his efforts to make a better life for himself and the family¹⁰², albeit they always tried to encourage him not to try again but to stay in Ghana¹⁰³. Upon his last return, Ali was outspoken about his experience in Libya, as Mr Khamil describes it in the last quote.¹⁰⁴ This openness made it possible for those around him to feel the suffering he was going through. In particular, the circumstances of the Libyan civil war

allowed people less close to him, such as his neighbour Mussah, to empathise and sympathise with the difficulties he faced rather than condemning him for his empty-handed return.¹⁰⁵ Many more neighbours¹⁰⁶, friends¹⁰⁷, and relatives showed compassion and welcomed him¹⁰⁸. Irrespective of disappointed high hopes, particularly on the part of the family, they tried to encourage him positively and help him reintegrate into (working) life.¹⁰⁹ On the side of the host families and communities, awareness and knowledge of the circumstances of migration and post-return challenges are considerably more prevalent at the time of Ali's last return in 2017 compared with his first return ten years earlier. Since then, there has been a certain shift in the perspective and attitude of host families and communities towards more knowledge and understanding of the problems and, thus, more sympathy and acceptance for transit returnees. Nonetheless, certain adverse perceptions and attitudes in response to the migrant's return persist to this day which was already described.

Ali's core family was happy that he returned alive¹¹⁰ and healthy¹¹¹, albeit impecunious¹¹². He was not only welcomed in basic terms¹¹³, but the core family tried very hard to give him support, as sister Sadia describes it.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, faith in God provides mental strength and hope for a better future for Ali and those around him.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, as sister Sadia puts it, the family prays very specifically for Ali that God should grant him a job.¹¹⁶ This symbolises a worldview that relieves the burden on the transit returnee Ali. As mentioned earlier, the attitude that one is not in control of one's life but God is edifying for the believers. Eventually, in their eyes, God is a benevolent God, which means that improvements will occur in the long term.¹¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, they gave him numerous examples of friends and family members who have established a solid livelihood in Tamale without ever migrating.¹¹⁸ These examples should encourage and inspire him so that he can be similarly successful in Ghana.¹¹⁹ Among the family members, Mr Khamil is the most important mentor for Ali. According to Mr Khamil's analysis, the mistake in the past was not only to leave Ali relatively alone but also to recommend him inappropriate jobs. All family members advised him to pursue the butcher business as most families traditionally do. However, this was not a tailor-made recommendation for Ali but was solely based on traditional considerations. Whether or not this idea has realistic perspective or suits Ali as a person was not further considered. In their logic, the abandonment of cultural roots poses the underlying problem.¹²⁰ Mr Khamil recognised this misguided and unsuitable advice for Ali. Instead of pushing him into a job for traditional reasons, he took care of Ali on a very personal level and tried to offer him the guidance which was suitable for him:

"You cannot force a job on him. You really need to find out what suits him. He needs guidance for that. He might decide on a job for himself which isn't very good because he is just eager to do something and takes quick decisions. You really need to advise and guide him on what to do."

~ Mr Khamil ~

Including his personality and character, Mr Khamil has genuinely engaged with Ali. Aside from financial support¹²¹, Ali receives continuous counselling¹²² and practical assistance.¹²³ Even by consulting contacts in the USA, Mr Khamil constantly strives to find Ali a job.¹²⁴ When Ali is with him in Accra, Mr Khamil tries to assign his half-brother household tasks or to engage him in his

drinking water sales. He emphasises how vital it is for Ali to have a task and to be trusted. Both are very crucial for him to remain mentally stable:

“Ali is very close to me. He opens up to me and vice versa. He does everything for me and respects me as a brother. He is very committed to whatever I’m doing. I’m the only person from the family. He is really getting closer and telling me what is happening. I try to advise him on what he is supposed to do. We are very close. He likes me and I like him. He comes here and takes care of the whole house and looks after my children. I can leave everything to him and he is doing everything. He is highly committed. [...] The last time he returned, I engaged him in helping me to produce pure water sachets. He managed that place independently when I wasn’t around. He is there and busy. Currently, we are in the rainy season. That’s why the business is down. Otherwise, he would be busy here. Ali still follows the news and knows what is going on in Europe and Libya, but the attraction isn’t there anymore. I told him that if I get the chance, I’ll let him go. But it shouldn’t be through illegal means.”

~ Mr Khamil ~

In this manner, Lukman confirms that he specifically tries to engage Ali in cheerful conversation. He enjoys chatting with him about football or teasing him in a friendly way.¹²⁵ Ali’s cousin Masahudu tries to give him pep talks as well.¹²⁶ From his own experience, Aziz reports that his brother helped him and guided him through psychological counselling as well. His brother needed to distract him in order to avoid negative thoughts from taking over.¹²⁷ Mawiya provides a positive example of his brother’s psychological counselling as well:

“Let me talk about the psychological aspect. I remember when I came down to Ghana, which was Tamale in particular, two months later, my brother came. After we greeted each other, he told me one thing. I should pay him money. He said, ‘Look, you face a problem. This is what I told you. In Ghana, life is not going to be easier for you. But bear it and enjoy it over time. The problem will fade away.’ He said that it’s not going to be easy for me in Ghana, but life over there isn’t brighter. After another six months, another brother of mine returned from the USA. He told me the same thing. Life is not going to be easy. Both of them said the same thing. Later, when I started to experience hardships. Then I remembered what they told me I had to bear and enjoy it. I overcame the situation with prayers. If I wasn’t lucky enough to get that psychological counselling, then I would have taken the wrong decision again if my problems were getting severer. I would have travelled again, but I was lucky to get this psychological counselling. When I returned, there were people who told me that time would come for a better future. This kind of psychological assistance is what everybody needs upon return when you have returned with nothing.”

~ Mawiya ~

In addition to the family network, the network of transit returnees plays an important role in the time upon return. The contact among transit returnees is significant for the mental health of each individual. Due to shared experiences under challenging conditions abroad, as described in *Subsection 5.1.2*, there is a special bond of trust and closeness among them. Matthäus confirms the magnitude of fraternal solidarity abroad¹²⁸, which is why they consider each other as brothers¹²⁹. This brotherhood is maintained until today since the time upon return proved challenging in its way. Baki describes that even if none of them has a job and all of them are hopeless, there is always a strong sense of belonging and willingness to help each other:

“We both don’t have the work we want to have. I don’t have my shop and he also doesn’t have a job. We are just managing. We are just talking and hope for each other that times will change. However, we cannot really help each other. If one of us is making it, he will help the other out.”

~ Baki ~

Matthäus¹³⁰ and Mawiya¹³¹ confirm that the transit returnees stay in contact with each other and always try to look after each other. There is a mutual understanding that people who did not

migrate cannot muster. Only former migrants can relate to what they have experienced and the problems in the current:

"If I sit together with Odum, we remember ourselves of the time we went through. We understand each other better because we are both living the hustler's life. Very often, I sit in silence and think about all that. If I have a friend like Odum, Baki or others, we recall the time we had together in Libya. Old friends here will never understand. If you meet them, it's just saying 'Hi,' and having small talk, and that's it."

~ Ali ~

Ali states that the conversations with fellow sufferers help him to cope with what he has experienced.¹³² Odum describes that the transit returnees also seek to give each other hope.¹³³ In this context, counselling one another is particularly valuable to regain orientation:

"That [counselling] is very important. Without that counselling, you will be just thinking about how to go back again. If somebody is with you and he is counselling you very well in terms of talking and being there for you to orient yourself, that is very helpful."

~ Odum ~

Nurudeen confirms the significance of mutual counselling.¹³⁴ The factor that everyone knows very well, the feeling of disappointed expectations and the confrontation with the harsh reality of having to start all over again, is particularly essential.¹³⁵ In order to support each other not merely mentally but also practically in everyday life, transit returnees set up self-help groups.¹³⁶ The self-help group in Ali's environment is called Great Jamahiriya Peace Club (GJPC).¹³⁷ At least a dozen transit returnees established it to support each other¹³⁸ and exchange ideas¹³⁹. Today, the association counts 42 members. If, for example, a wedding or a funeral is scheduled, each member can draw on the social as well as the economic capital of the group.¹⁴⁰ The members meet on Sundays and attempt to carry out projects such as farming.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, they also raise awareness about the risks of undocumented migration by going to schools and hospitals. In this regard, Aziz from GJPC founded his own organisation, the Centre for Youth Advocacy for Migration (CYAM). Mawiya describes in an interview with the Deutsche Welle (Krippahl, 2016) that the group was formed after they returned to Tamale under the impression of being labelled as criminals or losers by their families and other people. Therefore, they established this self-help group to assist each other. Cap Anamur once rescued many members of the GJPC. In Tamale, one of the rescued people, Aminu Munkaila, subsequently established the NGO African Development Organisation for Migration (AFDOM). Among other projects, AFDOM carries out reintegration activities. Ali was able to benefit from both organisations in various ways.

Beyond family contacts and socialising with other transit returnees, Ali interacts with some of his neighbours in T-Poly. Neighbour Abdul describes how he tries to raise Ali's self-esteem and how he always informs him when he hears news about job opportunities.¹⁴² Mussah emphasises that there is a certain brotherhood in T-Poly that binds the neighbourhood together.¹⁴³

¹ "We moved there in 2011." ~ Ali

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- 2 "I would say that the neighbourhood is composed of the same kind of people. They are friendly and nice. They have the same living standard in T-Poly as in Changli. We greet each other but I'm not getting closer to them because I don't wanna bother anyone. Most of the people living at that neighbourhood in T-Poly also just moved into this area. If I'm in need for something, I can ask my neighbours." ~ Ali
- 3 "The living standard in this community is average. There are no jobs available in this community. Even if you have particular skills, to find a suitable job for you is very hard." ~ Mussah
- 4 "There is a high unemployment rate in this community. We don't have work and cannot engage ourselves in any economic activities. That's why there is a high level of poverty." ~ Abdul
- 5 "There used to be a lot of construction work in the past ten years. I can go there and serve as a labourer to earn some money. But now we don't have this anymore. Our standard of living is declining." ~ Abdul
- 6 "We live peacefully together. Even at our community level we formed groups to help each other if someone faces a particular problem. Moreover, our groups are also meant to help people if there is an occasion like a funeral." ~ Mussah
- 7 "There is no competition. Moreover, they have also no external support." ~ Abdul
- 8 "We live in peace together and don't face any difficulties or conflicting interests among ourselves." ~ Mumuni
- 9 "There were also sister Kanidya and brother Solesu [living with us together in one household]." ~ Ali
- 10 "Ali is my brother. My father's brother's son is Ali. So, he is my cousin." ~ Masahudu
- 11 "There were also sister Kanidya and brother Solesu." ~ Ali
- 12 "My role model is my brother who passed away a long time ago. His name was Abu-Bakhar." ~ Ali
- 13 "My uncle's name is Abdel Rashid." ~ Ali
- 14 "At the time of my arrival, my stepmother passed away." ~ Ali
- 15 "One of my uncle's daughter passed away two weeks ago. Talking about that, I see a lot of people of my family dying." ~ Ali
- 16 "My best friend might be my brother Mr Khamil. He is my brother but also my best friend. He helped me a lot. The second one is my wife I would say." ~ Ali
- 17 "He is my senior brother." ~ Sadia
- 18 "Hamza, Yakubu, Karim, Saani. These four were my close friends when I was young." ~ Ali
- 19 "They [Mohammed and Seeba] are my friends but they are from Aboabu." ~ Ali
- 20 "They [Atakyi and Latif] are [childhood friends] from Changli. We are up all together. And we later passed all the same road northwards." ~ Ali
- 21 "I knew them [Jacob, Mohammed and Seeba] very well. Jacob [migration buddy] is from the same grandfather from my father's side. So, he is my cousin." ~ Ali
- 22 "We grew up together." ~ Saani
- 23 "Ali is my childhood friend." ~ Lukman
- 24 "I wanted to meet Abu Bakhar. He lived in Sabha." ~ Ali
- 25 "Iddrisu went to Libya in 1988. He returned and I just asked him about the route and the situation there because I wanted to go as well. He was six times in Libya and was returned through evacuation with me together in 2011." ~ Ali
- 26 "I was here for him after the war broke out and Ali returned. He wasn't doing anything but I had a job. Because we know each other, he came to me and I supported him financially. We grew up together and he helped me as well. Every time when I call someone, my youngest child asked me whether I'm calling uncle Jordan. He wants to talk to him all the time. All my children are very close to him. We see each other almost every day if he is in town. I discuss with him some issues when I'm around in T-Poly." ~ Lukman
- 27 "They [Atakyi and Latif] are from Changli. We are up all together. And we later passed all the same road northwards." ~ Ali
- 28 "We were three people. One other Ghanaian called David and a guy from Mali called Kuvani." ~ Ali
- 29 "I can just remember the Ghanaian name Jacob." ~ Ali
- 30 "There was one guy called Al-Bakhar Sayibu who is living in Germany now." ~ Ali
- 31 "There was Suleiman and Said and one we called Godfather." ~ Ali

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- 32 "There were Shaaban and his wife and two children, Baba, Nufdin, Sofian, Abdallah as well as Iddrisu and his wife Wasila." ~ Ali
- 33 "There were Seeba, Mohammed and Saani." ~ Ali
- 34 "I lived in a house together with Sofian, Seeba, Mohammed, Suliman, Abdellah and others." ~ Ali
- 35 "I met Ali also in 2010 in Benghazi." ~ Nurudeen
- 36 "I had phone contact with Ali." ~ Matthäus
- 37 "I'm in contact with Atakyi. He lives in Murcia in Spain." ~ Ali
- 38 "Since we live together in our community, you may live with someone who travel and returned. Because of this relationship, they easily share their experiences." ~ Mohammed
- 39 "I get the information only through the returnees themselves." ~ Saani
- 40 "Apart from your family, no one really knows what happened. Only your best friends know." ~ Nurudeen
- 41 "Some of the returnees are our family members. I have three returnees in my house. One has gone back, one is living with us in Ghana and the other has passed on." ~ Masahudu
- 42 "I get the information from the television." ~ Mussah
- 43 "Sometimes, we hear information from the national television. They describe the disadvantages that are associated with migration." ~ Mohammed
- 44 In February 2020, the Dutch Public Broadcaster (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, NPO) produced its own feature on civilian rescue missions at sea. It retells the rescue mission of the Cap Anamur, featuring some of the rescued, such as Mawiya, Aziz, Aminu and others, interviewed from today's perspective. The work of Aziz's organisation Centre for Youth Advocacy for Migration is presented as well (De Brouwer et al., 2020).
- 45 "I see those who want to leave Ghana trying to enter Europe as ignorant. They don't really know what they are doing. They didn't make an attempt to make it in their own country. Living abroad isn't as easy as it is shown on TV or the media in general. It's a difficult situation over there." ~ Aziz
- 46 "There are a lot of challenges. Looking at how things are in our world of today, if you stay in your country and make some efforts, you are going to be successful." ~ Masahudu
- 47 "It's always a failure to take the decision to migrate." ~ Matthäus
- 48 "There is no benefit to the communities if I think of these transit returnees. Comparing the living standard they had when they were in their native countries to that one they had abroad and upon return, things have become suddenly worse." ~ Saani
- 49 "When they were still with us, they were very helpful. After they have gone, no one replaces them and the work isn't to done by anyone. That has compounded to other people. Other people have to take on their responsibilities." ~ Sadia
- 50 "If you are the head of the family, they will be all looking up to you. There might be no one who replaces you. All their hopes rest on you but you are abroad. The gap you leave behind has to be filled. It's not easy. It affects them in some way." ~ Nurudeen
- 51 "Most of them return with nothing. Some of them come home with even a lot of problems. I don't really see a positive impact for the community." ~ Abdul
- 52 "I did [experience rejection myself]. There were just a few people open to welcome you." ~ Mawiya
- 53 "Those who stayed back had all their hopes on the returnee. They all pray that this guy will make it abroad to get something from him. The time the migrant returns empty-handed, they don't feel happy." ~ Baki
- 54 "However, the family and real friends of the empty-handed returnee won't feel very happy because if the person has been successful, it means that they would have indirectly also benefited from that." ~ Mustafa
- 55 "Some of us had some financial resources when we returned. Those who stayed back won't understand your situation. They will come to you, visit you and say, "Oh, my brother has returned." The little money you have, you have to spend it on them." ~ Nurudeen
- 56 "Sometimes, you just hear that family members expect you to bring something to them irrespectively your situation. I returned with no mobile phone, not even 50 USD, not even a clean shirt or clean shoes. No matter whether you were deported or returned willingly, you must provide something." ~ Aziz
- 57 "They [the people] just hear that you returned. They don't know the background of your return." ~ Nurudeen

⁵⁸ “Most of those returnees find it very difficult to reintegrate because their families have very high expectations. Either the returnee was successful or not. The perception of those who stayed back is still intact. Even if the returnee has a problem, it is very difficult for him to ask for help. Mostly, other people hardly believe the returnees if they tell them about their problems. That’s because of their quirky perception.” ~ Mustafa

⁵⁹ “That’s the African culture. That’s our nature. The people back home think that you are hiding the money.” ~ Odum

⁶⁰ “I left Ghana for Europe and I recognised that Europe is not the place for me to make money. Before, I used to think that anybody who lives in Europe or the USA is rich. It was a destination to make a better life in a really short time. After I went and experienced life there, I returned back home and got a clearer understanding and picture of Europe. It’s not a place where you can make money all the time. Sometimes, there are ups and downs as well. What you experienced abroad is nothing what those know who never travelled before. When you return, they always think that you must have more than you had before you left the country. You are returning from Europe. There is money. He has money. By then, you know the real situation over there yourself. There is no way to explain to those who stayed how the situation is like.” ~ Aziz

⁶¹ “When they return like that, they have to start over again. It’s very difficult. Others have to help you to make a living. They really need to provide support to sustain the returnee’s humble standard of living.” ~ Mawiya

⁶² “The return of transit returnees is a source of burden because they return empty-handed. They don’t have anything to support the family members. It’s rather the family members who have to take care of the returnee until they are okay.” ~ Nardia

⁶³ “I returned in 2004 with Mawiya. We accompanied each other upon return and already before. We were also sitting together with other colleagues. Nevertheless, we still felt some inferior on our backs. You are a returnee, you have been deported. If you think of the fact that you have been deported back to Ghana, it is kind of a shame. Why was I deported? Is it because I was a criminal? Did I commit any crime? When other people in Ghana hear deportation, what comes into their minds is that it must be crime related.” ~ Aziz

⁶⁴ “If you return empty-handed, it’s not easy. There is a stigma attached to that. It’s not easy to be reintegrated into the society. You are marginalised.” ~ Mawiya

⁶⁵ “These kind of refusal from your social environment makes it even harder for you to reintegrate and rather pushes you to travel again.” ~ Aziz

⁶⁶ “The actual reintegration is when people see you and you are doing something good for yourself making progress in your life, they will accept you. Even though the progress is slowly, at the end it will be always fine.” ~ Mawiya

⁶⁷ “If you work hard and apply yourself to make it on your own not depending on others, this gives you the respect back. Then you prove it to them that you are someone. You have to establish yourself in a humble way. Otherwise, you will fail.” ~ Matthäus

⁶⁸ “Those who have a hostile character do also hate those who returned with nothing. However, it makes them happy if they see people failing. They see their fellows as their enemies. They don’t want their enemies being successful in their lives. Only those who are not in good terms with the returnees feel very happy about the fact that they return empty-handed.” ~ Mustafa

⁶⁹ “When they return empty-handed, things aren’t that well. I look at them and I feel so much pity. Because most of them return and have to stay with their families. They desperately try to find a job to look after their parents.” ~ Nardia

⁷⁰ “I feel pity for them. Sometimes, I give support to those of them who are closer to me.” ~ Saani

⁷¹ “We receive them happily since they returned with good health. Most people have gone there and returned in very bad physical conditions. We believe in God. Whatever happens is destiny. It’s only God who knows.” ~ Sedu

⁷² “Those who return empty-handed have at least gained experiences. They went through hardships. Even though you haven’t succeeded, you have this advantage of experience in comparison to those who have been always at home.” ~ Mussah

⁷³ “They thought I was dead and thanked God for seeing me alive. Before, they thought I’m no more there.” ~ Ali

⁷⁴ “It was a really sad story when Ali returned. When we were in Libya, we gave money to our parents. When he suddenly returned, they were not happy because it was over. I think the family wasn’t happy at all. But subsequently, we are also part of the society and try to cope with it.” ~ Matthäus

⁷⁵ “Ali wasn’t blessed to be successful outside. When he went abroad to hustle, he didn’t bring anything upon return.” ~ Mohammed

⁷⁶ “I cannot answer that question since Ali’s mother is around.” ~ Nardia

77 "There might be a competitive aspect among certain family members. I can say that some aunts of Ali were very critical. Ali's wife Rukaya used to support him financially. That's what caused irritations as Ali returned empty-handed." ~ Lukman

78 "She [Rukaya] is selling slippers and other stuff. [...] That money she earns helps us to survive." ~ Ali

79 "Even though he didn't inform me before he left, I remember to receive a call from him which made me really happy. However, the day the war broke out, I sat at home having serious worries how he is living at that place." ~ Rukaya

80 "I feel love for him. When I see him, I still feel the love I have for him. Even though our living standard hasn't improved, I still maintain that life and the love I have for him." ~ Rukaya

81 "I still think that if there is a chance for my husband to migrate again, I'll let him go. Maybe he can try it for the last time and it's gonna be successful." ~ Rukaya

82 "Actually, I wouldn't feel bad since he has been there already. I already feel normal with him going to Accra and staying there for several weeks. That's no problem." ~ Rukaya

83 "I had to call my family and told them that I didn't find a job here and that I don't want to go to Europe but to return home. They sold their property and belongings [...] I wanted to go to Europe but my family thought that I would come back home. [...] I told her [mother Habiba] that I want to return to Ghana. She said that she doesn't have money but I insisted that I have no other hope than them. So, she tried to find some money. My family gathered and sold everything what you can monetise. So, they scrambled up the money. Isaac informed his family, our families exchange their phone numbers and the money was sent to them. At that week one of my friends made it by boat to Europe. I said to myself, 'No, I won't go back to Ghana. I gonna go to Europe.' Other migrants were sent to Europe that very week and among them was a friend of mine. So, I told Isaac that I wanna be part of the next group they send to Europe." ~ Ali

84 "It was not only Nafisa. There were a lot of people selling their belongings." ~ Ali

85 "I had a store at the market at that time. As he was stranded in Libya, we sold most of our belongings. We gave the money to him that he can just return to Ghana. When Ali got the money, he just changed his mind and wanted to go to Europe." ~ Sadia

86 "My family went also to other families to borrow some money explaining them the situation that I cannot find work in Morocco and that I cannot stay there neither. However, I decided not to go back to Ghana. Isaac added me to the migration group to Europe instead and they pushed our boat to the sea." ~ Ali

87 "We are not all the same in life. I may see Ali's life and I won't be very happy with it. Others may see him returning without anything and feel happy about it because of the kind of envy and resentment that exists in our family." ~ Masahudu

88 "My friends and I returned empty-handed. I had nothing. Most of my friends who stayed back home are rich now and have different friends. My old friends neglected me because I don't have anything. So, I had to make new friends mostly with those who also migrated in the past. The life is very hard to find a place for myself and to make a living. All the living expenses like paying bills and the rent and so on are very difficult to deal with. As I told you before, I cannot just go to my old childhood friends and ask them to help me out because they neglect me. I don't have anything. They just bond with other rich people. They move on together. If you see each other, they just say, "Hi!" and that's it. There changed a lot for me here in Tamale." ~ Ali

89 "I travelled a lot and tried, tried, tried. Upon all that, I used to call them [old friends]. The problem is that if you are rich, you have rich friends. If you are poor, you have just poor friends." ~ Ali

90 "After Ali returned, he had no money to enter the butcher business again. He came back here and if not people like us who felt sympathy for him were here to engage him, he couldn't do anything. So, there is no money to give to Ali. It's not everyone that is ready to give money. Even though if you wanna help him, sometimes you cannot." ~ Masahudu

91 "Ali visits us often. That's why I don't call him on a regular basis. If I haven't seen him for a while, I do call him." ~ Sedu

92 "The relationship became stronger because he is our brother and we have to maintain our family." ~ Nafisa

93 "Ali takes part in the family affairs. If there is an occasion, he goes there and participate. Even if there is some money contribution, he does his part." ~ Sedu

94 "The issue is: When they return without having anything, they become more confused. If they are lucky and live with good people, they will be enhanced in their reintegration process." ~ Masahudu

95 "We received him very well. We don't wanna react in a negative way towards him as it happened in the past. This would make him feeling uncomfortable." ~ Rukaya

⁹⁶ “I asked my family who else they asked but they said that they don’t want to tell me what they did because they don’t want me to think about it too much. They just said that they didn’t want to let me down and found their ways by selling properties and asking people to help me out.” ~ Ali

⁹⁷ “The people in Changli and his family welcomed him nicely because Ali is their child. Since he wasn’t successful, he has to be received nicely and provide him the needed support.” ~ Mohammed

⁹⁸ “My uncle didn’t agree on my migration but he also thought that I was dead. So, he thanked God that I was alive and I told him what happened. Everyone was thankful for me to be back. However, my uncle’s business wasn’t going as good as it was before. Nevertheless, he advised me once again not to leave Ghana for another time.” ~ Ali

⁹⁹ “I asked them for forgiveness that I didn’t return with the money they gave me. They sold everything and these 1,000 USD is not peanuts. So, I apologised and asked them to forgive me. I seek for forgiveness and they forgave me.” ~ Ali

¹⁰⁰ “Our mother and we as siblings accepted Ali’s apology. Upon Ali’s return, I try to help him on a daily basis. The same does my sister. We give him food our some pocket money.” ~ Sadia

¹⁰¹ “I just left to Libya without telling him [Mr Khamil]. He wasn’t happy about that but he allowed me to stay. [...] She [Nawala] was also disappointed but didn’t blame me. She promised me that she won’t tell her husband that she gave me the money. Until today, she didn’t tell him and Mr Khamil doesn’t know. [...] Both weren’t happy about the situation but allowed me to stay. [...] He told me what I did was wrong and that it is not good for me.” ~ Ali

¹⁰² “I’ve tried and she [Rukaya] sees that. So she didn’t put the blame on me. She just wants me to stay and try my luck here in Ghana.” ~ Ali

¹⁰³ “He [Mr Khamil] always advised me beforehand not to leave again.” ~ Ali

¹⁰⁴ “We received him very well. He shared the stories he experienced in Libya.” ~ Abdul

¹⁰⁵ “Ali’s situation makes me sad. Looking at the kind of suffering he underwent, it is all due to the war in Libya. He returned without having any benefit. [...] We received him very well even though he returned empty-handed. We were very glad to receive him.” ~ Mussah

¹⁰⁶ “Most of the neighbours were very happy when Ali returned because the kind of stories they heard what happened in Libya weren’t that good. When they returned, they were happy that he returned in good conditions. Friends came to his place to greet him because they have missed him a lot.” ~ Nafisa

¹⁰⁷ “I received him like my brother. I knew about the difficulties in Libya. I brought him to my mother’s house. She asked him, ‘When did you come?’ He said, ‘About two weeks ago.’ So, we ate together and my mother was excited as well because she knew Jordan. We discussed the issues and difficulties we faced in Libya.” ~ Lukman

¹⁰⁸ “They were all happy. My neighbours, my family, they were all happy. Even those who I wasn’t close to before were very happy that I returned. If I’m walking across Changli, even the small boys and girl open their doors and welcome me. Even if I’m just away for two weeks and returning from Accra, they are happy.” ~ Ali

¹⁰⁹ “At the time Ali left, we were all very happy because we thought that he will bring something back. After he had returned and found out that things aren’t that well, we just brought him back to his origin business. We didn’t want to have him negative thoughts that could affect his mind.” ~ Mohammed

¹¹⁰ “They [family] thanked God that I’m alive.” ~ Ali

¹¹¹ “Ali was received were nicely because they haven’t seen him for a while. Later, they got to know what was going on over there. When your family sees you, they have to be happy even though you didn’t bring anything back. Your life is very precious to them. That’s why they are very happy.” ~ Nurudeen

¹¹² “We received him very well. Even though he returned with nothing, we were happy that he is back. He is our son. We just received him very well.” ~ Nardia

¹¹³ “The family welcomed him very well. They also prayed that things will be well with him in the future.” - Saani; “When I returned, I didn’t know that he travelled and returned. But the way he appears to me makes me thinking that he was received very well.” ~ Mumuni

¹¹⁴ “I never had the thought to let him down. Ali is my brother. If I neglect him, who will receive him? No matter what the situation is like, I’ll always keep him as my brother. We are fortunate that he is still alive and with us here in Ghana.” ~ Sadia

¹¹⁵ “We are just praying for a long life and good health. As long as this is given, improvements will come to our lives.” ~ Sadia

¹¹⁶ “My prayer is that God should give him a good job that things will be well with him.” ~ Sadia

- 117 "After Ali's return, he came and apologised to us. What actually happened wasn't something he was expecting. It's just what happened. You don't have control over your destiny. We are just thankful to God for our good health. One day, our lives will definitely improve." ~ Sadia
- 118 "Most of my family members told me not to go anywhere again. They showed me good examples of friends and other family members who stayed in Ghana, didn't go anywhere and became very successful in what they were doing. That is the advise from my family. I shouldn't go abroad again but try it here in Ghana." ~ Ali
- 119 "One is Yusifu who is a lawyer but he is studying in Europe at the moment. Ibrahim and Al-Hassan are working at the butcher house. There is Lukman who is a government worker now." ~ Ali
- 120 "Most of the people working in the bother house in Tamale have their own job. The butcher shop is part of our culture and adds on to the income diversification strategy. Our father told us that if your job is not going well, we still have the butcher house to do something. There is still the belief that you have a difficult life if you neglect your cultural roots which is the butchering. You are supposed to go to the butcher shop even if you are a doctor. You might fail because you deny your family heritage. It's rather a cultural thing." ~ Mr Khamil
- 121 "Mr Khamil is helping me also regarding the problems we have to get a child. He financed a doctor for us who told us that we should just be patient and see what happens." ~ Ali
- 122 "Sometimes, he helps me financially. If he cannot afford to help me financially, he is still giving me important advice." ~ Ali
- 123 "Mr Khamil has his own private car. If I tell him that I don't have money for the public transportation, he just brings me there." ~ Ali
- 124 "He [Mr Khamil] just wanted to help me to better my future. Also, he had a friend in the USA. He contacted him and told him about my situation. Mr Khamil wanted to get some information about how to get a visa for the USA. Above that, he has a friend in Canada. He contacted him as well." ~ Ali
- 125 "I try to engage him talking about football or asking why he doesn't join me saying that there are a lot of nice women. I also try to tease him to make him happy. I used to say something like, 'Jordan, your hand is very long. That means your penis is very long as well!' I said things like that." ~ Lukman
- 126 "When Ali returned, I called him and said, 'There are always two options in life. After you went there and returned, your main attention was to be successful. Later on, you didn't succeed. So, just try now and here. Just put yourself together and live with us. Be hard-working and you will be successful in our country.' That was my advice for him." ~ Masahudu
- 127 "I got psychological counselling from my brother. He shared some time with me to distract me and to avoid that I'm thinking too much." ~ Aziz
- 128 "It's good to have your brothers around you. When somebody was sick, we came together and helped each other to bring him home." ~ Matthäus
- 129 "Once you are there, we consider each other as brothers because you never know when you see yourself in the same desperate situation in which you need the help of others." ~ Matthäus
- 130 "We returned to our homes and called each other ever since. Just asking how the other person is." ~ Matthäus
- 131 "We always try to see how we can help each other." ~ Mawiya
- 132 "That's why it is important to me to talk to others who experienced similar things. I like to be in Accra talking to Latif about what we saw during our time abroad." ~ Ali
- 133 "We give each other hope." ~ Odum
- 134 "We didn't always get counselling from non-migrants but we counselled also each other. Always when we returnees are sitting together, we counsel ourselves. We give each other hope." ~ Nurudeen
- 135 "We talk about those days abroad. During the time abroad, we told each other what we are going to do with the money we will earn back home. After returning with nothing, we have to sit together again and at least give each other hope and motivation to keep on trying. When we were there, we thought that everybody who is in Ghana is not going to make it. Until we returned and saw that people are able to make it here as well, we realised that if you try it hardly here, you can slowly build up. We give each other hope to start to do something. Through that, you can see that some lives changed here in Ghana, not outside. There are people who are even better off than those who travelled. When we were in Libya, we received USD and thought that we were superior. Now, we are here back to square one. In a nutshell, we also counsel ourselves which is really important." ~ Nurudeen
- 136 "Usually, they find it very difficult to reintegrate. I once saw a group of returnees who formed an association. If these people have gone there and were successful, they would have helped their families in their basic needs. Because they aren't successful, most of their family members will be still suffering." ~ Mustafa

¹³⁷ The name of the self-help group is derived from Muammar Gaddafi's political philosophy. Inspired by Islamic socialism, African nationalism and elements of direct democracy, the political system in Libya was based on the "Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya" as the ruling party from 1977 to 2011. Among all self-help group members, Muammar Gaddafi is admired to this day. Particularly in comparison with the time after his fall, many have an extremely positive opinion about him and his way of ruling Libya. Some members still have his photo as their background or lock screen image on their mobile phones. Members of Great Jamahiriya Peace Club organised a bus trip to support a Libyan football team when they played a friendly match against a Ghanaian team in Accra. However, they were asked by the Libyan staff to refrain from any visible affirmation of the Gaddafi regime. The team and the coaching staff were concerned that they would be held accountable for this back home.

¹³⁸ "We returnees come together as an association in case some member has an occasion. The organisation is called Great Jamahiriya Peace Club." ~ Mawiya

¹³⁹ "We established an organisation called Great Jamahiriya Peace Club to support and collaborate with each other." ~ Aziz

¹⁴⁰ "If a member has a special occasion, then the members put their money together to help out. It can be a funeral or a wedding or something like that." ~ Aziz

¹⁴¹ "We always try to farm together when it's the season for that. There are many things we are thinking about and doing. We set up a monthly contribution every member is supposed to give. We are meeting ever Sunday." ~ Matthäus

¹⁴² "We chat every day. Most of our discussions are about how to improve ourselves and our living. [...] Sometimes, I advise him to be who he is. I try to raise him above. He tends to lower himself down. I also tell him any time I hear of some construction work to do. That the little we earn there makes a positive impact on our lives." ~ Abdul

¹⁴³ "I like him because we are all the same. We live as brothers on the same house. When he is confronted with any bad situation, we are all worried." ~ Mussah

5.2.2 Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni

Mohammed has a big social network in Effiakuma. The fact that he never left his mother's house makes him very well-connected in the neighbourhood. Apart from public school, he met many people at the Koranic school.¹ Since childhood, he has made many friends², whereas Yunusah remains his best friend today³. Nonetheless, the most relevant point of reference always remained his core family.⁴ Since the family was always economically deprived, the children tried to assist their parents wherever possible.⁵ The sense of togetherness grew after father Yussif passed away. However, Mohammed and his sister Alimatu maintain a special bond.⁶ People see in him the required characteristics to become a chief in the future. Mohammed follows various activities, including his day work⁷, tailoring⁸, and communal work⁹, which make him well-known as well. He is part of informal¹⁰ and rather formalised¹¹ peer groups. Peter, a 16-year-old boy from the neighbourhood, is Mohammed's foster son. He follows him in his leisure time and receives counselling from Mohammed.¹² Mohammed himself has no role model but prefers to leave his own footprint.

He attends two so-called joint tea meetings several times a week. One joint tea occurs in the Zongo area and another in the Compound area. These gatherings are men's groups that meet in the neighbourhood near the mosque before evening prayers. Prior to the joint prayers, they informally exchange ideas on various topics while drinking Ataya tea.¹³ They discuss politics and other general topics. On a low-threshold level, people help, inform, and advise each other, for example, when they hear about job opportunities, as neighbour Suleiman explains.¹⁴ Usually, Mohammed attends the meetings as a listener. For him, these places are very significant for his mental health as they distract him from his everyday worries, provide him with a certain feeling of belonging and give him stability through the routine. Every Sunday, a sports group meets at the beach in Takoradi to train stamina and do bodyweight training. It is a welcome opportunity for Mohammed, which on the one hand, provides him with a routine and, on the other hand, allows him to leave Effiakuma with a break from the community's confinement. Aside from physical exercise, which is good for his health as well as his mental wellbeing, he particularly enjoys meeting other people outside his usual environment. Mohammed is likewise part of the self-help group Las Palmas Club consisting of men from Effiakuma.¹⁵ Mohammed serves as the chaplain. In total, there are about 20 to 30, mostly younger people in the group:

"We are a group of men. Some of us are not working. Others are taxi drivers but without having their own cars. What is important is the togetherness. Some of us aren't here at the moment. If something happens to one member, we try to help him as a group even though we don't have a lot. However, we can also reach out to a member at a personal level to cheer him up. [...] We are all born in this area. One day, we sat together and said that we had to form this group because we could achieve more as a group instead of everyone on their own. We are all from this community."

~ Suraka ~

As the name suggests, the group is not only designed to support each other in everyday life aspects but also to discuss migration issues. The group's name arose from its members' desire to reach Europe. In this context, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, the capital of Gran Canaria,

represents symbolically the Canary Islands and a possible destination to reach Europe. According to Said, around 16 members have already travelled, of which some are still in Europe.¹⁶ Thus, the main motive of the group is the exchange of information on past and aspired migrations to Europe.¹⁷

As already suggested, Mohammed's social environment in Takoradi comprises people who have either migrated or know people who have been through one or more migrations and have reported their experience¹⁸. Thus, the topic, including the return, is volatile and constantly under debate. The common propensity for emigration lowers the threshold for the ambitious individual in this regard. Hence, Mohammed started his journey with three other fellows from the same area. Over time, all four took different trajectories along the route. Mohammed returned to Effiakuma, Sedu lives in Accra now, Francis is still in Tripoli, and Papa took a boat to Europe.¹⁹ Hence, Mohammed spatially expanded his social network as his people travelled to different places. Furthermore, Mohammed met people along the route as well as at the detention centre.²⁰ Today, Mohammed stays in regular exchange with Ghanaians in different cities in Libya and Europe.²¹

Among the neighbourhood, returnees who sent remittances and are also financially solvent afterwards are perceived as having a positive impact as they exemplarily invest in infrastructure. However, those who return empty-handed are considered differently.²² Hence, there is a relatively undistorted picture of what migrants experience during their migration and what challenges they face upon returning.²³ Eventually, transit returnees who return without remarkable financial means are perceived as a burden to the community, as childhood friends Ali²⁴ or Zakari describe it²⁵.

Beyond the meso level, the destitute transit returnee is likewise conceived as a burden for society as a whole.²⁶ As mother Amimatu describes it, people have to take care of the transit returnee while the latter contributes nothing to society in return.²⁷ Mohammed's friend Ibrahim emphasises that the burden is not only on the society or the community but on the family and the parents in particular:

"The transit returnees become a burden. You cannot leave them alone. They will come to you and ask for money. They become a burden to the family too. At that age, you are supposed to have your own room with your own family, a wife and kids. However, there is no job and no money. They are still living with their parents. They get still fed by their father and mother at that age. So, the returnees are a real burden to the family as well as to the community."

~ Ibrahim ~

From his and others' experiences, Mohammed's childhood friend and migration fellow Sumaila reports that the transit returnee returns in a very bad mental state suffering from depression. Nonetheless, some families show no compassion and do not care for their affected relatives.²⁸ In fact, they may be mocked, ridiculed, and insulted. They are often compared to others who have successfully made it to Europe:

"Mostly, the people make fun of us who didn't make it to Europe and return with nothing. They insult and laugh at us. They call us names and tell us that others who were younger or from even more deprived families made it to Europe. They say like, 'Look at this woman's son. He crossed to Europe. Look at you. You brought nothing back home. You are a burden to the society. You are useless!'"

~ Sumaila ~

Ali's childhood friend Rahman adds that some transit returnees do not return to their home region but to larger cities instead. In this manner, they attempt to avoid confrontation with their disappointed friends and acquaintances to whom they may owe money they cannot repay. In the end, they run the risk of becoming criminals and harming the general security situation due to the given circumstances.²⁹ In this sense, mother Amimatu considers the impoverished transit returnee a waste of time and financial resources, which causes great difficulties for the family.³⁰ Sometimes, the family expels the transit returnee out of sheer disappointment. In addition, there is often a lack of understanding for the transit returnee who has to justify their alleged failure to no avail, as childhood friend Aziz reports:

"The family feels very disappointed and the returnee is rejected. The family thinks that they used the money for him just for nothing. It will make the person feel bad. The family has maybe sold some of their properties, no matter how. We aren't like Europeans. We have this kind of mentality. Some will understand you, but some will find a way to argue with you."

~ Aziz ~

Migration fellow Samuel reports that he has been positively received.³¹ Similarly, Ali's friend Mamudu notices that most empty-handed transit returnees are warmly welcomed by their families as well.³² However, Mohammed experienced both sympathies as well as rejection and ridicule.³³ According to Adams³⁴ and childhood friend Yunusah, the latter also arose from Mohammed's family but mainly from the extended environment.³⁵ At the same time, neighbours denounced Mohammed as well.³⁶ He was blamed for his empty-handed return.³⁷ On the part of some people, this has revealed a certain desire to elevate themselves above Mohammed and his fate and to spread their schadenfreude about his failed ambitions:

"Many people were saying a lot of bad stuff about him returning empty-handed. There are people who wanna see your downfall in life. If the opportunity to mock you comes, they mock you. So, there was a lot of bad stuff coming from other people."

~ Yunusah ~

In some cases, Mohammed was confronted with direct rejection. He was straightforwardly attacked for having wasted money on his migration and now being a burden and a nuisance to everyone.³⁸ However, most negative reactions did not come from the core family and were not directly addressed to him or the core family but rather behind their backs.³⁹ Mohammed can recall a few direct adverse reactions that he witnessed, which mother Amimatu confirms.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, the closest family members and friends felt pity and compassion for Mohammed since one could already see his deprivation from the outside.⁴¹ Due to the sporadic contact back home, which Mohammed could still maintain at the beginning of his migration, his family and close friends were aware of the extremely difficult situation he went through. As a result, they always sympathise with him⁴² to this day, albeit some doubt him and his story⁴³. In addition, many

could sympathise with Mohammed's fate as he described his experiences openly and in great detail.⁴⁴ Peter confirms that both of these factors ensured a high level of acceptance and solidarity.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the religious piety of Mohammed's environment positively affected their reactions. After all, even the difficult events in life are God-given and should be accepted and appreciated. Thus, Mohammed received a warm welcome "since everything that happens by the grace of God"⁴⁶. According to Mohammed, his friends showed understanding⁴⁷ and openly received him, as Ali⁴⁸, Adams⁴⁹, and Samuel⁵⁰ confirm. Before his return, everyone thought that he was dead. A funeral had already been organised for him. The response was very strong, and mourners even travelled from Kumasi.⁵¹ Hence, there was tremendous joy when Mohammed returned alive after all.⁵² Zakari felt great relief that his brother was in good condition after he and many others had been very concerned.⁵³ For him, there was never any question of rejecting his brother. Beyond Mohammed's core family, everyone in his closer network was excited to see him back alive. Even the determined and migration-hungry members of Las Palmas Club were happy about his return.⁵⁴ Mohammed's childhood friend Ali describes the initial reaction and joy over his return as follows:

"He was received like a family receives its child. They really welcomed him because it was a long time since they heard from him and the way he changed in appearance was special. They didn't know anything and what happened to him. They received him as a family should receive their child. [...] It didn't really affect the family negatively because they were happy that he had returned with his life. And even if it affected him and he was so sad that he didn't make it, he was happy to be still alive. We were all happy that he returned in person. Some others died in the desert. He could have died as well, but he didn't. That's why we were happy."

~ Ali ~

Whilst Mohammed's empty-handed return has not lastingly damaged the relationship between him and his family, the latter had to give up property and belongings due to his migration.⁵⁵ Beyond the financial hardships, there is the mental burden that weighs heavily on all of them.⁵⁶ As a consequence of the uncertainty about her son's situation she was exposed to, mother Amimatu developed a heart attack and high blood pressure and is on medication until now. She describes that the core family was and still is sensitive to Mohammed's emotional situation. Therefore, it is important to them to speak well of him and to give him a positive feeling of being welcome instead of judging him. Eventually, they are aware that their behaviour also influences the reactions of others towards Mohammed and that they do not want to burden him unnecessarily:

"We, as the direct family, didn't want to burden him unnecessarily more than he already is punished. He went through a lot. If you are mocking him, it might force him to go back. He could have got the feeling to prove us better. That's why we didn't mock him in any way. If we, as the inner circle of the family, blame him, how much does then the outside world paint him black? That's why we try to avoid any negative emotions."

~ Amimatu ~

Accordingly, sister Alimatu tries not to mention the subject of her brother's debts in order not to burden him unnecessarily.⁵⁷ At the same time, Mohammed's family still sees him as the person who is supposed to contribute the lion's share to the household income. Irrespective of his traumatising experiences, the family would not hold him back if he wanted to migrate again.

According to sister Alimatu, Mohammed should remigrate for the sake of the family's standard of living if he wants to travel again:

"We wouldn't stop him from migrating again if he wants to go, but we really want him to take the legal way. We don't wanna see him taking the same route as he did before and going through what he already went through. If it is the legal way, fine. In my opinion, he is the very person who can change the standard of living for the family. If he makes up his mind to go, he should go."

~ Alimatu ~

On the one hand, the last quote by the sister demonstrates that she does not want her brother to experience such a tragedy again. On the other hand, she and the rest of the family leave this decision to him alone and do not provide any guidance. Mother Amimatu's opinion remains ambiguous as well. In principle, she has a positive attitude towards the idea of migration as a livelihood strategy, as mentioned earlier. She emphasises the negative health effects which Mohammed's last migration triggered. Ever since she has been suffering from high blood pressure. While she would be very pleased about another migration, she would be likewise concerned and unhappy until he has been successful abroad.⁵⁸

Beyond Mohammed's family, his best friend Yunusah tries to assist him mentally. In doing so, he attempts to dissuade him from negative thoughts about the past.⁵⁹ Mohammed confirms that he is the person with whom he can talk about his worries.⁶⁰ Yunusah reports that the negative reactions after his return have severely affected his best friend's psychological wellbeing. In contrast, Yunusah⁶¹, brother Zakari⁶², and others seek to motivate him instead. For example, childhood friend Ali tries to sympathise with him since he migrated himself and is aware of the post-migrational mental state as such. He aims to comfort him in that regard.⁶³ In order to prevent him from overthinking his life situation, Rahman emphasises that he keeps close contact with Mohammed.⁶⁴ In addition, among others, Mamudu provides him with food⁶⁵, Ben and others support him financially, and Rahman supplies clothes⁶⁶. Similar to the core family, Rahman does not reclaim Mohammed's debts in order not to burden him further.⁶⁷ Childhood friend and migration fellow Sumaila and Mohammed exchange information about job opportunities and inform each other if anyone hears of something interesting.⁶⁸ Yunusah and others keep emphasising that only a permanent job would substantially improve his situation. They empathise with Mohammed and hope that he will find regular work in the near future.⁶⁹ Instead of shuffling from one casual job to the next, Rahman confirms employment as an essential pillar for a stable livelihood.⁷⁰

¹ "The reason why I have so many friends is that I'm going to the Arabic school. Then there are my people from Compound and from other places. Since I was a kid, I went to the Arabic school. The school's name is Makalanta. So, I have even childhood friends from there." ~ Mohammed

² "My childhood friends are Yunusah, Karim, Aziz, Ben. There were plenty." ~ Mohammed

³ "Yunusah is my best friend." ~ Mohammed

⁴ "My brothers Yaya and Zakari, then myself, my sisters Alimatu and Memu." ~ Mohammed

⁵ "My father's name is Yussif and my mother's name is Amimatu." ~ Mohammed

⁶ I'm directly born after him. He and I are very close. We are closer than the other siblings are. Even when he went and things turned out badly, I was the one who called him trying to be there for him. However, we all wanted to help. I hadn't have any work to do and I didn't know anybody to ask for help. So, we were very helpless. Nevertheless, we are very close. We are closer than the others. ~ Alimatu

⁷ "The other co-workers on the construction site were Ben, Idriussou, Kojo, Isaac, Lukman and plenty more."
~ Mohammed

⁸ "The colleagues at my tailor shop were Sumaila, Yussif and Sariki." ~ Mohammed

⁹ "Suleiman, Idriussou, Baba and others." ~ Mohammed

¹⁰ "At Zongo, I meet Mahamudu, Bukhali, Bashiru, Baba and Allahji. At Compound, I'm with Jakubu, Ali, Karim, Fuseni, Isaku and Kakra." ~ Mohammed

¹¹ "At Las Palmas Club, we have Aminu, Muneru, Idriussou, Suleiman, Fatawu and Zesuaka. These are the most important ones but there are plenty." ~ Mohammed

¹² "Peter is from Takoradi. I consider him as my junior brother. He is a good boy. He follows me anywhere I go."
~ Mohammed

¹³ "I'm meeting other people and we are having Ataya tea. We are sitting down and talk about this and that. The place where we do it is called Compound. I've also another one at Zongo. That is where I prayed yesterday." ~ Mohammed

¹⁴ "Just see myself for instance. I'm doing a construction job. That's a part time job. Sometimes, other opportunities occur and then we tell each other. We help each other like that. If there is nothing, we just sit and wait." ~ Suleiman

¹⁵ "We want to help each other if a member has an issue. So, it can be that one wants to marry or someone needs medicine or someone is facing a case or someone wants to further his education or one wants to travel. Any issue you have this club is the place where we seek for solutions." ~ Mohammed

¹⁶ "We are more people than we are here at the moment. Around 16 have already travelled. Some are even in Germany. This discussion doesn't occur just in a group when we sit here. These ideas are just developed among the who are close to each other. Before one of us has left, maybe none of us knows. The person leaves before the rest realises what happened. We don't just start to discuss this openly." ~ Said

¹⁷ "We don't have much but we are trying to help each other as good as we can. We just formed this group purposely because of the travelling. We are very passionate about the travelling. The purpose of the group is about the travelling and the help we try to give to each other." ~ Suraka

¹⁸ "Generally, most of the information you get are these you pick up on the street. That's how it is here in Ghana. Some people will tell as a first hand experience and others just from others who told them about it." ~ Rahman;
"I don't have a migration experience myself but I do hear a lot of stories from friends. Some died in the desert, others in the sea. Some are even fraud and lose the little they have. People get killed or robbed. I hear a lot of stories."
~ Ibrahim

¹⁹ "We were four people. Their names are Francis, Sedu and Papa. They are all from this area. Papa took a Lampa and made it to Italy. Francis is still in Tripoli. Sedu is in Accra now." ~ Mohammed

²⁰ "I met Mussah, two Adams, Sumaila, Issah, Hudu, Samuel, Papa, Meno, Ankomah, Abu, Lamid, Baba, Ebenezer, Sammy and plenty more." ~ Mohammed

²¹ "In Tripoli, Ackon, Ahmed, Asan, Tawiah and Uncle Ben and in Sabha, Abu and the rest left by Lampa which is the majority." ~ Mohammed

²² "The impact is mixed. Some succeeded and return and bring development like building mosques, schools, churches and other public buildings. Some die in the desert which makes people afraid that something could happen to their own relatives. A lot of people try to do their best to succeed. It has good and bad impacts on the society." ~ Peter

²³ "They return and have no job to do. That's why they always try to migrate to Libya and then to Europe. They return and have to start from square one." ~ Ibrahim

²⁴ "Some succeed and it ends well but those who don't succeed and return with nothing affect the community hardly. Even when they don't return at all, it affects the community." ~ Ali

²⁵ "The fact that young people are leaving the community affects this area in a way. It's sometimes in a positive and sometimes in a negative way. If they succeed, they help the community but if they fail, it's a burden to the people."
~ Zakari

²⁶ "It's really burdensome if they return empty-handed. They didn't have a job when they left. That was the actual reason why they went. Returning with nothing isn't good. It's really disturbing because of the imbalance in this country. The country isn't doing well. You return with nothing. That's very burdensome." ~ Yunusah

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- 27 "It's really hard that people leave this community to migrate. If they succeed, things will be okay but if they don't succeed, things are getting harder. In the latter case, we have to look after these returnees. It's not helping at all. It doesn't bring anything good for the society if the migrants don't succeed." ~ Alimatu
- 28 "Coming back with nothing means that these people have to sleep at their family house again. They return with depression and almost get mad or crazy. It's the family who is supposed to take care of everything for them. The means who are supposed to be used for other purposes and other family members have to be used for the returnee. Actually, some families don't really care about what happens to their returnees. They don't care how they end up." ~ Sumaila
- 29 "Most of the people just borrow some money from other people to migrate. There is the expectation that the money will be at least repaid. Some of these returnees don't return to their hometowns but rather live in big towns as Accra or Kumasi. That causes some insecurity and doesn't boost peace because money was borrowed and the person expects to get his money back. It isn't the best." ~ Rahman
- 30 "It's really worrying if people return empty-handed. Sometimes, we invest in the travelling. If the person goes and returns with nothing, it really bothers us. We gave our all and if nothing is coming back in return, it means that we wasted money and time." ~ Amimatu
- 31 "I was also received in the same nice way [as Mohammed was received]. They talked to me to not migrate again." ~ Samuel
- 32 "Those people who went and return with nothing are mostly received in good terms by their families." ~ Mamudu
- 33 "There are some who mock him but others show more compassion." ~ Ibrahim
- 34 "Sometimes family, sometimes friends. They mock him with his failure to succeed abroad." ~ Adams
- 35 "Some of his family members mocked him as well but most of the haters were from outside the family." ~ Yunusah
- 36 "There were some neighbours who painted Mohammed black." ~ Rahman
- 37 "Some people said that most of the migrants return and bring something but he didn't do so." ~ Rahman
- 38 "Sometimes, they [family members] were telling him that he wasted all their money and is now coming to disturb them." ~ Adams
- 39 "I barely know people [who reacted negatively to me]. Most of the people just said that they pray to God that I will succeed to help my family. They pray to the almighty that he helps me." ~ Mohammed
- 40 "We didn't get so many bad responses or mockery from others. Everybody was happy and cheerful that he was back alive even though he came with nothing." ~ Alimatu
- 41 "It didn't really bother us a lot because we saw that he has slimmed in appearance. He wasn't looking like he looked before he went. So, we welcomed him." ~ Yunusah
- 42 "They know that I struggled and don't have anything. So, they still have the patience and are insightful." ~ Mohammed
- 43 "Most of my friends understand what happened to me. If someone doesn't believe me, I tell the person to go and see it himself." ~ Mohammed
- 44 "Their reaction was positive. Everyone was very happy. My mother asked me about the journey and I explained everything to her." ~ Mohammed
- 45 "He was received well. We were all sympathising with him because of what he went through. We all prayed and thanked God that he came back alive. He was sound upon return." ~ Peter
- 46 "They just say that everything what happens, happens by the grace of God. Whatever happens in your life, you should give thanks to the almighty. So, they thank that I returned safely." ~ Mohammed
- 47 "We are still as we were before. My friends are really understanding and know how life is. We used to say that life is rough and smooth. Sometimes, it is smooth, sometimes, it's rough. My friends take it like that." ~ Mohammed
- 48 "He was received well. In fact, people even came to me when they were not hearing from him because I was so close to him." ~ Ali
- 49 "They warmly welcomed him." ~ Adams
- 50 "Mohammed said that they received him very nicely." ~ Samuel
- 51 "My people back home thought that I died since they didn't hear from me. My family organised a funeral for me. People were coming from Kumasi for that. When it turned out that I was still alive, everyone was happy. [...] They thought that I was dead. But when they so me alive they were happy." ~ Mohammed

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- 52 "The relationship between us and how I received him was better than before he left. Sometimes, he called from over there that things aren't that good and that he needs money. [...] We were very happy to receive him because he was abroad for several months and we didn't hear from him. We were happy that he came back home safely and sound."
~ Rahman
- 53 "It was a long time since we heard from him when he left. We were worried. I suspected that they have been arrested. When we heard that he returned, we were all happy that at least nothing happened and that he is alive. He is part of our family. We couldn't reject him." ~ Zakari
- 54 "They [members of Las Palmas] appreciated that I'm back." ~ Mohammed
- 55 "He [Mohammed] called back home when he was on the move. Sometimes, he was in need for some money. So, we sent him money. Later, we didn't hear from him any longer." ~ Alimatu
- 56 "My relationship wasn't affected due to the aspect that he wasted the money and isn't of big help until today. I was just worried and sorrowful because we had to give away even his room to get some money to send to him. When I saw him for the first time upon return, I started to cry because he slimmed and changed in appearance. Every time I saw him, I had to cry." ~ Amimatu
- 57 "I was happy that he was back alive. I gave him some money expecting that he'll give it back to me. Even the government said that they will give him something to establish himself and to provide for those around him but we haven't heard anything. So, far he is alive, I don't talk about the money anymore. I don't wanna talk about it." ~ Alimatu
- 58 "Due to the fact that we were not hearing from him during his migration, I got a heart decease. The doctor said that I have high blood pressure. I got medicine and I'm still on medication now. I would be happy if he migrates again and extremely worried at the same time. I developed a sickness due to his first migration and I would panic if he goes another time. I would never be happy about it. Even though he might succeed, I would never be happy until then."
~ Amimatu
- 59 "I'm telling him to forget about everything because once we are still alive, you don't know what you would get. He should forget what happened and move on with his life." ~ Yunusah
- 60 "Yunusah is my best friend and the person I talk about my problems with." ~ Mohammed
- 61 "The negative reactions upon return affected him. But I motivated him and told him to forget about it because life still goes on." ~ Yunusah
- 62 "There might have been negative responses from neighbours and others but I told him that life is full of ups and downs. Of course his target was to cross Libya going to Europe but if things didn't go well, you cannot continue migrating. You have to start your life here." ~ Zakari
- 63 "He changed emotionally. I'm very close to him that I told him to forget about what happened abroad. I told him about my experience and said that I've been to Germany and Portugal and other countries. I sometimes tell him to forget about certain things. Sometimes, when I'm sad, he is also the person who comforts me. If we don't see each other within a day, we cannot even leave. We are very close. Even though all these migration experiences affected him psychologically, we try to comfort each other to make sure to forget certain things." ~ Ali
- 64 "Most of the time, I'm trying to be closer to him that he doesn't bother himself with overthinking what happened and how to move on." ~ Rahman
- 65 "Sometimes, I had to call him to give him something to eat before he can survive." ~ Mamudu
- 66 "Ben helped me financially. Mr Rahman gave me clothes." ~ Mohammed
- 67 "All the money I gave wasn't calculated to be paid back. It was just out of generosity. I was helping him because he was in trouble. He asked for help and I helped. I cannot tell what happened between him and other people. The money I gave him was just out of my heart." ~ Rahman
- 68 "Mohammed and I are very close. We still communicated ever since we were deported back from Libya. Whenever there are job opportunities, I let him know and vice versa. We are still really close." ~ Sumaila
- 69 "I would be very happy if we could get some help for him that his life will be developing towards normal. He needs a job to do. We are all trying that things won't turn worse for him that he might travel again facing the same situation. If he wants to travel again, he should follow the legal process. I would be very happy to see him happy. We would like to see him having a job instead of asking around for some money or other stuff." ~ Yunusah
- 70 "I also call him to do certain jobs that he earns a living. Before that, he was going just for petty jobs that didn't earn him anything. Now, we try our best to give him some work to not make his mind to migrate again." ~ Rahman

5.2.3 Third Case: Ebenezer Bae

Prior to Ebenezer's migration, he lived with his mother, his siblings and nephews in a house at Mechanic Area in Drobo. In 2014, by age 22, Ebenezer rented his room just a few doors up. Upon returning, he moved into his mother's house again before he changed to a place in the district called Kwesi Brokom (KB), which was located closer to his mobile phone shop. In his leisure time, he frequently visits his family at Mechanic Area, where people he already knows from Taino I live¹, such as Abraham² or John³. In this place, the majority of people are farmers. The interpersonal atmosphere is calm, peaceful⁴ and in harmony⁵. Brother Michael describes life as "comfortable"⁶. In terms of social cohesion and solidarity⁷, Ebenezer confirms a good relationship with his neighbours⁸ without any problems⁹. He feels happy and accepted as the people know and greet each other.¹⁰ Since he lived as an active church member close to the place of worship, he is particularly well-known.¹¹ According to Ebenezer, the neighbourhood is composed of pious people who adopt a lifestyle in accordance with their Christian faith.¹² Neighbour Abraham adds his notion that the people living in Mechanic Area are "hardworking and industrious"¹³, but plenty of them aspiring to start their own business lack the required financial means. Another pressing factor is the influx of Indian cashew farmers who intensified the economic pressure and provoked conflicts among the farmers, as neighbour Abraham claims.¹⁴ According to mother Joustina, this struggle for land indirectly led to a dispute with their neighbours as well.¹⁵

Since 2018, Ebenezer has lived in KB. This neighbourhood is of a comparable social structure as Mechanic Area.¹⁶ As already mentioned, Ebenezer moved to KB solely because he had a shorter distance from his workplace. Approximately every second month, Ebenezer visits his relatives and childhood friends in Taino I. However, Ebenezer fully abandoned some of his childhood friends, whom he describes as "stubborn boys"¹⁷. His father died in February 2020. Irrespective of their broken relationship, this event made him very sad and he felt lonely for a while. At the time father Kwaku was brought to the hospital, he refused to talk to Ebenezer until he passed away. Afterwards, disputes arose within the family. Some elderly family members from the extended family claim the father's cashew farm and demand Ebenezer and his sisters to cover the hospital expenses.

Those childhood friends he gets along with are mostly with him together in Drobo, such as Emmanuel¹⁸ or classmate George¹⁹. At the time Ebenezer and his cousin George expanded their business, Emmanuel and George joined them before other friends of theirs were employed as well. Instead of a large social network, Ebenezer's contacts are restricted to his core family and close friends who serve him in multiple roles. For instance, his cousin George is not only a family member who lived with him door-to-door from early childhood, but he is also a very close friend, mentor and business partner. Cousin George considers Ebenezer as his brother.²⁰ Apart from his family, Ebenezer does not spend his leisure time with other people than those from work:

"In Drobo, I don't have many friends. The people I have relationships with are my co-workers. There are people who know me and vice versa. We greet each other when we cross our ways, but we don't work together or go out together or something like that. I don't have time for friends to go here or there, no."

~ Ebenezer ~

In fact, he actively avoids any contacts which might distract him from achieving his personal goals.²¹ At first glimpse, the only exception seems to be his girlfriend, Deborah, whom he met in 2014.²² Eventually, she went to Saudi Arabia in 2015 to work as a housekeeper for nearly five years.²³ However, besides supporting his family, Ebenezer wants to establish his own family as well. His ambition was to marry Deborah. They have already fulfilled their wish to have a child.²⁴ Ebenezer considers certain people as his role models. In childhood, he looked up to father Kwaku's brother Branketia. Uncle Branketia blamed his brother for his irresponsible behaviour and tried to support his nephews and nieces.²⁵ Furthermore, one of Ebenezer's two bosses, Atta, always advised him on life issues.²⁶ They jointly worked for many years and Ebenezer received valuable advice from him.²⁷ Ebenezer's ties with former migration fellows are limited in numbers. Nonetheless, he is in contact with a few living in Ghana and others abroad. Since Ebenezer embarked on his journey towards Europe with four other fellows²⁸, he is still in contact with two of them²⁹ who live in Dubai at the moment³⁰. His friend Silas lives in Italy now.³¹

If the people in Drobo are asked for their sources of information on transit returnees, a homogeneous image emerges consisting of at least four channels. Most people have friends or acquaintances³² who once migrated or know someone who has done so³³. In addition, some have relatives who can relate to their own migration.³⁴ Ebenezer's friend, employee and mentor Emmanuel confirms that he hears many of these stories from family members and friends and adds that as many tend to become addicted to alcohol which is another indication for identifying people with a return story.³⁵ Ebenezer's football teammate Awukye states that transit returnees either self-report their experiences or second-hand stories come to light.³⁶ Carpentry master Atta adds that the radio provides information about this issue as well. In addition to reports, the government also makes relevant announcements about repatriations from Libya.³⁷ Thus, the information source on the issue of migration and return, including the fates of transit returnees, widely ranges from personal first-hand or second-hand accounts from friends or relatives, the radio to social media such as Facebook:

"Personally, my brother has gone to Libya and returned. Some other friends talk about other friends who returned from Libya. Additionally, I got some information from the radio station Kiss FM based in Drobo. Sometimes, we have some firsthand information from Facebook. People are talking about the maltreatment they went through. These are the channels I get my information about the issues of transit returnees from."

~ John ~

Due to the broad information available on undocumented migration along the Central Mediterranean route, Ebenezer's immediate living and working environment is well aware of the conditions along this trajectory and the arduous return and post-return process. The perception is characterised by an intuitive understanding of the motivation to migrate due to financial

constraints³⁸ and better job opportunities abroad³⁹. Asking people of Ebenezer's social environment for their perception of migration, the common opinion agrees on migration as a livelihood strategy as his uncle Gyan describes it:⁴⁰

"I do agree that they should travel. If it is a family member, he will potentially contribute something to the family."

~ Gyan ~

Nonetheless, the actual migration should not be attempted⁴¹ as there are feasible future perspectives in Ghana, life-threatening conditions en route and remarkably high costs for the facilitators⁴². Thus, the difficulties en route, the high thresholds to reach Europe, and the suffering of transit returnees are well-known phenomena in vast areas of Drobo.⁴³ In addition, there is an awareness of the multi-layered pressure on the families of transit returnees as soon as their relatives start migrating, as Atta describes it.⁴⁴ As a result, their migration leaves a gap which is sometimes difficult to fill. As a result, uncle Stephen reports how the community not only lacks good footballers but likewise artisans.⁴⁵

Despite the level of information and awareness, transit returnees frequently experience bullying⁴⁶ and mockery⁴⁷. In addition, their migration is seen as a waste of resources.⁴⁸ Due to the costs of migration and the debts that may have been incurred in this regard, transit returnees harm both the society⁴⁹ as a whole and the community⁵⁰ in particular, as cousin George testifies.⁵¹ In response to such transit returnees, some families openly confront their returned relatives and condemn them for their unsuccessful migration. The family's dismissive attitude can lead to deepening depression on the part of the transit returnee. According to uncle Gyan, drug addiction may result in the following:

"Some of those returnees who borrowed money are openly confronted by their family members that they wanted to travel, promised to make money abroad for a brighter future for the whole household, and now returned with nothing and become a burden. The behaviour of the returnees can change because of their family members who are adverse. They stick to drinking because of the depression they have and the desperate situation they find themselves in."

~ Gyan ~

Due to the financial pressure, they tend to commit criminal activities to acquire funds.⁵² Neighbour Abraham suspects that the lack of prospects makes the empty-handed transit returnees inclined to have nothing else in mind but to get money to migrate again:

"Those who return with nothing are still motivated to go back. They just try to make money in any way for that. They might become robbers or anything like that. They use any means, whether fair or foul."

~ Abraham ~

In the face of possible future migrations or becoming drug addicts and criminals, John emphasises that transit returnees need people at their side who have a positive and motivating influence on them.⁵³ On the other hand, migration and the associated experiences have a lasting negative influence on the character of migrants. According to Abraham, those experiences make people reckless and mean:

“What I can say is that those who returned have played a lottery with their lives. I’m talking about those who went by car. Even if they return and get something, they tend to be very mean due to the harsh treatment abroad. If you want something from them, they won’t give it to you. They become somehow wicked and cruel based on the treatment they experienced in their journey.”

~ Abraham ~

Neighbour Agnes observes the opposite character development from her husband’s experience, who once migrated himself. She has observed that he and other migrants develop a calmer, more balanced and reflected mind with a tendency towards modesty and gratitude.⁵⁴ In particular, among transit returnees, another positive effect is the improved artisan skills abroad. In this manner, they are not only an asset for themselves and their family but also contribute positively to the development of society as a whole by providing manual training to those around them:⁵⁵

“Especially, people who are stuck in transit can become mason workers. If they return to Drobo, they can build on what they have learned abroad and continue their job here back in Ghana. They can even train other people. By doing so, they help to boost the country as a whole.”

~ Emmanuel ~

This is valid for Drobo and rural areas such as Taino I as Ebenezer’s father Kwaku⁵⁶ and uncle Stephen⁵⁷ confirm. The transit returnees have acquired new skills, which likewise enrich the community.⁵⁸ Irrespective of the mentioned downsides concerning transit returnees, neighbour Abraham emphasises that he and others always wholeheartedly welcome the transit returnees regardless of the financial means they brought with them.⁵⁹ As brother Michael confirms, the joy of seeing the person alive outweighs any debts.⁶⁰ Uncle Stephen adds that some families even organise celebrations to mark this special day.⁶¹ However, there are transit returnees who are not even able to apply what they have acquired abroad after their return. In such cases, cousin George stresses that it is very important not to criticise the transit returnees but to encourage them, as John confirmed earlier as well.⁶² Uncle Stephen accents the same supportive attitude.⁶³

In terms of Ebenezer’s reception, he was not only welcomed with open arms when he returned.⁶⁴ Apart from his immediate environment, he was not well received. As brother Michael reports, “there were mixed feelings” even within the core family:

“There were mixed feelings. There was happiness because my brother was back, and we were not hearing from him. On the other hand, he was somebody we were looking up to to help the family. But when he came with nothing, I can honestly say that I wasn’t that happy because he was our hope.”

~ Michael ~

Childhood friend John attests that the satisfaction on the part of the family was mixed⁶⁵, which sister Paulina affirms⁶⁶. Half-brother Isaac confirms the great disappointment of Ebenezer’s empty-handed return. By his admission, it affected his life negatively. Nonetheless, he was eventually relieved that his half-brother was back alive.⁶⁷ The joy over his return prevailed among some, but others were not too pleased with his homecoming.⁶⁸ The family’s financial losses caused increased resentment. One family member confronted him directly about his mother’s cashew farm.⁶⁹ Uncle Gyan from Taino I describes an initial rather reserved reaction in the family environment of the village, but everyone was very positive in the long run.⁷⁰ Indeed, there was

some disappointment that he did not inform anyone about his migration intentions. Nonetheless, he was invited home to Taino I and his apology was accepted.⁷¹ Francis from Taino I observed that the contact with Ebenezer is less frequent but of higher quality compared to the past.⁷² Ebenezer is often confronted with the disappointed expectation that he did not make it to Europe and contribute to the family's prosperity. However, there was widespread sympathy for his fate. People showed interest and tried to help him and give him advice. He did not feel that people avoided or shunned him. Instead, he perceived the behaviour of many people as motivating. He gained the respect of his fellow human beings through his manual skills and diligence. This is as true for Taino I as it is for Drobo, whereby Ebenezer ignores the sporadic taunts:

"Sometimes, they used to ask me why I came back and why I didn't arrive in Europe. So, I explained the situation. Not everyone knew that I was returned from Libya. Those who knew that I was deported were close to my mum and my family. When I returned, they used to come to my mother's house, trying to give me some advice and showing interest in me and what I'm doing now. [...] Yes, they were nice to me. I like joking, and they joked with me together and we were just having normal conversations. [...] I didn't have any problem with anyone when I returned. It was not like people were avoiding me or didn't want to talk to me. [...] I do feel respected. If I go to my village, my uncles always ask me to stay with them and eat. Even when I was in Libya, I felt the support of my family. Some others of the family or the village of my age are just sitting in the village doing nothing. However, they see me in the town doing my carpentry work and working really hard in general. They always told me that I'm a hard worker. One day, I was called to roof my uncle's house. If I go to the village, the people like and respect me. [...] The people in Trinity respect me and I respect them as well. I'm not an offending person and I like joking. If people insult me, I just leave them. I respect everyone and expect the same the other way around."

~ Ebenezer ~

Apart from his mother, keeping Ebenezer's entire environment in the dark about his migration intentions did not have a long-term negative impact. As already discussed by uncle Gyan and uncle Stephen, Ebenezer apologised and they, as well as his master carpenter Atta and others, accepted his apology.⁷³ Outside the family, Ebenezer was criticised by friends and acquaintances:

"I was expecting that some people would insult me because I travelled and have less than I had before I left Ghana. Some people indeed used to tell me. [...] Those [insulting me] were friends and acquaintances who knew me and my carpentry work. They see people travelling and returning having a better life afterwards. But then they saw me returning empty-handed, just continuing my carpentry work. So, they questioned me why I travelled to be a carpenter again."

~ Ebenezer ~

As described in the last quote, his teammate and childhood friend John reports that comments of this nature were also made about Ebenezer on the football pitch.⁷⁴ However, such statements appeared exclusively when Ebenezer was absent. This proves to be the case for most openly articulated hostility and begrudging expressions. The direct and sharp confrontation of Ebenezer is one of the exceptions.⁷⁵

From Ebenezer's story, the person who suffered most mentally and financially was his mother. Since she did not hear from him again, she desperately went from one pastor to another, seeking any information. The pastors exploited her and told her different stories about whether Ebenezer was still alive. She had to spend extra money since some required financial or in-kind donations, such as anointing oil.⁷⁶ During that time, she was full of sorrow and lost significant weight. As

described by Ebenezer in *Subsubsection 5.1.2.3*, mother Joustina was extensively crying over her son's uncertain fate. He had to call her asking for 2,000 GHC⁷⁷ and later for another 3,000 LYD⁷⁸:

"At that time, my mum still had her cashew business. She could sell the cashews for me. I called my mum, and she asked me why she had to do that again even though I didn't repay the first debt. So, she said, 'You ask me to send you money again?' I said, 'Mum, you want me to die here?' My mum started crying."

~ Ebenezer ~

Aside from the mentioned negative reception by a few people, the majority of his immediate environment was, first and foremost, very happy that Ebenezer returned alive at all. His people in Taino I and Drobo thought he was no longer alive.⁷⁹ Ebenezer confirms that those with whom he had a close bond were delighted that he had returned. Their attitude towards Ebenezer was mostly one of pleasure. They attempted to restore him mentally, as Iky describes it.⁸⁰ They are aware of what is happening to people on their way to and in Libya.⁸¹ The general joy at his return and the correspondingly cheerful welcome for Ebenezer were expressed and equally perceived as such by Atta⁸², Daniel⁸³, Gyan⁸⁴, George⁸⁵, Isaac⁸⁶, Michael⁸⁷, and Francis⁸⁸. Irrespective of the positive reaction, mother Joustina cannot assess for each individual whether the shown friendliness is genuine.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, based on the numerous statements and the authentic descriptions of feelings and attitudes, it can be assumed that Ebenezer's immediate environment in Drobo was extremely excited about his return as reported, for example, by his friend and classmate George:

"I was about to go to someplace and reverted immediately to happily welcome him. It felt like a dream. I was honestly happy because I hadn't heard from him. I received him with joy. [...] When he returned, the neighbourhood, as well as the family, were very happy to see him. He returned in June or July. Things are very difficult here in this area at that time. We wanted to organise a party for him, but we couldn't do that. Nevertheless, we thank God that he has returned. All the family, friends and the community received him with joy."

~ George (Classmate) ~

Notwithstanding their precarious financial situation, his cousin George organised a chicken they ate together on this occasion. As a result of his abusive experiences, Ebenezer was very scarred, both externally and internally.⁹⁰ His mother prepared rich food on the day of arrival, but he did not tolerate it well due to the re-feeding syndrome. This event and Ebenezer's stories, mixed with the overwhelming joy of his mother⁹¹, siblings and others, shaped the immediate scenery upon his arrival⁹². Mother Joustina cried tears of joy. However, her worries about her debts came to the fore as time passed.⁹³ Nonetheless, she confirms that the happiness of having her son back alive always outweighs the sorrow.⁹⁴ She tried to show a supportive attitude towards her son. Beyond his mother, Ebenezer received encouragement and pep talks from several people. They helped him to feel better. In the medium term, he was able to follow the given advice. It allowed him to focus on his carpentry work.⁹⁵ In particular, counselling and advice from elders unfold special weight for him, such as the conversations with Richard⁹⁶, Francis⁹⁷ or Atta. However, peers like John⁹⁸ also tried to support him with advice, as Ebenezer confirms⁹⁹. Ebenezer's current co-worker Iky remembers that he suffered a lot initially. According to him, nobody had been able to help him.¹⁰⁰ On closer analysis, however, this is not true. Ebenezer's close environment supported him mentally. Aside from the aforementioned Atta and Richard, George and Emmanuel were there

for him.¹⁰¹ George always motivated him to go for walks and to have conversations. After a short time, he took him permanently out to free him from the confinement of his family environment. He spent almost every free minute with his cousin to distract him and stabilise him mentally:

"I cried and my brother George picked me up and said, 'Let's go outside.' If I sat all the time at home and they asked me about my experiences, I would be sad. So, we walked around for a long time and returned. He told me to sleep at his place. So, I stayed at George's place for some time. That's why George and I are very close. We are cousins anyway, but we are very close."

~ Ebenezer ~

Ebenezer also highlights his mother as an important emotional anchor providing him stability.¹⁰² According to uncle Gyan, the family tried to stand united behind him. They tried not to focus too much on the incurred debts. The negative reactions and comments from the family were addressed and dispelled internally.¹⁰³ After the initial phase upon his return, mother Joustina and cousin George helped him focus on the carpentry work to stabilise his finances.¹⁰⁴ In addition, Emmanuel took on an active role, as Ebenezer confirms.¹⁰⁵ In the beginning, Emmanuel aimed to support him both financially and primarily mentally to overcome his depression:

"After his return, he was really depressed. I'm very close to him and tried to be there for him and advised him a bit. Even though I was working, the money I had wasn't enough to really help him. However, I was just there for him so that he doesn't develop any suicidal thoughts."

~ Emmanuel ~

Furthermore, he persistently motivated Ebenezer to apply for IOM's reintegration assistance:

"I encouraged him generally not to give up and to keep following up on IOM to get the reintegration assistance he deserves. [...] Upon returning, having all these bad experiences lingering in his mind, he received a call from IOM. He felt reluctant to go, but I encouraged him to go. Later, he went and the IOM people gave him some help, and that brought change into his life."

~ Ebenezer ~

On his own, Ebenezer was mentally incapable of handling the time-consuming, and demanding application process. Without Emmanuel's guidance, Ebenezer would not have met IOM's requirements and would not have remained persistent to keep inquiring with IOM. Emmanuel also developed the business idea for mobile phone sales and repair with him. He connected him with the needed mobile phone seller in Brekum and later with the owner of the place for the aspired shop, which Ebenezer eventually acquired.¹⁰⁶ In Emmanuel, Ebenezer has a person who is able to assume the operational and financial management of his business due to his expertise. As they are very close friends and have known each other since childhood, there exists blind trust. This is an indispensable success factor for smooth cooperation and profitable business:

"I really like Emma. He is always a good person. It's like I get some money from my carpentry work, let's say 200 GHC, and I ask Emma what the money could be used for our business. He suggests, for instance, buying some new mobile phone accessories because we are running short. So, we do so. He is really smart in doing all the accounting and financial issues. He appreciates my attitude to be direct and truthful. He knows that I'm very reliable and you can count on me and what I say and do. That's also how he is. That's why we appreciate each other and work together based on mutual trust. We really harmonise."

~ Ebenezer ~

In principle, Ebenezer's social environment assisted him substantially by relieving the mental pressure from his mind, rebuilding him psychologically, identifying short-term and long-term perspectives as well as translating them into practice. He received mental guidance and hands-on support from various sides in this regard. To the present day, his environment has also proved to be extremely functional in enabling him to run his business effectively.

¹ "One is called Ebenezer Mensah and another one is called Fosu Bismark. There are many people who are now in this town Drobo." ~ Ebenezer

² "I knew him before he moved to Drobo. I met him in Taino." ~ Abraham

³ "I'm from the same village as Ebenezer. I'm a little bit older than him. When they gave birth to him, I saw him. I've known him since he was born." ~ John

⁴ "I don't think that there is a particular problem in this neighbourhood. We all live in peace and I things are calm and cool." ~ Atta

⁵ "In this community, we all love each other. We live in a cool and calm atmosphere. There is only this friction with this shop owner. Apart from that, everything is nice." ~ Paulina

⁶ "We feel very comfortable in this area." ~ Michael

⁷ "The relationship to my neighbours was really good. We shared some food. Sometimes if I have something left over, I give it to them. At the weekends, we pound Fufu and eat together." ~ Ebenezer

⁸ "I had contact to my neighbours. We used to talk and eat together." ~ Ebenezer

⁹ "There were no problems. I cannot read their minds but among each other there was no problem. We used to go to the church. We were meeting, singing, dancing and laughing together. I cannot say if they had personal sorrows or what they actually think about you." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁰ "I felt happy and accepted. People know and greet each other. So, people also knew me and that I'm a church member. I loved it." ~ Ebenezer

¹¹ "I lived pretty close to the church. Therefore, I was surrounded by other church members you lived close by. As I don't like laziness or fooling around but preferred to work hard, I was also not spending that much time with my neighbours. Nevertheless, I was in a good relationship with my neighbours." ~ Ebenezer

¹² "I liked about the people living at Mechanic Area including the church members that they are all decent people. They do not fool around. The girls dress appropriate. I myself prefer a good conduct. That's why I liked the neighbourhood very much and to be with them." ~ Ebenezer

¹³ "People in this community are hardworking and industrious. A lot of them want to start something like a business. The major problem is that they don't have the capital to start." ~ Abraham

¹⁴ "Since the Indian people started to come to Drobo to buy cashew, we have some problems among each other. People started to fight over farms as a result of that. There is a surge in crime among the people living in this area." ~ Abraham

¹⁵ "This place is a calm place. There are not many problems here. I'm just not in good terms with the owner of this shop closer to me for the last three years. We have a dispute over a piece of land, a plot. Apart from that, this is a nice place to be." ~ Joustina

¹⁶ "I don't see any bad things in this neighbourhood. No crime is happening here. It's cool." ~ Agnes;
"There is no problem here. Just the business activities are sometimes a bit low. [...] The togetherness of the people living in this area is still the same. I've not seen any changes [over time]." ~ *anonymous*

¹⁷ "Kofi, Emma, Peter, Evans and some others." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁸ "Ebenezer is a family friend." ~ Emmanuel

¹⁹ "Ebenezer is my brother from the extended family." ~ George (Classmate)

²⁰ "Ebenezer is like my brother." ~ George (Cousin)

²¹ "When I left the village and entered Drobo, I wanted to stop hanging out with these stubborn boys. Here in the town, I have to work hard. I don't want to put myself into these kind of friendships which influence me badly. So, I wanna focus on my work at any time. These times, my only friends were the people I worked with. The people at the carpentry work are my friends." ~ Ebenezer

22 "I met Deborah 2014." ~ Ebenezer

23 "Deborah left to Saudi-Arabia after me but still in 2015." ~ Ebenezer

24 "Deborah is important to me because I want to marry her." ~ Ebenezer

25 "That brother of my father. He was just a simple guy. When my father was not taking care of us and doing all these reckless things, that man Kokoyo came to our house and told my father that he is not doing well and he should better himself to take care of us. He always advised us, 'Be a good and hard worker. Don't mind your father. Better times will come.' So, I said to myself, 'This man is a good man.' [...] We call him Branketia." ~ Ebenezer

26 "Alaji is the boss for roofing and the furniture boss' name is Atta. I started with roofing and added the furniture job. At the carpentry work, I came before my co-worker Kwame. So, I also taught him some things." ~ Ebenezer

27 "I would mention my boss Atta. He always advised me to be a hard worker. If I'm doing good, I can open one day my own shop, he said. He used to tell me those kind of things. We work for a long time together." ~ Ebenezer

28 "We were five people." ~ Ebenezer

29 "To two of them, I'm still in contact. Silimon and Emmanuel." ~ Ebenezer

30 "I have even friends in Dubai. They both left with me to Libya and later on, they went to Dubai." ~ Ebenezer

31 "I had one friend there called Silas who is now in Italy." ~ Ebenezer

32 "Some returnees come to my shop. Upon further interaction, they tell me that they have travelled and returned." ~ Richard

33 "I get the information from my friends who are also returnees." ~ Daniel;

"I get the information about transit returnees through their friends and family members." ~ Iky

"Apart from my husband's experience, he tells me also about people who went with him and returned. Also, I interact with people who told me that they also went to Libya and returned." - Agnes;

"Apart from Ebenezer, I have another extended family member who travelled to Libya and was arrested. He was still lucky and was released." ~ George (Classmate)

35 "We get the information about transit returnees from our own family and friends. I hear these stories a lot. When they return empty-handed, they tend to start drinking." ~ Emmanuel

36 "Some of them specifically tell you that they want to travel. Those who returned will tell you that they are back. If not through that person, some other person might tell you about it." ~ Awukye

37 "Sometimes, I do hear stories from friends about the journey to Europe. Sometimes, the government makes announcements on the radio station that there are some people who got deported from Libya. So, I get information from the radio station and sometimes from friends as well." ~ Atta

38 "I think that people who decide to leave Ghana are not able to make a living on their own. They have some financial burdens. There is this need for them to travel." ~ Iky

39 "I agree in a way to what people see as their motivation to travel. Since things are not working that well in Ghana, particularly the youth unemployment, I see that point. If you are not good educated, you will hardly get a job. If you travel and work and get paid in a foreign currency, it gives you a substantial amount of money. So, I agree in a way that they travel." ~ John

40 "At the time when I travelled, I wasn't employed and saw my mates travelling, returning and doing a lot of things upon return. I had nothing to lose and was really motivated to travel and to make it." ~ Abraha

41 "I don't think that it is a good idea for one to travel outside Ghana. I think we should all stay here in Ghana to make Ghana a better place." ~ Daniel

42 "I do not agree on the thinking of those who wanna leave the country. If you are in Ghana, you can come up with ideas and work yourselves way up. It's better here than to travel outside Ghana. Especially, if you have connection or middle men who take around 2,000 or 3,000 GHC trying to take you outside the country. This won't be by air but rather on route. This is not good to me." ~ Richard

43 "I see that the returnees from transit countries have really suffered. They have worked and couldn't get anything. They really suffered." ~ Iky

44 "The departure of so many young people puts so much depression on the families who have a member of them travelling. Most of the time, we hardly hear from them. So, all the time we are thinking whether this person is dead or not. It puts a lot of pressure on the rest of the family." ~ Atta

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- 45 "Some of those who left this village were very good footballers. When we used to play against other teams, we used to score them. But when these people were gone, we lost. Some left who were good in carpentry work. If somebody in this village dies, there is no one who can do a good coffin for us. Also those with the mason's skills are missed. There are a lot of ways how our community is affected by emigration." ~ Stephen
- 46 "On the other hand, if they return and don't have anything, we don't like them. We tease them." ~ Emmanuel
- 47 "The returnees don't return with anything. If you return to your village empty-handed, people might mock you behind your back or even openly." ~ Stephen
- 48 "I really see the return of people from Libya as a waste of resources. When you were going, you spent an amount of money and then you are back with nothing. I think it's a waste of resources." ~ Daniel
- 49 "Most of the transit returnees affect the life here in a negative manner. That's because they wanted to travel by sea to Europe. When they were caught, they had not enough money on them to even go back. When they are deported, they depend afterwards on the society. They become a burden to the society." ~ Richard
- 50 "I think that these transit returnees failed if they return. Some of them borrowed money, others, such as my nephew, sold all his personal belongings and took a loan. Then you still have to repay money. Upon return, there is a lot of pressure on them and it affects the community in a negative manner." ~ Gyan
- 51 "People who returned with nothing have to come to us who have also almost nothing. They start struggling and depend on us. In that case, it affects us negatively." ~ George
- 52 "Most of them who return are really desperate cases in terms of their financial situation. If something like that happens, there is a likelihood for them to steal from other people." ~ Atta
- 53 "Talking about those who returned with nothing, if they don't have people to encourage them, the likelihood that they stick to drinking and smoking is very high." ~ John
- 54 "There are some people who were very rowdy, stubborn and recalcitrant. When they returned upon the experiences they went through, they became humble and calm and not as much rowdy as they were compared to the time before they travelled." ~ Agnes
- 55 "Most of the returnees had no artisan skills before they left. They didn't know any skilled labour. Once they returned, you can see that they do plastering, carpentry and all those kind of things. You can see that they learned skills abroad." ~ Iky
- 56 "Some of the transit returnees have learned at least unskilled labour such as artisan work. Upon return, they can be really useful to the people here." ~ Kwaku
- 57 "I can tell from my experience that there are no negative impacts of empty-handed returnees on our village life." ~ Stephen
- 58 "Some of the empty-handed returnees have started to work in the realm of cashew farming. Some learned new trades and became artisans. In the event that we need their services, we call them and they come quickly. What I want to say is that they impacted the community positively." ~ Stephen
- 59 "We whole heartedly welcome these returnees. Once you haven't heard from a person, it can be assumed that this person is dead. So, once somebody returns whether he brought something or not, we whole heartedly receive him." ~ Abraham
- 60 "Sometimes, we are sad if they return without bringing anything. However, we are above that very happy seeing them alive because a human returned who we appreciate. The only thing is that this person might owe money. But when the person is dead, it's even worse." ~ Michael
- 61 "We heard that some people died but we never really know who actually died. When they return and we see them alive, we are really happy. Some families throw even a party for them. Indeed, we receive them with happiness." ~ Stephen
- 62 "But there are also others who return who are not able to do anything. However, you shouldn't blame but encourage them." ~ George (Cousin)
- 63 "I should encourage my child if it was an empty-handed returnee. I would tell him that if I have something or get something, I would help him." ~ Stephen
- 64 "When he came and things weren't well with him, they [the people] didn't receive him very well." ~ Emmanuel
- 65 "There were mixed feeling when Ebenezer returned. Some family members and friends were happy. However, others weren't too happy. What I can say is that he came back with his life. In a nutshell, people received him with a happy mood but just the stories he told us didn't make us happy." ~ John

⁶⁶ “Ebenezer’s return affected us in a positive way. We didn’t hear from him and were really happy to have him back.”
~ Paulina

⁶⁷ “The consequences of Ebenezer’s return were for the first weeks that I was somehow sad to see my brother returning from Libya without having anything. But anyways, he came back with his life. That is good. He affected for that reason my life in some way but not overall.” ~ Isaac

⁶⁸ “There were mixed feeling when Ebenezer returned. Some family members and friends were happy. However, others weren’t too happy.” ~ John

⁶⁹ “Earlier when Ebenezer returned from Libya, there were some negative feelings due to the money that he borrowed. [...] I know that some of Ebenezer’s family members passed a comment that they had to mortgage the cashew farm the mother was having before they could get the loan. So one said to him that the cashew farm is lost unless he will pay off the loan. So, somebody in the family confronted him.” ~ Gyan

⁷⁰ “In the long run, he was received happily. We are close as a family and communicate openly not putting a lot of pressure on him.” ~ Gyan

⁷¹ “When I heard that Ebenezer has returned, we invited him to our house. He pleaded for apologies that he has wronged us by not telling us that he wanted to travel. We forgave him. I advised him that there is still more in life.”
~ Stephen

⁷² “Before he [Ebenezer] left for Libya, I used to see him more often here. Since he returned, he doesn’t come here that often anymore. We don’t have such frequent physical contact but the relationship itself improved.” ~ Francis

⁷³ ⁷³ “He [Atta] welcomed me and said that he was always thinking about me and my good work I did before I left. He was happy that I was back.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁴ “Sometimes when we are playing football or doing other things, some people made the comment that if he would have not travelled, he would have gone forward in life.” ~ John

⁷⁵ “I cannot give you names about those who talked negatively about me. These people were just people who knew me or rather my story. They got to know who I am because you are in contact with a lot of people across the town and you have also colleagues. So, that’s why they hear my story and I hear what they think but I don’t know their names.”
~ Ebenezer

⁷⁶ “When Ebenezer was in Libya, I wasn’t hearing from him. I was going from pastors to pastors who could see the spiritual realm. Some demanded that I should pay some money before they could tell me what was going on with my son in Libya. Some asked me to buy anointing oil. I did all those things but some were saying that he was working, others said that he was arrested. So, I couldn’t really know what was really going on with my son Ebenezer.” ~ Joustina

⁷⁷ “I for myself didn’t regret even though I’ve seen a lot of devastating things. But if I go home now, I will return empty-handed as I spent all my money. Therefore, I rather wanted to work in Libya again and continue my journey. I called my mum and the police guards said they need in Ghanaian money 2,000 GHC. I told this my mum and she started crying asking from where she is supposed to get this amount of money. I told her that I’m in prison and the situation isn’t easy. My mother had a cashew farm and she was willing to sell it what she also did.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁸ “I called my mum and she asked why I am in prison again. I explained that I started working again and earned 900 but the police caught me on the road again. It was not my fault but this is how the Libyan life is for me. The black prison worker told me that I need 3,000 Dinar to get out of the prison. It is a big camp. So, you cannot be released just with a bit of money. I told my mum that I want to pay for my release. At that time, my mum still had her cashew business. She could sell the cashews for me. I called my mum and she asked me why she has to do that again even though I didn’t repay the first debts. So, she said, ‘You ask me to send you money again?’ I said, ‘Mum, you want me to die here?’ My mum started crying.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁹ “I whole heartedly received him. I and all the others were very happy that he returned. We heard that a lot of people have died. We also thought that Ebenezer was dead. When he returned, I was very happy.” ~ Abraham

⁸⁰ “When he returned and we really saw that the returned with nothing, that was not the time for us to castigate or blame him. What we were doing was to motivate him to do something for himself. We tried to encourage him and not say something that would demoralise him.” ~ Iky

⁸¹ “Those who really knew me were happy that I came back. They heard from the hardship of other people on the move to Libya and in Libya. That’s why they were very happy that I’m back even though I don’t have anything.” ~ Ebenezer

⁸² “I was really happy to see him back. All the others were happy as well.” ~ Atta

⁸³ “I was happy that he returned. So, I received him in a happy mood. The other received him happily as well.” ~ Daniel

⁸⁴ “We received Ebenezer in a joyful manner. We didn’t hear from him for such a long time. When he came, indeed we were happy.” ~ Gyan

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- ⁸⁵ "Both, the family and the neighbourhood received him in joy. We were very happy." ~ George (Cousin)
- ⁸⁶ "We were happy to hear that Ebenezer had returned. We heard so many stories that people died. To hear that he returned alive made us extremely happy." ~ Isaac
- ⁸⁷ "The other people received him also happily. Even though he hasn't gone to our hometown, they were also happy to hear these news. People celebrated indeed." ~ Michael
- ⁸⁸ "I was happy when he returned. The same applies to the family and community members. We had heard that he was dead. Then we were all happy hearing that he returned alive." ~ Francis
- ⁸⁹ "They all received him in a happy manner. However, I cannot really tell what is in their hearts or minds. I cannot attest that. The people in our hometown were also very happy. When they got the news, they celebrated." ~ Joustina
- ⁹⁰ "Honestly, I received him with sadness because when he came and you looked at his face, it was very sad to see. Even though we heard that he had died, he returned alive but in a very bad state. His hair was bushy. Personally, I was happy. He had to stay at our place and other things. We tried to counsel him and he started picking up again. His stories were really sad. I wasn't very happy." ~ John
- ⁹¹ "When my son Ebenezer arrived home, I just cried tears of joy. I was so overjoyed seeing my son coming back. I already thought that he is no more because I didn't hear from him." ~ Joustina
- ⁹² "My mum was happy that she got her son back alive. Michael and my sisters where shouting full of joy. [...] When I explained everything to her [mother] , I started crying. My mum and my sisters and everybody cried as well. It was not easy. My mum said, 'Don't worry. Thank God we have you back alive. Many people from our family told me that you are dead. For me, you were dead for a whole year. Thank God you are alive.'" ~ Ebenezer
- ⁹³ "The feeling of joy over my son's return is still there. However, we are still struggling how to repay the debts. The debts are there but he is my son. So, I need to love him as the person he is. That is it." ~ Joustina
- ⁹⁴ "We received him happily. His return affect the family in a positive manner because the correspondence between ourselves and him was no more. Once he returned, we felt happy and still do. Even though we are still struggling how we can battle our debts, still the happiness is there." ~ Joustina
- ⁹⁵ "I don't have that many friends. The friends I have are part of my family like George or really close friends like brothers like Emmanuel. If people saw me sitting in silence and thinking about my experiences, they just asked me what I was thinking about and tried to console me saying that everything will be okay and travelling is one part of education. They said that these experiences sharpened my view on the value of work and money and how to manage that. They tried to advise and motivate me. [...] [However,] I was sitting down and groomed all day long. Other seeing me there tried to make me not thinking too much anymore. They said, 'Everything will be okay. Don't think.' I accepted that because they told me that I still have my carpentry and mason's work and that I don't have a reason to worry. Because if you return with no skills or anything else you can make use of, it's bad but I was in a different position. So, they said that I can make it. I just told them that it is not easy to start over. At that time, I was sitting down in silence and thought a lot. "
~ Ebenezer
- ⁹⁶ "I've personally advised him a lot. I just saw him moving up and down doing a lot of things. One day, I called him and asked him for his wellbeing. He told me and I saw that things are improving for him." ~ Richard
- ⁹⁷ "We tried to encourage him and he is picking up." ~ Francis
- ⁹⁸ "We tried to counsel him and he started picking up again. [...] Anything Ebenezer is doing now, he is doing it after some consultation. I'm older than him and he discusses all his life issues with me. I also try to offer some ideas and advice I have." ~ John
- ⁹⁹ "John is one of my good friends like a brother. He didn't work with me but he motivated me a lot. He gave me several pep talks." ~ Ebenezer
- ¹⁰⁰ "Ebenezer has really suffered. When he returned, there was no one who could really help him." ~ Iky
- ¹⁰¹ "Upon return, I didn't have a lot of friends. If I leave my house, I'm with George. Sometimes with Emma. I don't have another place to go. We are just sharing a lot. [...] Both [Richard and Atta] are very helpful and advised me." ~ Ebenezer
- ¹⁰² "George and other friends of mine like John and Emmanuel used to talk to me to psych me up. Especially, the person who motivated me the most was my mother. She always talked to me to not worry and that everything will be fine." ~ Ebenezer
- ¹⁰³ "On the other hand, even though there are debts that need to be payed off, we told him as a family that we do our best to support him to that end. [...] The person who said that [Ebenezer waisted money and should rather remigrate] was called by phone and got the advice refrain from making these comments." ~ Gyan
- ¹⁰⁴ "My mum and George advised me to focus on my carpentry work to build up again step by step." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁰⁵ "I can mention Emma to be a big support for my business. George and my mother are also always there for me."
~ Ebenezer

¹⁰⁶ "I wanted to do that business but we don't have a shop like that in Drobo. It's called Itel shop. I asked Emmanuel and he told me that he knows one guy in Brekum where we could try it. He introduce me to that man. So, I decided to go there to ask him for his help. I travelled to Brekum and told him everything about my life, my stories from Libya and explained my current situation at that time. He agreed to help me. [...] I consulted Emmanuel and told him about the situation with the burglaries. At that time, Emmanuel worked at the place where I have my small shop today. He told me that the current shop owner at that time couldn't afford the rent anymore. So, this man was about to leave that shop. There was for me the chance to take over that place." ~ Ebenezer

5.2.4 Fourth Case: Moses Gafah

Moses was born and raised in Beposo, where most inhabitants are farmers or day labourers. Compared to the rest of the country, the living standard exceeds the average. Moses' father was even better off since he owned a petrol station. As a result, he achieved a comparatively high level of prosperity. In Beposo, social cohesion is stable. Due to the limited number of residents and the resulting personal entanglement, the sense of belonging is also strong. However, serious tension was all the more present among the children within the Gafa family. Aforementioned, Moses feuded with his older half-brother Vincent in particular while he felt neglected by his father. Hence, an attitude of defiance arose in him during his adolescence. He yearned to disassociate himself from his family. In addition, Moses reduced his social contacts to the necessary minimum due to the subsequent disappointing experiences with his superiors and his best friend at this time, Michael, whom he felt was destroying his future¹ and is referred to as "the Judas in [his] life"²:

"I had no friends with whom I discussed issues of my life. The only tight friend was this one in Cape Coast [Patrick], but he was far away. At that time [living in Kumasi], I didn't really have any tight friends."

~ Moses ~

In Kumasi, Moses stayed in one apartment with his friend Ken and Ken's friend Asamoah.³ Both were the only contacts he sustained for pragmatic reasons of living altogether. Nonetheless, he avoided informing them about his ambitions to migrate or discussing this issue. This indicates that they lived together but did not have a deeper friendship on a personal level. Moses wanted to leave behind the negative experiences with his patrons such as George⁴, Godwin or Mr Consah⁵. He deliberately severed contact with them. Albeit Godwin, with whom he had an intimate relationship⁶, died later⁷, he had already broken off contact with him before. In order to focus entirely on the future and his migration plans in particular, Moses even cut ties with Mausi or the loyal colleague Egyapong who told him about Michael's betrayal.⁸ The initiator for Moses' migration ambitions was childhood friend Salifu⁹. Eventually, they migrated to Libya together, but the contact was not maintained upon arrival in Libya. At that time, his only reference points were his cousin Caroline and her husband.¹⁰ Both helped Moses immensely and provided orientation. Through them, he managed to find a job as well.¹¹ As time passed, Moses got to know many other Ghanaian people, although he kept his distance. Beyond collegial contact, he refers to only a few of them as his friends.¹² Moses hosted a Ghanaian immigrant through whom he met his later wife.¹³ Moses still possesses his and others' contact details, but none of them he maintained contact with until today.¹⁴ Some are still in Libya, others in various European countries, and a few are already back in Ghana. Upon his first return, his excellent contacts with the staff of the British Embassy in Libya enabled him to receive 3,000 GBD. Nonetheless, Moses only maintains a close relationship with his friend Charles Frimpong¹⁵ whom Moses encountered in Libya¹⁶. Apart from him, he does not see any friends regularly. The last remaining person from his youth with whom he still has contact is his childhood friend Patrick.¹⁷ However, he has always lived in Cape Coast ever since. They only stay in contact by phone.

In contrast to the other three cases, Moses settled into a new social environment upon his last return. Weija's neighbourhood is predominantly composed of immigrants anyway. The Gafas maintain a distanced relationship with their neighbours and are not integrated into any social structure. Their migration background became not relevant as they did not make it explicit. As already mentioned, Moses limits his social activities to Sunday church services and does not engage in any social contact apart from Charles Frimpong. The same applies to Moses' wife. On a social level, there can only be the talk of relocation and no real integration into any social context. Moses generally avoids establishing relationships with non-returnees or communicating about his return. In his eyes, stayees do not and cannot be able to have any real understanding of his situation. While they feel understood and secure among transit returnees, Moses and his wife still fear stigmatisation as a consequence of revealing their migration stories. In fact, not Moses nor his core family directly experienced mockery and ridicule, whereas they perceived something of the kind indirectly.¹⁸ At this earlier discussed impersonal level, he feels accepted:¹⁹

"I prefer to be friends with those who also migrated, like Charles Frimpong or Adam. Why? If I choose to be friends with people here and they notice that I travelled, do you know what comes to their mind? They think that this person is useless. He has travelled and returned with nothing. 'See the way he is suffering,' they would say. That's the first thing that comes to their mind. They just see that I travelled for so many years and returned with nothing. This person is just useless. The kind of insults is just ridiculous. John, this system here is different. If you listen to the things they say, you'll be baffled. But if you talk to a friend who also travelled, the atmosphere is different. You can see that they respect you, you feel their love and you can share ideas. Beyond these friends, you have to return with something like a car or money to build a house. If you come back and see our situation right now, they think that we are useless. Every bad name will be coming to you."

~ Moses ~

In Moses' immediate family environment, there is now a general awareness that the support of the family is crucial since, otherwise, the transit returnee could slip down the social ladder, as Edward puts it.²⁰ In addition, mother-in-law Salome expresses deep sympathy with the transit returnees.²¹

Even if the family environment nowadays expresses understanding and supportive intentions in general terms, there were significant unpleasant voices from the family environment about his return in particular.²² Instead of returning to Ghana, they suggested that he should have migrated to Europe as Edward or William demanded.²³ In place of the proclaimed awareness and sympathy, the concern that he could become a burden for the family prevailed:

"Especially, my brother Edward in Teshie didn't like the idea of return. He was the only one who used to call me sometimes. Anytime I told him that we would return, he always said that we shouldn't come because life in Ghana is hard. He wasn't happy that we returned. He rather advised me that I should follow those who are going to Italy. I should go there and not return to Ghana. He wasn't happy at all that I was back. Some others, like David, William and others, weren't happy about my return either. They were happy for me that I was still alive, but they didn't like the fact that I had to move around again and ask for help. They rather wanted me to return with something that I could establish myself. [...] They feared that I would become a burden to them."

~ Moses ~

According to Moses' descriptions, the reactions of the core family were not particularly positive and helpful. However, if you ask half-brothers William²⁴, Edward²⁵ or Vincent, these subdued reactions after Moses' return are not reflected in their statements:

"We were so concerned about his life. Even though he brought nothing home, he came with his life. We were happy about the fact that he came home alive. I asked him how things were, and he said that things were very bad over there. Even IOM had to bring you home. There was not even the opportunity for them to get your stuff from the place where you lived. They returned without having anything. It didn't bother us that he was returning with nothing. Now, I'm saying that we want him to become the king. We are really thankful. [...] We were very happy that he returned. There were no negative reactions. [...] So, we received him very well and the brotherly love was there."

~ Vincent ~

As a matter of fact, it took a while to restore trust between Moses' family and him. During the second phase in Libya, Moses had sent his sister Felicia remittances for her business. However, she embezzled this money and made false claims to the family, who believed her instead of Moses. This shows how deep the family's mistrust towards Moses sustained for a long time. At this point, they not only wanted to see Moses continue to migrate to Europe but wanted him to send them remittances, as William testifies.²⁶ There was still a trust deficit and little mutual understanding between Moses and his family until the time upon the final return.

Nonetheless, both Moses and his wife emphasise the importance of knowledge about their situation, which can lead to the awareness that family support is vital. Both families knew about their misfortune and the circumstances in Libya, which fostered their understanding of their situation and enabled them to develop a helpful attitude. Moses' family ultimately supported him, which childhood friend Patrick confirms.²⁷ According to William, the half-brothers supported Moses financially, for example, to buy a car or medicine for the children.²⁸ They do not pressure Moses to repay the debts, which mentally relieves him.²⁹ Following the last return, Edward took Moses into his home.³⁰ Adwoa's mother was prepared for their deprived return and was glad that her daughter returned unharmed with her family.³¹ As a result, the family also showed compassion and tried to help as much as they could.³² Mother-in-law Salome hosted her daughter, nieces and nephew and supported them financially.³³

¹ "His name is Michael. He was the Judas in my life. I despise him very much because he destroyed my future." ~ Moses

² "His name is Michael. He was the Judas in my life." ~ Moses

³ "I stayed in Kumasi with my friend Ken and Asamoah." ~ Moses

⁴ "Family friend called George." ~ Moses

⁵ "Since that time which must have been the year 1999 or 2000, I never came across Mr Consah again." ~ Moses

⁶ "Godwin told them that I was a very good worker and that he liked me more than anybody else in the shop." ~ Moses

⁷ "His name was Godwin but he passed away." ~ Moses

⁸ "Her name is Maudi." ~ Moses

⁹ "His name is Salifu. He was the main driver for the idea for us two to travel. He came up with the idea. He was a muslim at that time. He was waiting for me to start the journey." ~ Moses

¹⁰ "My mother's sister's daughter was staying with her husband in Libya." ~ Moses

¹¹ "The only person I relied on was my sister who introduced me to the family. She is the one who helped me a lot after I entered Tripoli. Her husband helped me as well and both tried to help and they did because I was getting my job through them. My sister Caroline was of big help and I depended on her." ~ Moses

-
- ¹² “Adjei Fosu is in Germany now. He was a colleague in Libya. There was also Charles Frimpong. He is also here in Ghana. Fosu and Jones Appiah are in Italy now. Augustine is in Libya. Mohammed Adam is in Germany but I don’t have his number. Seth Ampomah in Italy. These were all my colleagues but they went to Europe overseas. There was also Andy in Germany but I don’t know where I put his number. I’m very close to his wife who lives still here in Mallam. So, there are also Adam and Georgina Bati who are here as well. So, I knew a lot of people from that time. Some are here in Ghana, others still in Libya and others overseas.” ~ Moses
- ¹³ “His name is Gideon. I met through him my wife.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁴ “They [employer in Libya] sent me 3,000 GBD through a friend who is working at the British High Commission.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁵ “The only person I’m very close to is Charles Frimpong. We were together in Libya and returned together. But he is also in deep shit. We returned both by IOM with nothing. He is the one I share ideas with. We motivate each other that the future will be bright for us and so on.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁶ “I met him [Moses] for the first time eight years ago.” ~ Charles
- ¹⁷ “Moses is my friend. We lived together at Beposo.” ~ Patrick
- ¹⁸ “Maybe people do say something bad about him or try to mock him but they never said something like that in front of the family. This might happen always behind us because I’m sure that people are talking and negative opinions like that are floating around.” ~ William
- ¹⁹ “The neighbours accepted me so far.” ~ Moses
- ²⁰ “I feel pity for them because if you don’t take care, you gonna end up as an arm robber.” ~ Edward
- ²¹ “I cannot really say anything about that situation. It’s not really nice to see people who travelled and return empty-handed. It’s not a nice feeling at all.” ~ Salome
- ²² “Some of my family weren’t happy when I returned because to return means to hustle again because it’s not easy in Ghana. Coming back means coming back to hustle. Some of them weren’t happy at all.” ~ Moses
- ²³ “We are all humans and we do think all differently. When he went, I asked him why he didn’t try to move forward to Europe. But he said that the life in Libya was okay and even better than in Ghana. We didn’t want to force him. If you are better off in a different country, that’s all right. Moses only wanted to go to Europe in a legal way. He didn’t want to go by boat. So, we didn’t force him or pressured him. He knows what is good for himself. We just thought differently what would be the best for him.” ~ William
- ²⁴ “He is my brother and we couldn’t reject him. [...] At least, we came together as a family and tried to support him as much as we can.” ~ William
- ²⁵ “Everybody received him nicely. We love each other. If you return and you have no job and that cracks your mind, we were there to help. We helped him to register the car because the money from IOM wasn’t enough.” ~ Edward
- ²⁶ “We have some differences in our perceptions but we are still close enough. Even when he went, I asked him why he didn’t send us some money that we can start investing the money for him that he has something upon return. We are different and he didn’t give me the opportunity to do so. I didn’t want him to pressure too much.” ~ William
- ²⁷ “They [family] received him well.” ~ Patrick
- ²⁸ “We brothers collected some money and I convinced the others to add something to it. We bought a car for him but it wasn’t helping him that much because the work back in Libya and the work here in Ghana now aren’t the same. [...] At least, we came together as a family and tried to support him as much as we can. [...] Sometimes, he even called that his child is sick and that we should send some money to take the child to the hospital.” ~ William
- ²⁹ “For the family debts, there is no rush. For that one, I have a little peace.” ~ Moses
- ³⁰ “He stayed with me but my job is also not too good.” ~ Edward
- ³¹ “I didn’t anticipate anything extraordinary. I was aware of their situation. I didn’t have high hopes for them. I just thank God for bringing them back. It’s God who knows best.” ~ Salome
- ³² “There were no negative reactions. No one said anything. My husband helped also out to support them. Also, my last one helps out.” ~ Salome
- ³³ “I do help them. They came to me and Moses stayed later at his brother’s place. I also gave them with what I had because their situation wasn’t good at that time. I also took care of the children.” ~ Salome

5.2.5 Conclusion

The social environment and network of the transit returnee play a crucial role before, during, and after the migration phase. The relationship between the transit returnee and the respective actors; their disposition towards the general topic of migration and return; and their resulting reactions and behaviours towards the return of the individual transit returnee are influential for the agency of the transit returnee. The social network significantly participates in and shapes the transit returnee's life. This can happen implicitly or explicitly, consciously or unconsciously. Depending on the network behaviour, constellation, proximity and degree of dependence; the impact of the network can vary from case to case.

The family is an essential reference point in this regard. For Ali, Mohammed, and Ebenezer, the cohesion among nuclear family members intensified further after losing their father and other important reference persons. In particular, the relationship with their mother and the desire to support her increased. An exception to this is Moses, who wanted to distance himself from his family but was also embedded in other socio-economic conditions and did not have to compensate for any family tragedies. Nonetheless, the core family plays a crucial role in one way or another.

Regarding the pre-migration phase, friends and acquaintances from their social environment, whom they had known since childhood in some cases, helped to generate ideas, plan, and later execute the migration. At the same time, there were some family role models. As they moved from place to place, their social network expanded in their respective countries. They met new people through contacts and independently developed new acquaintances. Thus, social connections grew over time and space. Since the new acquaintances from this time were mobile across borders, a continent-spanning network was established. For example, people who met in Ghana may now live in Europe or the Arab world. The importance of transnational networks and communities in transit was previously described in *Subsection 5.1.2*.

Within the social network, specific individuals hold a unique position for the transit returnee. These individuals are characterised by their closeness to and relatively significant influence on them. They play an outstanding role for the transit returnee and are usually from their close family and friends. For Ali, these individuals are his wife Rukaya and his half-brother Mr Khamil. Rukaya provides necessary mental support for her husband, while Mr Khamil offers financial assistance and is an important mentor. Mohammed has a closer relationship with his sister Alimatu and his best friend, Yunusah. Ebenezer maintains a very close relationship with his cousin George and his friend Emmanuel. Additionally, Atta and Richard also serve as close confidants and mentors. On the other hand, Moses only exchanges with his friend Charles, as he tends to deal with most things on his own.

In addition to family and close friends, the social environment of the transit returnee, whether intended or unintended, is composed of acquaintances and individuals from the neighbourhood and community as well. This extended network of individuals is crucial for the period after return and can either facilitate or hinder the readjustment process. In addition to personal experience, the primary sources of information are family members or acquaintances who have migrated or know someone who has done so. Furthermore, the media regularly reports on undocumented migration, the situation in transit countries, the return from such places, and the subsequent reintegration into the country of origin through various channels. Based on these reports and experiences, people form their opinions, from which their attitudes and behaviour towards transit returnees can be derived. As a result, there have been certain continuities, recurring phenomena as well as differences, in attitudes and actual conduct towards transit returnees over the past decades.

Undocumented migrants are sometimes viewed as ignorant of the risks of migration and the income opportunities available to them in Ghana. Accordingly, the decision to migrate is perceived as a failure. On the other hand, there is also an understanding of the motives behind migration. Some also have migration plans for themselves, as shown, for instance, in *Subsection 5.1.1* in the self-help group Las Palmas Club. If a migrant returns as a penniless transit returnee, some see it as a sign that the path to Europe is not divinely ordained. This is emotionally relieving for the transit returnee, as it becomes less about their individual failure and more about a divine decision. It is also easier for family members to accept the fate of the transit returnee. Instead of blaming the transit returnee for the outcome of the migration, one can be grateful that the transit returnee was chosen to live and not die a painful death during the migration and equally draw hope for a better future. In addition, it is recognised that transit returnees can positively impact the community through the experiences gained abroad. Some improve their skills or learn new ones, which benefits their environment upon return. Additionally, they broaden their horizons and acquire intercultural competence while abroad. The fact that some send remittances before returning is also perceived positively. A positive character change towards more humility and general gratitude is also attributed to them.

However, negative experiences with transit returnees have been made as well. In this case, transit returnees appeared somewhat reckless and cold-hearted due to the brutal treatment they received in transit countries. Moreover, there is the prejudice that they consume drugs and are or could become criminals. Overall, the image of transit returnees is primarily negative. The financial and social impact of their migration and subsequent return is considered bad for families, the community, and society. They leave a void, especially for their families, which others – mostly family members – must compensate for. At the same time, especially on the family's side, there is the expectation that they will financially benefit from the migration project significantly if they directly contribute to the migration costs. Some families do not understand the transit returnee's poverty, are frustrated, and let the transit returnee feel their displeasure unfiltered. They brand their returning family member as a good-for-nothing and a waste of time and money. Instead of

empathy, the transit returnee is mocked, ridiculed, and insulted. Some families even reject the transit returnee. The circumstance that the transit returnee will continue to depend on the family is perceived as a significant burden. Instead of the transit returnee caring for the family's wellbeing, it is the opposite. Given this situation, an implicit remigration expectation towards the transit returnee was built up, which is also explicitly stated in some families.

Outside the family structure, transit returnees experience bullying and mockery as well – both behind their backs and in the form of confrontation. Some compare them to other successful migrants or those who have not migrated and now have a better standard of living than they do. Those individuals, even if they once had a friendship with the transit returnee, sometimes socially distance themselves and avoid contact. Given the transit returnee's deprived situation, even family members feel *schadenfreude* and enhance their own value by degrading the transit returnee.

Another opposing phenomenon that transit returnees face, although it has become rare due to improved information, is the suspicion that they must have accumulated financial resources while abroad. As a result, transit returnees are asked for financial support for various purposes. If remittances were sent in the past, these financial flows are expected to continue even after the return. Some transit returnees feel compelled to comply with these expectations despite having limited financial resources. As a consequence, they either incur further debts or remigrate.

Similar to some transit returnees being denied family membership, some people also deny them membership in society. They are stigmatised as failures and are considered untrustworthy, leading to a low willingness to help or lend money to them, as they are assumed to want to migrate again with the money. This rejection and social and financial exclusion lead to isolation and marginalisation, not only for the transit returnee but also for their social network, including friends, family, and all those who interact with the transit returnee. In such a situation, transit returnees are usually more dependent on contact with these people. They are often left with only their immediate family and a few friends, and therefore these people play a crucial role in the post-return phase for the transit returnee. In addition to the fact that they are victims of stigmatisation themselves, this burdens this group of people in many ways.

Even if the family does not ostracise the returning migrant, they are often poorly integrated into family structures. Transit returnees are either unconsciously or intentionally excluded from family matters and decision-making processes or are only assigned ungrateful tasks. Using the example of Ali's repeated migrations, it becomes clear how the disintegration into the family structure affected Ali's wellbeing. Over the years, the family underwent a dialectical process of becoming aware of their role and changing their behaviour accordingly. They developed an understanding that Ali only feels accepted and acknowledged when he is affirmatively treated, equally included in the family structure, and not confronted with implicit or explicit accusations of guilt. In general, they understood that they must consistently and actively address the challenges he faces. Ali was

made an integral part of the family, and his opinions were taken seriously and given weight. By assigning him responsible family tasks, he was not only better integrated into the family structure, but the exchange and bonding with individual family members were intensified as well. Moreover, the family tries to take care of him intensively, accompany him in his endeavours, and stay in constant contact with him. Previously, Ali was left to fend for himself, was not integrated into the family, and received only inadequate advice and superficial tips on how to live his life. Nowadays, Mr Khamil, in particular, serves as an important mentor who not only provides guidance according to Ali's individual needs but also offers tailor-made advice and is always there to support him. Furthermore, he tries to keep Ali busy and assigns him further tasks, signalling that he trusts him and that he is needed. Additionally, routines provide orientation and generate mental stability. All these functions illustrate the high value of the social network as a stabilising factor. In the case of Ebenezer, both George and Emmanuel assumed an equivalent mentoring role, which was extremely helpful for his reintegration. Ebenezer's environment relieved him of mental pressure, psychologically rebuilt him, and supported him in developing his business idea, acquiring funds, and jointly implementing it. An essential prerequisite for these productive relationships' success in the business was the prevailing interpersonal relationship of absolute trust. Furthermore, Ali and Ebenezer were allowed to escape the narrowness of their familiar environment through their mentors. Unfortunately, this factor and the fundamental aspect of close tailor-made guidance are absent in Mohammed's case. He does not have a mentor in his environment who frees him from the narrowness of his living environment, supports him in the application process for reintegration assistance or provides clear orientation and a new focus. Instead, the family still sees him as the breadwinner and expects him to migrate if he wishes. Therefore, Mohammed is relatively on his own, even though he has the largest social network on-site, which tries to support him with various forms of assistance and general motivational speeches. This illustrates that it is the quality and not the quantity of social contacts that matters.

Regardless of the sacrifices and losses that the families of Ali, Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses have endured, they try to remain positive and show reconciliation and forgiveness towards their returning family members despite the upheavals. Burdensome topics such as debts incurred from migration, including the names of debtors, are kept away from the transit returnee. Likewise, the family actively confronts intra-family or external stigmas or ridicule. Often, examples of fellows who were in a similarly unfavourable situation are shown to the transit returnee in a motivating sense to show that they managed to improve their living standards in their home country. However, even if the transit returnee manages to follow these examples and emancipate themselves through their income and integrate into the labour market, it takes a certain amount of time, and further efforts are required to fully restore the deserved trust and social recognition from the environment.

As indicated, the collective consciousness about the effects of their behaviour towards the transit returnee, which also affects others, is only sometimes present from the beginning. In this regard, family members undergo a learning process. Immediately after the return, the joy of having the

family member back alive, whom they believed to be dead, as was the case with Ali, Mohammed, and Ebenezer, predominates — however, disappointment and worries about the financial situation set in shortly after that. In addition, there is reputation loss due to the perceived failure of the returning family member or the fact that they had to borrow money from others that has yet to be paid back. Furthermore, the emotional and health-wise suffering of the family due to the migration of the family member likewise comes to the fore. In addition, the loss of trust between the transit returnee and the immediate environment is another hurdle. In this complex situation that also affects the relationship level with the transit returnee, taking an understanding, compassionate, motivating, and protective attitude towards the transit returnee is a significant challenge for the family and close friends.

In addition, the social network often consists of neighbourhood contacts and informal or formalised community self-help groups. Despite the sometimes tense economic and social situation, a climate of neighbourly helpfulness and solidarity can prevail within the community. Neighbourhood meetings and self-help groups provide a space for jointly engaging in sports, discussing any topic, and providing mutual support. Regular meetings also provide routine, create a sense of belonging, and are a welcome opportunity to find a distraction from negative thoughts. For transit returnees, contacts with other transit returnees are vital, as they offer a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and support each other with any challenges, whereas a distinctive shared destiny connects them. They try to cheer each other up and motivate one another. In addition to practical help, they experience acceptance, understanding, support, and solidarity there, which non-returnees cannot offer. This makes contact with other transit returnees very essential.

5.3 “Back to square one” – Livelihood Strategies

This section focuses on the livelihood strategies chosen by transit migrants after their return. It examines both the mental state and the actual behaviour of transit returnees after their return. In addition, the discussion captures the factors that influence transit returnees positively and negatively.

5.3.1 “Is this the end of the story?” – Mental Constitution

“I just don’t feel good at the moment. I don’t know what to do in my life. I feel pressure. [...] I have nothing to do to make my life stable and comfortable. I don’t even feel happy. My mom doesn’t have enough. I don’t have a place to stay on my own, nor do I have any work which will earn me a living. I see some people who are happy because of their independence, but for me, I would be lying to you if I told you that I’m happy.”

~ Mohammed ~

The present subsection addresses the mental disposition and actual behaviour of transit returnees after their return while exploring the influential positive and negative factors in this regard. Specifically, it delves into the fundamental character, attitudes, perceptions, self-perception, and sense of belonging of transit returnees as well as how others perceive them and the psychological

effects of the migration experience. It emphasises the issues and circumstances that impact their mental wellbeing and their ideas and ambitions regarding their current and future life plans. The role of the social network and institutionalised reintegration programmes are also highlighted. Reflecting the degree of hope for future change, the opinions and attitudes towards governmental and international institutions are examined.

5.3.1.1 First Case: Ali Alhassan

Ali considers himself a Ghanaian, Dagomba, and Muslim¹ who belongs to his home town Tamale² since he and his family were born and live there³. Asked about his perceptions of his home country Ghana compared to Libya and Europe, Ali emphasises that he felt permanently threatened in Libya, whereas he is completely safe in Ghana. However, he always chooses his residence based on where he finds a means of living.⁴ For the sake of the family income, he is not place-bound and open to moving to other areas.⁵ On the one hand, Ali appreciates his low living standard more than in the past.⁶ On the other hand, he does not want to accept his fate.⁷ Despite his self-assessed deteriorating situation, committing suicide was never an option for him.⁸ Instead, he bears the hope for a better future⁹ and believes in himself¹⁰. As a devoted Muslim, he never questioned his religion and perceived his faith in God, proven by several dangerous situations from the past which passed off smoothly.¹¹ In the subsequent, Ali exemplarily provides an impressive incident at the Moroccan shore when he and his migration group were about to embark:

"I never questioned God. Everything is God's will. I can remember the time before we capsized. We had to build three groups for three boats—45 people on each boat. The facilitators were counting the people to allocate them to the boats. However, they had for the first boat, which was about to embark only 43 people. The facilitators returned to the beach to collect two more people to add them to the first boat. They started picking these two people from the right-hand side. My friend Ibrahim was standing next to me. The man counted, 'One, two.' Ibrahim was one of the two people who were added to the first boat and I was allocated to the second boat. After less than 15 minutes later, we got the message that the first boat capsized. Everybody died. Ibrahim's family didn't believe that their son died, but I had to tell them that I witnessed it. He was supposed to call and they thought that he lost his mobile phone. I had to tell them that this guy is no more. So, I thought to myself that God didn't want me to die and that my time hasn't come yet."

~ Ali ~

In particular, incidents like these, primarily en route, strengthened his faith in God. He draws his mental strength from his religion in connection with past mastered situations like these.

Asked for Ali, his social environment attests that he always shows helpful and caring streaks. This attitude is lived out not only towards certain people or at a particular time in his life. As his current neighbours¹², as well as his family members or migration fellows¹³, confirm his readiness to help no matter how close Ali is or was to the respective person, this is proved to be an integral part of his personality. Thus, he shares the little he got with his fellows and easily bonds with people. In this way, he became friends with some neighbours.¹⁴ He even leaves his house key with his neighbour Mussah which is evidence of their trustful relationship. Among the neighbourhood Changli, he is respected for his humble, calm and sociable behaviour, which makes him a likeable

person¹⁵ who comforts others¹⁶. In fact, he is not very talkative in groups but rather a highly reserved person.¹⁷ Aside from watching football, where he can get very emotional, he appears shy and introverted.¹⁸ Apart from his reticence, he is described as respectful¹⁹ and shows honest behaviour²⁰ with a devout lifestyle²¹. Mr Khamil mentions his hardworking attitude and commitment to making it in life²², which is acknowledged among family members likewise²³. Ali receives and perceives the mentioned acceptance through mutual visits or phone calls.²⁴

Since role model Abu-Bakhar passed away four years ago, Mr Khamil became an even more critical mentor to him in recent years, as previously described. Due to his migration experiences, Ali's family and friends detected changes in his character. According to Mr Khamil, Ali became more resilient, self-responsible and capable of taking his life into his own hands. He matured and developed an open mind due to his various experiences and hardships, which allowed him to advise others. In Mr Khamil's words, "he understood what life is about":

"The migration experience made him really strong. He became a very strong guy. He is a very quiet person and not that kind of aggressive type. He seems to endure hardships which makes him very strong. He is a hardworking guy now and very resilient. He doesn't seek for anyone to do something for him. He thinks for himself now and he wants to do things. He is more open now and was very quiet in the past. No one would have expected him to travel that far. Now, he matured and seems to be more open now. He can even advise others who want to travel. He counsels them. I feel like he understood what life is about. Even though he has not lost this kind of hope to travel, he definitely knows that it should be the legal way."

~ Mr Khamil ~

Compared to the pre-migration time, his personality changed²⁵ into an extremely reserved but helpful, attentive²⁶ and caring behaviour²⁷. Before his migrations, his friends perceived him as more outgoing, even looking for quarrels, which significantly changed.²⁸ All in all, Nafisa²⁹ and Mustafa³⁰ confirm that his horizon broadened, new perspectives entered his mind, and he gained experiences which enriched his way of looking at things and situations. The experience of being a stranger shaped Ali's perception. He taught his brother Mustafa to be always welcoming to strangers since you never know if you could become a stranger yourself.³¹

Irrespective of his gratitude for his life and health as well as his belief in the grace of God, Ali bears sorrows on his mind and stresses out over his current situation. In particular, he broods over his life when he is roaming around or sitting alone and in silence.³² Childhood friend and migration fellow Aziz confirms this pondering behaviour for himself as a typical transit returnee behaviour upon return.³³ One aspect of the mental burden is the loss of migration fellows, which stresses him until today. Ali repeatedly remembers people he has seen dying or killed en route. He recalls not only their death in the desert, in prison, in the Mediterranean Sea or elsewhere but the personalities and stories he associates with these people as well. One example of a lost migration fellow is Mr Bhafs:

"Sometimes, the faces of those who lost their lives are flashing through my mind. I remember them including the Malian and Senegalese people. Back then, we told each our stories and the reasons why we wanna enter Europe. I remember one man called Mr Bhafs. Mr Bhafs, Jacob, Seeba, Mohammed and I were leaving together from Tamale. Mr Bhafs was 45 to 50 years old at that time. He told me that he is a farmer and has three sons and two or one daughter. He said that he wanted to go to Spain seeking a job to afford the education of his children. I remember him drowning in the sea. Afterwards, one of his sons won the American green card lottery and is in the USA now. Everyone is just talking about getting to Europe, having all these good examples in mind. However, there are some migration groups which we lost all."

~ Ali ~

Another aspect of the unfolding mental burden is the constant quarrel over wasted time abroad. Until today, the thoughts of what-if scenarios linger in his mind. This includes recalling situations abroad and imagining how better off his life could have been if he stayed in Ghana without leaving his country. Moreover, the comparison with other fellows who did not opt for migrating remains omnipresent in his head:

"The people I worked together and grew up with back in Ghana progressed a lot during my time abroad. Some of them continued their education and became lawyers. I just wasted my time trying to enter Europe."

~ Ali ~

Such comparisons reinforce his unhappiness as butcher colleague and half-brother Saani notices as well.³⁴ From his own experience, Aziz confirms this notion. He perceives his migration time as ten years of his life which has been wasted.³⁵ Looking at his life before his migrations and comparing it to other fellows who progressed comparatively better, Ali comes to the disillusioning conclusion that his current situation is the worst:

"I saw my friends at the butchery moving on with their business. They had a better living standard now, but I was just at a standstill or even below the level I was before I went abroad."

~ Ali ~

For him, the prolonged and deepened financial dependency on his family and others signifies another disturbing outcome of his migrations:

"Nothing changed for the better in my life. I cannot afford anything in my life on my own. I depend on others. I didn't improve at all. I'm at the same point as I was in 2002. Maybe even worse because I'm now even more dependent on others than before."

~ Ali ~

Apart from the waste of time, the waste of money causes severe sadness until today.³⁶ In this regard, he quarrels with the bad investment for his migrations and his aspired living situation if he had used this money differently.³⁷ His cousin Masahudu concludes that the whole outcome confuses him a lot.³⁸ As an empty-handed transit returnee, childhood friend and migration fellow Lukman describes that "you literally move back"³⁹, which Ali confirms looking at his situation:

"I've moved backwards if I see myself today in comparison to my life before I started migrating. I didn't move forwards. I moved backwards. The only thing that is good is that I'm alive. [...] As I told you, when I'm sitting alone or walking around, I become very thoughtful. Since 2002 [first migration] until today, my life has become worse. That makes me very sad. That's it."

~ Ali ~

Beyond the comparison with stayees, Ali also sees himself confronted with other migration fellows' success. In the subsequent, he describes a highly demoralising and frustrating confrontation with a former migration fellow in Accra:

"If I see my friends being successful in Europe now after they mastered the journey, it's really thought-provoking to me. Those who made it to Europe have a better life now. Some return to Ghana with money. They are establishing businesses and sending cars and fridges and stuff like that. I was with that person, probably on the same journey, but he was lucky and I wasn't. They are leading a successful life and I don't. I can remember one situation when I was at the O.A. bus station in Accra. I met one guy called Raruf. We met in 2002 in the Nigerien desert, going together to Sabha and later up to Tripoli. We passed the same road. He lives in Belgium now. He told me that he is trading cars. He is sending containers full of cars from Europe to Ghana. He stays in Bolgatanga. Once, we were in the same car aiming for Europe. If I hear stories like that, I'm getting highly frustrated. There are many similar stories like that. It always reminds me of my failure."

~ Ali ~

As Ali says, such encounters make him see his migrations as failures. Consequently, the despair intensified with every failed migration and reinforced his desire to make it abroad. At the same time, the perceived wealth gap between him and the people around him widened, causing them to distance themselves from him increasingly. These circumstances culminated in a vicious circle composed of a growing desperation of not being capable of making it in Ghana, social detachment and the persistent belief of having the chance to succeed abroad as others did already. The lack of future perspectives, the disintegration in the family and the implicit or explicit hopes from his immediate environment that the empty-handed transit returnee should try again flanked Ali's perception and his undesirable psychological condition paving the way for his repeated migrations⁴⁰. Apart from Ali, other migration fellows confirm such patterns. In various forms, transit returnees are implicitly and explicitly confronted with their own failure after their return. Beyond strong feelings of regret, this situation can lead to mental distress, which one can feel inclined to escape from.⁴¹ The idea of escaping problems and becoming active in a place where no one knows you and where you do not have to deal with the old burdens is very appealing. As suggested earlier, this was also the case with Ali, at least in the past. Matthäus describes this as a permanent temptation that every transit returnee is exposed to. It is a sudden thought that strikes one to try it again.⁴²

Due to their experience abroad and the following conditions upon returning, Mr Khamil characterises the mental situation of transit returnees as confused. In a way, they live in two worlds. One desired world born out of the wish to continue living abroad or to migrate to Europe successfully versus the other world, which is the actual reality in which they live. In other words, the aspiration to continue the involuntarily interrupted migration until they succeed is contrasted by the harsh living reality in Ghana. This clash of two worlds causes severe disorientation among the transit returnees. Mentally, they are still in the mindset of overcoming the migration regime to Europe. Hence, their focus is only partially on their real life in Ghana. Instead, they are mentally still in transit⁴³, thinking "that this is not the end of the road"⁴⁴.

For this reason, a stabilising social environment is particularly essential. On a long-term basis, it has to keep an eye on the transit returnee closely and be able to counter the arising dynamics of frustration. In the subsequent, Mr Khamil describes how transit returnees can be adept at pretending to have a stable mindset after their return. In this way, they deceive their relatives about their true mental state and their real intentions to migrate again, such as Ali did on several occasions:

“They have to be looked after. Someone needs to take care of them. They return and have just nothing. You return empty-handed, there is no job and you have to stay with your family again. It’s a burden for everybody. Someone has to accommodate that person. All his needs and problems have to be heard and taken care of. The returnee has circled the problem indeed but has no means to fix it. The person will have psychological problems as he returns with nothing. You have to help him to get rid of that serious burden. If you aren’t careful with that person, the person becomes more frustrated. Even though things aren’t good, the person knows how to pretend that everything is going in the right direction and before his social environment recognises, this person will be travelling outside again. They rather prefer to be somewhere where nobody knows their situation. If you stay home, people will get to know that you have failed. There is a big fear of failure. You see your friends back home and they might be all better off than you. Nobody wants to have this kind of feeling and be exposed to or confronted with this failure day in and day out. That all makes you think to try it another time.”

~ Mr Khamil ~

After each return, Mr Khamil tried to maintain close contact with Ali in order to show him perspectives in his home country. At a certain point, he always lost contact with him and living abroad became again more attractive to Ali. In addition, his transnational contacts lured him to Libya:

“Every time when he returned, I sat down with him and tried to convince him not to travel again. I told him that there was no point in that. However, there always came the point that you lost access to him. Then he starts to think to be mainly a burden on you. On top of that, the returnees still have links to those who are still abroad. They communicate and those people tell them about new working opportunities. This makes them think about trying again. Then he travels again and tries it again but also fails again. That’s how he went back and forth, not achieving nowhere what he wanted to get. We are just lucky that he is still alive.”

~ Mr Khamil ~

At an initial stage upon each return, the depressing experiences en route held him back from remigrating. He was intrinsically demotivated to travel again. Furthermore, his social environment also tried to encourage him to stay in Ghana.⁴⁵ Over time, upon return, the memories of his troublesome journey diminished and his current deprived living situation dominated his thoughts increasingly. Mr Khamil tried to support him in finding a job without success. However, the inactivity and lack of job perspectives determined his migration aspirations.⁴⁶ In the subsequent, Ali either expressed his wish to migrate again openly or travelled clandestinely.⁴⁷ As a matter of fact, Ali entertained a plan to travel despite his opposite-proclaimed assurances towards others and their efforts to convince him to stay in Ghana.⁴⁸ Prior to his fourth migration, his mindset underwent the same development from opposing remigration to secretly planning another journey while misleading his family and friends about his real aspirations took play again. Nowadays, he assures his willingness to stay in Ghana and stresses his painful experiences en route once again, providing a vivid account of what he witnessed along his journeys:⁴⁹

"Mr John, I tell you. If I tell you my whole story, you can fill books with it. I saw the most horrific things and went through the most dangerous situations. I suffered, I saw the war, and people were killed in front of my door just like this. I saw people dying in the desert, dying inside cars and trucks, drowning in the sea. I will never leave the desert for Europe again. I will never try it again. Also, everyone is telling me to stay and not to leave. They give me good examples of friends who achieved something back home without going abroad. Even if no one would say not to go, I wouldn't go. I saw what the value of my life is. I saw things no one ever was forced to see before."

~ Ali ~

In fact, he only considers documented migration⁵⁰, which is well-planned⁵¹. Nonetheless, the question arises whether or not the earlier described vicious circle of recurring migrations has been truly overcome and is now an attitude of the past. From his own experience, Mawiya recognises this pattern of repetitive migrations. Through psychological support from his environment, which repeatedly motivated him not to give up, he developed the strength and perseverance to keep trying in Ghana instead of quitting and migrating again. Restoring faith in himself and in the possibility of making it in Ghana was the prerequisite for freeing oneself from mental transit. In the subsequent, migration fellow Matthäus describes how he developed self-efficacy, restored hope in himself and left the mental transit behind:

"The little time we have stayed made us restore hope in ourselves. You are seeing there people making progress and you wish that it was you who is making that progress. Now, you are thinking of how you can match this person. Once you have picked up the notion of resembling those successful people who stayed behind, you will start learning a trade. This makes you understand that you have to do something yourself instead of leaving. At the end of the month, you can save maybe 20 USD or 20 GHC. This is something to make some progress. We understood that if you struggle and hustle in the same way as we were doing it abroad, you can make it even at home in our own country. Remember when I told you that I was doing the vulcanising job? How would you describe it? You would describe it as an old-fashioned job, I guess. People don't like it, yes. But if you make it, you can make money. That is how we are thinking. We just have to restore hope in ourselves. If we continue to struggle, we are going to make it."

~ Matthäus ~

Hence, the social environment is key in building and unfolding self-efficacy. Once again, this illustrates the significance of psychological assistance, which Mawiya emphasises as essential for every transit returnee.⁵² Once the minimum level of self-efficacy is reached, the examples of successful non-migrant friends and acquaintances have a rather motivating than a demotivating effect, as described earlier. Instead of focusing on the discrepancy between them and oneself, those life stories serve as evidence of prospects of success, as migration fellow Nurudeen describes.⁵³ From his own experience, Nurudeen confirms that one has to overcome the first challenging months upon return. Once the general situation improves, the psychological wounds will heal with time as well.⁵⁴

Ali once dreamed of a life in Europe. To this end, he migrated four times to Libya and other countries. The migrations had far-reaching consequences for him. How do he and other transit returnees perceive Libya, Europe, and the EU's migration policy today? Through contacts in Europe, Ali learns that the general life there is better and that people of colour enjoy the same human rights as the white population, whereas the "Arabs" mistreat black people in Libya.⁵⁵ Despite his experiences, Ali does not question the migration policy and the role of the EU in this regard. Migration fellow Nurudeen has a similar perspective and does not question the EU either.

Instead, he blames the political leaders in Ghana for the situation in his home country Ghana.⁵⁶ Among GJPC members, unanimity on the EU's migration policy prevails. Aziz perceives that the EU has massively reinforced its borders to stop immigration⁵⁷. However, Matthäus even pleads for a more restrictive border regime to directly deport people and return them to their home countries. A zero-tolerance policy in transit countries would deter people from continuing to seek entry to Europe. At the same time, he believes that the possibilities for legal immigration should be expanded.⁵⁸ This is likewise the collective attitude of the transit returnees who were once part of Cap Anamur and undocumented migrants themselves. Nonetheless, Aziz is still haunted by the question of why the Italian authorities deported him and all the others without being heard:

"I still have some questions for the EU. I'm still a bit angry about the actions they took on our case, which was the deportation after Cap Anamur rescued us. I want to ask them for the cause of our deportation back then. What was the reason? I cannot quote the law, but the international law on migration says that anybody who risks his life to cross water coming to your territory must receive some security protection. I still don't understand why we were packed as a piece of goats and deported back to Ghana. It was a very shameful deportation. I still feel it up to now. We were used as a warning example. After our deportation, I haven't heard of any other group of migrants who were just deported back as it happened to us. It might have happened, but I've not heard. There are a lot of similar cases to us at the current. If I get the opportunity to get to ask the EU, I will ask them, 'Why were we deported? Were we criminals? What was the reason for our deportation?' Seriously, it's very painful. There wasn't any kind of sympathy or humanity. Why were we deported? I still have this question in my mind. Even though we claimed that we were from Sudan, they should have granted us some kind of humanitarian assistance to allow us to stay in the country. That makes me have a bad feeling about the European migration policy."

~ Aziz ~

As the quote indicates, this violation of human rights has left its mark to this day. Most interestingly, he perceived the zero-tolerance policy he and everyone else on board the Cap Anamur experienced in 2004 as unfair and mentally painful to this day. However, this is exactly what they all demand and describe as an ideal for a desirable European migration policy. As a matter of fact, no one can be found among them calling for a more liberal border policy for undocumented migrants. Since being deported, most of them have achieved relative prosperity in Ghana. This favourable economic status shift should be noted and might make a difference in their opinions.

¹ "I would say that I'm a Ghanaian. I'm Ali, a Dagomba and a muslim." ~ Ali

² "I belong to Tamale." ~ Ali

³ "My home is Tamale because I was born here and all my family lives here. That's why Tamale is my home." ~ Ali

⁴ "I'm here and there because of the work. If I get something to engage myself, I will just continue my life there." ~ Ali

⁵ "I just sit together with my wife who is doing the slippers business. It could be that she cannot do it at the new place where I found work. So, we just weigh where to make more and take a decision according to that. Actually, I rather think that I would just move to that place and my wife stays here and I'm coming for a visit during the holidays and returning afterwards." ~ Ali

⁶ "I appreciate my living standard today more than in the past." ~ Ali

⁷ "I'm having a lot of sorrows lingering in my mind. However, everything what happens, happens by the grace of God. I'm grateful for my life and that I have something to eat. I thank God for that. However, if I sit down and remain in silence, I start thinking about my journey from the very first day and the suffering I went through. If I compare my situation to others who stayed in Ghana, they moved forward and are countless steps ahead. Nevertheless, I'm thankful that I'm in a healthy condition but apart from that, I don't wanna accept my fate." ~ Ali

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- ⁸ “I just thank God that I’m still alive and that I didn’t commit suicide. I’ve never had that thought. I’m still a poor person and I don’t have anything. Maybe, I will be able to establish myself in the future step by step.” ~ Ali
- ⁹ “I’m still positive about my future. There will be some improvement. I pray that I will be one day like you, Mr John.” ~ Ali
- ¹⁰ “I hope the future will be better. I still believe in it.” ~ Ali
- ¹¹ “I believe in God. I’m a muslim.” ~ Ali
- ¹² “I like Ali because we are in the same ghetto. If I need help, he helps me and vice versa. I don’t have a motorbike. If I need one, he borrows me his.” ~ Mumuni
- ¹³ “I met a very good person. He took good care of me. He was helpful and caring.” ~ Matthäus
- ¹⁴ “Ali is a good person. When he moved to this area, we became friends. We use to sit together. Even when he has some small money, he uses it for us to eat together. That alone proves that he is good. I love him because of that.” ~ Abdul
- ¹⁵ “Ali is living a very humble and calm life. He is very respectful and doesn’t have any wayward lifestyle. We live together peacefully, we eat and laugh together. Sometimes, we drink and chat. I don’t see any problem with Ali.” ~ Mumuni
- ¹⁶ “Ali is a respectful person. Everyone is feeling comfortable to be with Ali. He is my brother and I don’t see anything wrong in his lifestyle.” ~ Saani
- ¹⁷ “Ali is a reserved guy. He is not a noise making person. Even if he sits with friends, he mostly remains quiet. He just talks once in a while when he is with colleagues. Ali has even motivate himself to talk to me because he is such a reserved type. However, he is highly respectful.” ~ Nafisa
- ¹⁸ “Ali is a very calm and respectful type. He isn’t very active or outgoing when he is with colleagues. He doesn’t like chatting too much. He is very reserved.” ~ Mustafa
- ¹⁹ “Ali is respectful. He isn’t that type who is noisy. He is calm and respectful.” ~ Nardia
- ²⁰ “Ali is a very respectful person. I cannot say that the migration affected his personality negatively. I cannot say anything bad about his behaviour.” ~ Sedu
- ²¹ “Ali is a very calm guy. He doesn’t smoke or drink or does any bad things. He is very respectful. He is also not a talkative guy.” ~ Sadia
- ²² “Ali is a very nice guy. He is hardworking and committed. He has very good intentions of making it in life.” ~ Mr Khamil
- ²³ “He had been a hardworking guy. Everybody in the family liked him and he liked everybody. He is a nice guy.” ~ Mr Khamil
- ²⁴ “They [family] accept me. If I didn’t see my mum today, I go there tomorrow to see her. If they don’t see me, they call me.” ~ Ali
- ²⁵ “The migration experience changed Ali’s personality a lot.” ~ Nafisa
- ²⁶ To give an example from an own experience, I suffered conjunctivitis during my first stay in Tamale in 2015 due to the headwind my eyes were exposed to as the most common used vehicle in the Northern Region is the motorcycle. Upon arrival for this research in 2019, I was looking for appropriate goggles which was not an easy task. My interpreter went with me from one place to another in the quest for it. Finally, we bought a model which was sufficient. Ali observed that and brought me the next day when we were meeting for the first interview a better pair of goggles. He just observed and took the initiative to help me out without being asked for it and without wasting a word or demanding anything in return for it.
- ²⁷ “He became mature now. Sometimes, if I have a problem, he offers me any help he can give.” ~ Sedu
- ²⁸ “Back then, Jordan was more interested in fightings and quarrels. He wasn’t such a calm person. Now, he isn’t that outgoing and that kind of man-about-town type. He is very calm now.” ~ Lukman
- ²⁹ “Because of the experiences he gained abroad, he became extremely reserved and capable of thinking of issues in a different perspective.” ~ Nafisa
- ³⁰ “When Ali returned, the way he thinks about issue has changed because travelling alone brought experience to him and he is now handling issues from a different perspective.” ~ Mustafa

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- ³¹ “Upon return, we sat together and he told me that I should always try to help other strayers because you never know when you will be a stranger elsewhere yourself. When you receive someone good-hearted, you will be received in the same way. If you reject a stranger, you will be rejected sometime in the future as well.” ~ Mustafa
- ³² “When I’m sitting alone or walk around, I become very thoughtful. Since 2002 until today, my life became worse. That makes me very sad. That’s it.” ~ Ali
- ³³ “After I came down to Ghana, I never wanted to sit alone because any time I was sitting alone, I was thinking about the things I went through. Friends you were together in school or from the community are now ahead of you in terms of life instead of you who was easily better off than them before you migrated. They are now ten years ahead of you. How do you start? How can you catch up? You wasted your life for ten years. Financially, I was okay although I didn’t return with money. I had not such a burden on me because I had no family apart from my mother and my father to take care of. My main point of worry was what I did to myself. I took the wrong decision which has affected me.” ~ Aziz
- ³⁴ “Ali hasn’t reintegrated very well. He went abroad to hustle and end up making a living. Upon return, he didn’t feel happy. He compares himself with others and sees how others progressed. So, he isn’t really happy to be back home.” ~ Saani
- ³⁵ “The things I was in need for counselling was the psychological aspect of life. I was always thinking what I did to myself. Ten years of my life have been wasted.” ~ Aziz
- ³⁶ “The difference between today and before I started migrating is that the money I spent is gone. If I had used the money for my own business instead of the migration, I’ve gone very far. I cannot compare the past before the migration and my life today because I don’t know how to put this.” ~ Ali
- ³⁷ “The difference between today and before I started migrating is that the money I spent I gone. If I had used the money for my own business instead of the migration, I’ve gone very far. I cannot compare the past before the migration and my life today because I don’t know how to put this.” ~ Ali
- ³⁸ “Ali is a bit confused. Those who he worked with in the butcher house had moved on with their lives by far in comparison with his living standard.” ~ Masahudu
- ³⁹ “Their [transit returnees’] stories are too sad. When you travel and return to Ghana, you literally move back. You have your family here in Ghana who is really in need for something. Some of your friends developed themselves by far. To return empty-handed is the main worry. It won’t be prosperous. Today, I don’t advise my friends to travel again. It has a lot of implications. I don’t advise to travel in that way.” ~ Lukman
- ⁴⁰ “You see other people moving forward and you ask yourself, ‘Is this the end of the story?’ Then, you want to go back. Those who stayed back home are having the hope that you will succeed. The return becomes a big problem then. They return and don’t know what to do.” ~ Mr Khamil
- ⁴¹ “Ali went there four times without success. Things aren’t well with him. There are vast differences between him today and the possible case of being successful. Ali might regret for what happened.” ~ Mohammed
- ⁴² “It’s a strike. Sometimes, it strikes you to try it again through the desert but then you think twice and reject it for yourself. It’s an experience we made all ourselves. No one among us wants to face the same situation again. There is just the perception in Africa that whoever is in Europe has money. When you travel abroad, they expect you to have money. That is the perception. We have tried the road. We have seen the dangerous and evil things on the way. We experienced all kind of setbacks. Some of us spent ten years trying to reach Europe. When you return, the economy has changed, the education system has changed, everything changed. So, how do you think you can cope? Personally, I think that I won’t even go to Europe for a visit. We tried in so many ways. If you go by car and boat, it’s a horrible situation. Why should I put myself in the same situation?” ~ Matthäus
- ⁴³ “Those returning from transit countries are very confused due to their experience. When they come down empty-handed, they are really disoriented. That’s the reason why they want to go back. People back home expect them to bring something. Even though they have returned but with nothing, the returnees still think that they are in transit. They really feel that they have to go again until they come down with something. That’s a big problem. They return home and there is no policy for them which could keep them together and make them understand that they can actually make it in Ghana.” ~ Mr Khamil
- ⁴⁴ “The returnees are still in transit. They think that this isn’t the end of the road.” ~ Mr Khamil
- ⁴⁵ “We met and they [family] said that I should try it here in Ghana and I tried but it didn’t work. I told them about my experiences and that I won’t go again. At that time, it wasn’t even on my mind. The dead bodies I saw in the desert and on the sea were horrific. If I’m going to tell you the stories I experienced, your notebook would be full. You have to get another one. I faced a lot. That’s why I told them that I won’t go anywhere again.” ~ Ali
- ⁴⁶ “I wanted my brother to help me going back to Libya because I don’t want to just sit and wait having all these things lingering in my mind.” ~ Ali

47 “We [Mr Khamil and Ali] were just looking for a job for me without success. Mr Khamil made several phone calls to the USA and Canada but I was getting more and more unsatisfied. I told him that I wanted to go back to Libya.” ~ Ali

48 “My long term plan was to go back to Libya to make some money to start that business. My mother and everybody told me to focus on my life in Ghana but I had other ideas in my mind.” ~ Ali

49 “This [familial encouragement] gives him hope and lets him understand that he should not travel under these conditions as he did in the past. He realised it himself. Once we are talking to him, he says so himself. He shares his stories how close to death he was. It has been inches that he could have been part of those who died. He sees that. This shows us that he realised what happened. I think that he left this mentality to travel behind.” ~ Mr Khamil

50 “I’m just thinking about the documented way to migrate.” ~ Ali

51 “I told you before that I will only travel by air plane in a documented way if everything is also arranged there in Europe. Passing the desert isn’t good.” ~ Ali

52 “Let me talk about the psychological aspect. I remember when I came down to Ghana which was Tamale in particular, two months later, my brother came. After we greeted each other, he told me one thing. He said, ‘Look, you face a problem. This is what I told you. In Ghana, life is not going to be easier for you. But bear it and enjoy it by time. The problem will fade away.’ He said that it’s not going to be easy for me in Ghana but the life over there isn’t brighter. After another six months, another brother of mine returned from the USA. He told me the same thing. Life is not going to be easy. Both of them said the same thing. Later, when I started to experience hardships. Then I remembered what they told me I have to bear and enjoy it. I overcame the situation with prayers. If I wasn’t lucky enough to get that psychological counselling, then I would have taken a wrong decision again if my problems were getting severer. I would have travelled again but I was lucky to get this psychological counselling. When I returned, there were people who told me that time will come for a better future. This kind of psychological assistance is what everybody needs upon return when you have returned with nothing.” ~ Mawiya

53 “After you returned, you look at the people around you who didn’t travel. And these people are far ahead. They progressed more than you did. But you were the person who left seeking for greener pastures and the other person stayed here and made it. So, why not trying it here as well?” ~ Nurudeen

54 “Time will heal it. You just wait until you are better off.” ~ Nurudeen

55 “The fightings are still ongoing in Libya. A lot of bad people are walking around harming you. However, I’m free here in Ghana. Even the Arab people are struggling. Their life is also different to your white people’s life. Our black fellows in Europe are telling us about your living standard and behaviour. You are friendly, jobs are available but what white people don’t like is misconduct like stealing. If they catch you in doing so, they deport you. You can live in peace and harmony with the white people in Europe as long as you don’t misbehave. However, the Arabs don’t know human rights but in Europe you have human rights and respect for each other. Our friends are used to call and tell us these things.” ~ Ali

56 “It’s a matter of our leaders who are responsible for it.” ~ Nurudeen

57 “The time I got to know about the EU which was around 1998 when I started to develop my idea of travelling, I learned two things about the EU. First, they wanted to make the EU bigger, such as the USA. Secondly, they wanted to increase their border security which should restrict the free flow of migrants. Always, when I think of the EU, it is the European migration policy. It’s just about making their borders tight to avoid migrants to cross their borders and that there will be no free movement of migrants from the South to the European territories.” ~ Aziz

58 “I don’t see anything wrong about the EU’s current migration policy. If I was in that position to change something about it, I would enforce the borders against illegal migrants. However, I would do it in a soft way. If you want to go to Europe, you go to the embassy of the country where you wanna go and follow the legal process. Those who just want to go to hustle without any educational background have to be refused. Those who follow the illegal way have to be sent back. I would boost the efforts, for instance, on the Mediterranean Sea to send these migrants back to their home countries. Right now, people are trying to enter Europe in the hope to get a refugee status after some years. Look at the death rates in the sea. Every month people are dying. 100, 50, 40 people are dying. That’s why I want to see a restrictive border regime. If they catch you, you should be sent back to your point of departure. Otherwise, the situation like this will just continue. Laws should be enforced against these illegal migrants. You should be sent back. That’s what they do in Algeria. I was arrested in Algeria myself. They just sent you back to Niger and hand you over to the Nigerien authorities to bring you fully back from where you come from. They just throw you away. That’s the reason why I will never take the route again. The first days I walked seven days day and night by foot. What is the motive of doing that again? When we see that our people are in Europe and get after two years documents and they tell their brothers in Nigeria or Ghana to come, it motivates people to migrate towards Europe. But when people get arrested and deported, the numbers will get down. Therefore, the EU should support the governments in transit countries, such as Morocco to make sure that people get deported.” ~ Matthäus

5.3.1.2 Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni

Mohammed appears to be a hardworking and disciplined¹ but introverted, respectful, and calm person² who is a family man. In his way of expression, by using Islamic words, such as inshala, alhamdulillah or mashallah, the vital role of his faith is literally expressed in this way. While spending time with friends or enjoying his quality time, he prefers to stay in the background.³ Asked about Mohammed's personality, all respondents emphasised that he is a "good person"⁴.

Always offering his assistance to others, proves his kind⁵, caring⁶, and tolerant character who is willing to help⁷. Mohammed has an open ear for others and is a good listener. As a result, many people want to associate with him even though he is highly reserved and does not seek to be in the spotlight. Accordingly, Mohammed puts smiles on other people's faces and likes laughing himself.⁸ Over the course of their time in prison, he was the one who had high mental stamina and encouraged other fellow detainees despite onerous situations, as Adams confirms.⁹ In his community, people acknowledge his truthful and virtuous attitude¹⁰ and his pious lifestyle avoiding confrontations with others¹¹. In the subsequent quote, childhood friend Ali summarises a few of the already listed characteristics:

"He is a really good person. He has so much patience. He has time for other people and will listen to you whenever you want to talk. I walked with him ever since I was a child and I've known him since then. If I would say that he is a bad person, it would mean that I'm an unfair person to him. He is always a good person, very calm and respectful. When I heard that he had travelled, I was even surprised because he isn't like that. But we all prayed for him because we were not hearing from him since he went. We all gathered that he either came back or would be successful abroad. He is really a good person."

~ Ali ~

As suggested at the end of Ali's last quote, he was surprised that Mohammed decided to migrate to Europe. This astonishment is shared by other friends as well. In their opinion, he is not that hasty type who seems liable for migrating. Rahman never considered Mohammed as the typical "migration type"¹² as it was earlier described. However, the migration experience changed Mohammed psychologically.¹³ Mohammed grapples with mental problems descending from his experiences en route and at the detention centre and the overall disappointment of not reaching Europe. Witnessing that he broods over his past a lot¹⁴, his family and friends attest him to be depressed¹⁵ and unable to cope with the situation¹⁶:

"Mohammed's character is still good and disciplined. However, the migration experience has really affected him. He seems to be really depressed. This happens to most of us when we return from Libya. Most of us are depressed. We start behaving as if we were insane or absent-minded because we mostly think about the hardships we went through, such as the beatings and the horrible things that happened like the killings, the hunger we went through and so on."

~ Sumaila ~

Furthermore, he suffers from traumatic flashbacks today.¹⁷ Childhood friend Yunusah states that the adverse reception and mockery upon returning affected him negatively.¹⁸ Mohammed compares himself with other fellows¹⁹ and feels the urgent need to better his living standard²⁰.

Similar to other transit returnees, this puts an enormous burden on him, as his friend Ibrahim describes it:

"When he returned, you saw him not being himself. Because all those who have migrated, they made it. Even the small boys have made it. He has been left behind in life. That kind of thing is there. The returnees are always confronted with their colleagues and old friends whom all made it in life. Some are in Europe, and others have their own families and own apartments."

~ Ibrahim ~

He does not see himself in a financial position for a wedding even though his mother awaits grandchildren from him.²¹ Mohammed suffers from depressive moods, particularly when others do not surround him. The lack of future perspectives deprives him of his hope for quick improvements. There are extremely rare light-hearted moments in which he does not desperately think of his current situation:

"I just don't feel good at the moment. I don't know what to do in my life. I feel pressure. Right now, I feel pressured. I have nothing to do to make my life stable and comfortable. I don't even feel happy. My mom doesn't have enough. I don't have a place to stay on my own, nor do I have any work which will earn me a living. I see some people who are happy because of their independence, but for me, I would be lying to you if I told you that I'm happy. Everyone sees me with that pressure. I feel a bit okay whenever I visit the joint tea session meeting other people. We argue on a topic until it's time for prayers, and this keeps me off my worries for a bit. But whenever I'm alone, I feel that pressure and I tend to worry more about my life. I even have a certain lady I want to marry, but because I neither have the money nor any work to do, it won't be possible."

~ Mohammed ~

Mentally, he returned as a more considered²² and reserved person who seems to be very thoughtful and isolated, as previously described²³:

"He was very shy before he migrated. Because of the experiences he went through, it even added more shyness. He is more reserved now, even more than before he went. He has really changed in terms of his appearance and character."

~ Mamudu ~

Irrespective of his unsteady situation upon return and his big disappointment of not reaching Europe²⁴, Mohammed shows calculated optimism and claims to be determined and convinced to achieve his life goals in the future²⁵:

"I like to leave my own footprints. I compare myself to others, but there is no role model. Some people say Kwame Nkrumah. I believe that my life will change, alhamdulillah. I'm my own role model and I will also make it on my own. I will get my own apartment and marry and all these things."

~ Mohammed ~

After everything he went through, he appreciates his life and freedom more than ever.²⁶ Encountering different cultures broadened his horizon and made him more humble.²⁷ Accompanied by a certain determination to improve his living situation, it brought a new focus.²⁸ As a result, Ibrahim attests him a higher level of resilience.²⁹ As a devoted Muslim³⁰, his faith helps him to endure, provides him strength³¹, and makes him grateful for the life he got³². He never questioned God³³ and found his salvation in prayers³⁴, which he wants to preserve without any doubt³⁵. He is convinced that with God's help, he will achieve his goals.³⁶

In terms of his physical appearance, Mohammed slimmed dramatically and his body was strewn with wounds and scarves when he returned.³⁷ The current situation hinders him from having a stable mind, according to his friend Mamudu.³⁸ Mohammed lives at his mother's house again, sharing a room with his brother Yaya as Mohammed had to give away his room for the migration. Sometimes, he sleeps at a friend's place, but he has to show consideration for his friend's girlfriend, who is sleeping over at times as well. Regardless of the fact that Mohammed himself states the lack of financial means³⁹ and the lack of shelter⁴⁰ as a tremendously disturbing aspect⁴¹, the absence of his own living space is not per se the most urgent problem for Mohammed. Despite his undesirable situation, he would not accept an offer for a room in his neighbourhood.⁴² Since Mohammed conceives the continuation of living in Effiakuma as a dead end where he cannot excel, he aspires to live in a different area other than the current district. He feels restricted with no personal freedom and no self-determination:

"If I get money, I move somewhere else. I need a change of scenery. The neighbourhood is really nice, but I still want to change the environment. I would move to somewhere else. I don't want to stay in these areas. I prefer a place like Lagos Town or Anaji. Sitting in one place for your whole life isn't good. I want to have my own room and a place where I can enjoy my leisure time more. At the moment, I don't have my own. I don't have anything. I don't have freedom."

~ Mohammed ~

Mohammed desperately wants to escape the confinement and confrontation with the pressing current reality.⁴³ In short, Mohammed himself is fed up with life in Effiakuma. He likes the community but is tired of living there his whole life and longs for a change of scenery.⁴⁴

In fact, Mohammed feels to be part of the community of Effiakuma.⁴⁵ Once being back, he was very happy to be reunited with his community and its people.⁴⁶ At the same time, he also had some hesitation to return to this area. His definition of home is where his family and friends are.⁴⁷ As already quoted, his sense of belonging remains contested for the given reasons. He still considers himself a "Takoradi Boy"⁴⁸. Regarding his migration aspirations, Mohammed is still prone to the idea of finding better income sources in Europe. He hopes for God to provide him with such an opportunity⁴⁹ and patiently awaits an invitation letter⁵⁰. Nonetheless, he is aware of the economic thresholds he will be facing if he enters Europe and acknowledges that financial means will bring change in Ghana as well.⁵¹ Thus, his main focus is on how to find income-generating activities in Ghana, which Mohammed emphasises, and his family and friends confirm.⁵² They are sure that Mohammed "learned his lesson" as he advocates against undocumented migration⁵³ and its dangerous nature⁵⁴:

"I always tell people that there are three ways your migration can end. Either you die, or you are put in prison, or you make it to Europe. I always say that if you want to travel, take your passport, take some money and get all your documents together. You should go just with an invitation, but entering the road is simply awful. What I witness with my eyes is unspeakable. It's not easy."

~ Mohammed ~

However, his foster son Peter stresses the lack of final certainty of the genuine character of Mohammed's proclamations.⁵⁵ Mohammed's mother Amimatu's view on his decision-making for

travelling as well as staying in Ghana is quite remarkable. Both migrating and staying in the country upon returning requires mental strength and courage, according to her:

“He is also very courageous because he forces himself to survive even though there is no money for him. If he didn’t have that strong, he might have been already travelling for a second time.”

~ Amimatu ~

Regarding politics, Mohammed is disenchanted with the politics of the Ghanaian government. However, his resignation does not stop him from participating in political elections, which shows that he has not lost faith in change.⁵⁶ Until today, he campaigns for NDC. Mohammed expects European countries to support people in Africa.⁵⁷ Specifically, he expects the EU to do so. The EU should assist the people on the ground. He warns against giving the funds to the political leaders of his country. Instead, people in need should receive support directly.⁵⁸ This shows that he has not lost his fundamental faith in the state's structures and its opportunities.

¹ “I would describe Mohammed as a disciplined and hardworking person. Knowing him for that long, he has a good character.” ~ Sumaila

² “Mohammed is calm and cool. He is understanding and respectful. You can go around and ask others. They will all confirm. However, he recognised that all his colleagues are progressing and he feels the urgent need to find something to make his life better. Mohammed isn’t a bad guy. Everyone can testify that he is good.” ~ Zakari

³ “Mohammed is very calm. He isn’t violent. He is not that outgoing or extroverted. Mohammed is not going out with friends, going here or there, no. He is very calm and always in the house with his brothers. He isn’t that type who wants to get the spotlight.” ~ Alimatu

⁴ “I cannot say anything bad about him. He is a very calm person. He is very good. He isn’t troublesome. To say anything bad about him would be very hard for me. He is a good person.” ~ Yunusah

⁵ “Mohammed is very kind.” ~ Samuel

⁶ “Mohammed is a calm and good person. We children are all the same. We know where we are from. We make sure to look after each other very good. He is really a good person.” ~ Amimatu

⁷ “Mohammed is very tolerant, kind and loving. When he can, he wants to help. The little he has, he wants to share. He is someone who brings people on his side. He is loving and very good.” ~ Peter

⁸ “He is a very kind and calm guy. He likes smiling a lot. That’s why he is my best friend when I come here. He likes to laugh and I like that too. So, he makes me always laughing. He puts always a smile on my face. He is a very kind guy.” ~ Aziz

⁹ “Mohammed is a very good person. He encouraged us even in prison even though our situation there was very sorrowful. He always found a way to encourage us. Even today, he is doing so.” ~ Adams

¹⁰ “Mohammed is a good guy. Everyone likes him and wants to associate with him. But there is no work for him and the family. He isn’t that kind of guy who doesn’t misbehave. He is a cool guy and truthful.” ~ Ibrahim

¹¹ “Mohammed likes other humans. Even though he might be a bit shy sometimes, he doesn’t always dare to tell a person to stop if that person is doing something wrong. He is a really good person. He doesn’t smoke, he doesn’t drink alcohol and isn’t womanising. He is focused on his religion and makes sure to serve God. He is never bad. He is always good.” ~ Mohammed (Las Palmas Club)

¹² “Mohammed is a very good person. He is very calm and very honest. You tell him A and he wouldn’t claim B but telling others exactly what you said. He isn’t a violent type. He is very good and calm. Then I heard that he has travelled outside, I was a bit shocked because he isn’t that type who might be liable for travelling outside. I wasn’t expecting him to go to such places. He isn’t that type.” ~ Rahman

¹³ “He changed emotionally. [...] Even though all these migration experiences affected him psychologically, we try to comfort each other to make sure to forget certain things.” ~ Ali

¹⁴ “Mohammed has really changed. He slimmed and something is going on in a psychological sense. He thinks a lot about what happened in the past. He changed in appearance and in his mentality as well.” ~ Yunusah

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- 15 "In terms of basic needs, he is okay. Healthwise, he is okay. But I really think he is frustrated. He suffers depression." ~ Sumaila
- 16 "Mohammed is more reserved due to the migration experience. Since he returned, he hasn't been able to cope. He is more reserved and has been changed psychologically. He hasn't been himself until today." ~ Zakari
- 17 "The journey to Libya is something I would like to abandon. Sometimes, I wake up in the morning and I think I'm imprisoned again. The situation in the prison in Libya was horrible." ~ Mohammed
- 18 "The negative reactions upon return affected him." ~ Yunusah
- 19 "Most of my friends who stood back moved forward. Their lives changed. If you get support from your family, you can continue your education or start a business. Those who got the support improved their living standard." ~ Mohammed
- 20 "However, he recognised that all his colleagues are progressing and he feels the urgent need to find something to make his life better." ~ Zakari
- 21 "My mother told me always that I should try to get married but I've my financial problems and it's not easy even though I would like to marry. My mother wants me to marry and get children. However, in my condition that isn't realistic." ~ Mohammed
- 22 "Mohammed is more considered in everything what he does since he migrated. He learned his lesson and is always been considered whatever he is doing." ~ Peter
- 23 "He change a bit. He has been always a calm guy. When he returned, he slimmed and there were scratches all over his body. The physical appearance wasn't good at all. Moreover, he seems to be more reserved, thoughtful and isolated today." ~ Rahman
- 24 "What disappointed me most was the feeling that I didn't make it." ~ Mohammed
- 25 "I want to make it in my life. That's what is important to me." ~ Mohammed
- 26 "I appreciate my freedom more." ~ Mohammed
- 27 "The migration experience changed Mohammed's character a lot. There is the saying that travelling is a part of education. When you are quick-tempered and you travel, you get really calm. You travel and you are just you alone. You have no father and no mother there. Travelling can totally change you. My journey has changed me a lot. You see a lot of different things, different cultures you had never seen before. You learn languages." ~ Aziz
- 28 "We used to play a lot but right now, he is extremely focused on life. When you talk to him, he will always talk about how to succeed in life and how to live a better life and all those things." ~ Aziz
- 29 "You need to be resilient to get along with all these circumstances." ~ Ibrahim
- 30 "I'm religious inshallah. God created us. So, you should always follow God and obey what he is telling you. I didn't see God myself but I worship. The Quran tells us to believe in God." ~ Mohammed
- 31 "Things are still not improving for me. I don't have anything and I don't have a lot of motivation. I just have good health but that's the only thing. I've nothing in my pocket. God tells me to be patient. I believe in God. I just pray to God for help. Some people commit suicide but that's not me. I'm patient and pray to God. People will come and help me out. I'm optimistic inshallah." ~ Mohammed
- 32 "Just as our Quran teaches us, I want my friends to understand what life is. It teaches us to give thanks to Allah in all situations whether good or bad." ~ Mohammed
- 33 "I didn't loose faith in God. Nobody can be without God. You just have to pray. I just had the moments when I asked myself what I did wrong. That is very common most of the time. God will always remember us and we should always remember God." ~ Mohammed
- 34 "Things were really hard for me. I always prayed that I will have good health. Otherwise, you have a problem as a poor person. I'm praying to God to protect me." ~ Mohammed
- 35 "My faith in God is something I wanna preserve." ~ Mohammed
- 36 "I want to get a job opportunity, get my own accommodation and improving my lifestyle step by step. God will help me and I will marry and extend my family." ~ Mohammed
- 37 "He was so slim that if you see him right now, you would cry." ~ Ali
- 38 "The returnees don't have a stable mind. They left because of money related issues. They left and returned home with nothing. They are confronted with living with their parents, living without anything, not even a room to stay. It's really worrying. It's not good at all." ~ Mamudu
- 39 "I don't have money to pay the rent somewhere else." ~ Mohammed

40 “It’s just that I don’t have my own accommodation. That’s what really disturbs me.” ~ Mohammed

41 “At the beginning, I wasn’t feeling well. I returned empty-handed. It felt like in school and I had to do class one again after all these years. My intention was to go to Europe but I came back empty-handed. That’s it. The place I had before was gone. Sometimes, I sleep at my friend’s place. If I go and he is with his girlfriend, I have to wait until they are done before I can go there to sleep. That’s why I said I want to hire my own place sleep. It drives me crazy not to have my own room for myself. That affects me so much. Sharing a room with my brother and my mother. I have no words for that.” ~ Mohammed

42 In terms of the living space available for him alone, Mohammed’s current living situation does not even comply with humanitarian principles after first emergency response which is supposed to be 3.5 square meters for living space (Sphere Project, 2018).

43 “If I get my own room here, I wouldn’t accept it. I wanna live at a different area. I don’t wanna sit at the same place but move a bit. However, the community itself is very nice and peaceful but I would just prefer a change of scenery.” ~ Mohammed

44 “I like the life in this community but I’m personally fed up with it. I stayed there my whole life.” ~ Mohammed

45 “I do feel to be a part of the community.” ~ Mohammed

46 “I was happy to be back with my community and reunited with the people.” ~ Mohammed

47 “My home is where my family and friends are.” ~ Mohammed

48 “If I get money, I would move to Lagos Town or Anaji. These are good areas but I’m still a Takoradi boy.” ~ Mohammed

49 “God has to give me the opportunity. He also says that travelling is part of education. If I get the opportunity, I will make it.” ~ Mohammed

50 “I’m waiting for the invitation from Mr John because I haven’t seen Germany. I’m joking of course.” ~ Mohammed

51 “If I hear Europe, I always think that Europe is sweet. But it’s the same as in Ghana. If you get money here, your life is sweet. But the problem is that you don’t get money. Akufo-Addo was supposed to be the right man but he isn’t. If I should get something alhamdulillah, I thank God. What I hear from Europe makes me wanting to enter Europe.” ~ Mohammed

52 “I’m sure that he isn’t thinking about travelling again or at least not that much as he does about the business.” ~ Ali; “The migration experience has changed Mohammed a lot. If we are chatting, he says that he would not do the illegal migration again but the legal one. He would never take that route again. He would rather invest that money into a business.” ~ Adams

53 “I told him not to go to Libya but then he went. I’m sure he learned his lesson. He saw that what I was telling him wasn’t a lie. He felt it himself. So, I’m sure that he has learned from what I told him. He also tells people that it’s not a good thing to migrate northwards.” ~ Mamudu

54 “No, it [undocumented migration] is too risky.” ~ Mohammed

55 “I don’t really know what he really thinks but when I’m conversing with him, he says that he wants to do business here in Ghana if he gets the money. He travelled and it wasn’t good. [...] He wouldn’t really try to migrate again but rather settle down here and find a business to do.” ~ Peter

56 “I always vote. Just when I was in prison, I couldn’t vote. In prison, one guy said that Akufo-Addo will make Ghana sweet. After we returned, we saw that Ghana wasn’t getting sweeter. Akufo-Addo promised a lot but nothing changed. I always vote for NDC.” ~ Mohammed

57 “I would help the Africans. We are very poor. In Europe, it is okay but if you go to the rural side here, you will cry. Even me and my friends are seriously suffering.” ~ Mohammed

58 “The EU should help us. If you get support, no one will enter the road again. The situation for Africans is very bad, we are very poor and our leaders don’t help us. That’s why we Africans always enter that road. If I can start my business, I would never enter that road again. But our leaders are not good. We Africans suffered a lot. The EU should support Africa more. They shouldn’t give the money to the president. They should support us individually. Our leaders won’t pass on the money to the people.” ~ Mohammed

5.3.1.3 Third Case: Ebenezer Bae

Ebenezer can clearly define his sense of belonging. His roots lie in Taino I¹, which he would always tell people if they ask for it². In a broader sense, his home is Drobo. He feels part of his current neighbourhood despite having no deeper connection with its inhabitants.³ Before moving to KB, he lived with his family in Trinity, where most of his material relatives still live. That is why he maintains relationships in Trinity rather than in KB, where he rents a room for pragmatic reasons.⁴ For his future, he prefers Drobo over any other place in Ghana.⁵ According to his definition of home, home is where he feels happy and where his family stays. From his understanding, members of his core family are his mother, siblings and nephews. Today, his nephews see him as the provider and caregiver.⁶ Irrespective of his cultural orientation and his self-projection as a proud Ghanaian and Akan, he considers his mindset and behavioural attitudes as alien about expected behaviour from his Ghanaian social environment:⁷

"If I see the way of life in Europe, I really like it. I told you that I'm a direct and honest person. African people don't like that attitude. If you tell the blank truth, they feel offended. They rather like convenient lies instead of facing the truth, which might be hurtful. Moreover, if I see the way how people in Europe do their things, it makes me think that if I live in Europe, it would be better."

~ Ebenezer ~

As previously stated, stemming from his distinct sense of justice, Ebenezer's childhood dream was to become a soldier. He wanted to enforce the law and bring justice to the world.⁸ In Taino I, Ebenezer spent his leisure time with other teenagers who partly smoked marijuana and drank alcohol, whereas he always refused to follow their example. Ebenezer resisted peer group pressure and proved his determined mindset.⁹ According to himself, friends and family members, Ebenezer had already been the hustler personality type back then. Additionally, the circumstances at that time matured him. At an early age, he conceived that he had to take on a responsible role within his family's household.¹⁰ He matured relatively early and made caring efforts towards his mother and younger siblings.¹¹ This development accelerated after the move to Drobo.¹² At this time, Ebenezer was proud of his relative independence. In spite of the deprivation of his youth compared to friends of the same age, he developed an affirmative mindset to embrace the difficult situation and acknowledge its positive aspects in it.¹³ Ever since Ebenezer was a family person in its purest form.¹⁴ However, his parent's divorce¹⁵ and sister Regina's death¹⁶ made him assume responsibilities for himself¹⁷ and his family. Nonetheless, the undesirable financial circumstances combined with hard work let him to fall into despair as well:

"Initially, I was sometimes sad. I quarrelled with myself a lot. The thing that made me sad was the hustling. At that time, I was producing and carrying the bricks and blocks for the mason's work. I asked myself, 'Why? Why always me?' I used to struggle to get the money. During the time my father was still there, they had the coco farm, but he also didn't mind us. So, I asked myself again, 'No, it's not easy for me. When? When will I become a rich man?' So, that time was not easy. The whole day I was going up and down and my mother suffered. So, I had to work. I'm the man. The work I was doing was no work my mum would be able to do. Also, my junior brother is just a small boy and he cannot do this work. Only I was left. Sometimes, I woke up in the morning very tired, but still, I had to go. There were also my sister's children. They had no money either. Also, they had to go to school too. So, I had to go and work no matter how tired I was. Sometimes, I felt very depressed when I

saw my friends going to school and having a better life. But if I'm lazy or smoke weed with somebody, I don't get any money. So, I sat down and just thought, 'Oh, it's not easy!'"

~ Ebenezer ~

Asking Ebenezer's social environment for his character, the word which is dropped mostly is "hardworking"¹⁸. Others consider him a simply good person¹⁹ with a diligent²⁰ and industrious²¹ attitude. Since he was a child²², such an attitude has been reflected in his work morale²³:

"Sometimes, people ask me why I don't rest. So, I just replied, 'If I have work to do, why should I go to sleep? I just go and do the work.' Even sometimes, on Sundays, when I used to rest after church, I went to work. I was going and fixing door locks and stuff like that. I don't remember the last time I just stayed at home doing nothing. No, I cannot do that."

~ Ebenezer ~

Beyond his family, he is always ready to help people in the village with his artisanal skills without taking any money. At his workplace, Ebenezer is acknowledged for his candour and proves to be adaptive and adaptable to the business environment.²⁴ From their own experience, he is willing to help the poor, which is another motivation stemming from his suffering.²⁵ His kind-hearted attitude makes him use his skills for others without expecting service in return, as uncle Stephen reports.²⁶ The magnitude of labour determined his life even in Libya. For him, to hustle is the highest virtue in life.²⁷ He is very proud that he had the opportunity to earn his own money²⁸ from an early age, for which he is always prepared to make sacrifices²⁹. Others characterise him as a respectful³⁰, down-to-earth, collected and resilient³¹ person but also open-minded³², sociable³³, and honest³⁴. His cousin George describes his approachable nature and sociable character as useful for reintegration.³⁵ Ebenezer considers himself a just character³⁶ to whom it is vital to be reliable³⁷ and straight³⁸. In fact, his uncompromising directness and genuine self-assertion ignore the conformist conventions as a rule.³⁹ As a consequence, he does not abandon his personal and cultural roots and considers himself proudly a Brong-speaking Akan.⁴⁰ He is true to his own principles and repels any self-refusal.⁴¹ If they undermine his sense of justice, his respective perception is higher valued than traditional rules or family loyalties. One example is his reserved relationship⁴² with his father⁴³, for which other family members criticise him. Nonetheless, he stands by his own principles outweighing societal norms:

"I respect everyone and expect the same the other way around. One day, I called a person who was older than me to come, 'Boss, bra.' Then my sister asked me why I did that—calling a person to come even though that person is older than me. I told her that I would also come if a younger person called me. I used to do that. I don't make a difference."

~ Ebenezer ~

As the last quote suggests, his comprehensive moral behaviour shapes his work life as a boss⁴⁴, business partner⁴⁵ and contractor⁴⁶ but goes even beyond⁴⁷. His determination and absolute focus, and dedication play a crucial role here. On the one hand, he is calm and humble⁴⁸, but on the other hand also determined, assertive and self-confident, trusting his abilities⁴⁹. Asked about any weaknesses, he cannot name any.⁵⁰ His full focus is on levelling up his and his family's standard of living without losing sight of other people in need. At the same time, he does not give too much space to other people's stigma imposed on him.⁵¹ He draws strength equally from faith. He is a Christian⁵² seeing in God the Creator⁵³ and his strength⁵⁴. For a short time, the

experiences in Libya provoked serious doubts.⁵⁵ Thus, Ebenezer has a positive outlook on life⁵⁶. As he assesses his situation as improved, he derives an optimistic forecast for the future.⁵⁷ This correlates with his understanding of what the meaning of life is:

"If you ask me for the meaning of life, it comes to my mind that as long as you are doing your things well, you will get a better life. You should respect the elderly, be a hard worker and worship God. Finally, you will have a better life."

~ Ebenezer ~

Nonetheless, the migration experience has left its marks likewise.⁵⁸ Upon arrival in Ghana, Ebenezer was hopeless⁵⁹, considering the amount of money his mother had to repay as a consequence of his requests⁶⁰:

"At that time, I was still sad. Before, I thought to be happy the day when I arrived in Ghana, but when I was getting off the plane in Ghana, I remembered the debts. I started becoming sad. From where am I going to get this money? Before I left for Libya, my mother had almost no money and I worked a lot to give her a bit of my salary. 5,000 GHC is a lot of money. That's not peanuts. From where am I going to get the money? I was sad and started crying a lot."

~ Ebenezer ~

Due to the sorrows caused by Ebenezer's unknown fate, mother Joustina slimmed remarkably. Her condition made Ebenezer very sad.⁶¹ Since it led to self-reproaches and intensified his depressive mood.⁶² Immediately after his return, the loss and threat of further deprivation of the mother's cashew farm put an additional strain on Ebenezer.⁶³ In addition, he was constantly thinking about the debts⁶⁴ and realised that he had to struggle again⁶⁵. According to Emmanuel, "he was really depressed and desperate"⁶⁶.

At that time, Ebenezer often sat alone, grooming over his life course and how it deteriorated. People surrounding him and witnessing his mental state advised him to employ his carpentry and mason's skills which would help him to improve his living situation.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, his time in Libya shaped him severely. It took him some time to accept what happened, recognise that he could still achieve something, and mobilise self-efficacy.⁶⁸ He fully adjusted his lifestyle to earn money. For that reason, he set up a strict financial plan, changed his neighbourhood and avoided any social contact which might distract him from his perceived duties:⁶⁹

"Everything changed. My mindset was different, as well as the environment. You see, the time before I left for Libya, we were working, and on Sundays, we were pounding Fufu and enjoyed our lives. However, upon return, I didn't see myself following the same lifestyle. I drew my personal plan, which rules out this laissez-fair lifestyle. I made a really strict financial plan to save money. I started making cuts in my consumption, such as clothes or mobile phone data I used. I had to plan everything from now on."

~ Ebenezer ~

His social environment recognised these behavioural changes. Ebenezer appeared to them more mature⁷⁰ and forceful⁷¹ but humbler⁷² and careful with life⁷³. He unfolded a "now more than ever"-mentality and showed a high degree of resilience.⁷⁴ In this regard, IOM's reintegration assistance marked a vital turning point in his financial outlook aiming to repay his mother's debts. Both mentally as well as financially, it had been a significant game changer:

"After they returned me, I was thinking a lot about my experiences and the debts I have. Before IOM helped me out, I regretted it a lot. That time, I suffered a lot and sat down and brooded over everything a lot. After I got the money from IOM, knowing that I have a second mainstay apart from the carpentry work, things were getting easier both in reality and in my mind."

~ Ebenezer ~

After the first in-kind assistance was provided, future perspectives unfolded.⁷⁵ Ebenezer's general opinion about the chances of realising one's dreams for life in Ghana is that anyone can make it. Nonetheless, if he has sufficient funds collected, he would seize the opportunity to travel to Europe⁷⁶ as his yearning to experience the European way of life is still vigorous⁷⁷. In fact, Ebenezer is still appealed by the idea of working abroad. He is willing to opt for documented migration.⁷⁸ However, the experiences in Libya rule out any other means of transport than the aeroplane.⁷⁹ In addition, he became a strong advocate opposing any form of undocumented migration.⁸⁰ For this reason, he is actively involved (IOM - UN Migration, 2020) in the awareness-raising campaign No Place Like Home launched by the Ghanaian government, IOM, and the EU Delegation to Ghana (European Commission, 2020). This underpins his faith in the state and trust in the institutions. Accordingly, he also participates in political elections.⁸¹ Ebenezer is not critical of the EU's migration policy. Instead, he directs the focus on each individual and their responsibility. He blames neither the EU nor the national governments for the migration flows and the suffering en route.⁸² Furthermore, Ebenezer advocates a more restrictive migration policy.⁸³

¹ "I would say that I come from the village Taino." ~ Ebenezer

² "If a person asks me here in Drobo [where I am from], I would mention my village where I come from." ~ Ebenezer

³ "I felt to be a part of the neighbourhood and I still do." ~ Ebenezer

⁴ "I would say I belong to Drobo. KB is just a place where I live for pragmatic reasons. My mother lives in Trinity. So, I also belong to that place. If my renting time is up, I will be leaving KB. That's why I would say Drobo is the place I belong to. That's why I don't have many friends or things to do or people I wanna bond with at KB. If I get another room or if my rental time ends at KB, I will move to Trinity." ~ Ebenezer

⁵ "Talking about the future place where I wanna stay, I don't know anybody in Sunyani or Brekum but Drobo is the place where I spent most of my time. So, I like it here." ~ Ebenezer

⁶ "The relationship to Regina's children is very nice. When I go there, they always call me, "Uncle, uncle, uncle!" They know me for giving them little money for school. When I wasn't there for just two days, they start to call me, 'Uncle, when will you com here again?' So, I try to go there frequently. Sometimes, I call my sister to give little money to them which I'm about to pay her back the next day." ~ Ebenezer

⁷ "My cultural orientation didn't change. I was and I'm still an Akan. Nothing changed my cultural perception or self-definition. I always proudly projected that I'm a Ghanaian and an Akan speaking my language." ~ Ebenezer

⁸ This childhood desire can be seen as comparable to other little boys in Western countries having the career aspiration to become a police officer. However, the police has not a good reputation in Ghana as they are deemed corrupt. That was the reason for Ebenezer rather wanting to become a soldier instead of a police officer back then.

⁹ "My mum always told me that I shouldn't be a womaniser or something like that. If I would be like that, I spent a lot of money. So, I knew that she is right because we are not having a lot of money anyways and therefore I wouldn't have any future. This is the reason why I don't have a girlfriend up til now. I have a girl I like. If I have money in the future, I will marry her. We always used to talk on phone." ~ Ebenezer

¹⁰ "I used to play football and I was a happy child. Together with my friends we just strolled around up and down. That time I had not the grown up hustle. So, why should I feel sad? I went out, played football." ~ Ebenezer

11 "This time was all about hustling. So, I don't know how and I didn't want to misbehave like stealing or smoking. So, I will not do that. I was thinking about the work. How to get money and hustle. I know that my family doesn't have any money and I have to fight hard to get money. So, talking about any misconduct like drinking alcohol or smoking weed, I don't know how to do that. When I lived in the village, I was with these stubborn boys who did that and I was with them but I didn't do it. Because of the way I am this harsh and hustling personality type, they like to spend time with me. So, sometimes when they went out they came over to call me. They put the weed in their bags and we went to the place where they smoke it but I didn't do it. Sometimes, they ask me, 'Why don't you join us?' And I said, 'The way I am and from my attitude, I know myself that if I drink or smoke, I will do fucking things. So, I will not do that.' That's also why they liked me. We played some football. I realised that my family is a poor family and I cannot allow to be a fool. If I start smoking or stealing, my mum will suffer. So, I have to avoid that and help my mum. That's why I left these stubborn boys behind. When I arrived in Drobo, I started thinking about my mum. For me, Drobo is the place to work hard."

~ Ebenezer

12 "When I left the village and entered Drobo, I wanted to stop hanging out with these stubborn boys. Here in the town, I have to work hard. I don't want to put myself into these kind of friendships which influence me badly. So, I wanna focus on my work at any time. These times, my only friends were the people I worked with. The people at the carpentry work are my friends." ~ Ebenezer

13 "The time I was in Drobo, I learned how to work and gained skills. If my mum is in need for something, I was able to help her. So, I thought the life bettered slowly and this made me happy. When my former classmates completed SHS, they had no work to do. However, I was already working and getting some little money. At the time, I stopped SHS. I thought sometimes about my friends who are going to school and I couldn't. So, I asked myself, 'Why? Why me?' But later on after I learned from my work I said to myself, 'No, that is not too bad for me.' So, if my former classmates get their government jobs and start building their houses, they will come and call me. I know how to do the ceiling, the doors, the bells, furniture, I can do all these things. So, I can get money from them. It is not too bad for me. They might have their work but I have my work myself as well. At that point, I recognised that I moved on and can be of help to them and to myself. I felt like it was a good decision I took. So, it is not sad for me that I didn't complete SHS. However, if I saw them during their vacation time at the time, I was learning the furniture and carpentry work. They told me what they are learning and about their future plans. This made me thinking, 'Why am I deprived from this?' But later on, I understood perfectly that there is no problem for me." ~ Ebenezer

14 "As a child what made me happy was my family. Especially, my mum and my sisters. When I went out and then or after I returned I saw them, it made me happy. At that time, I had no problem. I was staying with my mother and my father and my sisters. So, any time, I felt happy. In a nutshell, staying together with my family made me happy."

~ Ebenezer

15 "What made me sad was the time when my mum and my father divorced. I felt sad. My mum was not supposed to be with my dad again. So, we had to struggle. That time I felt sad." ~ Ebenezer

16 "I felt very sad. I cried a lot. It was not easy. My sister came just right before me. That made me really sad and what saddened me even more was the fact that she left two children. Who is taking care of these two children? Only my mum and us were left. My sister's husband doesn't take care of the children. So that makes me sad. My mother struggled. The boy was just born and the girl is just four or five years old I think. They cannot live on their own. So, there is only my mum taking on responsibilities. Even when the time passed by I became still sad. The started going to school and I gave them the little money I had. My mother doesn't have any work apart from cashew farming." ~ Ebenezer

17 "In the village, I had some friends just to go out and hang out with. They liked to do stubborn things like drinking or smoking weed. Sometimes, my mum asked me, 'Ah! Ebenezer, what are you doing?' However, when I moved to the town I realised that those kind of friends are not good. So, I wanted to stop it and started thinking that with those kind of people I don't want to be again." ~ Ebenezer

18 "He is a hardworking guy." ~ John

19 "Ebenezer is a good person. He doesn't like fighting. In a nutshell, he is simply a good person." ~ Francis;
"Ebenezer is a good person." ~ George (Classmate)

20 "Ebenezer is hardworking and diligent." ~ Daniel

21 "Ebenezer is a good person. He is hardworking, calm, respectful and industrious." ~ anonymous

22 "Sometimes, I woke up at 6 am but sometimes even at 4 am. Then I worked until the evening. I'm used to work since I was a child. So, for me that is no problem. I'm not a lazy one. Any work you give to me, I will do it. When I was a small boy, I was doing any work. I was weeding, carrying bricks etc. I was even digging holes for people to use it as a toilet. I did it for you. So, I'm a hard worker." ~ Ebenezer

23 "Ebenezer is calm and humble. He is not the rowdy type. You see him always working." ~ Iky

24 "Okay, I took me around one year to get to know how these customer issues work. I knew the ones who like it fast and those who I need to delay. That's how I used to work." ~ Ebenezer

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- 25 "Most of the rich people are making generous donations to the poor. So, this is what I wanted to do as well because I suffered a lot myself." ~ Ebenezer
- 26 "I can say about Ebenezer that he is a kindhearted person. One of our family members had to roof a building. Ebenezer came to roof the whole building without taking anything from that person. If anyone of us is in Drobo, he will come and guide us. In the event that something happens and we need his services, he will come and help us for free. He has a very big heart. We are all having a good contact with him." ~ Stephen
- 27 "My brother Ebenezer is somebody who is hardworking. We are all living in this village and had the idea of going to Drobo since seeing that the standard of living is a little bit higher than living here. However, Ebenezer took the bull by the horns and just went. He mastered the challenge and went there. He is doing a lot of things. He repairs phones and does his carpentry work. He is very hardworking and courages." ~ Isaac
- 28 "I was proud of the fact that I was having work." ~ Ebenezer
- 29 "I didn't feel any shame. Also, not for the work I was doing. Any work you give me, I will do it because I just need the money. So, I know if I'm ashamed to do the work, I won't get the money. So, I'm ready to do it. Even after my carpentry work, I was dirty but I was not ashamed for anything. I knew that if my shirt is dirty, I have something in my pocket. So, it bettered my standard of living. So, I didn't feel ashamed or whatsoever." ~ Ebenezer
- 30 "Ebenezer is my apprentice. I and also other people see him as someone who is respectful and calm." ~ Atta
- 31 "He is very calm and collected. He is hardworking but returning from Libya with not a lot of good things. He is still picking up trying to move on." ~ Abraham
- 32 "I like him because of his good nature. He is very open and good to people." ~ anonymous
- 33 "He is a very sociable person." ~ George (Classmate)
- 34 "I've worked with Ebenezer for quite a number of years. He is sociable and above all really honest in all his business dealings." ~ Daniel
- 35 "He is a very sociable person which helped him also to reintegrate with ease." ~ George (Classmate)
- 36 "I was never looking for a fight but if someone is doing injustice to me, I will be straight with this person and try to solve the problem telling the person, 'If you do this to me, I will do this to you as well.'" ~ Ebenezer
- 37 "As I have already suggest, he is very just. If something isn't right, he will tell you. He is somebody who is like if he says yes, it's yes and if he says no, it's no." ~ George (Classmate)
- 38 "I wanted to become a soldier because I like justice. I don't like lies or those kind of fucking things. That's why I wanted to become a soldier. If you do bad things, I will do justice. For instance, when I was working and some co-workers wanted to steal, I told them not to do so." ~ Ebenezer
- 39 "He is kind to people. He is very direct and just and will tell you right in your face if he doesn't like something what you do. He is honest." ~ George (Classmate)
- 40 "My cultural orientation didn't change. I was and I'm still an Akan. Nothing changed my cultural perception or self-definition. I always proudly projected that I'm a Ghanaian and an Akan speaking my language." ~ Ebenezer
- 41 "I'm a Ghanaian or rather an Akan. When I travel, I speak my local language. Some people refuse to speak their local language. In Ghana, we have a lot of tribes. So, our language Brong is different from the Ashanti or Fanti. If I travel across Ghana, I speak my language Brong that everyone's knows where I'm from. Even when I was in Libya, I was speaking my language Brong. Some Ashanti people laugh if you speak Brong because they don't understand you. They always have to ask what I'm saying. They laugh at you. There was a time when I was at my sister's place in Kumasi people came over and I kept talking in my language. Afterwards, my sister asked me not to speak in my language again but I refused. My sister is now used to speak Ashanti as she lived there for many years. So, at my sister's place people asked me questions to hear me speaking my language that they can laugh. My sister asked me not to do that anymore but I said, 'No, no problem. This is my language.' So, what I want to say, I say. I'm proud." ~ Ebenezer
- 42 "I like him [father] but what he did to us and if I think about that, no I don't think my father is a good person. It's just sometimes if I'm there that I go and greet." ~ Ebenezer
- 43 "Yes, I can talk to him [father]. If I go there I say, 'Good morning. How are you?', and we talk and later I get back. Even sometimes, he wants me to stay at his place but I rather stay at my mother's side house. When I was young he didn't take care of us and now since I'm running a business he wants me to sit with him. No, I don't sit with you. Even two or three months ago my father called me to build the kitchen for him but I refused. I said that I don't have time." ~ Ebenezer
- 44 "He is a good boss." ~ George (Cousin)

45 "I'm very happy to have him as a business partner. He is not that type who likes arguing a lot. He is humble, calm, collected and honest." ~ Iky

46 "When I went to Drobo, I was the same person with that distinct sense of justice. If there is an agreement of, for instance, lending and paying back money, I'm this kind of person who sticks to the agreement. Sometimes, people tell me that I'm not respectful because I insist on what we agreed. Another example would be if I do for you some block work and we agreed in advance that after the work you gonna give me ten GHC. And after the work is done, you're giving me eight GHC. I don't agree. If people see that you don't have money, they think they can fob you with less money. But for me, I start fighting if you try to trick me. If you don't give me my money, where should I get it from? So, I start arguing saying that this kind of thing is not correct. We sat down and agreed on ten GHC. Why are you doing this? So sometimes they said, 'You are not respectful. Why are you talking to me like that?' So, I say, 'No, it's an agreement. So, you have to pay me.' That's what they used to do even now. I work very quickly. So, customers ask me how much time I need to be done. I say three days and at the end I finished it in two days. And they say, 'Oh, why? Why did you already finish in two days?' So, then they refuse you to give the whole amount of money. That's what they used to do. So, sometimes, it comes to my mind to work in shorter steps. Let's say I should to a table for you. Normally, I can finish it in one. However, I will just work on it for a bit and leave to another place to work on a different project. So, if you ask me to finish it in three days, I will finish it in three days." ~ Ebenezer

47 "In terms of his behaviour, Ebenezer has a very good morale behaviour. He isn't into drinking or smoking. He is an easygoing person." ~ George (Cousin)

48 "Ebenezer is calm and humble. He is not the rowdy type. You see him always working." ~ Iky

49 "My hardworking and respectful attitude makes me thinking optimistic about my future. The God is Good shop owner always advises me that if I want to become a big man in the future, I have to be hardworking, respectful and genuine. I'm keen to follow that advice." ~ Ebenezer

50 "Talking about myself, it is hard to think of any weakness. I don't drink, I don't womanise or these kind of things. I'm always thinking of how to move on and go forward. I never look back or let anything bring me down. Nowadays, I'm thinking of the money my mother borrowed for me. So, I'm looking forward to that day I payed everything back. Now, I'm just trying to repay as much as possible. That's how life is." ~ Ebenezer

51 "I said to myself that I don't have a problem with that [mockery]. I was focused to continue with my carpentry work and building up my livelihood step by step." ~ Ebenezer

52 "I'm a Christian. I always prayed when I was in Libya." ~ Ebenezer

53 "The reason why I believe in God is that God created us. I know if something is worrying me, I can pray to God. That's why I believe in God." ~ Ebenezer

54 "I always used to say that my strength is God. I like to go to church and pray. Even on Fridays we did some prayers. I was aware of my suffer in the past. So, the bible says without God you cannot do anything but with God all things are possible." ~ Ebenezer

55 "Okay, when I was in Libya, I sometimes used to say, 'Okay, now I'm fed up. God, you might be there but I pray and I fast and I do everything but I'm still here in prison. Why is that?' At times, I was tired of it. After getting some hope back, I prayed again for forgiveness. However, sometimes I even thought that God isn't there. If God is there, why am I in a prison for full one year? I'm praying and fasting and still at this place. Later, I realised that what I thought wasn't good. I asked God to forgive me. I knew that he could help me so I returned to faith again. But sometimes I thought where God is and I gave up." ~ Ebenezer

56 "The time I was in Ghana before going to Libya was characterised by a lot of struggle. Now, I'm still hustling but this life is better I would say. Now, I have a small business and I have other work to do but before I had no mobile phone business but just my carpentry work. So, I can definitely say that my life today is better." ~ Ebenezer

57 "I do think positively about my personal future. I know that I will become a big man one day. That's why I'm working hard and trying everything to have a better future." ~ Ebenezer

58 One remarkable attitude Ebenezer developed through his time in Libya was an adverse perception on both Arab countries and people. The racism he faced from people who he considers as Arabic determined his strong opinion. On the other hand, Europe remains to be a positive counter example: "Europe and the Arab countries aren't the same. The way how they welcome and treat foreigners is not the same. If you go to Europe, you are free. But Arab people aren't like that." ~ Ebenezer

59 "I said that I don't have any faith. I struggled from my childhood onwards but now I've to struggle again." ~ Ebenezer

60 "He was suffering and just desperate. I used to ask him why he was always sad. He just said that his family borrowed money for him to travel. Now he is back and depends on the family to eat." ~ Emmanuel

⁶¹ “The day I arrived in Drobo, the people were very happy but the moment I saw my mum and how she reduced her weight, I felt very sad.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶² “When he returned, he was very depressed.” ~ George (Classmate)

⁶³ “Now, I’m back and I didn’t get any profit from it nor did my mother. So, my mother bagged him to be compassionate and patient. She knew that we would be able to pay it back little by little with the work I’m doing. My uncles also helped to convince him to agree and he agreed. Initially, he said that if my mother doesn’t repay the debts at once, he would take my mum’s cashew farm.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶⁴ “After return, I was constantly thinking about the debts. I was not feeling happy.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶⁵ “I was working and my life improved slowly before I left to Libya. Upon return, I had nothing. My mother borrowed money and the debts are there. I realised that I have to struggle again.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶⁶ “He was really depressed and desperate.” ~ Emmanuel

⁶⁷ “Upon return, I was initially thinking about the debts and my struggles I’m facing for another time. I recalled the time before I left my home. Back then, I had my own room, was able to afford the rent, I had a small TV and enjoyed my life at a humble level. However, upon return, I had nothing. I just slept at my cousin’s place. I thought, ‘Why did everything happen like that?’ I was sitting down and groomed all day long. Other seeing me there tried to make me not thinking too much anymore. They said, ‘Everything will be okay. Don’t think!’ I accepted that because they told me that I still have my carpentry and mason’s work and that I don’t have a reason to worry. Because if you return with no skills or anything else you can make use of, it’s bad but I was in a different position. So, they said that I can make it. I just told them that it is not easy to start over. At that time, I was sitting down in silence and thought a lot.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶⁸ “The time in Libya and the way they treated me. All that suffering shaped me a lot. The money I spent during my journey and not getting anything in return but being deported back home changed my perception. I had to change my way of life and just be focused on my work. Later on, I recognised that I can achieve something.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶⁹ “I have no further interest to be in a more regular contact with the people at KB [neighbourhood where he lived]. I’m not a person who has a lot of friends. I wake up in the morning and go to work. That’s the place where I’m with people. The reason why I moved to KB was that I knew that I need to work hard now and I didn’t wanna be distracted. Before, my life was different.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁰ “I would say that in certain things that he was doing he was little bit childish. After his return from Libya, he is more serious now.” ~ Abraham

⁷¹ “I can see some changes in his behaviour. Notably, he is now forceful, hardworking, indulgent and industrious as compared to when he had not gone to Libya.” ~ Atta

⁷² “Because of the ordeal and the pain he went through, I can totally say that when he returned, he was little bit calm and humble. He was more careful with life because of the experiences he went through.” ~ Francis

⁷³ “I can see some changes in Ebenezer’s behaviour due to his migration experience but not in a bad way. I can see that he is more careful with life now due to the things he went through in Libya.” ~ Gyan

⁷⁴ “If I think of my life in Libya seeing sick or dead people, I’m feeling that sense of freedom today more than ever. I don’t wanna leave again. I’m happy every day. Sometimes, my neighbour asks me whether I’m also sad sometimes. She says that she sees me always happy. I don’t let sorrows linger in my mind again. The hardship I mastered in the past gives me no reason to be sad today. I saw the most devastating things one can imagine. Therefore, nothing can harm me no more. So, every day, I’m happy. People who didn’t travel and don’t have money will start thinking. They don’t know how awful life can be. I stayed in a prison for a whole year with no money. If I wake up in the morning with no money, I don’t care. For me, it’s just one day. That’s no reason for me to worry. Even if I didn’t eat from the morning to the evening, I don’t care. I experienced times even worse than that. In prison, we were constantly hungry. We almost ate parts of our mattresses. The situation in the desert is the same. If you don’t eat for two days, you cannot get up because you are too weak. Today, if I wake up in the morning with hunger, it doesn’t affect me. However, those who didn’t experience that and wake up in the morning without having anything to eat are severely affected. I know how it is to get nothing or to eat just uncooked noodles. Either you eat it or not. All that made me extremely resilient. That’s why I’m so happy today. I have something to eat, how can I be sad? Even though I’m not a rich man and my life isn’t the best, I don’t have any feeling of poverty.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁵ “That [depressed mood] was upon return before IOM helped me out. Before, I was just seeing the debts. But after I got the 5,500 GHC, I saw some perspective to be slowly better. I wasn’t really happy such as everything is perfect. I knew that it is still a long way to go.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁶ “I don’t want to migrate through Libya again. I told you that it is on my mind to travel again but not that dangerous routes through the desert. If I get money, I will fly to Europe.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁷ “It’s just that I wanted to enjoy the European lifestyle. That’s what I missed. Even today, I’m thinking of how my life could look like if I was in Europe now. I always think about that. I like sports a lot. If I see some friends in Europe watching or doing sports there, it feeds my yearning for entering Europe as well.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁸ “If the chance come to make a better living abroad, I would go. It is still in my mind that I would have the opportunity to get a plane ticket if I earn more money in the future. The places abroad are good and I still like the idea. Everybody wants to be there.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷⁹ “No, the suffering I experienced and saw in Libya is nothing I wanna see again. No, no, no, no. That’s why I’m focussing on my business that hard. This gives me also then the chance to fly but I would never try to go through Libya to Europe again.” ~ Ebenezer

⁸⁰ “I would like to see an end of people dying in the desert and the Mediterranean Sea. The people shouldn’t use their money to migrate but invest this money into their future in their home countries. I wanted to become a soldier. If I had used the money which I’ve used for the migration for myself here in Ghana, I would be a soldier today.” ~ Ebenezer

⁸¹ “I will vote for the same party. I always vote for NDC. People told me when I was abroad that NDC is not doing well. So, I wanted to vote for NPP the next election which I missed. Now it turns out that NPP is not doing anything neither. So, I will go back to NDC for the next election. However, I don’t really talk a lot about politics with others. If others start talking about politicians, I don’t mind them. Sometimes, I think that voting makes no difference. It could also be that I won’t vote at the next election.” ~ Ebenezer

⁸² “I wouldn’t blame anybody else apart from us the people who are travelling. No one else forces you to leave Ghana. It’s their own decision. I decided that I want to travel. If I can enter Europe or get some work, I can get some money. That was my idea. If I work in Ghana a whole day, I earn ten GHC. If I work a whole day in Europe, I earn 100 GHC. If I’m in Europe, it would help me. However, I don’t blame the EU for the deaths. It’s because of our own decision. They decide to travel. I decided on my own to travel. You decided to travel from Nigeria to Libya, not the Nigerian Government. You decided to travel from Guinea to Libya, not the Guinean government. So, I cannot blame the EU for the deaths of them.” ~ Ebenezer

⁸³ “I wouldn’t just enforce the border surveillance on the Mediterranean Sea but already in Burkina Faso. It would prevent people embarking on a Lampa. It must be possible for Africans to go to Europe by airplane instead.” ~ Ebenezer

5.3.1.4 Fourth Case: Moses Gafah

Moses appears to be a hardworking¹ and determined person² who is acknowledged to be a good friend³ with a genuine character⁴. He is a devoted Christian following a modest lifestyle⁵ and believes in formal education to excel in life⁶. According to himself, his focused industriousness⁷ let him become a model employee⁸ wherever he was hired. One would describe Moses as the typical lone fighter and hustler. He has high self-esteem and is straightforward and truthful, regardless of whom he is confronted with. From early childhood, he felt deprived of successful personality development by his father. Since Moses felt abandoned, this disadvantage caused severe conflicts within the family. In his opinion, father Kwaku was responsible for his inappropriate personal development.⁹ Thus, he rebelled against his father and the rest of the family.¹⁰ In return, they reacted with a lack of understanding of his ideas and behaviour. The father's standpoint and the unanimous incomprehension with Moses' behaviour reinforced his commitment to pursue his future plans against all opposition:

"I developed the attitude ever since my dad refused to finance my SHS that no one and nothing will be allowed to cross my plans."

~ Moses ~

From an early age, his struggle for independence and emancipation is a vital narrative pervading his life. The Bible is the source of inspiration from which he derives his action and worldview. Hence, Moses always aims to be an image of God.¹¹ The more letdowns Moses experienced in this way, the closer he came to God and the more resolute he focused on his life plan. He sustained his intransigent nature even in Libya as he did not deny his Christian faith when other fellows falsely claimed for opportunistic reasons to be Muslim.¹² Moses challenged the Libyan authorities if he felt to be treated unfairly.¹³ Honesty is a paramount value to him. For instance, the virtue of being truthful is more important to Moses than denying the truth for the sake of cultural conformity. Therefore, plenty of people in his social environment feel treated in a discourteous manner:

"The truth is something very hard for people. You can hide the truth if the truth damages you. In that situation, you can lie. Aside from that, everybody has an obligation to be honest. Untruths destroy our society. Especially if the person is older than you and that person is lying and you confront that older person with the lie, they will say that you are disrespectful. So, people will say that you are disrespectful and quick-tempered. That's what I'm going through in my own society."

~ Moses ~

After his father and the entire family refused to support him, Moses gained additional dispiriting life experiences that strengthened his desire for emancipation. At the same time, his mistrust towards others grew. As already described, the two disappointments with both his masters; the betrayal of his best friend; the loss of his prospective wife; and the mistreatment by George's brothers occurred after he left his family in Beposo. In particular, Michael's black treachery shook his confidence in other fellows' trustworthiness.¹⁴ Based on this disappointment, Moses' non-negotiable sense of justice, obstinacy, intransigence, and unforgiving character reveals.¹⁵ According to his experience, even if there are people who are supposed to stand by him either

explicitly or by self-definition, he can only rely on himself at the end of the day. On the one hand, that is why he developed enormous scepticism towards third parties and their promises. On the other hand, the determination to make it on his own arose. For this reason, he still refuses to live with his family in Beposo even though it would be noticeably easier economically than in Greater Accra.¹⁶ According to him, asking fellows for assistance would change the relationship negatively.¹⁷ He listens “to the voice of the Lord”¹⁸. Thus, accepting help from others is out of the question for him, which Caroline confirms.¹⁹ The lone wolf attitude grew on with the responsibility as a husband and father, assuming a patriarchal understanding of his role in society.²⁰ The aforementioned masculine understanding of his role in society is also reflected in his feeling responsible for his sick mother as the first-born son.²¹ Prior to his paternity, he already listened to and relied on other people decreasingly.²² What others describe as quick-tempered is, in Moses’ eyes, a straightforward and decent attitude that is true to his principles.²³ In the subsequent quote, Moses summarises his character and corresponding behaviour:

“I’m a straightforward person. If I’m with you and I recognise that you don’t speak the truth, I will just ignore you. Truth is something which makes you a human. That’s why anywhere I go or any person I work with, they find out that this connection with me is based on honesty. I don’t care who you are. Even if you are my boss, I don’t hide the truth. I’ll give it to you. That’s me. Some Ghanaians find it difficult to understand me. They might say that I’m very quickly angered or he is bad-tempered. If I notice that you are lying and not a straightforward person, I’ll just give it to you very hard. So, that’s why people see me as quick-tempered, but I’m not. When two people come to an agreement, you don’t bypass me. Especially when you are a Christian going to church every Sunday and you misbehave, I ask myself, ‘Are you the image of God?’ God created us in his own image. As a Christian and a believer, you have an obligation to behave like the image of God who created you. Who is that image? It’s Jesus Christ. The truth is the only thing that sets you free. If you are not a truthful person and you call yourself a Christian, I hate that. I’m not perfect myself, but I’m trying.”

~ Moses ~

Over the course of time, the family’s pejorative view of Moses turned into a subdued appreciation of his characteristics, as William²⁴ and Vincent testify²⁵. The following quote by brother Vincent who was Moses’ main counterpart, is an illustrative example:²⁶

“Moses is not a rough or tough person in a bad way. He was just very calm and informed us what he wanted to do. Even though he lived in Kumasi, he returned several times to Beposo. This shows that this person has some mentality of caring about his family. So, I wouldn’t say that he turned into a bad guy or something like that. No, just his life moulded him. He was young and was trying to make life work for himself. So, at least, he needed that character if he wasn’t with his parents anymore to make ends meet. He had to be a bit tough in order to succeed. Nevertheless, he is not a rough or rowdy type.”

~ Vincent ~

Taking the eventful relationship of the past into account, brother William’s emphasis on their mutual brotherliness appears to be bizarre:

“He is also really hardworking. He is a good person at heart and always tolerant. Even if we wouldn’t tell people that we are from different mothers, no one would even think of that. We get along really well. We welcome each other. There is a lot of brotherliness. So, he is a good person, and he likes working as much as we do. He is working very hard.”

~ William ~

The rivalry between Moses and his brothers eased over recent years. Their relationship improved and his brothers helped out financially. Nonetheless, their bond is not as close and unburdened as William, Vincent or Edward portray it.²⁷

Moses' perception of his prospects remains pessimistic. He has seen no progress ever since he returned from Libya. The whole situation makes him sad as he struggles with no satisfying outcome.²⁸ He has the knowledge, energy, ideas, and vision to start a business; on the other hand, he lacks the financial means for implementation. One impact the time in Libya had on his attitude is his increased determination paired with a boosted willingness to make sacrifices. In addition, he feels to be "different from those who stayed in Ghana"²⁹. The latter reveals an identitarian conflict of adjustment after the return.

William confirms that the whole time abroad impacted his mindset and appearance noticeably. According to half-brother Vincent, Moses' English improved significantly and he became an even more justice-loving person who addresses issues directly. Vincent assesses the changes in his personality positively as he even proposes to Moses to become a king.³⁰ Since Moses spent most of the time abroad with his wife, Adwoa changed correspondingly. Mother-in-law Salome noticed for her daughter both a stronger personality and a mental burden due to the hardships experienced abroad.³¹ Upon returning, Moses started reminiscing and thinking about himself and how things happened. Moses perceived failure to achieve an improved living standard embarrassed him. Thus, Moses is more reserved and distant in his interaction with people.³² In addition, family members developed expectations to benefit from him after such a long time in Libya:

"It changed him a lot. He doesn't want to see people and doesn't want to get too close to others. He was really embarrassed about his situation and felt very uncomfortable. That's why he doesn't get closer to others. Even not the family members. They expect from you that you bring something from abroad and if you return with nothing, it's gonna be difficult for you. That's why he behaves like he behaves."

~ Caroline ~

Moses' sense of belonging is ultimately hard to determine. His father came from the Volta Region, where Moses never lived. As a child, Moses travelled several times over there, which made him want to live there in the future³³, namely in Ho³⁴. He prefers the Volta region as his centre of life. However, most of his family members do not live there anymore.³⁵ Nonetheless, this is where he would prefer to live. He feels lured by this place since he assumes to find favourable conditions to establish himself. Upon returning, his idea was to settle in Kumasi as he owned a piece of land there.³⁶ However, the landed property was sold. For pragmatic reasons, Moses and his wife decided to settle down in Greater Accra even though it was not where they would stay free of their own accord.³⁷ In fact, Moses resents their current place of residence. Their house is on a hill exposed to the sun and remote from crucial goods providing for their daily life, such as a gas station or the market.³⁸ He certainly prefers other places in Greater Accra.³⁹ Moses answers the question of the origin and belonging with Beposo, albeit he would never return there. In the sense

of a safe harbour where he can always go back to, Beposo is to him, to a certain degree, his home.⁴⁰ Asked for his definition of home, it is only at first glance remarkable that he does not mention his family. Taking his personal story into consideration, it is no surprise anymore. Apart from the family aspect, the other mentioned factors reflect his pragmatic attitude:

"Your home should be giving you access to many things like your private space; you should live in happiness, the people around you accept and respect you, you should have a job and above that, you need access to many other things that make you feeling comfortable and saying, 'Yes, this is my home.' Every mankind feels at home when you are working and at the end of the month, the salary is enough to take care of the family to live in happiness and put something aside. That's the most important thing in every human's life. If this isn't given, even though you live in a big house, you will end up thinking."

~ Moses ~

The magnitude of a decent salary sufficient to provide for the family and allocate savings is stressed by him in particular. This was the main driver for him to emigrate. Thus, the general willingness to migrate again to serve this very purpose still exists.⁴¹ However, he does not actively seek another journey but seizes the opportunity if there are no other options.⁴²

Irrespective of his scepticism, Moses still trusts the Ghanaian political system to bring positive change to its citizens. He has always been a committed voter actively involved in the NDC's election campaign.⁴³ This can be seen as a belief in the system and the possibility of change for a better future.

¹ "He is a hardworking person." ~ Salome

² "He isn't the lazy type of person. He takes his work seriously because I saw him any time I was going to the British compound. He was always hardworking. He is hardworking." ~ Georgina

³ "Moses is a very good person. He lives just about 100 yard away from me. We are close friends for a long time now." ~ Charles

⁴ "Moses is my junior brother and he is a very good guy." ~ Edward

⁵ "I'm a person that goes to the church and that's it. I'm not going to a night club or something like that. I'm not this type of person. I went to work and to the church and that's all." ~ Moses

⁶ "I believe in education. There is nothing I would do which jeopardises the education of someone else." ~ Moses

⁷ "I'm a kind of person who wants to solely focus on what I'm doing." ~ Moses

⁸ "I was the model employee." ~ Moses

⁹ "My perception is that if my dad would have been capable to take care of me meaning to afford my education which he could, it wouldn't have been like that. However, he didn't do it because he has not just a few children from one mother. There were too many children with different mothers. He couldn't treat all equally. He wanted to do it but he couldn't because he was afraid of the reaction of his social environment. I saw that theoretically he could have give every child a fair share but he didn't." ~ Moses

¹⁰ "I abandoned Beposo because I was thinking that my dad should take on the responsibility for the children and not my brother Vincent. My father always listened to Vincent more than to anybody else in the family. What Vincent said was what my father would do. This pain was on my mind. So, I decided that if that is how the situation is, I will never go back." ~ Moses

¹¹ "People question it because they don't know the word of God. If you are imprisoned and a truly believer, you have to see that God has done everything on purpose for you. Every believer has to see that. It's like a test and after they went through these hardships, they know what to do. Being a Christian doesn't mean that you are better than someone who isn't. Being a Christian just means that you have to pray more than someone who doesn't know God." ~ Moses

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- ¹² “I always say that I’m a Christian. Others deny it because of what happens to them. They think if they say that they are Muslims, they would be treated better.” ~ Moses
- ¹³ “I always challenged them. Everywhere I challenged them. I will not fight but I will try to put sense into what you said and what I say that you understand what you are asking me is rubbish. The moment they noticed that, they say, ‘سب,’ which means ‘Okay.’” ~ Moses
- ¹⁴ “I trusted Michael. My boss knew that and used him against me because he knew that I share everything with him. Godwin used Michael to nail me. He is a human being and that’s an aspect of how human nature is. This experience of disappointed trust made me also believing more in God who is the only instance I trust.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁵ “Nature will never forgive him [Michael] what he did to me because I trusted him as a friend and we shared all our ideas and he misused my trust. Nature will never forgive him.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁶ “He is not that close to me because he stays in Accra. If he would have been closer to us, then we could have figured some ways and means. Living in Accra and living here isn’t really the same.” ~ William
- ¹⁷ “You don’t want to put your burden on someone because you don’t know the position of that person. If you ask the person for help and the person refuses, that will change the relationship. The person won’t pick your calls again. So, if you are a hustler and went abroad and returned, you have to show this maturity to make it on your own.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁸ “I always listen to the voice of the Lord and listen to him what to do.” ~ Moses
- ¹⁹ “I told him that he could come also if he needs help or something. But Moses is a person who doesn’t like to ask for help. He has the mindset that he is a man and can do things on his own.” ~ Caroline
- ²⁰ “A man does not leave his wife alone.” ~ Moses
- ²¹ “I’m the head of the family from my mother’s side. My father’s side isn’t a problem because I have senior brothers who are taking care of issues. But everything lays on my shoulder when it comes to my mother’s side. It’s getting to one month now that I haven’t sent any money to my mother because it’s a bit difficult for me at the moment. The Uber driving is a good job but the problem is that everything is on me. My wife isn’t working.” ~ Moses
- ²² “I forgot about all the people I knew and said to myself that I don’t want to depend on anybody again. That’s part of becoming a man.” ~ Moses
- ²³ “His character is very good. He is a very kind guy and a hard worker. He isn’t lazy and got along with our boss very good. But he is also quick tempered. He can get angry very quickly. Nevertheless, he is a good guy and a good friend. He is always trying to help you out if you have a problem. That’s him.” ~ Adam
- ²⁴ “Moses is very honest. If a thing is white, he says that it’s white. If a thing is black, then he would say that it’s black. He is very honest and truthful.” ~ William
- ²⁵ “My brother is very calm and very obedient. He is also respectful but when he went to Kumasi and I visited him or he came here, you could see the hustling lifestyle and things that he is facing. This was changing him a bit in his character but not in a bad way. Due to the hustling, he became a really determined person. All in all, he has never done anything bad. He is a very good and calm person. He lived together with other people doing that apprenticeship. There he became even more straightforward and was very determined to upstage honesty and justice.” ~ Vincent
- ²⁶ “Since I’m a child, I always fought with Vincent. I was the youngest in the family. If there was an issue, Vincent wanted to be the person who decides. I told him that we have to share ideas and that it’s not only him. I always had arguments with Vincent.” ~ Moses
- ²⁷ “Moses is a very good brother to me. He is a hard worker too.” ~ Edward
- ²⁸ “When I look back on the two years upon return and I have still nothing to show today and then visiting my hometown where I was born and raised as a Ghanaian, in fact, I’m sad. I’m sad because even getting a job is a problem here. Going to a foreign country and easily getting a job but not in your own country. That makes me sad. Being here is a very big problem. There is not future in Ghana. The only future comes from yourself but not from any government, not from any leader, only from your own struggling. That’s what I see in Ghana.” ~ Moses
- ²⁹ “There are so many ideas I have in my mind with regard to my own future. All that ideas fail to be implemented based on one thing: money. I’m different from those who stayed in Ghana because I went abroad and mingled with a lot of nationalities and different characters. If I want to do something, I have that knowledge and the ideas to do it. There are so many things I wouldn’t do even looking at my lifestyle that people here would do because they haven’t travelled before. My perception is different. Some things have to be put in place. I have my ideas when it comes to business. If I had a job, I would do it perfectly and you would love it because of the way I’m doing it. There are so many things you want to do upon return. You really feel like doing something and you might have the energy for it but not the means to do it. I returned full of ideas and plans but I didn’t have the source to fulfil it.” ~ Moses

- 30 "I do see a lot of changes in his personality due to the migration experience. Just as I said earlier, he is that kind of person who forces himself to get something in life. After he left Ghana, the way he talks and acts changed. He wasn't able to speak English that well but there, he developed his English very well. I even suggested to him to become a king. Even though he said that he doesn't like it, I said that I can express myself having not that education background but he is even better. Nevertheless, he didn't really give me a final answer to that. He has changed in his way how he talks and reacts. He become more a justice loving person. If something happens that is unfair, he would strongly intervene and make sure that the law is followed. He addresses that right away. Therefore, he changed in his behaviour and the way he conduct himself. It has changed him in a good way and he is still the hustling strong person as he was before his migration." ~ Vincent
- 31 "The personality of my daughter improved. Facing problems, such as poverty and financial handicaps made her having not a good feeling but she tries to keep it up even though it's still a struggle. She is searching for a job which wasn't successful so far. It affected her emotionally." ~ Salome
- 32 "Ever since he returned, I wouldn't say that this attitude changed but he is more reserved and doesn't talk to us that much because due to what he has seen on his travel which was rough changed him in that way." ~ William
- 33 "I never lived there. I never stayed there but when we grew up, we were travelling to my father's home town. But where I want to stay is the capital of Volta Region Ho. I think that place is good for me. If things turn out good in the future, I would like to live there." ~ Moses
- 34 "If I can establish myself, I would go to Volta Region. Especially, Ho is a place to be for me. My father is from Kpenyi. There is another close city which is called Tojan in the district Ketu North." ~ Moses
- 35 "Only one of our older sisters is living there and represents us there. So, we are visiting her sometimes. All our aunts, uncles and grandparents left the Volta Region." ~ Vincent
- 36 "It's not that I like Kumasi the most but because we had a land there. It was the idea to move there. Then we could have stayed in Kumasi and do something on the land we had. If I stay in Accra, this won't happen and the land wouldn't be of big use." ~ Moses
- 37 "My intention isn't to stay in Greater Accra or Accra. It's not the place where I want to be. But because of my wife's education level, we decided to stay here because she can more likely find a job here. Based on that, we are staying here for now. Also, I have better access to IOM and do what I want to do which is the Uber driving. Initially, the plan was to stay in Kumasi because we had some land there. We could have started to establish ourselves and to build step by step our own house. So, the idea was to start over in Kumasi." ~ Moses
- 38 "I don't like this place. This location was chosen by my wife. From the very first day, I said that I don't like this place. This place is really remote. Yesterday, my other friend had the car and the fuel was finished when the car was returned. I had to get new fuel and left my home at around 8pm to 9pm and return at 1am. I went to three places but there was no gas and I ended up going to Kaneshie with my jerrycan. So, you see the stress. Let's assume I'm staying in Mallam, Teteku, Awoshie, Lapaz or those places. I can just take my car and find some gas station. The accessibility is a problem here. It's even a problem for my wife to have access to a market. She has also to carry the child and this hilly area is just not good for her." ~ Moses
- 39 "I would prefer to stay in Anyaa where I stayed in 2011. It's a hilly place as well and you don't feel the heat there so much." ~ Moses
- 40 "If I think of situations that I couldn't handle, I knew that Beposo is definitely my home because that's the place I always can go back to. The idea of being in Kumasi was to hustle and fight for what I wanted to achieve. I wanted to build a life and do something. That was the idea." ~ Moses
- 41 "I wouldn't go to Libya. It really depends on the person who calls me and comes up with the idea to try it somewhere abroad. If the person can help but not the whole family, I have to go alone. Maybe later, I can let them follow. Why not?" ~ Moses
- 42 "If I'm here today and things are not going too well and somebody comes up with a new idea saying come to Britain or Australia or Canada or Germany and there is no alternative, then I have to go." ~ Moses
- 43 "If I'm here, I'll vote. I voted already in 1992 even though I wasn't 18 years old. Every following election until I left to Libya, I voted. 1999, I gave my vote to NPP. I thought that they deserved to get a chance. The leader of NDC wasn't really popular. However, after I voted NPP I noticed that I did a mistake. I regretted that I voted NPP. They weren't helping the people. In 2020, I will fully join the campaign that Mahama gets elected. That's my intention if I'm here." ~ Moses

5.3.1.5 Conclusion

Ali, Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses exhibit similar characteristics in various respects. All four are highly concerned about the wellbeing of their family, particularly their mother, and have internalised a male image already outlined in *Subsection 5.1.1*. Although all four are equally considered pious, value-driven, helpful, and industrious, there are fundamental differences in characteristics between Ali and Mohammed on the one hand and Ebenezer and Moses on the other. The former are considered extremely calm, reserved, conflict-avoidant, and shy, while the latter are particularly determined, assertive, principled, contentious, and self-confident. In this manner, Ebenezer and Mohammed indicate that they deviate from the norm and possess a particular spirit of resistance coupled with scepticism towards authorities, whereas Ali and Mohammed are more conformist. While Ebenezer's environment has always seen him as the typical hustler with all the qualities needed to assert himself en route and master the challenges, Mohammed's acquaintances were extremely surprised when they learned of his migration because they did not see him as the classic migration type. As different as the characteristics are, so are the resulting behaviours. This is particularly evident after their return, which is discussed in the following *Subsection 5.3.2*.

However, parallels among all four can be detected in some mental and characteristic changes that their respective environments register in them as a result of migration. The transit returnees are considered more humble and grateful because they value their freedom and life more. Accordingly, their expanded perspectives and horizons are also noticeable in their inner constitution. They appear more resilient, mature, self-responsible, determined, and focused on improving their living standards. At the same time, they are more conscious, attentive, and helpful but also more introverted and distant.

Upon their return, the mental state of all individuals was unstable and characterised by feelings of despair, resignation, hopelessness, lack of motivation, and powerlessness. They were equally demoralised and frustrated and experienced shame and guilt. Moses appeared to be the most mentally stable, while Ali, Mohammed, and Ebenezer were depressed, although not suicidal. There was a tendency for all of them to isolate themselves to brood and despair alone about the seemingly overwhelming situation they faced. What-if scenarios were typical thought patterns that pushed the transit returnees deeper into their perceived hopelessness. This was exacerbated by thoughts of the money lost through migration, wasted time, and negative consequences for their loved ones. Other omnipresent adverse circumstances include financial and other dependence on third parties, resulting in a lack of self-determination, tightness and restriction. The confrontation with old friends or former migration companions who have now attained a much higher socio-economic status; the memories of the loss of fellow human beings during migration, as well as various other traumatic experiences and near-death experiences that lead to flashbacks and sleep problems are just as mentally stressful as the stigmas as losers and criminals as well as ridicule, mistrust, humiliation, or other forms of rejection and marginalisation.

These factors make the mentioned what-if scenario of another migration more present and attractive. The circumstances fuel the desire to escape and find better conditions abroad. The hope of making it to Europe this time and being lucky, as well as the certainty of finding a community environment in transit where the adverse circumstances of the country of origin play no or only a subordinate role, all have an effect. With every failed migration, this idea becomes more tempting as the gap between desire and reality widens. Every transit returnee is subject to at least the thought game regarding a permanent temptation that must be resisted. Accordingly, Mohammed's mother aptly describes it as courageous to embark on the path of undocumented migration for the first time, but as the much more significant achievement to resist the temptation to take the easier way, namely to go abroad, after returning. Although the transit returnees have physically left transit after migration, they are usually still mentally in transit. The social environment can help the transit returnee resist the described temptation and finally free themselves from the mental transit, as Ali and Ebenezer have succeeded (*Section 5.2*). However, transit returnees are generally difficult to access and sometimes skilled in pretending to their environment a stable mindset geared towards life in their country of origin, as Ali repeatedly did. Nonetheless, liberation from mental transit is possible, and self-efficacy can be developed so that the confrontation with fellows who have been able to improve their standard of living no longer feels demoralising but rather motivating. An additional driving force is a belief in God, which provides strength to all four individuals and from which they derive their mental fortitude. In addition, there was a significant improvement in Ebenezer's mental health when he received reintegration assistance from IOM. This helped him improve his economic situation and eliminate or at least substantially alleviate the mentally burdensome circumstances since his return. Although, to a lesser extent, something similar applies to Moses. While Ali was able to stabilise himself mentally, he still feels like a failure and has regressed. Mohammed's wellbeing and his evaluation of his situation are highly critical, and he does not see any prospects for himself.

However, Mohammed and Ali remain purposefully optimistic that their situation could change. All four have a stable sense of belonging and feel the acceptance of their environment. Moses is an exception, as he is inherently dissatisfied with his place of residence and is drawn to the city of Ho. They also indicate their willingness to relocate for income-generating activities. No one categorically rules out going abroad, but it should only be done with a concrete job prospect and a legal and secure entry. There is also a belief that one can succeed through their efforts in Ghana. Despite the shortcomings, there is an essential trust in the political system in Ghana and the possibility of change. Regarding the EU and its migration policy, all individuals plead differently but with a conviction for more restrictive measures to limit undocumented migration and, at the same time, enable legal migration to Europe.

5.3.2 “Still in mental transit” – Post-return Behaviour

“I returned empty-handed. It felt like in school and I had to do class one again after all these years. My intention was to go to Europe, but I came back empty-handed.”

~ Mohammed ~

The actual behaviour of the transit returnee is significantly determined by their mindset. The challenging circumstances after their return have already been hinted at, which influence the transit returnee's behaviour in addition to their mental constitution. This subsection focuses on the social behaviour of the transit returnee. How does the transit returnee deal with their migration history? What factors influence their behaviour? What activities do they engage in, and what ideas can they implement? How do they interact with others, including institutions? What changes can be observed over time? This subsection investigates these and other questions regarding transit returnees' agency and actual activities.

5.3.2.1 First Case: Ali Alhassan

At the beginning of each return, Ali was sitting alone, grooming extensively over his experiences abroad.¹ As mentioned before, one difference in behaviour upon the last return compared to the other three lies in the degree to which he shares his collected experiences with other people, such as his family and friends. In that shift of behaviour, Mr Khamil indicates a change in his mentality and his decreased eagerness to migrate.² However, this openness is not easy for transit returnees to adopt. Mawiya³ and Aziz explain what embarrassment the stigmatisation triggers among the transit returnees and why they tried to keep their migration story confidential:

“You are a returnee; you have been deported. If you think of the fact that you have been deported back to Ghana, it is kind of a shame. Why was I deported? Is it because I was a criminal? Did I commit any crime? When other people in Ghana hear deportation, what comes into their minds is that it just be crime-related. Before you reintegrate yourself back into the society, it takes time. It really depends on how smart you are to reintegrate yourself. Sometimes, you sit with colleagues and discuss things, such as a wedding or funeral or other occasions. Then you go home without revealing yourself.”

~ Aziz ~

Regarding his social network behaviour upon his return in 2017, Ali maintained his transnational ties to friends and former migration fellows based in North Africa and Europe.⁴ At the same time, Rukaya confirms that Ali started mingling with people in Tamale, which shortens the periods of being alone and pondering the past.⁵ The neighbours notice his new sociable and communicative openness as well. Nowadays, Ali bonds easily with people from his social environment.⁶ His neighbour Mussah lives directly next to Ali in T-Poly. They became friends and Mussah considers Ali as very well integrated into the community.⁷ In Ali's current situation, leisure activities are all the more vital for his mental health.⁸ Before Ali migrated for the first time, he was a basketball club member⁹ which he could not afford anymore.¹⁰ Nowadays, he works out independently¹¹, but neither follows other sports activities nor is he a member of any informal or formal club or association¹².

Beyond the described openness and drive, the notion of having higher chances of achieving his personal goals in Libya¹³ or Europe¹⁴ changed correspondingly. According to sister Nafisa, Ali is committed and full of ideas to establish himself in Ghana¹⁵. He tries to seize any occurring income-generating opportunity.¹⁶ However, the implementation of the drive is associated with hurdles. Ali criticises nepotism as a fundamental obstacle to finding employment in Ghana. Job opportunities depend on the current ruling party and your own party affiliation:¹⁷

"The problem is the nepotism in this country. Even if there are some vacancies and you send your application within the deadline, you won't be considered because only party members or other associates of the ruling class are part of it. My problem is that I don't belong to any of these two sides."

~ Ali ~

Ali had several job interviews with oil companies in Greater Accra and was never selected.¹⁸ For this reason and due to the general scarcity of jobs, he sees only his own business as a possibility for a secure income.¹⁹ In this regard, a certain amount of starting capital is also necessary to realise one's ideas.²⁰ Referring to Ali's situation, his half-brother and butcher colleague Saani confirms this aspect.²¹ Accordingly, Ali describes financial scarcity and pressure as the main problem.²² Before his return in 2011, he sent remittances to his family, who used it to buy property. However, the seller's papers were forged.²³ Thus, Ali was defrauded of his money and the land. He could not recover the loss through civil law. Thus, the lack of legal security and weak institutions prevented him from converting his income into safe investments. Under different conditions, he would have had a starting capital through his remittances. As a result of the inflation in Libya, it was subsequently no longer possible for him to accumulate sufficient funds, as described earlier.²⁴

Upon return, Ali wanted to resume the butcher activities.²⁵ His mid-term plan was to expand it to become a cattle dealer²⁶ or invest in farming²⁷. However, he did not earn sufficient income²⁸ and asked his social environment unsuccessfully for funds²⁹. Eventually, Ali assisted at the butcher market, which never exceeded his livelihood by a hand-to-mouth standard of living.³⁰ Aside from butchering, Ali functions as a middleman for the cattle trade connecting the periphery with Tamale and supra-regionally Tamale with Tema³¹. When Ali moves to Tema, he stays at Mr Khamil's house in Accra, where he does some housekeeping and assists him with his sachet water production.³² With the support of Mr Khamil, Ali goes back and forth, trying to find a permanent job at both destinations.³³ However, he would like to establish himself at one or the other place which he could not put into effect yet:

"I just sat down and thought what job I could do. If I'm looking for a job in Accra, I can stay at Mr Khamil's place. However, life in Accra isn't easier. Nevertheless, he tries to help me. I'm sometimes at his place in Accra helping him in his house and sometimes in Tamale at the butcher house, five months here, another six months there and so on. I would like to stay in one place, at a place where I can establish myself successfully. So far, I didn't do so. So, I'm still going back and forth."

~ Ali ~

Beyond a satisfying job, the quest for a permanent one remained unsuccessful as well. Hence, his situation remains unstable and in limbo, which does not remain unnoticed by the people around

him.³⁴ The previous sub-subsection of his case described the mental transit in which many transit returnees still find themselves psychologically. However, for Ali, the spatial transit has not been transcended either. At first glance, one can see that Ali's repetitive migrations to Libya due to stagnating and frustrating living circumstances have not occurred until now. However, on reflection, the vicious circle of restless movements is still present. The migrations no longer take place from Tamale to Libya or other Northern African countries and back, but within Ghana from Tamale to Accra and back. As described earlier, the underlying psychological pattern remains unchanged. Instead of the previous Central Mediterranean route northwards and back, Ali shuttles back and forth between Tamale and Accra. Whenever he feels unsatisfied in Tamale, Ali moves to Mr Khamil's place, which serves as a refuge for him.³⁵ This means that the state of mental transit is not completely cancelled out, but Ali remains in transit spatially as well. He is back in Ghana but has not been able to settle down permanently at any place. Mr Khamil confirms that his half-brother has no "place to start his own life"³⁶. In fact, it is certainly accurate to assume that Accra offers more opportunities to find a job. As a matter of fact, this hope has remained unfulfilled in reality until now.³⁷ The question is whether it would not be more promising the other way round: first to settle in one place and find a job there instead of spending years trying to find a job everywhere in vain. To settle permanently would immediately release him from spatial transit. However, Ali must equally free himself from mental transit. Both processes of emancipation are presumably reciprocally related. Aziz reports from his own experience that accommodation is a key factor for a transit returnee.³⁸ Upon his return, Aziz first had to share a room with his cousin, which was very challenging for him.³⁹

In order to be able to develop the aforementioned self-efficacy and to free themselves from mental and spatial transit, external guidance is required. Mr Khamil describes that this is needed not only for transit returnees but useful for every young person. According to him, there are opportunities to thrive in Ghana, on the one hand. However, on the other hand, there is no one to guide them in this regard. The disoriented individuals need someone to stand by them and talk to them. A person who shows them convincing prospects available, meaning that they can make it in their own homeland. The main aspect is to highlight their own strengths and receive assistance to apply them in practice:

"I think that everybody can make it in Ghana depending on the guidance. If they get the right guidance, they can make it in Ghana. We have opportunities here, but there is nobody to guide you. People need assistance. They cannot just start themselves. They need somebody to talk to. It's not necessarily financial. It's also about psychological support. Let the person understand that he can make it here in Ghana. They need to have the belief that they can make it here if you wanna keep them here. But if it's like that, his brothers aren't making it, my friends are not making it, and nobody else is making it; they want to leave. It's like nobody wants to talk to them. They don't have that kind of pep talk. There are no business ideas. You just go to school, and after school, you are finished and have no idea what to do with your life. People learn stuff like marketing, but they cannot really apply their knowledge outside the school in the real world. There are simply limited opportunities."

~ Mr Khamil ~

While IOM and its reintegration programmes were unknown to Ali, he took part in a training on finance simulation run by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).⁴⁰ However, the

appropriate transfer of the learned skills into practice never materialised. Instead, Ali disinvested the money provided by Mr Khamil's wife in cattle trading. This turned out to be a mistake which would probably not have happened with accurate financial guidance. Since entrepreneurship requires particular guidance and Ali is inexperienced in this regard, he failed.⁴¹ At this point, Ali did not have the required guidance. Eventually, he migrated again in despair:

"The money Mr Khamil's wife gave me wasn't enough to start to be a cattle dealer because even transporting the animals from the south to the north of Ghana is very costly. So, I said to myself that I should rather use the money to go to Libya again because these 2,000 GHC won't even last for transportation. You can buy some sheep, but then there is no money left for the transportation. Nevertheless, cattle dealing was my idea to make a living. So, I wanted to hustle a bit and return and start the business."

~ Ali ~

In fact, holistic guidance that is centred on the individual is required. In the mid-term, the transit returnee would lose hope for a better future if he does not see that there is a tangible perspective for him. He must be convinced that there are real alternatives available to remigration:

"If we get together people and the resources, we can definitely change something. Otherwise, people will always try to migrate. Ali has done it four times. Others are doing it six times before they die. Some just commit suicide. For such people, no one feels responsible. There is no one who guides them upon return. However, you cannot guide people just with words. You have to offer something and present them with an alternative so that the returnee sees that what you are saying is true and a real alternative to travelling. If you just talk to the person, the person will forget about what you just said within a short time. But if you commit the person to make him believe what is presented to him and be successful, he will stay and try his luck here in Ghana. This applies not only to Ali alone. There are a lot in Tamale and they are all thinking of going back again. Some are still trying to leave. Ali tells me that they are there, ready to try it again. But he is lucky enough to have us around him to make him aware of the dangerous aspects abroad and the opportunities here in Ghana. He respects us and wants to stay out of this respect. Finally, he wants to stay."

~ Mr Khamil ~

Nonetheless, even before a business idea is pursued, financial counselling is essential. Immediately after their return, many people usually approach the transit returnees with their needs. As already described, they hope that they can benefit financially from the allegedly liquid transit returnee. Dealing with this posed a challenge. Aziz describes that he deflects such requests "in a playful way"⁴². In contrast, Odum tries to keep his return story confidential.⁴³ According to Nurudeen, in the ideal case, the transit returnee is assisted in budgeting and planning for financial sustainability.⁴⁴ As Mr Khamil mentioned in his last quote, financial counselling is meant to be part of the guidance, whereas psychological counselling remains likewise crucial, as Mawiya confirms as well:

"Upon return, you are always thinking about how to start life again. If you have financial and psychological counselling, then you start thinking about what you can do back home. However, if you don't get that, you might be thinking of travelling again at the end of the day. It is very good if you have somebody to motivate you to carry on and stay positive about your future in your home country. If you get counselling, you will not find yourself in the mindset to travel again."

~ Mawiya ~

Furthermore, the environment of return has changed in their absence as well. In fact, one returns to a presumably familiar environment but this environment has transformed and the conditions

have altered. The thematised guidance provides orientation and helps people to settle in and adapt to it.⁴⁵

The respective subsection already described how Ali's social environment also learned that they must integrate him into the family structures and give him responsible tasks. Since the extended family is prominent in numbers in Accra living, Mr Khamil is eager to be informed about recent familial developments. In this regard, Ali and Mr Khamil are having phone calls almost on a daily basis.⁴⁶ Beyond informing Mr Khamil, Ali assumed the role of being the familial focal point. The importance of activities of this kind which keep his half-brother Ali busy, is emphasised by Mr Khamil.⁴⁷ In addition, it serves to enable them to have other thoughts and to leave the past behind. Instead of being alimented without further ado, they should earn something in the meantime as well.⁴⁸ In this way, their self-confidence is strengthened, they have something to do and can slowly build self-efficacy through their own actions.

Compared to the living standard years ago, Ali's life deteriorated. Aziz reconstructs this notion and puts forward the thesis that Ali would have had a considerably better life if he was not undergoing his migrations.⁴⁹ However, comparing the immediate time upon returning to the following unfolding years, he is still struggling, but his situation improved a bit, as Sadia observed:⁵⁰

"Comparing the time he came back to today, things have improved a bit. Those days, you couldn't look at him, seeing him face to face. I wasn't happy at all. Life hasn't really changed for him today, but there has been a little bit of progress in his life."

~ Sadia ~

Beyond an exact definition of reintegration, the opinion on Ali's progress and status is unanimous. Core family members⁵¹, extended family members⁵² and neighbours⁵³ concur with one another that he is not reintegrated. However, Ali's efforts and proactive behaviour are seen and acknowledged by the people of his social environment, such as Nafisa⁵⁴ and Sadia⁵⁵, which earns him respect⁵⁶ since they are aware of the general challenging circumstances⁵⁷. Ali's wife Rukaya attests to her husband to give his best to improve the family's living standard even though improvements fail to appear.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the fact that he relies on others is a significant issue. Ali still depends on financial assistance from his family. He is not fully independent, which correlates with the degree of being reintegrated. Until today, a permanent and stable income-generating activity is missing in order to be self-sustaining:

"He has a wife, but all those things stem from family assistance. It wasn't established on his own. If we realised that there was a problem, we stepped in as a family to help him. He still lacks his own way of making money. There is still no independence. In some way, he is okay but not up to a level which you would consider as fully reintegrated or fully independent. [...] What is missing is a job for himself. He earns some money here in Accra and there in Tamale, but it's not his nor permanent or reliable. He cannot really lead his own life and make his own plans. It's all just about relying on what others have and giving to him. Every day you have to hustle to find something."

~ Mr Khamil ~

¹ “He sits a lot in silence and thinks a lot.” ~ Lukman

² “He shares his stories how close to death he was. It has been inches that he could have been part of those who died. He sees that. This shows us that he realised what happened. I think that he left this mentality to travel behind.”
~ Mr Khamil

³ “Sometimes, you simply hide that you have been deported. There is a stigma. If you pass by people, they start talking in a bad way about you as the person who has been deported. The people just insult you behind your back and gossip about your situation and your failures. You don’t want others to talk about you in that way. That’s why you also don’t tell them exactly what happened.” ~ Mawiya

⁴ “Ali migrated with other people who found their ways to Europe and are successful now. He is back and is still in contact with those who are successful.” ~ Nafisa

⁵ “At the immediate time upon return, he used to sit lonely. A lot of thoughts were bothering his mind. However, now I see my husband mingling with people, he stays with his friends and does a lot of things with them together. I don’t see him sitting alone thinking of other issue anymore.” ~ Rukaya

⁶ “When I return from work, he comes out and we used to sit and chat. He also spends some time with others of this ghetto.” ~ Mumuni

⁷ “I think Ali has been reintegrated very well into the community.” ~ Mussah

⁸ “If we chat and laugh, it makes me happy. Watching football is also something I really enjoy.” ~ Ali

⁹ “I just played basketball. We had a coach and played at different places. That was before I migrated for the first time.”
~ Ali

¹⁰ “I was a member of the basketball club called Keep Fit. We played every Saturday and Sunday. Apart from that I don’t have any club or association. I cannot afford any subscription as I’m jobless at the moment. If you wanna be a member of an association here in Ghana, it’s very costly. So, I don’t have any association here.” ~ Ali

¹¹ “I’m just doing some exercises on my own.” ~ Ali

¹² “I was a member of the basketball club called ‘Keep Fit’. We played every Saturday and Sunday. Apart from that, I don’t have any club or association. I cannot afford any subscription as I’m jobless at the moment. If you wanna be a member of an association here in Ghana, it’s very costly. So, I don’t have any association here.” ~ Ali

¹³ “I didn’t even start that business. I took the whole amount and went to Libya. Mr Khamil’s wife agreed on that to collect the money. I said that they called me to come and take the money and leave again afterwards. She knew that there is war and that it might be not possible to find work at that time. That’s why she gave me the money.” ~ Ali

¹⁴ “At that time, my plan was that I still wanted to go to Europe or at least Libya to work there a bit to get some money in order to build myself in the butcher business. The others told me not to go anywhere again. I was at some friend’s places and we talked a lot. Sometimes, I went to the butcher house of my uncle.” ~ Ali

¹⁵ “He always thinks of different ways and means how to achieve what he wants. [...] He always tries to engage himself to make a living.” ~ Nafisa

¹⁶ “My brother has a pure water machine in Accra. In the past, he had two but one spoiled. If my brother isn’t available, I’m doing my butcher work. Besides, I’m keeping myself on my toes looking for new opportunities to make money. One day a company came to Tamale to give their employees their salary. I just went there curiously whether they have a job for me or not. I always keep my eyes open. That’s it.” ~ Ali

¹⁷ “The government’s policy is characterised by nepotism. It always depends on what party rules if you get a job or not. The payment is not even attractive” ~ Mr Khamil

¹⁸ “Some oil companies called me and we did some interviews but I wasn’t picked.” ~ Ali

¹⁹ “Here in Tamale is nothing. There are no jobs. You have to establish your own business.” ~ Ali

²⁰ “Before you settle down in order to begin a new life, you need some capital to start up a business. You really need some time and resources to reintegrated yourself into the society.” ~ Aziz

²¹ “If Ali gets financially supported, he can make real progress. Because the work we all do requires capital. If you don’t have money, working with your friends doesn’t give you that much.” ~ Saani

²² “There is the financial situation and the unsuccessful efforts to become a baby.” ~ Ali

²³ “I wanted my family to buy some land. They did so but it turned out that the papers of the landowner were faked.”
~ Ali

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- 24 "I failed to gather money in Libya because of the inflation. I spend so many years in Libya but I didn't make it to gain money to start my cattle business. I couldn't even start that business." ~ Ali
- 25 "I wanted to resume the butcher job." ~ Ali
- 26 "My ambition was still the to be a cattle seller. I helped one of my friends who was already doing that and accompanied him. I was doing some sells for him and go a little share afterwards. I was on the butcher's side to get a good price for the cows." ~ Ali
- 27 "The plan was still to become a cattle dealer. Also some farming was in my mind which I could combine with that business and my skills I had." ~ Ali
- 28 "Sometimes there were cows, sometimes not. At the end of the day, I just got some pocket money. If you made a deal, you can get 30 GHC or 50 GHC. My idea was and still is to transport cows from the rural areas to the city to sell them. Back then I was just linking up owners and buyers. I was just getting a token for that." ~ Ali
- 29 "I still had the same idea to be a cattle dealer but I knew that I don't have money for that. I tried to call people asking for money." ~ Ali
- 30 "I was just living from hand to mouth." ~ Ali
- 31 "I've some friends in Tema. A lot of people moved from here to Accra. So sometimes I also spend time with them. Besides, we have a lot of villages here like Savrogo, Combogo, Yendi and others. I'm the connection man between the villages and the butcher house as well as between Tamale and Tema." ~ Ali
- 32 "Mr Khamil has a big family who I take care of and do some housekeeping at times and he supports me a bit in return." ~ Ali
- 33 "I went to my brother Mr Khamil and wanted to find a job in Accra." ~ Ali
- 34 "Ali isn't stable. He moves always back and forth. Always Accra, Tamale, Accra, Tamale." ~ Matthäus
- 35 "Every time I'm getting unsatisfied with my situation, I'm going to Accra again seeking job opportunities." ~ Ali
- 36 "Ali still didn't have this place to start his own life." ~ Mr Khamil
- 37 "If I'm looking for a job in Accra, I can stay at Mr Khamil's place. However, the life in Accra isn't easier. Nevertheless, he tries to help me. [...] I looked in Accra for a job like that. Therefore, it is good to have Mr Khamil's place as a place to stay from which I can start walking around looking for a job and going to some offices asking for working opportunities." ~ Ali
- 38 "Through my father, I was able to get a job on a construction site. I was assisting him on his workplace. Through that, I was able to get some money. Therefore, the key was the housing and a job. If you don't have a place to sleep, you cannot plan. The accommodation is the key factor in life." ~ Aziz
- 39 "As we came back, a lot of us were facing problems, such as accommodation. I lived together with my cousin in one room before I migrated. After spending two years abroad, I didn't wanna stay with my cousin again but I didn't have money. I found it difficult to get an apartment for myself. My most urgent problem was the accommodation." ~ Aziz
- 40 "I didn't contact IOM or any other organisations for some help upon return." ~ Ali
- 41 "If he would have enough capital, he might make some profit. However, you will have to sit down with him and plan what to carry out. He has no experience in business making. That's why he needs guidance." ~ Mr Khamil
- 42 "The only chance you have is to try it in a playful way to make some jokes with the person that they will forget about the request. Inside, they think that you have to give them something." ~ Aziz
- 43 "You don't want to expose yourself to them." ~ Odum
- 44 "I think financial counselling is very important. [...] Some of us had some financial resources when we returned. Those who stayed back won't understand your situation. They will come to you, visit you and say, 'Oh, my brother has returned.' The little money you have, you have to spend it on them. If there was some financial counselling, you would have been aware that people will visit you but you don't spend the money on them. That money you have is too much and not operational. You will immediately start to spend this money on other people before you realise that this money is finished." ~ Nurudeen
- 45 "It's not easy at all. You have to start from zero. Everything has changed. You have to learn to start over. [...] Before, we used to have our place. Now, most of the people don't know you anymore. You returned to the community and have to start struggling before you get used to the community again." ~ Nurudeen
- 46 "I need to know what is going on in Tamale. So, he is the person who informs me. Then we have also just normal calls checking up on each other. Ali calls me if there is a problem in the family and I tell him what to do. We call each other very often. It's at least once a day or almost every day when he is in Tamale." ~ Mr Khamil

47 “There is also so much attraction to move out and nothing keeps you. There is not even anything to keep him busy that he doesn’t have the space to make up his mind to travel again. But there is nothing that makes him forgetting about his unachieved dream of making it abroad. Therefore, you need places to keep them busy and where they can earn something without having to ask someone at the end of the day to support them.” ~ Mr Khamil

48 “You need places to keep them busy and where they can earn something without having to ask someone at the end of the day to support them. That would be better. If you just give them money, the money will be exhausted very quickly. Then they turn around and don’t know to who to talk to. A job or anything to do which will affect them from the very first day.” ~ Mr Khamil

49 “I have seen some changes in him until today but it is not enough because if he had stayed in Ghana to pursue his aspirations, I believe that he would have been better by far as he is right now.” ~ Aziz

50 “Ali is still struggling but he is doing better now. At first, his situation was very bad.” ~ Lukman

51 “He isn’t really good reintegrated.” ~ Mustafa

52 “Ali hasn’t reintegrated very well.” ~ Masahudu

53 “His living standard has not changed. The way I used to know him is also the same.” ~ Mussah

54 “Upon return, he started to stay with his brother in Accra. If he is at home, he is going to the butcher house to do some business.” ~ Nafisa

55 “Since he is also in Tamale sometimes, we are also happy to have him here. He doesn’t want to be lazy. He always finds a way to engage himself.” ~ Sadia

56 “He might be in the process but he is struggling a lot. However, we respect him.” ~ Matthäus

57 “Most of those who weren’t successful abroad and return find it difficult to reintegrate. Others who return find it very easy. It depends on the individual. Most of them don’t find it easy upon return.” ~ Nafisa

58 “Our living standard hasn’t improved yet. It’s still the same since he came back. However, he tries to earn something and I’m also doing my business at the market. We try bit by bit.” ~ Rukaya

5.3.2.2 Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni

As discussed before, upon returning, Mohammed preferred to stay at his friend Faruk's place in Accra for some weeks instead of moving on to Takoradi immediately. Due to the harsh treatment and the lack of hygiene facilities at the Libyan detention centre, Mohammed looked worn out, or to use his own words, he looked "like a slave"¹. Hence, he was afraid that people would insult him. Mohammed did not want to return to Takoradi not solely because of his physical condition but wanted to find a different place to start over as well. However, his childhood friend Yunusah persuaded him to return to Takoradi in order to be with his family.² In comparison to the time before Mohammed migrated, his personal circumstances, employment situation, and the living conditions of his family did not change. It is obvious that he is highly committed to better his standard of living.³ Sister Alimatu emphasises that her brother Mohammed is permanently striving to discover income-generating possibilities⁴, for instance, extracting metals at the scrapyards⁵ or doing some mason's work⁶. His vocational idea is to resume his fashion design activities.⁷ Thus, Mohammed handed in several invoices to IOM in order to receive reintegration assistance in that regard.⁸ Furthermore, he jointly developed with a friend the business idea to trade with convenience goods.⁹ His friend Atakyi runs a lottery which lures Mohammed's interest as well. However, as for all the other business ideas, initial capital is required. Mohammed's firm desire to have a regular working life persists until today:

"My friend Atakyi has a lottery, but it requires money to run this business. So, if I get help, I can do a lot. I even thank God that I'm not a beggar. But I want to do my own business and have my own accommodation. I wanna take my bath early in the morning and go to work and close like 5-6 pm and come back. That's simply what I want. I don't want to depend on anyone. But for now, I always have to be with my friend and eat from other people's plates, and that's what gets to me most. I really don't like it."

~ Mohammed ~

He sustains the ambition to support his mother as well as to move into his own room and to settle down having his own family life.¹⁰ At the moment, the reality of life stands in stark contrast to this. Instead of supporting his family, Mohammed depends on them. His friend Mamudu outlines the current circumstances as an additional burden for the family:

"It has really affected the family. He had become a burden in a way. Before he migrated, the brother had to take care of all of them. Mohammed left and returned with nothing. The brother is still taking care of them. So, the family has to make sure to provide Mohammed with whatever is within their reach. He controls himself also so that he won't cause more problems on top of the difficult situation they are in already."

~ Mamudu ~

Nonetheless, mother Amimatu maintains her wish for her son to deliver her a daughter-in-law and grandchildren, which Mohammed conceives as unrealistic to realise under current conditions.¹¹ In fact, Mohammed shows interest in a woman and he would like to propose to her but of his economic situation, it did not happen so far. In fact, he endeavours to achieve substantive self-sustaining independence first:

"I want to be my own boss. I want to be independent. I want to buy things like food and clothes myself. At the moment, I cannot afford it at all. So, I want to get my own shop just like the others."

~ Mohammed ~

Aside from the financial situation, he is an integrated part of the community who is acknowledged by a vast number of people. Mohammed is certainly sociable and mingles with other fellows, which helps him to distract himself and curb the negative thoughts lingering in his mind.¹² Occasionally, he even advises others on life issues.¹³ Beyond that, Mohammed is eager to provide information to his friends and describes in detail, for example, what he has experienced en route. He explains what it means to be crammed into a vehicle, to run out of drinking water or to experience a breakdown in the desert.¹⁴ In his free time, he regularly helps to do communal labour, which means mostly cleaning up the neighbourhood collectively.¹⁵ He is the chaplain¹⁶ of Las Palmas Club¹⁷. He is doing some physical exercises with some friends at the beachside¹⁸ and joins informal meetings at two different locations in order to have an Ataya tea before jointly entering the mosque¹⁹. In *Subsection 5.2.2*, Mohammed's roles and activities within his network were already described.

In spite of his social activities and his remarkable efforts to find a permanent job, his reintegration success remains negligible.²⁰ Mohammed himself considers his situation as deprived and he cannot see any positive developments since his father died.²¹ Asked for any changes ever since he returned, he proves his maintained sense of humour:

"Nothing changed in my life. I only got grey hair. You can see the change on my head."

~ Mohammed ~

People from his social environment do not consider him as reintegrated either.²² Sister Alimatu acknowledges the importance of having financial means. According to her, the scarcity of money is the main issue troubling her brother.²³ Hence, the migration-induced debts remain fully unbalanced.²⁴ His friend Ibrahim assesses Mohammed's standard of living as worse than before his migration.²⁵ According to their assessment, Mohammed's standard of living did not improve:²⁶

"I think his living standard is still the same. When he left for Libya, he had no job. This is the situation he still faces today. I don't see any improvement. However, we stick together as a family and try to help each other out. Nevertheless, there is no improvement."

~ Amimatu ~

According to his childhood friend Ali, the problems which prompted Mohammed to leave Ghana are still unsolved and symbolise an inevitable threshold for being reintegrated.²⁷ In addition, Mohammed feels abandoned by IOM.²⁸ As a matter of fact, sister Alimatu even questions his reintegration progress on a social level. She feels that the people he hangs out with might not be real friends.²⁹ Mother Amimatu and others assume that her son wishes to attempt another migration:³⁰

"Mohammed hasn't well reintegrated, not at all. He wishes to go back. It's just that he doesn't have the money. If he gets the money, I'm sure he will migrate again. He wants to get things better. He doesn't have a job to do. He doesn't have his own room. These are all his problems. He wants to better it and isn't really reintegrated."

~ Amimatu ~

In this context, brother Zakari recognises the negative psychological impacts the migration experience unfolds in Mohammed's state of mind.³¹ Mamudu agrees that Mohammed's mental state is unstable, which hinders him from becoming proactive and being fully reintegrated.³² Childhood friend and migration fellow Adams agrees that Mohammed is not well reintegrated as he has no stable income.³³ His friends Ibrahim³⁴ and Ali³⁵ likewise conclude that a job or funding to start a business would help him. Mohammed himself is aware of the fact that he depends on assistance from his friends³⁶ and family³⁷. Thus, his everyday life is shaped by the scarcity of essential aspects of life. Childhood friend Aziz mentions Mohammed's request for money and clothes as well as the fact that he still has no own room.³⁸ Others from his environment, such as Mamudu³⁹ or Zakari⁴⁰, confirm the lack of basic aspects such as food, clothing or shelter:

"Mohammed hasn't reintegrated. He has no work to do. He has no money. Even eating something is a problem sometimes. So, how should he be reintegrated? He hasn't at all."

~ Zakari ~

Since Mohammed is still seeking a permanent job, his struggle does not decrease.⁴¹ The described dependency and missing self-sustaining resources cause mental pressure and long-lasting depression. In the subsequent, Mohammed sums up how negatively he perceives his current situation:

"I thought that my depression would slowly disappear. But up to now, I don't have a room; I don't have kids; there is no wife; there is no job; I've no freedom and no leisure time. It makes me sad. I've got plans. I've been thinking about everything; everyone has been thinking, and so do I. I'm worried. [...] I just don't feel good at the moment. I don't know what to do in my life. I feel pressure. Right now, I feel pressured. I have nothing to do to make my life stable and comfortable. I don't even feel happy. My mom doesn't have enough. I don't have a place to stay on my own, nor do I have any work which will earn me a living. I see some people who are happy because of their independence, but for me, I would be lying to you if I told you that I'm happy. Everyone sees me with that pressure. I feel a bit okay whenever I visit the joint tea session meeting other people. We argue on a topic until it's time for prayers and this keeps me off my worries for a bit. But whenever I'm alone, I feel that pressure and I tend to worry more about my life. I even have a certain lady I want to marry, but because I neither have the money nor any work to do, it won't be possible."

~ Mohammed ~

¹ "I stayed at Faruk's place in Accra because I looked like a slave. I was extremely blowsy. People would insult me if I return like that. Everyone was very slim. Ask Ebenezer. I looked at myself and said, 'No, I cannot go back to Takoradi like that.' So, I waited for two to three weeks." ~ Mohammed

² "When Mohammed returned to Accra, he stayed there and didn't want to return home because of how things are. I talked to him and explained him that Takoradi is his home and that he cannot live anywhere else. [...] There is no place like home. He should return home." ~ Yunusah

³ "I want to make it in my life. That's what is important to me." ~ Mohammed

⁴ "He is not always in the house. He always makes sure that he gets something." ~ Alimatu

⁵ "If they [friends from the scrapyard] receive a big load, they call me to help but that's just a little bit of money. [...] A lot of cars are coming from Tema. They try to extract the iron, aluminium, copper and so on. So, I just go to the scrapyard to help my friends and get some money in return." ~ Mohammed

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- ⁶ “I’m having some friends who are doing mason’s work. So, I join them sometimes. I have another friend at the scrapyard. If he gets a new load, I help them to harness the scrap.” ~ Mohammed
- ⁷ “I said that I wanna do some fashion design.” ~ Mohammed
- ⁸ “IOM opened an office here in Takoradi. I went there this year and handed another invoice in.” ~ Mohammed
- ⁹ “I wanted to do business. My friends and I have a business idea to buy and sell. But we didn’t have the money to realise it.” ~ Mohammed
- ¹⁰ “I wanna make my family happy and have my own family with my own accommodation.” ~ Mohamed
- ¹¹ “My mother told me always that I should try to get married but I’ve my financial problems and it’s not easy even though I would like to marry. My mother wants me to marry and get children. However, in my condition that isn’t realistic.” ~ Mohammed
- ¹² “By now, he is coping with whatever he is going through. Mohammed goes out to mingle with people. So, he is trying his best and doesn’t let the ticking come to close to himself.” ~ Zakari
- ¹³ “He advises me sometimes how to improve myself and my work and everything.” ~ Samuel
- ¹⁴ “I explained them all the difficulties you face such as the situation when your drinking water is finished or your car spoils and your are in the desert. The facilitators pack you like goats.” ~ Mohammed
- ¹⁵ “I’m doing some communal labour like cleaning up our neighbourhood.” ~ Mohammed
- ¹⁶ “I’m part of Las Palmas Club. I’m the chaplain there. We have the secretary, treasurer, chairman and I’m the chaplain. We meet every Saturday. Before we start and after we are done, I lead the prayer.” ~ Mohammed
- ¹⁷ “In 2006, I went to a meeting of Las Palmas Club for the first time.” ~ Mohammed
- ¹⁸ “I go jogging but I don’t play ball again. I do some exercise at the beach. We do it every Sunday as a group. I will show you the place later.” ~ Mohammed
- ¹⁹ “I’m meeting other people and we are having Ataya tea. We are sitting down and talk about this and that. The place where we do it is called Compound. I’ve also another one at Zongo.” ~ Mohammed
- ²⁰ “Mohammed isn’t reintegrated but he is really forcing to be in the future.” ~ Adams
- ²¹ “I am still deprived. After my father died until today, nothing got better. Things were not good for me and I’m still struggling.” ~ Mohammed
- ²² “I think it is okay but not too well regarding his reintegration. He planned to travel and bring something back home but he failed. So, I don’t see anything that can be considered for him to be reintegrated. I don’t see anything he gained because things are just like he left and even a bit worse. Even though the group he is in helps sometimes, it’s not that much and it doesn’t really boost him. So, he hasn’t been reintegrated so far.” ~ Peter
- ²³ “I think Mohammed’s main problem is money matters. To do anything requires money. He doesn’t have anything and his other takes care of him at his age. The fact that he doesn’t have money is worrying him the most I guess. I’m sure. If he gets something, he would be okay.” ~ Amimatu
- ²⁴ “I didn’t repay anything until today.” ~ Mohammed
- ²⁵ “The living standard was the reason why he was migrating. Ever since, things were getting worse. Before his migration, it was okay but now it’s not good at all. It’s a very low level.” ~ Ibrahim
- ²⁶ “His life hasn’t been bettered. I cannot really see any improvement. But it’s okay, we take it like that.” ~ Alimatu
- ²⁷ “So, the reason why he wanted to travel is still there. So, I’m not sure whether he is really reintegrated. The same problems still exist. Until these problems are solved, he will never be reintegrated.” ~ Ali
- ²⁸ “Since I returned, nothing improved for me. I’m just sitting here and wait. Since I returned, no one helped me. I’m trying to do any job I can get. I manage it somehow. [...] It’s all the same as it was before.” ~ Mohammed
- ²⁹ “I cannot really say that he is good reintegrated. He is also on the move with friends. I cannot even say if he really has friends. So, I cannot really say what he is doing but I don’t feel that he is really reintegrated.” ~ Alimatu
- ³⁰ “He isn’t well reintegrated. He still pounds to migrate again.” ~ Rahman
- ³¹ “It has been a while since I migrated. I’ve coped with the challenges that were involved. It hasn’t been that long ago for Mohammed. He is still trying to cope with the consequences of the failed migration.” ~ Zakari

³² “Mohammed isn’t stable at the moment. He isn’t well reintegrated. He is thinking a lot. He wishes that everything would have gone well and that his family would be better but it’s not like that. This makes him think a lot. Mohammed isn’t well reintegrated.” ~ Mamudu

³³ “He hasn’t got any work to do. Things aren’t that smooth for him. Nothing comes really into his pocket. That makes him not being integrated well.” ~ Adams

³⁴ “If they go, fail and come back, it’s very sad. They have to start all over again. The only way to help them is to give them jobs. Jobs are very necessary. If they have a job here and get well paid, I don’t think that they would risk their lives for travelling.” ~ Ibrahim

³⁵ “If he gets some help or money to start up a business, that would be very good for him. That’s what we all need and why we are all travelling, him included. He should get something to start up a business that earns him some money on a daily basis. That would be fine.” ~ Ali

³⁶ “Mohammed couldn’t really improve his standard of living. We help him sometimes in terms of money. He is jobless. He doesn’t have any work to do. I help him sometimes to buy food and other stuff. There hasn’t been any improvement.” ~ Yunusah

³⁷ “I didn’t have anything. So, there was nothing I could be responsible for. I depend on them and not vice versa. I have not much agency.” ~ Mohammed

³⁸ “Mohammed isn’t reintegrated at all. I know that things aren’t good for him at all. I can say that he wants to make it but things are very hard for him. He comes sometimes to ask for some money. I give him clothes and other things in addition to that. You see how he lives at his mother’s house. It’s not supposed to be like that.” ~ Aziz

³⁹ “When Mohammed returned from Libya, he had no place to sleep. To be frank, eating became also a problem to him as well.” ~ Mamudu

⁴⁰ “Mohammed had to give even his own apartment he was living in for rent. The little money he had is gone. We gave him also some money. Since he returned, he wasn’t able to recover financially. He has no job, he doesn’t have a place to stay and all of that is his burden and really bothers him.” ~ Zakari

⁴¹ “He struggles to find work. Nothing is clicking.” ~ Ibrahim

5.3.2.3 Third Case: Ebenezer Bae

As previously described chapter, Ebenezer's mental constitution was devastating upon returning. At this time, he was highly depressed and sat alone, overthinking his personal situation for hours.¹ Irrespective of the mason's skill which he still possessed in order to earn a salary, Ebenezer felt demoralised and lethargic:

"Upon return, I was initially thinking about the debts and the struggles I'm facing for another time. I recalled the time before I left my home. Back then, I had my own room, was able to afford the rent, had a small TV and enjoyed my life at a humble level. However, upon return, I had nothing. I just slept at my cousin's place. I thought, 'Why did everything happen like that?' I was sitting down and groomed all day long. Others seeing me there tried to make me not think too much anymore. They said, 'Everything will be okay. Don't think.' I accepted that because they told me that I still had my carpentry and mason's work and that I didn't have a reason to worry. Because if you return with no skills or anything else you can make use of, it's bad, but I was in a different position. So, they said that I could make it. I just told them that it is not easy to start over. At that time, I was sitting down in silence and thought a lot."

~ Ebenezer ~

Uncle Stephen reports that the transit returnees from the village do not return to where they came from but prefer bigger cities.² However, there was never any doubt in his mind that he would not return to Drobo to be with his family. Nonetheless, according to his childhood friend John, Ebenezer felt embarrassed and neglected his social contacts in order to resume his work.³ In the face of the received mockery⁴, he applied himself⁵ in order to redeem his mother's debts⁶. He started over to work as a carpenter.⁷ As he did not even have his tools anymore, he had to start from scratch.⁸ Due to his absence, he had lost his former regular clients.⁹ In addition, he not only had to fight for potential customers, but argued likewise with the actual ones.¹⁰

After some time, he conceived the idea to start a mobile phone business in Drobo since there was no business as such in the immediate vicinity.¹¹ In this manner, Ebenezer contacted IOM¹² successfully and bought the required mobile phones and accessories¹³. Alongside his carpentry work, Ebenezer started to sell and repair mobile phones and accessories jointly with his cousin George as well as his friend and mentor Emmanuel.¹⁴ Ebenezer leaves sales, accounting, and operational decisions to Emmanuel. He had previous experience and managed the business successfully. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust between him and Ebenezer, which makes them rely on each other. Emmanuel consults Ebenezer as the owner on every strategic decision. Beyond strategic decisions, Ebenezer limits himself to repairing mobile phones. If one shows Ebenezer's photo to the shop's neighbours, they cannot tell who that person is. This illustrates the explicit division of labour within the work team. Unfortunately, burglars broke into their containers twice.¹⁵ Thus, they moved from the container to a regular shop.¹⁶ After the mobile phone business started to leave a profit, Ebenezer rented a room nearby.¹⁷ In the new neighbourhood, he deliberately avoids any closer contact with his neighbours in order to lie his total concentration on his income-generating activities:

"I have no further interest in being in more regular contact with the people at KB. I'm not a person who has a lot of friends. I wake up in the morning and go to work. That's the place where I'm with people. The reason why I moved to KB was that I knew that I needed to work hard now, and I didn't wanna be distracted. Before, my life was different."

~ Ebenezer ~

The income diversification¹⁸ and the division of labour with closely trusted friends and relatives, such as George, Emmanuel, and others¹⁹, enhanced Ebenezer to invest in his business for the sake of further expansion. In addition, his business idea filled a market niche which he was able to exploit successfully. In the future, he wishes to move with his business to another place²⁰ in order to expand his activities further, to obtain a higher profit, and to accelerate the repayment of his mother's debts²¹. The latter remains his main driver for all his activities. Nonetheless, he aims for sustainable finance in terms of reinvesting a certain share back into his business instead of channelling all the profit to liquidate the debts.²² In addition, he keeps his eyes open for additional business ideas.²³

As one might correctly assume, Ebenezer overcame his initial lethargy and pessimism. Aside from IOM's reintegration assistance and the support he received from his family and friends, Ebenezer's outgoing attitude was helpful for his social reintegration.²⁴ His openness to talk about his experiences in Libya enabled his friends and family to understand him and his situation better, to sympathise with him and to support him as Atta²⁵, Francis²⁶, and others describe. Beyond his own wellbeing, other people from his social environment benefit from his attitude and business activities as well. As an entrepreneur, Ebenezer generates income not only for himself but also for his employees, as George²⁷ and Iky²⁸ gratefully mention. All his activities and helpfulness make him a man in demand and earn him widespread respect. As described earlier, if his skills are required in the community, he volunteers, for instance, when the church community built a new chapel in Drobo²⁹ or when some of the kiosks in Taino I³⁰. Ebenezer gives the people from the community discounts and teaches them his skill in craft and plastering as Abraham testifies.³¹ According to Emmanuel, his industrious lifestyle seems to pay off, which is recognised by others as well.³² Besides his mother³³, he supports his brother Michael³⁴ financially. Asked for his long-term goal, his business success is meant to serve people in need, such as orphans as well.³⁵

Today, the people of his social environment state that Ebenezer has a bettered standard of living³⁶ and can be seen as "blessed"³⁷. Directly asked for his state of reintegration, they, with no exemption, considered Ebenezer to be fully reintegrated as well. The neighbours next to his container³⁸ and to his shop³⁹, his boss at the carpenter's workshop⁴⁰, his sister Paulina⁴¹, his cousin George⁴² and his uncle Stephen in Taino I⁴³, former classmate George⁴⁴, football teammate John⁴⁵ as well as acquaintance Francis⁴⁶ arrive at the same conclusion. Financially, his mobile phone business and the carpentry work unfolded to be successful, which allowed him to repay his mother's debts.⁴⁷ Ebenezer himself states that he can afford his own room⁴⁸ and runs his own business⁴⁹, which enables him to improve his everyday life⁵⁰. Similarly, Ebenezer is socially highly recognised, as already suggested. His family in Taino I⁵¹, in Drobo⁵², and beyond⁵³ confirm this notion of him being socially integrated into society as well as within the family⁵⁴:

"I can say that Ebenezer is fully reintegrated. When he was coming to the village this morning, people started to call him, 'Ebe, Ebe, Ebe!' The people are happy and surprised that he is coming for a visit. He is then invited to eat and people wanna spend time with him and invite him to their houses. I know him very well and can say that he is very well reintegrated into society."

~ Gyan ~

Over the course of IOM's reintegration assistance, his initial psychological problems faded away. In October 2019, Ebenezer's girlfriend Deborah returned from Saudi Arabia, where she worked as a home help. Nowadays, they are parents of one daughter. Nonetheless, he claims to and insists on being in need of more financial support from IOM in order to be fully reintegrated.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ebenezer has established a youth group with other friends and people from the Brong-Ahafo region, which he leads. They founded the group Ghana Youth Advocacy Against Irregular Migration. The aim is to raise awareness of the risks of undocumented migration and prevent others from choosing the route through the Sahara and the Mediterranean Sea. The group advocates for safe migration. He is also part of IOM's No Place Like Home campaign, for which he shares his migration and reintegration story to promote safe migration among the Ghanaian youth amid COVID-19 (European Commission, 2020). Both socially and financially, Ebenezer serves as a change agent for plenty of people. Since he is very involved with his work and other services, he has almost no time left to follow any regular hobbies.⁵⁶

In conclusion, with the support of his social environment and IOM's reintegration assistance, Ebenezer was able to stabilise and establish himself mentally, socially and financially gradually.⁵⁷ For the latter, he ultimately decided to opt for a mobile phone business. He was able to benefit from the expertise of those around him by employing them in an appropriate way. Market opportunities, financial resources and human resources converged in an optimal way. At the same time, he could use his craft skills to find work again and thus build up a second financial pillar. These factors, coupled with his mentors at his side who offered him support and orientation, as well as his personal characteristics and his openness to talk about his experiences, were very beneficial elements for a successful and comprehensive reintegration. In all respects, his standard of living has improved.

¹ "Back then, I was sitting down a lot and thought for hours." ~ Ebenezer

² "When they return, they don't return to their original roots but to bigger towns. They stay in Drobo, Sunyani and Brekum and other regions." ~ Stephen

³ "He felt embarrassed for his failure. Now, all his focus is on his work. Sometimes, he might even not have time to visit his friends and family in the village or those here in Drobo because he is so busy." ~ John

⁴ "However, I said to myself that I don't have a problem with that [mockery]. I was focused to continue with my carpentry work and building up my livelihood step by step." ~ Ebenezer

⁵ "He tried to put himself together and tried to work as good as he can." ~ George (Classmate)

⁶ "The debts of my mum came when I was in prison. So that time, she asked me whether she should sell her cashew farm but I said no. I wanted to repay by instalments upon my return. [...] Upon return, I started working, saving money and paying back the debts." ~ Ebenezer

⁷ "I started working at Atta's carpentry shop again. I had still the needed skills. I told him that things were not going well and I tried my luck abroad but it didn't work neither and I would like to start working with him again." ~ Ebenezer

⁸ “Upon return, I had no money. Even my tools weren’t there anymore. I had no money to buy new tools. I don’t have anything.” ~ Ebenezer

⁹ “I lived in Drobo before but I spent two years in Libya. When I returned, everything became new to me. At the time I left, a lot of people knew me because I was doing that carpentry work. After I left, they never heard from me again. They also didn’t have my phone number. After I returned, I had to start from scratch because nobody knew that I was back and nobody had my number. It was difficult to establish yourself again and to make a name for yourself. That was different. I had no contact details of any customers.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁰ “Customers sometimes try to pay less money than we agreed on before.” ~ Ebenezer

¹¹ “I wanted to do that business [mobile phone business] but we don’t have a shop like that in Drobo.” ~ Ebenezer

¹² “I started working again going up and down. After a day of work, he gave me 10 or 20 GHC. Sometimes, I gave it to George to save it for me. Therefore, I slowly started saving some money. Moreover, I started calling the number I got from IOM.” ~ Ebenezer

¹³ “I was waiting for the mobile phone seller to receive the money. Three days went by and he didn’t withdrawal the money yet. However, one day he told me that the money is on his bank account. So, I should come and collect the mobile phones and accessories. When I went to Brekum, I told him that I also need some money to rent a shop to sell my goods. But he wanted to sell his goods instead of passing the money straight to me without selling something. I bagged him saying that the money belongs to me. I didn’t want to collect the whole amount but I don’t have a place to sleep and above that I don’t have property. At that time, I had to use the mobile phone of my mother because I didn’t have money to buy my own mobile phone. So, I asked my mum to use her phone. So, I told him to get some money to buy clothes et cetera but the man said no. At the end, he gave me 300 GHC and the mobile phones and accessories. I told him that I cannot rent a room for 300 GHC but I just take it like that.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁴ “I started with the container which I showed you. There I started together with George selling the mobile phones and all the accessories. After starting that business, it developed after some time. In the meanwhile, I was still doing the carpentry work. At that time, George didn’t teach. He had time to stay at the shop.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁵ “I started at the container at the beginning of 2018. After around two months they started breaking in. Then I quickly decided to move from there to the small shop because they cannot break the iron gate.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁶ “The reason why I changed the location for my shop was that some burglars broke two times into my shop. The first time they stole mobile phone covers and batteries. So, I had to start struggling hard and worked even more at my carpentry work to get the lost money back. The second time, they broke into the container they didn’t get mobile phones but just the batteries because after the first incident we used to take the mobile phones with us to keep it at home. However, the mobile phone boxes, charger, batteries et cetera are left in the shop. So, for the second time, they took everything like the batteries, chargers et cetera. You cannot sell a mobile phone without a charger or without the battery. So, I had to get chargers and batteries to keep my business running. I decided after the last remained mobile phones were sold to stop using this place for selling my goods.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁷ “After it was successful and the business started to leave a profit, I rented my own place at Kwesi Bokrom.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁸ “In the case there is a problem at one work place, I can shift and work at another place. So, any time I can get money to support my family. That’s why I made my mind if I know how to roof, build furniture, and do the house building and roofing is not working, I can still shift to furniture’s work. If the furniture’s work is not working, I can shift to mason’s work. So, I can always get money in some way.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁹ “The agreement was to take over that place where Emmanuel already worked. He should just stay there and we would work together. Emmanuel knew that I have also some other jobs to do. Therefore, there was still something to do for him. I could make some contributions with the money I got from my other work especially if the business is not going too well or there are other financial straits for some reasons. So, I left the chargers and accessories at the container. Today, it is still like that.” ~ Ebenezer

²⁰ “I would like to take over the whole store but I don’t know if that is possible. I don’t think so. If I get a different place, I can expand my business.” ~ Ebenezer

²¹ “I’m always thinking about the debts. I’ve already repaid a bit. I know that this business belongs to me and if the business goes well, I will have a bigger shop. So, I thank IOM. I always show them that I’m willing to expand my business. So, I’m waiting for them to help me. The business is going well but it is still not enough for me.” ~ Ebenezer

²² “My first priority is to repay the debts back. Even when I got the help from IOM, I had no other thoughts than being debt-free. However, I knew that if I give the profit I make directly to the creditor, then I don’t have any business left after repaying the debts. So, I also need money to reinvest.” ~ Ebenezer

-
- 23 “I’m doing this mobile phone business at the moment. However, if another sector promises more profit, I would go for it. If I can make better business with rice, I would do that. Moreover, I like income diversification as I’m doing it already.” ~ Ebenezer
- 24 “Any time he comes to the container, he makes sure that he comes to this house just to say hi. I see him very often.” ~ Agnes
- 25 “Since he is my apprentice and returned from Libya, in most of the cases we discuss things that happened to him when he was in Libya. That’s what we talk about. All the ordeals he went through and how he suffered.” ~ Atta
- 26 “When Ebenezer returned, he told us a lot of scary stories. We weren’t really happy to hear that.” ~ Francis
- 27 “I can personally say that Ebenezer’s return affected my life positively. He returned, set up this business and employed me. I share the profit with us and shares very generously in general. His return has indeed affected my life very positively.” ~ George
- 28 “Ebenezer’s return has really helped me. I have him now as a co-worker and business partner. We collaborate together and make money together. Indeed, his return has really helped me.” ~ Iky
- 29 “Just some things at the church. They [church community] started building our mission house. So, I used to go there and helped out.” ~ Ebenezer
- 30 “Nevertheless, he is contributing a lot with his skills to the benefit of the community. Some of the kiosks that Ebenezer showed you was one which he did. It agrees to the fact that he is very helpful to us.” ~ Gyan
- 31 “He owns a mobile phone shop. Those people from this community would rather go to his shop to buy something. They get a cheaper price there as compared to other shops. Since he has some knowledge in carpentry work, he tries to teach other people from the community. The same applies to plastering. He really tries to help people. He is more serious with life now and is able to offer an open hand to people who are in need.” ~ Abraham
- 32 “When he returned, things were very difficult for him. I can see now that he has a mobile phone shop and is repairing phones and has some other things to do. I can see that things are better for him compared to his situation upon return. [...] He is hardworking and industrious. That’s why I can confidently say that he is reintegrated because he is working and walking up and down helping other people.” ~ Richard
- 33 “Michael is doing mobile money. So, I support him financially in keeping his business running.” ~ Ebenezer
- 34 Ghana has the fastest growing mobile money market in Africa. Mobile money gains importance as a payment method. The reasons are the penetration rate of mobile phones as well as the shift of the e-money issuer guidelines in 2015 (Adaba et al., 2019).
- 35 “For my future, I wanna expand my business to get more money to help those in need, such as supporting orphanages and those who don’t have much. If I see people struggling, I want to help them. I know the pain. I’m always thinking, ‘If I get money, I can help this guy or that person.’ That’s always on my mind.” ~ Ebenezer
- 36 “Things are a bit better for him now.” ~ George (Classmate)
- 37 “I see him as blessed today.” ~ Emmanuel
- 38 “I think he is totally reintegrated into the society based on the things he is doing.” ~ Agnes;
“He has been really reintegrated.” ~ anonymous
- 39 “Yes, he has been fully reintegrated.” ~ Daniel
- 40 “Ebenezer has been fully reintegrated into society.” ~ Atta
- 41 “Ebenezer has been fully reintegrated.” ~ Paulina
- 42 “He has been fully reintegrated.” ~ George (Cousin)
- 43 “He is reintegrated.” ~ Stephen
- 44 “Ebenezer has definitely been reintegrated into society. But at first, things weren’t that good. Now, things are getting well and he has been fully reintegrated.” ~ George (Classmate)
- 45 “Ebenezer has been reintegrated into the society. But he is very concerned about the work that he is doing.” ~ John
- 46 “I think he is fully reintegrated.” ~ Francis
- 47 “I already paid 2,000 GHC back. That’s the money I got from my mobile phone business and the carpentry work.” ~ Ebenezer
- 48 “After it was successful and the business started to leave a profit, I rented my own place at Kwesi Bokrom.” ~ Ebenezer

49 “If I compare the situation today with the situation before, I can say that I have a business now with three employees. So, it turned out quite well.” ~ Ebenezer

50 “Okay, the time I was in Ghana before going to Libya was characterised by a lot of struggle. Now, I’m still hustling but this life is better I would say. Now, I have a small business and I have other work to do but before I had no mobile phone business but just my carpentry work. So, I can definitely say that my life today is better.” ~ Ebenezer

51 “Even though my son Ebenezer doesn’t live in this village anymore, any time he comes, his friends and family members do recognise him and see him as one of their own. I think it’s the same in Drobo. So, I can say that he is completely reintegrated into the society.” ~ Kwaku

52 “I can confidently say that he is good reintegrated because when he is here, he plays with the children. When he comes here, the children approach him happily asking, ‘Are you back? Are you back?’ That joy tells a lot. He is good reintegrated and accepted.” ~ Michael

53 “Ebenezer has been fully reintegrated into society because of his hardworking nature. People like him. Indeed, he really has been reintegrated.” ~ Iky

54 “Ebenezer has been fully reintegrated in the community and the family.” ~ Joustina

55 “I’m always thinking about the debts. I’ve already repaid a bit. I know that this business belongs to me and if the business goes well, I will have a bigger shop. So, I thank IOM. I always show them that I’m willing to expand my business. So I’m waiting for them to help me. The business is going well but it is still not enough for me.” ~ Ebenezer

56 “There is a football club where I used to go. But since I’m working that much, I don’t have much time to go there anymore. They used to train on a daily basis at 3pm but I’m still busy at that time. So, I cannot go. The reason why I stopped was the work.” ~ Ebenezer

57 “Because of the help from his family members and IOM he is doing better now. Not all his problems have disappeared. However, in comparison to the time when he returned, the majority of his problems are already solved but not entirely.” ~ Emmanuel

5.3.2.4 Fourth Case: Moses Gafah

In 2011, Moses returned from Libya for the first time. Initially, he lived with his wife at his brother Edward's place in Teshie, Accra¹ and worked as a taxi driver while his wife was looking for a job and got some practicals as well². Upon his last return in 2017, the situation was more complicated. Moses scrutinised the income opportunities thoroughly. His first idea to enter the transportation business was dropped as the market was saturated already.³ He was full of other ideas and eager to implement them, but he lacked the financial resources to that end.⁴ Prior to his return, Moses tried to invest his savings from his activities in Libya since he did not trust the Libyan banking system. He invested his money in a television set. However, it no longer functioned after he arrived in Ghana and lost its value.⁵ Migration fellow Georgina and her husband Adam even had to leave their savings in Libya with their money frozen in Libyan bank accounts until today.⁶

In fact, Moses' decision to return from Libya to Ghana was taken under the premise of receiving reintegration assistance from IOM.⁷ However, he had to argue with IOM for several months until he was allowed to materialise his wish to work as an Uber driver. It highly frustrated him and resulted in preventable sacrifices he and his family had to make.⁸

Moses and his wife had a detailed plan in mind on how to use IOM's reintegration assistance and the other savings they possessed. However, the delay in IOM's reintegration assistance hindered the family from carrying out their ideas accordingly and made the family experience severe financial pressure. As a result, they had problems affording food, housing, and the children's school fees. Moses had to separate from his wife and children before they could finally reunite after seven months. Prior to the reception of the required resources from IOM in order to start a new life, their wish to settle down in the Volta Region could not have been implemented. They changed their intention to move to the Volta Region to settle in Kumasi, where they wanted to build their own house. However, the children had to resume school, forcing the family to settle down in Greater Accra, from where Moses had better access to IOM.⁹ Until then, they lived with their respective families and became a burden to them as well.¹⁰ Hence, Moses and his wife had to exhaust their own resources, which were supposed to serve as a basis for their business idea.¹¹ Until IOM partly provided the financial means for his Uber driving, Moses had to sell his land in Kumasi¹² and ask friends to lend him money¹³:

"There was a friend of mine who returned from Libya not through IOM but by himself. We stayed at his place in Kasoa for one week. His name is Francis Asamoah. After one week, I transported all our luggage to the Volta Region. My wife went to her mother's house and we went all together to the IOM office. Due to the delay, I had to find another place to stay. So, I moved to my brother Edward in Teshie and looked for another place. My wife and the three children remained at the grandmother's house in Osu. So, the whole issue of delay caused the selling of the land, paying the school fees and all that wasn't part of the agenda. But because of the delay, we had no other option than also renting this place."

~ Moses ~

Against the advice of his friends, Moses dealt firmly and emphatically with IOM. He insisted on the reintegration assistance and his wish how to use it. Eventually, his resolute behaviour shortened the time until the family received their entitled support:

"A lot of my friends said upon return that IOM might refuse to help me because I push them. They plead with me not to push that hard. I just asked, 'Why are you all so afraid of what I'm doing? Don't be afraid. I'm not quick-tempered.' The IOM people noticed that I'm the only guy who gives them pressure. If you sit down and shyly ask, 'Please, I want to do that, and I need money, please, please,' it won't make them do anything. I will not do that! I will tell him the truth and what he is supposed to do, and he has to do it. The truth is the truth. That's all. He will see that I'm the only person that gives him a hard time. Emma noticed that. Anytime he heard that I was around, I heard him saying, 'Oh, this guy is coming again.'"

~ Moses ~

However, he had to wait for two months after buying the car before he could start working, as the confirmation by the insurance company was delayed. At the same time, the creditor's pressure on him to pay back the debt increased. Afterwards, the aspired profit from Uber driving was not met.¹⁴ Furthermore, the family was supposed to find another place to stay since the rent for their current accommodation was not affordable once the first contract had to be renewed. To this day, the plan is to find another place to be up for sale.¹⁵

Socially, their neighbourhood relations are characterised by distanced politeness which does not go beyond small impersonal talk. Regarding their migrational experience, Moses is highly critical of disclosing it to his neighbours since he expects them to develop negative opinions about them, as discussed already. However, he suspects that his neighbours easily recognise that they are outsiders:

"They asked my wife whether we have travelled before. They easily see according to our behaviour that we have travelled. It's just for someone who has lived here for a long time really easy to see that you are not from here. Ghanaians will recognise. Since I'm not close to them, they cannot ask me. It just remains on a small-talk level with them. I won't go any further than a greeting. I always keep my distance."

~ Moses ~

Hence, it is crucial for Moses to observe his social environment and to remain reserved:

"The three weeks since you came here, nobody asked me because I'm the reserved type of person. Unless I see that you won't come close to me. However, I study you very well to know what type of person you are before I come closer. Secondly, I'm not coming closer to you because of the issue I said already with the perception people have of those who migrated. This kind of insult I would have to listen to, Mr John, you won't like it. You will never like it. Look at our place, and then you are telling them that we are coming from abroad. So, you really have to observe them because they also observe you."

~ Moses ~

In his free time, Moses does not follow any leisure activities other than going to church.¹⁶ The rest of the time, he prefers to spend indoors. As previously described, his friend Charles Frimpong is the only person he visits.¹⁷

Asking Charles about Moses' reintegration progress, he emphasises their ongoing joint suffering.¹⁸ Both Vincent and William do not consider their half-brother Moses as reintegrated.¹⁹

William reports that Moses once asked him for money to treat his sick son.²⁰ However, Vincent observed a slight improvement compared to the immediate time upon returning when Moses depended mainly on others.²¹ Childhood friend Patrick sees Moses still struggling.²² Mother-in-law Salome considers the main problem to be the financial situation²³ and attests them a lower standard of living in Ghana than in Libya²⁴. Moses himself stresses the daily struggle and unsatisfying lifestyle he and his family face:

"I'm still dreaming of having a good job to live well here in Ghana. It has to be a job that gives me at the end of the month after expenses something to be saved for the future. Now, we don't have it. My children are asking for something they wanna have, but you cannot afford it. But they are still insisting and crying. It's very sad. My family isn't happy. Comfortable means that you can eat what you want to eat on that day. Today, let's go out here and refresh ourselves. We cannot do that. Being comfortable doesn't mean that you have to make a fire before you can cook. Having a comfortable life means a lot of things, but we are facing the opposite at the moment. We are not enjoying the bright life. We have to struggle the whole time. Even though I have the car to do the Uber, it's still a hustle day by day."

~ Moses ~

Irrespective of the partial extinction of 6,000 GHC²⁵ debt, Moses is concerned that he cannot save enough money by the end of the week. As mentioned earlier, his senior brother recently passed away, and he has to provide for their sick mother and his own family.²⁶ Until today, the Uber business proved not as lucrative as expected.²⁷ Nonetheless, the family depends on the car as the only income source.²⁸

Georgina describes that the main obstacle to their own integration after their return was that they needed to prepare. They returned neither mentally ready nor with any financial means, nor were they able to take any preventive measures beforehand:

"The fact that I wasn't really prepared to return and had no plan for what to do upon return was the main problem. There was no opportunity to prepare. My mind wasn't prepared. We were confronted with the return out of nowhere. It was only God who knew. We returned home with nothing. Settling without money isn't easy. If I was well prepared that I'm coming home instead of the fights that forced us to return, things wouldn't be like this."

~ Georgina ~

However, Moses and his family were mentally prepared but criticise the need for more opportunity to make preparations.

On a systemic level, Georgina notes that it is difficult to reintegrate into the altered Ghanaian system after years of absence.²⁹ In addition, Moses mentions the general weak investment climate in Ghana. There are many business ideas, but the opportunities to implement them are limited. This causes many people to migrate abroad since there are no profitable activities and businesses in Ghana, as another hurdle.³⁰ Georgina adds that nepotism is an insurmountable hindrance for most people. Before one can get a satisfying job, you have to pay money. Many fail at this point.³¹ Her husband Adam agrees that the situation in the labour market is agitated compared to abroad.³²

¹ “Upon return, I stayed with my wife at my brother Edward’s place in Teshie in Accra for like two months before we got our own place in Anyaa. I informed my boss about the current situation.” ~ Moses

² “I was a [taxi] driver and tried to financially bridge the time. My wife was looking for a job as well. She was also getting some practicals for three months.” ~ Moses

³ “I found out that the job I wanted to do is already occupied by a lot of other people. I wanted to sell building materials, such as cement, nails, anything you need. However, you need a place where you store your goods and that’s very costly. I didn’t want to put that burden on someone who wants to help you. I wanted to start something by myself. My idea was to do transportation.” ~ Moses

⁴ “There are so many ideas I have in my mind with regard to my own future. All that ideas fail to be implemented based on one thing: money. [...] There are so many things you want to do upon return. You really feel like doing something and you might have the energy for it but not the means to do it. I returned full of ideas and plans but I didn’t have the source to fulfil it.” ~ Moses

⁵ “A friend of mine worked with the Ghanaian Embassy in Libya. He contacted me and said that he has a little bit of space in his shipping container. So, I bought some stuff from the money I had because I didn’t want to keep the money at home. I used the money to buy this TV here. When we returned to Ghana, it turned out that it’s not working. [...] It’s very unfortunate. It’s paining me but there is nothing I can do. But those who left their money at the bank had to return home and leave the money there.” ~ Moses

⁶ “I was a teacher and sewed also in Libya but I had to leave everything there. There was nothing I brought home nor did my husband. The money is still stuck. There is also no money to start any business. We are five people with our children.” ~ Georgina

⁷ “We noticed that staying in Libya is too dangerous. I had this idea of IOM in mind. So, let’s go and we will definitely get the help from them and start something.” ~ Moses

⁸ “Then IOM asked me again what I wanted to do and I said that I’ve nothing left and no job to do for now because if I want to sell something, I need a shop. That shop would take half of my money and even before I finished everything in the shop, another quarter of the money would have been gone. How much will then remain for me to buy some goods? That’s why I’m telling you goddam motherfuckers to buy this car for me to let me register it and start working with it. They refused. So, I asked, ‘The remaining money I have now, what should I do with that? Tell me! I should go and buy footwear, carry them on my head and sell them. That’s what you want me to do?’ I want a car. I will be able to earn something right away day in, day out without struggling. Before IOM realised that there is sense in what I was saying, the money was exhausted by renting the accommodation and paying the one year school fees for the children. Then, IOM agreed on my idea to buy a car, gave me the money and I should try to come up with the rest of the money to finance the car. That’s very bad. Why don’t you do it right away but let me and my family suffer? So, I had to go to Kumasi to sell my land and then to my family to ask them for help.” ~ Moses

⁹ “My intention isn’t to stay in Greater Accra or Accra. It’s not the place where I want to be. But because of my wife’s education level, we decided to stay here because she can more likely find a job here. Based on that, we are staying here for now. Also, I have better access to IOM and do what I want to do which is the Uber driving. Initially, the plan was to stay in Kumasi because we had some land there. We could have started to establish ourselves and to build step by step our own house. So, the idea was to start over in Kumasi.” ~ Moses

¹⁰ “It’s a problem for our children if they cannot eat. My wife had to stay with our three children at her mother’s place where Winfried was throughout that time. I went back to my brother Edward where I was able to get something to eat. All that because of the delay. [...] I had to stay with my brother and my wife with the three children at her mother’s place in Osu. Things became tough and we had to get our head around another place to rent for us as a family. That house I had to pay from my own budget as well as the children’s school fees. So, the money we had was running short. [...] Our family was reunited after seven months before we moved into this place.” ~ Moses

¹¹ “When they delayed our money for the car, we decided that we have to settle because the children have to start going to school. So, it was this place and the children started to school at the Smart Kids Primary School here. So, after all our documents were complete, IOM gave us the money to rent this place. Later, I processed the documents for the school fees and IOM paid it for one year then. The children started schooling. Then the issue for us to get a job was still on the table. Suddenly, they referred to what I was telling them from the very beginning. At that time, it was very late because most of my money was exhausted by then. So, I had to find money to add it myself in order to purchase the car.” ~ Moses

¹² “He told me later that he bought a land in Kumasi on which he wanted to establish himself but because things were so bad, he sold the land and everything on it in order to add the little he got from the siblings to that money to buy the car for him to work.” ~ William

¹³ “I asked a lot of friends to help me as IOM delayed more and more.” ~ Moses

14 "Sometimes, I ask him about his job and he tells me that the Uber job isn't that good. When a customer pays for a ride, it is sometimes not even enough to pay the petrol. If he would have known that before, he wouldn't have entered into that business. However, he cannot abandon that business because then he wouldn't even have anything to it. Nevertheless, he is managing it." ~ William

15 "If this [debts repaid] is done and the car is still working which we have to see because our roads aren't good and Princess might also have a job, then the plan is to work harder to get our own place because renting a house involves a lot of money in Ghana. In two years, the money will be exhausted and then the landlord won't accept monthly payment. The rent for one year is 1,300 GHC. This means that I have to go for another time to borrow money. All the time you have debts you face. You cannot move forward." ~ Moses

16 "I'm a person that goes to the church and that's it. I'm not going to a night club or something like that. I'm not this type of person. I went to work and to the church and that's all. [...] There is only the church I'm going to. For now, I don't have any club or anything like that." ~ Moses

17 "If I don't have anything to do, I'm that kind of person who stays indoors the whole day except I'm going to church. The only person I used to visit is Charles Frimpong." ~ Moses

18 "Both of us are struggling. No one has really made it. We are all suffering." ~ Charles

19 "He hasn't reintegrated. Considering all the circumstances, he hasn't reintegrated at all. [...] Sometimes, he came and told me that days were passing without any food for him. Things were very hard for him. He didn't easily readjust until he got a call to return to Libya. Then he worked hard and made it to return to Libya. Until now, he is still not okay with his life." ~ William

20 "Sometimes, he even called that his child is sick and that we should send some money to take the child to the hospital." ~ William

21 "I cannot really say that he is fully reintegrated. When he returned earlier in 2011, I can say that things were hard for him. In Libya, he was taking care of himself and then he returned with nothing. Other people had to take care of him. In the beginning, it was hard for him but for now it's getting at least better. I haven't intentionally asked him whether he would like to travel again. For now, I think he is coping with whatever he is facing. But I think if he can get some business or anything like that, he would do that. That's all he needs to be good reintegrated." ~ Vincent

22 "Moses is still struggling. When he returned, he called me and said that he doesn't have any money. So, I sent him some money. He had to stay in Accra at different places but had no proper place to stay." ~ Patrick

23 "The major difficulty I see is their financial challenges. Right now, they don't really make it. It makes me thinking a lot." ~ Salome

24 "There is an imbalance between the standard of living in Libya and the situation here in Ghana. You can easily get a job in Libya and earn some money. Returning to Ghana changes their way of living because it's not easy here. It's difficult." ~ Salome

25 "I repaid 6,000 GHC." ~ Moses

26 "I'm working alone and my wife isn't working. Assuming my wife would work, I could save money because at the end of the week I have 300 GHC after satisfying our expenses. If my wife works, I can put around 700 to 800 GHC per week aside. However, at the moment the household depends on the car and I've sometimes just 200 or 250 GHC left after a week of work. So, that makes it really difficult to save something because at the end of the month something comes across for you to be paid. My mother is also very old and my senior brother passed away." ~ Moses

27 "Sometimes, I ask him about his job and he tells me that the Uber job isn't that good. When a customer pays for a ride, it is sometimes not even enough to pay the petrol. If he would have known that before, he wouldn't have entered into that business. However, he cannot abandon that business because then he wouldn't even have anything to it. Nevertheless, he is managing it." ~ William

28 "Currently, the only thing that he has is the car and he has a wife and children who he has to support." ~ William

29 "It's really difficult what we are facing at the moment. We are struggling. It's not easy to return home from far away because we stayed in Libya for eleven years and my husband even longer. We don't know the system here in Ghana and how it works." ~ Georgina

30 "The problem is that I have ideas but not the source to fulfil the plans that I have. But if these sources aren't here in Ghana, then there is no future here. If I have the source to do it, I'll be pushed to do it. That's good. It's better by far than to travel but if those things aren't there, I have to look for it somewhere else. People chose to travel not because it's not good here to stay. They travel because even if you start a business with the little you have, another person next to you starts to do the same if your business is running well. After a while, no one will make any profit anymore because the prices for your services are pushed down. That's the reason why people rather invest the money in travelling instead in their own business." ~ Moses

³¹ “It’s not easy to get a job here in Ghana. You always have to pay before you get a job. From where is that money supposed to come from?” ~ Georgina

³² “It’s about the financial problems he has. That’s all our problem here, the financial situation. The money we spent is more than we get. That’s the problem. If I don’t find the job I want, I can still find another job. That’s how it is in Libya but in Ghana it isn’t like that.” ~ Adam

5.3.2.5 Conclusion

As a result of their critical mental state, transit returnees tend to reduce or avoid social contact upon their return. Other transit returnees do not return to their place of origin at all. Mohammed spent only a few weeks in the capital before he could gather the courage to return to his hometown. Especially in the early return stages, transit returnees are overwhelmed and lethargic. During this phase, introverted rumination is a widespread behavioural pattern. Some even develop a tendency towards criminal behaviour. In an attempt to avoid stigma, the transit returnees often try to hide their migration history. After a phase of being withdrawn, Ali, Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses were very honest with their relatives and close friends about their experiences and reported in great detail what they had been through. Knowledge of their experiences is the basis for empathy and possible support for the transit returnee by others.

After the acute initial lethargy is overcome, transit returnees are easier and highly active in seizing any income opportunity. However, in many employment contexts, it is customary to make payments in advance or to belong to a particular political party to get the job. Often preferred for various reasons and supported by institutionalised reintegration programmes, self-employment is an alternative to traditional employment. For this purpose, starting capital is necessary, which Ali and Mohammed currently need to improve. While training programmes can be helpful, learned skills can only be applied with a financial foundation. Another challenge is the sustainable investment of accumulated savings abroad so that it is available upon return to pursue business ideas. Developing profitable business ideas requires knowledge of business management as well. For example, although Mr Khamil provided Ali with funds for his intended livestock trade, he misinvested it. Ali's fellow migrants confirm that financial guidance from third parties has helped them behave financially sustainably. This includes appropriate responses to requests for financial support. Similarly, Emmanuel's financial expertise was crucial for Ebenezer to realise his business idea, highlighting the importance of social networks and effective management.

The four cases present very different patterns of social network management. Moses has a tiny network and avoids contact with people in his immediate environment, relying solely on himself for his transport business idea. Ebenezer also has few connections, but they are profound and trusting relationships that helped him develop his sense of self-efficacy and return to his regular job early on. He focuses exclusively on his work and business, avoiding leisure activities and breaking off contact with people who hinder his personal development. One benefit of this "tight" network management is that it is easier for him to ignore taunts and distance himself from them, as they lie outside his core group and have less impact. In contrast, Mohammed has an extensive network and spends time with many different people, including the members of Las Palmas Club. Sister Alimatu questions whether they are his friends or contacts that distract him from his goals and are detrimental to his wellbeing. Although his sociability, openness, and diverse activities are essential for his short-term mental health, they do not sustain his wellbeing. Ali also has a

relatively broad network, focusing on two locations; Tamale and Accra. Transnational contacts are maintained only by Mohammed and, to some extent, Ali.

Regarding entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activities, Ebenezer can demonstrate significant achievements. In his case, he successfully filled a market gap with his business idea. His entrepreneurial success is attributed to the support of IOM and his network management skills. He established a circle of trusted individuals around him and cooperated with them to build the business. He mainly focused on strategic planning and delegated operational tasks to others. The key to his success was the effective division of labour with competent and trustworthy individuals and wise reinvestment of profits, based on advice from Emmanuel. As a result, he gradually expanded his business while paying off debts. Another contributing factor to his success is his diversification of income streams by continuing his original job as a carpenter. This allowed him to offset declines in profits in one business area with gains from another. As a result, he became an employer and drove regional development. This includes his activities as a carpenter, providing occasional community service without getting paid, and sharing his knowledge and skills with others.

On the other hand, Alis' attempts to establish his own business have so far failed. Instead, he searches for business opportunities or jobs in both Tamale and Accra. Due to his constant travel between the two cities, he functions as a focal point for his family, playing a responsible role within the family. While this enhances his sense of self-efficacy and strengthens his self-confidence and sense of belonging, especially since he can earn some money through casual and smaller jobs at both locations, it also places him in a state of rootlessness. Another limitation is that some transit returnees have been abroad for years or decades, and during that time, the environment they return to has changed fundamentally. Ebenezer had to rebuild his customer base and earn a certain standing. Many other societal and systemic changes have also occurred, which transit returnees usually need to prepare for. The lack of preparation for the situation after the return is described as problematic. Moses wanted to prepare for his return with IOM but was not given the opportunity by the organisation. In particular, the appropriate place of residence proves to be an essential factor for the post-return phase, whereas the needs of transit returnees vary highly. The goal of becoming self-sufficient and not dependent on others underlies the described efforts to become self-employed or to obtain a permanent job. The degree of dependence is seen as an indicator of the respective reintegration success.

Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses have all been returned to Ghana as part of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration and are therefore entitled to reintegration assistance (*Section 5.4*). However, the application process to obtain such aid takes much work. As mentioned earlier, Ebenezer's environment significantly impacted his successful application. Moses was also successful with support from his environment. Both share a certain level of persistence and perseverance in their behaviour and attitude towards IOM, which explains their

success. On the other hand, Mohammed lacks this persistence and demanding attitude, and Ali has also not been persistent in the past regarding his entitlement to financial support.

In addition, leisure activities, such as sports or neighbourhood or community meetings, are essential for transit returnees without regular employment, especially for their mental health. However, membership fees can be potential barriers. Some transit returnees, such as Ebenezer, actively participate in campaigns against undocumented migration.

5.4 “IOM ignored my wishes” – Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

“You hope that you get help from IOM within a shorter time, but then you are stuck for one year. How does IOM think this person survive over that period of one year upon return? Where should this person sleep and eat? And if there is even a whole family behind the returnee, as it is in my case, how should we survive? Do you want the person to die before you help? [...] The frustrated person coming home gets more severer embarrassment by IOM than the frustration the person experienced in the country he or she is returning from. [...] Why don't you do it right away but let me and my family suffer? [...] I don't think that IOM is doing any humanitarian work. [...] I haven't read in the policy of IOM that the returnee has to stay one year at home before he gets help. [...] All this motherfucker madness of bureaucracy is pointless. [...] As I'm talking now, some of my colleagues are still not getting anything from them. Some got something, others just a bit and others simply nothing. [...] When you call, they [IOM] don't pick up. Sometimes, you call and they just turn on the answering machine. These goddam motherfuckers are in the office. This is what is going on. [...] You always have to pay before they do anything. I had to do that. The most painful part is that IOM doesn't inform you about the whole procedure and what is required for that. [...] I have to sleep outside. My wife and the three children are in a similar situation. Even if they refuse my business idea, I still need a house for me and my family, and my children need to start going to school. [...] IOM didn't care about me and my family. They knew that I returned with my wife, a baby and another child and had a third one back home. They have all their names. They never asked me about anything. [...] Even if you go there, they won't let you enter. I had that situation. You are not allowed to pass the security check. [...] Some people go there early in the morning before their shift starts to grab them at the gate to get the chance to talk to them before they enter their workplace. And IOM is telling us something about cooperation? Everything that they say in this respect is a lie. I don't see any truthfulness in what they are saying. People are cooperating. I don't see any honesty in IOM's agenda. That's all a political lie.”

~ Moses ~

This section is dedicated to institutionalised AVRR and its impact on the reintegration of transit returnees in practice. The focus lies on the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration and how this initiative supports transit returnees. It describes the needs and expectations of transit returnees from such a programme; the services received by transit returnees; the application process; the general interaction with IOM as well as the perception of IOM by transit returnees. However, as Ali did not benefit from the EU-IOM initiative, the findings regarding his experiences with institutionalised reintegration programmes are limited, which is why his part remains relatively short regarding this topic.

5.4.1 First Case: Ali Alhassan

Ali did not benefit from the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration or any other institutionalised programmes as he had never been in contact with IOM in this regard. The only exception was the evacuation in 2011 which IOM organised and executed. After Ali and other migrants were brought back, everyone was supposed to receive a mobile phone and

transportation money to contact relatives and reach their respective home regions. However, there was no mobile phone left for Ali and he was only given 30 GHC to return to his family in Tamale.¹ Similar and yet contrasting experiences were made by Matthäus in 2008. Once again, no reintegration assistance was provided.² At that time, only a handful of the more than 200 transit returnees were interviewed by IOM after arriving in Ghana.³ He received a mobile phone with a SIM card but no transportation money.⁴ In 2011, IOM organised a business workshop to empower transit returnees to start their businesses. The participants were supposed to receive 1,150 GHC as a starting capital. However, according to Ali, he was not physically present in Tamale when IOM disbursed the money to the participants. As a result, he could not benefit from the starting capital and did not attempt to receive the assistance either⁵.

Among its target group, IOM is not particularly well-known in Tamale. The name is familiar to only a few people. Instead, AFDOM serves as the place to go and is perceived as a provider of hands-on support. AFDOM is mainly funded in its activities by GIZ. Their head Aminu Munkaila confirms the situation and reports that he stays in lively exchange with the target groups. Prospective or returned migrants come to him instead of IOM. Thus, neither does IOM appear to have any remarkable contact with the target group nor does the organisation proactively establish such networks.

Asked the Cap Anamur transit returnees, they have precise expectations of what IOM should provide. Regarding beneficial reintegration assistance, Mawiya expects IOM to accompany the transit returnees with financial and psychological counselling and to offer vocational training programmes.⁶ It is vital to monitor the transit returnee and to be close to him. Matthäus notes that it is bad that IOM does not even have an office in Tamale which is factually wrong but illustrates the perceived absence of IOM as mentioned above.⁷ Aziz states that including the community and neighbourhood in the reintegration process remains essential. They should be informed about the circumstances and characteristics of the return and reintegration process.⁸ It is particularly important first to ensure orientation. For the transit returnees' sake, this should be provided through psychological counselling in combination with vocational and financial training before the transit returnees are supported in realising their business idea:

"The returnee needs one thing: orientation. You have to give him orientation. You have to do that for his personal sake. Make sure that you give him vocational and financial training and psychological counselling before you also support him in establishing himself. The latter is not necessarily in cash. It can also be in products. If he wants to do MTN business, give him the cards to sell. Don't give him the money. Sometimes, they may not use it for the right thing."

~ Matthäus ~

Nurudeen believes awareness programmes about the dangers of migration by transit returnees are effective in preventing others from such experiences. Instead, the transit returnees can serve as good examples that it is possible to lead a successful life in Ghana.⁹

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- ¹ “In 2011, we were evacuated by IOM. They brought us back to Ghana and gave us cell phones and some transportation money to return to our families. [...] [However,] the cell phones were finished. I just got 30 GHC.” ~ Ali
- ² “That’s what they [IOM] said. They said that they will bring us back to our home. [However,] they didn’t [provide any reintegration assistance].” ~ Matthäus
- ³ “We were over 200 returnees. They just interviewed two or three of us but I wasn’t among.” ~ Matthäus
- ⁴ “We got only a mobile phone and an MTN sim card. There was no money.” ~ Matthäus
- ⁵ “It’s not their fault that I wasn’t around and I cannot force them to help me. They tried to help but I was just too late. I cannot force them.” ~ Ali
- ⁶ “The returnees need psychological and financial counselling which IOM should provide. There is support required to train the person vocationally.” ~ Mawiya
- ⁷ “Monitoring is very important. It’s a shame that IOM has no office here. They must have an office with stuff here who monitor the people they are supporting.” ~ Matthäus
- ⁸ “You can only incorporate the community and neighbourhood into the reintegration process through education. IOM and other organisations have to educate our people.” ~ Aziz
- ⁹ “What I want to add to the question of what the international bodies should do is that they should put their focus on us who migrated and returned and want to stay in the country. No one of us will travel again based on what we saw. IOM should focus on us that we can educate others not to travel. That would be the best. We returnees can convince the people with what we saw. If we talk to them, they will listen. When I returned, I didn’t come down with a single USD. Today, I have a family, I have my own home and my own business. My story of returning with nothing but making it afterwards can convince people to try their luck in their own country and not to travel. If you are in Ghana, you can make it. They can see us as good examples of those who failed in travelling but made it still upon return back home without travelling again.” ~ Nurudeen

5.4.2 Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni

Upon arrival in Ghana, Mohammed was interviewed at the airport. Beyond being provided with something to eat and drink, he received 500 GHC as a transportation fee and a modest starting capital. After reaching Takoradi, he was supposed to call a telephone number to request assistance from IOM for setting up his own business. However, his attempts to receive that support were unsuccessful.¹ Instead, IOM asked him for an invoice for the business he intended to start. The promised start-up aid for the respective business corresponds to the equivalent of 1,000 EUR. Despite receiving the start-up aid, Mohammed has been repeatedly delayed on the phone for the past years:

“They said that I should submit an invoice about the business I wanna do. They said that we get 1,000 EUR to establish a business. Even yesterday, I called IOM and they said that I should be patient and that they are still working on it. I should be patient after two years since I returned.”

~ Mohammed ~

In detail, IOM promised Mohammed to provide him with a sewing machine to start his fashion design business, but the process still needs to be completed. He has submitted several invoices in person but received no financial or other assistance for his reintegration.² Instead, IOM invites him to awareness-raising events about the dangers of undocumented migration. Mohammed has always accepted IOM's invitations and attended five of these events. During these meetings, promises are constantly repeated, claiming that reintegration assistance will surely be provided soon. Yet their words were not followed by visible actions. Consequently, Mohammed and other transit returnees went to court to get the promised aid they were entitled to. The court ruled in their favour. Nonetheless, it did not change anything but increased the frustration among the transit returnees:

“I didn't get any help from IOM. They just did some one-day meetings with us, telling us how risky the journey to Europe is and that we should try to do our own business here in Ghana. They just talked but provided no money or any other assistance. When they want to meet us, they tell me to gather the boys to meet them, but they don't say anything when we actually meet. Now, all of the guys are angry and don't want to go to the meeting again. Instead, we went to court and the judge said that they would compensate us, but in Ghana, it won't happen. I went to these meetings five times at different places. One was in Takoradi, another one at Jubilee Park here, one at the hotel I showed you, and the other meetings were at the other hotel. You always get a call in advance to make you aware of these meetings. We always go when they call us for a meeting. They meet us for a whole day, and nothing consistent emerges. The last time they told us that the judge wanted to meet us. So, we went there and they didn't say anything vital. So, we were even angry with IOM for making us go and wasting our time. [...] They are always saying that they are working on it.”

~ Mohammed ~

However, Mohammed's urgent need for housing, food or mental assistance is entirely ignored, and he is forced to cope independently. Of all transit returnees, he knows only two who have received half of the promised assistance. In consequence, the majority have abandoned their efforts in this regard. Yet, albeit he is weary of IOM's words and highly frustrated, Mohammed is not giving up:

"Issah and Meno got half of the promised money. However, even Issah is angry and does not go to the meetings again. They said they were holding a meeting at Kumasi, but he said that they would just talk and nothing good would come out of it. So, he will not go. [...] If IOM calls me, I go. Most of the others don't. They are just tired of it. Always just talking, talking, talking. [...] They always say over and over again that they are working on it."

~ Mohammed ~

In response to the question of what comes to his mind when he thinks of the acronym IOM, Mohammed replies:

"I always think that they said that they wanted to help us."

~ Mohammed ~

Once again, Mohammed's words, the tone of voice and facial expressions reveal resignation, frustration and disappointment. His impression is that IOM is misappropriating the money and defrauding him and others of their share.³ Accordingly, he appeals to IOM to keep their promise to support him.⁴

¹ "Upon return, IOM interviewed me and gave me 500 GHC for transportation and some food and water. They also said that everybody will receive some money to start a business. Up to now, I didn't get anything. They gave us a number to call to get help for our business. Until today, I didn't get anything." ~ Mohammed

² "IOM opened an office here in Takoradi. I went there this year and handed another invoice in." ~ Mohammed

³ "Even IOM people are not good. If I'm in Accra, I go to the IOM office and tell them. They get money from Europe and they don't use it for us." ~ Mohammed

⁴ "I want to urge IOM to help us." ~ Mohammed

5.4.3 Third Case: Ebenezer Bae

Similar to Mohammed, Ebenezer was brought back to Ghana under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. After being released from the Libyan prison, he and the other migrants were registered and provided medical care. However, they were not offered any food.¹ IOM distributed standard-sized T-shirts, which were too big for most of them.² On the plane, the transit returnees were told about the EU-IOM programme. They were promised that they would receive funding for their business. If their business were successful, more funding would be forthcoming.³ In order to benefit from the programme's reintegration services, an IOM staff member gave Ebenezer a phone number to call.⁴ After landing, he was also interviewed and his contact details and those of his relatives were taken.⁵ In addition, the needs of other family members were inquired, whereby Ebenezer mentioned his nephews, whom he also has to care for.⁶ His travel allowance and starting capital totalled 420 GHC.⁷ This amount despaired him as it could not cover any of his needs. He was completely destitute.⁸ After arriving in Drobo, he called the mentioned telephone number and aimed to receive reintegration assistance for his mobile phone shop and repair. Ebenezer perceived the application process to be extremely demanding since he had to meet numerous requirements, provide information and submit many documents. IOM's requirements meant much effort on his part. It was particularly challenging that there was no transparency about the process as a whole and the requirements as such.⁹ Ebenezer did not know when all the requirements would be fulfilled. The uncertainty and demoralisation increased with each new demand:

"The process was very tedious. The moment came when I wanted to give up. I was tired and thought that they just didn't want to give me the money. Today, I did what they asked me to do; the next day, I had to do another thing, and the day after, I had to meet other requirements. So, I was very tired doing so. However, I didn't give up and tried to finish what they asked of me."

~ Ebenezer ~

Emmanuel confirms the arduousness of the whole procedure in which he assisted him.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Ebenezer followed the instructions and obtained an invoice from a mobile phone seller. From him, Ebenezer wanted to buy the necessary mobile phones and supplies for his intended shop. After confirming IOM the invoice's accuracy, the salesperson provided his bank details. Afterwards, Ebenezer was allowed to collect the cheque amounting to 5,500 GHC in Accra. However, he had to cover the expenses for the journey to the Ghanaian capital and back by himself.¹¹ When he received the cheque, tears of joy were provoked in him. However, the money was exclusively designated as in-kind assistance for the mobile phones and supplies requested from the mobile phone salesperson in Sunyani. In order to cover his living expenses and the cost of renting a sales space, Ebenezer tried to convince the vendor to pay him a share in cash. Except for 300 GHC, the salesman did not agree to this.¹² The entire process lasted about half a year, from submitting the initial application form to obtaining the actual assistance.¹³ Irrespective of the fact that IOM monitors Ebenezer's business and conducts interviews with him and Emmanuel, the once-promised additional financial aid following the successful launch of the business has not materialised yet.¹⁴ Instead, IOM regularly renews the promise of further support,

but no specific date is mentioned when this support would be provided. Thus, the promise remained unfulfilled and Ebenezer is still waiting for further assistance:

“They want to see if the business is going in the right direction. If they see that the business is going in the right direction and that I’m showing interest and effort to work to that end, they will help me. However, they didn’t mention a particular date. [...] They didn’t give me a date or anything. They just told me that they would help me and expect certain progress. [...] I got help, but the help was not enough. I told you about my debts and that I’m still repaying. The promise IOM made was to help me achieve my goals, but I’m still waiting for them.”

~ Ebenezer ~

IOM demands that he shows a willingness to expand further. In fact, he considers the size of his shop as too limited. According to him, he needs a bigger one to be able to provide sufficiently for himself and his nephews. He has relied on the promise of further assistance, but its non-compliance discourages him.¹⁵ By his admission, he shows this requested commitment on a daily basis, but still, nothing is happening from IOM’s side:

“I’m always thinking about the debts. I’ve already repaid a bit. I know that this business belongs to me, and if the business goes well, I will have a bigger shop. So, I thank IOM. I always show them that I’m willing to expand my business. So, I’m waiting for them to help me. The business is going well, but it is still not enough for me.”

~ Ebenezer ~

Nonetheless, Ebenezer is grateful to IOM for the help he has received.¹⁶ Until today, the provided aid has not only financially improved Ebenezer’s standard of living, but it has boosted his mental health as well:

“After they returned me, I was thinking a lot about my experiences and the debts I have. Before IOM helped me out, I regretted it a lot. That time, I suffered a lot and sat down and brooded over everything a lot. After I got the money from IOM, knowing that I have a second mainstay apart from the carpentry work, things were getting easier both in reality and in my mind.”

~ Ebenezer ~

Asked about the thoughts coming to his mind when he hears the acronym IOM, he replies that this is the organisation which once rescued him from Libya, gave him 5,500 GHC and that they do not want people to migrate through the desert.¹⁷

¹ “After arrival, we encountered IOM officials and started filling out forms asking for your name and other stuff. They asked me, ‘Are you sick? Is something painning you?’ If yes, they gave you medicine. In case you have something, they brought you to a room with a doctor. They checked your temperature and so on. They told us that we will be leaving. We didn’t get anything to eat from the morning until the evening when we arrived at the camp in Tripoli. The next morning, we just got a bit of bread.” ~ Ebenezer

² “IOM supplied us shirts in big sizes because they didn’t know anyone’s size.” ~ Ebenezer

³ “When we were on the airplane, IOM told us to help us to start a business. That’s what they told us. After we arrived at the airport, they wrote down our names and gave us some papers. We should call their number after arriving at home and then they would help us. [...] When we were on the airplane coming from Libya they told us that we will receive money to start our business. At a future point, they will check if the business is going well. If so, they promised to help you more that you can achieve what you are aiming for in order to prevent that it will come into your mind to travel again.” ~ Ebenezer

⁴ “She [IOM] gave me a paper with some contact details of IOM. So, if I need some help, I should dial that number.” ~ Ebenezer

⁵ “IOM people wrote down our names and asked us for our families’ phone numbers either your sister, your mum or your dad or any number you know because no one had a phone himself. I gave them my own number and my mum’s number. They gave us a little paper and said that we should be calling them when we arrived back home.” ~ Ebenezer

⁶ “No, they asked me for a wife and children and I said, ‘No, but I have to take care of my sister’s children and I have to support my mum because of the debts.’ That’s what I told them. They said that they will give me the appropriate help.” ~ Ebenezer

⁷ “At that time, they gave everybody 420 GHC for going home and to start over again.” ~ Ebenezer

⁸ “I thought with these 420 GHC I cannot do anything and I don’t have anything else.” ~ Ebenezer

⁹ “They asked me if I have found a work I would like to do and I told them that I want to start a phone business. They told me to look for a place for it and requested a lot of things, ‘Do this, do this, do this.’ I followed their instructions. They promised me money to start my business.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁰ “It wasn’t easy for him to get the money from IOM but he made it.” ~ Emmanuel

¹¹ “I followed the IOM instructions and they gave me 5,500 GHC. However, they didn’t give it to me in cash but as in-kind. But before that, they wanted to know with who I wanted to do that business. They didn’t want to give the money directly to me because they claimed I would travel again. I said, ‘No, if I think of that time and the things I saw in Libya, I won’t travel again.’ But still, they didn’t agree on giving the money to me. I went to Brekum to a friend of Atta who had a mobile phone shop. I told him about my plans and that IOM is willing to support me but won’t give the support directly to me. I explained that they will send the money to his bank account and then I can buy my goods. So, I asked him for his bank account number and the shop name. He did so and I informed the IOM office. They received it and later called me when I was at my carpentry work. They asked me where I am and what I do. They called me on a Friday and told me to be in Accra at the IOM office on Monday by 8am. Going to Accra back and forth costs 100 GHC but I didn’t have 100 GHC.” ~ Ebenezer

¹² “The [IOM] guy understood and gave me a cheque over 5,500 GHC. I wanted to cry. Tears of joy. He wrote down the name of the phone shop in Sunyani and the owner’s bank account number. The boss told me that I cannot withdrawal the money myself unless I give the cheque to the phone seller. I had to prove what kind of mobile phones I wanted to buy and IOM would check whether the 5,500 GHC would be exhausted or not and confirm then to do the business. I told that the phone seller in Sunyani and he agreed to call me after he received the money to come and collected the goods. So, I just returned to Drobo and waited for his call. [...] I was waiting for the mobile phone seller to receive the money. Three days went by and he didn’t withdrawal the money yet. However, one day he told me that the money is on his bank account. So, I should come and collect the mobile phones and accessories. When I went to Brekum, I told him that I also need some money to rent a shop to sell my goods. But he wanted to sell his goods instead of passing the money straight to me without selling something. I bagged him saying that the money belongs to me. I didn’t want to collect the whole amount but I don’t have a place to sleep and above that I don’t have property. At that time, I had to use the mobile phone of my mother because I didn’t have money to buy my own mobile phone. So, I asked my mum to use her phone. So, I told him to get some money to buy clothes et cetera but the man said no. At the end, he gave me 300 GHC and the mobile phones and accessories. I told him that I cannot rent a room for 300 GHC but I just take it like that.” ~ Ebenezer

¹³ “I know that the whole process with IOM took around half a year.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁴ “IOM only talked to Emma when they came to monitor our business. When IOM is about to come for a check up, they call me before. Then they talk to me and Emma. [...] They ask me about the business and how it is going and I tell them that it is progressing slowly. I always used to tell them that the store is too small. I’m asking for some help to get a bigger store.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁵ “I got help but the help is not enough. I told you about my debts and that I’m still repaying. The promise IOM made was to help me achieve my goals but I’m still waiting for them.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁶ “I need a bigger shop and I have to take care of my sister’s children and I can do so. So, I thank IOM.” ~ Ebenezer

¹⁷ “The thing that comes into my mind is that IOM was the organisation which returned me from Libya, they gave me 5,500 GHC and that they don’t want people to migrate through the desert. That’s what comes into my mind.” ~ Ebenezer

5.4.4 Fourth Case: Moses Gafah

In 2017, Moses was returned to Ghana with his wife and the two youngest children under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. On the internet several months in advance, he had researched the programme and the services it offers to transit returnees in detail.¹ By the time his wife became pregnant, it was the most appropriate time for the family to leave Libya for Ghana.² Prior to departure, Moses did not receive any information related to his reintegration. In spite of the fact that he already had very concrete ideas about what he wanted to do and how he wanted to apply the reintegration assistance accordingly, he was not interviewed on this matter. It was only promised that he and his family would be given some support. There was no medical examination or other services. The IOM staff only asked to see his passport and gave him a phone number to call upon arrival in Ghana:³

"IOM did not interview me before I was brought back. The only thing they told me about the things I could expect here was that because we are a family, we are entitled to a lot of things we can get to start a new life. That's it, but they never interviewed me, asking about my intentions. They just took a photocopy of my passport and I got a stamp that I left Libya. Back in Ghana, they gave me my passport back."

~ Moses ~

At the airport in Accra, they were given 100 USD per person and told to contact IOM if they wished to receive reintegration assistance.⁴ Nonetheless, the communicated contact details were deficient as no address was provided, and no one could be reached under the telephone number. If, in rare cases, someone answered the phone, they were told that the person in charge was unavailable. Eventually, Moses went searching for himself. The people at the UN office in Accra referred him to IOM and provided him with the respective address:

"Do you know what IOM did when we arrived at the airport? They gave us a piece of paper with an IOM logo on it, phone numbers to call them and email addresses to write them, but the location of the office isn't stated. So, what do you imply? When you call, they don't pick up. Sometimes, you call and they just turn on the answering machine. These goddam motherfuckers are in the office. This is what is going on. And if they pick up your call, the person who is in charge of your issue isn't around. They will toss you until you give up yourself. You'll be fed up after a while and stop calling again. The only chance for you is to go and look for them yourself. I went to the UN office first and was redirected to the IOM office. If someone doesn't have this idea of looking for them themselves, you have no chance. You can witness the scenario right now."

~ Moses ~

At the end of the previous quote, Moses speculates that he would never have been able to start the application process for reintegration assistance if he had not appeared in person and remained persistent. Eventually, he was requested to submit invoices to buy a car for his aspired Uber driving. However, each invoice required a 1,000 GHC deposit which is only compensated if there is a positive purchase decision at a later stage:

"IOM is talking about in-kind help. They don't want to give cash. Fair enough. I went there; they explained everything to me; I agreed and told them from the very first day what I wanted to do, which was buy a car and become a driver. They said that I should provide them with invoices about the price of a car from three different garages where cars are sold. I provided two and they still insisted on another one. If you try to get an invoice, you have to pay for that already. One garage I went to demanded 1,000 GHC from me. So, I asked them, '1,000 GHC for what?' They just said, 'For the invoice.' It is that the 1,000 GHC are the deposit, and if you want to buy the car, you pay the rest."

That's the agenda, but if you don't come back, they just keep the money. In my own country, I have to pay for an invoice. My own brothers and sisters are demanding that from me. You always have to pay before they do anything. I had to do that."

~ Moses ~

For the successful application process, IOM requested three different invoices. This procedure is not only almost impossible to fulfil because of the advance payment which the usually destitute transit returnee has to make, but it is also financially highly inefficient. After he submitted the third cost estimate for the car, it took them another three to four months to process the documents. In this case, Moses exerted constant pressure to accelerate the process. Moreover, Moses was never informed if the documents submitted were faulty or insufficient. Instead of transparently presenting what is required for a successful application for reintegration assistance, new demands are constantly imposed without the transit returnee knowing whether this is sufficient or new demands will follow. This salami-slicing strategy is psychologically highly gruelling, painful and makes most people quit sooner or later.⁵ After reviewing the cost calculations, IOM informed Moses that they rejected the business idea. It was not considered too costly or not financially feasible for them. However, in their eyes, it was inappropriate for deserving investment in the context of a reintegration measure. After the rejection and the resulting lack of opportunity to generate an income through Uber driving, the need to cover the family's requirements came to the fore as described above:

"After I submitted the third invoice, they told me that they were going to process it. After the processing, they would call me. The processing took them three to four months, regardless of how hard I urged them. I even went there with my wife and my children. Then they told me that they could not buy the car for me. The explanation for rejecting my application was not that the car was too expensive but that they didn't like to buy a car for me because this business was pointless. They wanted me to focus on another business area. One week later, I called IOM and told them that I didn't even have a place to stay. Even though I'm staying at my brother's place, I have to sleep outside. My wife and the three children are in a similar situation. Even if they refuse my business idea, I still need a house for me and my family and my children need to start going to school."

~ Moses ~

Besides the need for wages, the family also had to live somewhere. Regarding their intended place of residence, the original plan was to settle in the Volta Region. The reasons are manifold and were partly introduced in *Subsubsection 5.3.1.4*. Moses' family on his mother's side originates from there, the land prices are low and Moses could imagine working there immediately as a driver. However, IOM ignored the family's desired plans, whereas they were well aware of their precarious housing and living situation. They had already been informed about the size and the needs and wishes of the family before their return. However, IOM did not address the need for accommodation, food, compulsory schooling of the children or any other living costs. Moses had to come back countless times and proactively ask for help since he would otherwise not have heard anything from IOM. Due to the uncertainty of whether or not the reintegration assistance would have been approved and the necessity to constantly appear at the IOM office in Accra, they had to settle in Greater Accra. But even this was only possible with problems. Until IOM approved the assistance, the running costs of living needed to be covered by themselves. For this reason, Moses sold the property in Kumasi and they relocated to an unknown area against their

will. As a consequence, he considers himself and his family to be deprived of their future plans by IOM.⁶ Since even the money for the accommodation took three months to reach Moses, he was also unable to move into the apartment in Greater Accra, which the landlord had promised him. In the meantime, the flat was given to other tenants and the family was forced to move into a much worse and more expensive flat for which they had to pay commission fees as well. Moses felt completely abandoned by all these issues. IOM did nothing to quickly and adequately support the family, which irritated Moses tremendously:

"IOM didn't care about me and my family. They knew that I returned with my wife, a baby and another child and had a third one back home. They have all their names. They never asked me about anything. Even when I proposed to get accommodation, it took them three months. After they refused to buy me a car, I started two weeks later the process applying for accommodation. So, I started trying to get the car in November. In February, we got a negative answer. The same month, I started trying to get a house, and we ended up getting a positive answer in May. Even for that, I had to go there several times. I found a house which was very cheap to rent. It had two bedrooms and cost 350 GHC per month. IOM delayed and delayed and the landlord gave that house to another person. I wanted to borrow money from one of my sisters. The day I got the money from my sister, I went to the landlord and he said that he just gave the house on that very day to another family because I didn't answer for a month. That's why we had to take this current accommodation. Even for that one, we had to instruct an agent, which cost us money. I presented all the required documents to IOM, but it still took them two months to process them. All that they do doesn't work as it's supposed to. I don't know if the employees aren't properly supervised or if this is an order from above. I don't know."

~ Moses ~

Eventually, IOM agreed to fund the car for Uber driving. The reason for the approval is probably attributed to Moses' persistence. Nonetheless, the financial and emotional sacrifices for Moses, his wife, children, and their families were already very high.⁷ Thus, Moses blames IOM's long processing time for the described hardships and the failure of their original plans.⁸ The frustration about the whole process and the avoidable suffering is reflected in Moses' following descriptions:

"Then IOM asked me again what I wanted to do, and I said that I had nothing left and no job to do for now because if I wanted to sell something, I needed a shop. That shop would take half of my money, and even before I finished everything in the shop, another quarter of the money would have been gone. How much will then remain for me to buy some goods? That's why I'm telling you goddam motherfuckers to buy this car for me to let me register it and start working with it. They refused. So, I asked, 'The remaining money I have now, what should I do with that? Tell me! I should go and buy footwear, carry them on my head and sell them. That's what you want me to do?' I want a car. I will be able to earn something right away, day in, day out, without struggling. Before IOM realised that there was a sense in what I was saying, the money was exhausted by renting the accommodation and paying the one-year school fees for the children. Then, IOM agreed to my idea to buy a car, gave me the money, and I should try to come up with the rest of the money to finance the car. That's very bad. Why don't you do it right away but let me and my family suffer? So, I had to go to Kumasi to sell my land and then to my family to ask them for help."

~ Moses ~

Irrespective of the pressure and his constant personal appearances, Moses had to wait one year before he could partly realise the plans he had already formulated in Libya. He criticises the entire bureaucratic procedure and the disregard for the direct living costs of the transit returnees and their families after arrival. He asks the rhetorical question if the transit returnee should die before IOM helps him. The processing time is severely degrading and has dire consequences. Thus, the frustration of the already frustrated transit returnees is further exacerbated by IOM. Moses perceives the entire IOM process as humiliating, which he describes vividly in the following:

"My first ride was in November 2018. I stayed here in Ghana for one year until I was able to offer my first ride. That's why we are saying that even though they are helping, which is good that the process and the delay are taking too long. You hope that you get help from IOM within a shorter time, but then you are stuck for one year. How does IOM think this person survive over that period of one year upon return? Where should this person sleep and eat? And if there is even a whole family behind the returnee, as it is in my case, how should we survive? Do you want the person to die before you help? Just because of your goddam delay? I always used to tell them, 'Do you want the person to die because of your goddam delay before you help?' The returnees are coming from a place which has already frustrated them. The frustrated person coming home gets more severer embarrassment by IOM than the frustration the person experienced in the country he or she is returning from. All that because of the way IOM delays us and this kind of implications you have to go through before you get help from them is very, very, very bad. I personally don't like it at all. It's very bad."

~ Moses ~

In his eyes, the migrants are completely ignored and not heard. In fact, IOM pursues a misplaced policy that must be adapted to the transit returnees. Moses personally confronted IOM with his accusations, but it seems to him that IOM wants to hear or understand only some of this as they follow their policy.⁹ He complains that IOM never genuinely tried to talk to him. Even during the pre-departure phase in Libya, he wanted to talk to them about his reintegration plans. However, he had no opportunity to discuss his situation with IOM. Upon arrival in Ghana until today, they do not listen to him or consider his needs. He believes that if IOM had listened to him, he and his family would not be in this precarious situation today.¹⁰ Moses understands that IOM wants the transit returnees to be cooperative. However, the dimension of delay, non-transparency and foreign influence by IOM staff seems to him to be ultimately destructive. He was well informed, prepared, proactive, and cooperative to the highest degree; yet all of this remained unrewarded. His advantage was that he could make regular personal appearances. Nonetheless, even then, he could not speak to IOM officials in person as they did not let him enter the compound. Thus, he raises the question of what transit returnees do if they live outside the perimeter of the main office in Accra. He reports scenes in front of the IOM compound where transit returnees camped or gathered early in the morning. Before their shifts, the transit returnees picked up IOM staff members to be able to talk to them. These conditions invert IOM's credo of serving migrants and the expectation that transit returnees should cooperate. Moses speculates that the staff wanted to keep the money designated for the transit returnees for themselves. According to him, the whole agenda of IOM is a lie. The underlying strategy might be that the transit returnees become demoralised and frustrated. In the end, they give up on their own and IOM embezzles the money for itself:

"If the returnee is supposed to be cooperative, fine, but is it necessary to let time lapse away for such a long period before the person gets what he wants? It might also be that they don't want the returnees to know that they have the money for them to help. Or maybe IOM thinks that the returnee can help himself while they are delaying and processing. If they have any of these perceptions in their minds, it's wrong. It's totally wrong. If you want us to cooperate, yes, I did. I can say so for myself. I'd been going there over and over again, but what happened? It took them from November to May until I got accommodation and to October until I got my car to start Uber driving. It was barely one year. How come? I've been going there countless times. If I cooperate, I become a burden to them. It was possible for me to go to the office and urge them, but how about those who don't live where the main office is? I asked all these questions Emmanuel from IOM because phone calls are pointless. They won't pick up your call unless you go there. Even if you go there, they won't let you enter. I had that situation. You are not allowed to pass the security check. You cannot even see the IOM people. Before you see the IOM person in charge, you have to urge very hardly. Some people go there early in the morning before his shift starts to grab him at the gate to get the chance to talk to him before he enters his workplace. And IOM is telling us something about cooperation?"

Everything that they say in this respect is a lie. I don't see any truthfulness in what they are saying. People are cooperating. I don't see any honesty in IOM's agenda. That's all a political lie. The returnees are going there day in, day out. They are cooperating, trying to see them, but what happens? You just get to talk to them on the phone while you are sitting in the security room, not allowed to enter to see them personally. Then you just get the information that they are working on it and that they will call you. That's all. And then you are waiting again. That's what is going on between us returnees and IOM. When they promise that they will call you back and they don't, you have to go there again. That's what is going on. It comes to the point that I think that this is indeed part of their strategy to frustrate the returnees, making them give up reaching out for any help. Geneva had announced that they would give them their budget. The money was already given to IOM in Ghana. Whatever they will do with the money, the auditor will come and ask about it. Then they gonna tell him that the money is finished."

~ Moses ~

On the one hand, Moses objects to the logic that IOM's current process encourages a proactive attitude on the part of transit returnees since even Moses himself has now given up contacting IOM.¹¹ Albeit they promised to contact him, monitor his business and provide further assistance, he does not intend to follow up again, even though the promises have not yet been fulfilled.¹² On the other hand, he contests the idea that the process minimises the likelihood of the transit returnee using the assistance to remigrate. He strongly appeals to IOM to forget about their perceptions in this regard and end the delays as they are fundamentally harmful to the transit returnees and do not undermine their desire to remigrate in any way:

"They should stop the delays. The delays don't help the migrants. It's very bad. IOM thinks that if they give the money quickly, the returnees will use the money to travel again. That's what they think. However, if someone returns and stays for two years back, you give him the help, and he wants to travel, he will travel. IOM should forget about the goddam shit they have in their mind. They should stop it. It's not helping us. The delays are killing us."

~ Moses ~

In summary, for Moses' case, considering the length of the processing time, the procedure, and the resulting high level of frustration, the entire assistance should be provided in a less bureaucratic, accelerated, more flexible, and customised manner. The use of cash subsidies is required instead of delaying the transit returnee for months and years and providing unsuitable in-kind support in the end:

"There are a lot of problems caused by the delay of IOM. People get highly frustrated. The frustration that arises is very bad, and I don't think that IOM is doing any humanitarian work. If I just see this aspect, I have to say that they aren't doing any humanitarian work. They want us to go through this drama before they help me. They told me that they gave money to people in the past and that they used that money to travel again, and that's why you have to go through that bureaucratic process before you get help from IOM. That's very bad. I haven't read in the policy of IOM that the returnee has to stay one year at home before he gets help. The money is supposed to be given to the returnee at the airport. If it is 1,000 Euro, you give them 1,000 EUR and you can start your business. All this motherfucker madness of bureaucracy is pointless. I studied IOM's policy and it says nothing about that. As I'm talking now, some of my colleagues are still not getting anything from them. Some got something, others just a bit and others simply nothing. So, my colleagues' money is still with them. Why? I don't know."

~ Moses ~

It is speculation whether or not Moses and his family would have prospered if they had adhered to their original plan and settled in the Volta Region. However, they would certainly have avoided IOM's stressful application process, would still possess their financial resources and land in

Kumasi and would have settled in a more suitable living environment that matches their practical needs for a living and where they feel comfortable.

Comparable experiences with the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration after their return from Libya to Ghana were made by Moses' friend Charles Frimpong and the befriended couple Adam and Georgina Bati. Upon arrival in Ghana, Charles received 100 USD and a phone number to contact IOM.¹³ In his case, the processing time for reintegration assistance lasted eight months. The assistance included funding for accommodation and school fees for the children. He was allowed to invest the rest in his business.¹⁴ However, his original business ideas were rejected and he was forced to implement IOM's recommendation instead. Unlike Moses, he did not oppose this but followed IOM's wish and pursued an income by selling sandals. However, Charles always felt this was inappropriate, but he had no other alternative. In the end, his business partner embezzled IOM's money and disappeared with it. Thus, the reintegration aid has been exhausted without Charles ever being able to benefit from it. He is still unemployed today and faces problems affording his children's formal education expenses. Nonetheless, IOM has not paid any further attention to his situation to support him:

"I had my ideas of what kind of business I wanted to do, but IOM ignored my wishes. They had their own ideas on how I should use my money to establish myself. It wasn't proper for me. The way how they release the money is their own decision. I decided to buy a car with my money. I wanted to be a driver. However, IOM refused. [...] Then I wanted to enter the sandals business. I found a person I could give the money to in order to get my items to start that business. I was sitting down with that man and we got all the required papers ready for the IOM process. It took IOM a long to process our application. Later, I got a cheque and gave it to the man who was about to help me with that sandals business. The man went to the bank and started the sandals business. Unfortunately, he betrayed me and took the money for himself. The business was over before it even started. I became jobless and couldn't take care of my children anymore. That's the situation until now."

~ Charles ~

Since the Bati family returned, their living conditions have become precarious. On the one hand, Georgina completed two job trainings, whereby the participants were only partially reimbursed for the travel costs and had to pay for their meals themselves. The acquired skills and knowledge are to be applied by the participants in order to establish their own businesses. However, they still need to receive starting capital for this purpose and were therefore unable to implement their new abilities. On the other hand, her husband Adam did not receive any assistance from IOM. They jointly completed another job training provided by another organisation. Once again, no starting capital was provided afterwards.¹⁵ In addition to the training, IOM paid for the family's rent and the children's school fees for one year each. The rest of Georgina's budget was to be dedicated to her business as a fashion designer. To receive this money, Georgina had to persistently approach IOM for several months.¹⁶ In the end, IOM paid for the container where she was supposed to sew and sell the clothes. In spite of the fact that she submitted all the receipts for the materials she needed, IOM did not cover the repair costs for the container. She had to borrow the sum of about 1,900 GHC from friends.¹⁷ Thus, even the support for the business is not sufficient. For example, they have to tap electricity illegally from their neighbours and the electricity meter promised by IOM has not yet been purchased. Adam also harboured hopes that IOM or UN could help him get

his money frozen in Libya, but this proved unsuccessful. To this day, he is unemployed and IOM has rejected his wish to invest his reintegration funds in his wife's business.¹⁸ Similar to Moses' and Charles' cases, it took Adam and Georgina several months to get a response from IOM. They also perceive the whole process as very bureaucratic and frustrating.¹⁹ As Moses affirmed, they likewise agree that transit returnees should be cooperative along the reintegration process. However, Adam and Georgina still do not understand why IOM does not respond on its own initiative when something is wrong with the submitted documents and why they only get into contact after three to four months.²⁰ One has to follow up countless times until IOM reacts at all:

"Unless you push IOM to give you the information about your current status. Otherwise, you won't hear anything. I won't hear anything from them and the whole process is stuck. I submit the invoices and IOM could tell me right away if something is missing or incorrect or whatsoever. Instead, I'm going home and I have to call them over and over again to follow up. Without me calling, nothing would happen. That's pointless. Just tell me, 'See, there is something missing and this is incorrect. Please change it and then we can process your appeal.' It always takes a very long period."

~ Georgina ~

In order to keep in contact with IOM, Georgina has to be continuously available over a period of weeks and months. Accordingly, she has to keep her mobile phone permanently switched on to avoid missing any calls from IOM. This drains her electricity. In addition, as she has to pay a fee when the answering machine picks up, unsuccessful calls to IOM are costly. As a result, she could no longer afford it and had to stop her attempts to contact them. Instead, she went to the IOM office in person, which cost her 15 GHC, which she cannot financially manage to do nowadays since her children have to go to school and her business still needs to be established. Regarding her fashion design business, she lives exclusively with walk-in customers and even this seasonal business is dependent on the time of year.²¹ Furthermore, IOM had promised Georgina that they would monitor her business and provide further assistance.²² They are waiting in vain for this promise to be fulfilled as well.

Adam concludes that whilst he is grateful to IOM for bringing him from Libya to Ghana, he is equally critical due to the shortcomings in the reintegration process.²³ Overall, Georgina complains that it took almost a year for IOM to support her, whereas Adam is waiting until today.²⁴ She also mentions other transit returnees who partly received IOM assistance but are very dissatisfied. However, most have received nothing and have already given up applying for assistance. In fact, they have migrated again, which is contrary to what IOM claims to achieve with its procedure:

"Some returnees got help from IOM, but yet they are not satisfied. Those who didn't receive any help are like dropping their efforts trying to get help from IOM and rather find other means to travel again. Because they have seen the situation back home and nothing is improving. Then they want to find another way to travel. That doesn't mean travelling back to the country they came from but rather trying out a different route and a different country. There are many who took that decision. Those who have not in their mind to travel won't travel but face the struggle. Those who have made up their mind and see what's going on in our system will travel back. Even though the governments are trying to block the way through the desert, people are still trying to travel."

~ Georgina ~

Georgina describes in the following quote how vital it is to get rapid assistance to alleviate the transit returnees' distress and stabilise them mentally amid a highly vulnerable situation they find themselves in:

"I know returnees who are telling me that if they knew what the situation upon return would be like, they wouldn't have returned from Libya. Why am I saying this? Some returnees are facing problems with reintegration and they regret that they returned. They say now that it might have been a better idea to try to cross the sea to Europe or at least to stay in Libya but not return home. Some returned with sicknesses which cannot be cured in Ghana. Some even died. There is no money in the system and there are no jobs. Some find it very difficult. As I'm talking now, people are considering travelling back if they get the money for that."

~ Georgina ~

As comprehensively described earlier, rapid and uncomplicated assistance needs to be forthcoming. By implication, this means that transit returnees' misery continues to soar. The promise of reintegration assistance lured people to Ghana. However, every day without any provided assistance increases the level of regret and the corresponding desire to remigrate:

"What they want to receive from IOM and don't get makes some returnees have unstable minds. Should I stay in Ghana? Yes or no? I want to travel. That's what they think. If they get money, they will definitely travel again. Especially if they get a plane ticket, they will definitely do that. That's what I'm telling you because I heard a lot of stories like that. Some of our brothers say that home is home. You always struggle for a while, even abroad, but then it works. At home, you always struggle and it's never easy. What I gained in Libya isn't the same as what I gained here. And I was gaining a lot. Ghana is my country, but I'm not even nearly gaining that."

~ Georgina ~

As mentioned already, this leads to the paradoxical situation that IOM's policy and the associated time-consuming application process result in the opposite of what they intended to achieve. In other words, the longer the process takes, the more likely the transit returnees are to migrate again and the more likely they are to use the reintegration assistance once it is provided. Georgina recounts that she has spoken to countless transit returnees who have told her that they would never have returned to Ghana if they had known what the situation would be like once they arrived:

"I met so many guys who did the training with me who said that if they had known the situation upon return, they wouldn't have come home. They would have proceeded their journey to somewhere else."

~ Georgina ~

¹ "I used to get these information through the internet. I informed myself about the help they are doing for people and the stories of those who returned to their countries and the help they got offered. So, I used to tell people to go there. So, I kept it in mind that if the time is due for me and my wife to return, that's where we have to go. I had all the information about what they were doing." ~ Moses

² "I used to inform myself a lot through the internet. Before my wife was getting pregnant, I used to tell my friends about IOM and what they are doing and what they can do for you upon return back home. There was a person doing some advocacy who always said that if you are in need for something, just got to IOM. I had that source long time before my wife got pregnant." ~ Moses

³ "When we were ready to go, I just asked where their office is. I went there in Tripoli. Before I left, IOM didn't even interview me. They just saw my passport and said that I can go home. They didn't provide any medical support or anything like that. They just got the contact details of the four of us and said that when the plane is ready, they will call us." ~ Moses

4 “When we arrived at Kotoka International Airport, IOM representatives were there. We spent around 20 minutes after we arrived and then we had a chat with these IOM representatives. [...] She talked to us as a group. They gave us some forms, told us that IOM welcomes us and is here to help and we got a little package to start. That was 100 USD each. They gave it to us and took pictures with us. After that, we got a paper containing IOM contact details. If anyone is interested, we should go to their office. And then, everybody went his way.” ~ Moses

5 “The most painful part is that IOM doesn’t inform you about the whole procedure and what is required for that. They just tell you to do one thing and after you delivered it, they just give you another task to do and after that another one and so on.” ~ Moses

6 “The plan was to take my family to my home town at Volta Region because there are a lot of untenanted houses. Simultaneously, I would have pursued the money we were entitled to which was supposed to be 1,000 EUR each person times four would be at least 20,000 GHC. Assuming that IOM would have give an ear to me, there wouldn’t be a need for me to rent this place here. My family would live in Volta Region and I would have the car with which I could have started working right away. That means that this land in Kumasi with the 1,400 blocks would have still been there for me and my children’s future. It would have been saved but because of the delays we had no support and rather thought of what to eat.” ~ Moses

7 “When I returned, my plan was to get a car and to start working but IOM neglected all my requests. They said that they cannot buy a car and so on. They made me waiting. That’s why we settled here and had to find a school for the children. After they noticed that I seriously had the intention to get a car and to become a driver, they agreed.” ~ Moses

8 “It happened that all the things I wanted to do were refused by IOM. They refused to get me a car saying that they cannot do it but now they can do it surprisingly. Then we rented a house here in Weija. That wasn’t our initial agenda. I already said that the plan was to stay at the family house in Volta Region but the whole plan screwed because of IOM’s delay.” ~ Moses

9 “I went to Emma from IOM and told him, ‘It seems that you have a policy which doesn’t work for us. Your policy is your policy but you don’t want to listen to us the immigrants and our intentions and what we want to do. You don’t want to listen to me and what I really want to do but you believe in your policy which you think is the best. But it isn’t the best. Listen to me. If I get a store and rent it, I will get it for 20,000 GHC, maybe 15,000 GHC. That means that the money will be exhausted before I will be even able to equip my store. How am I going to do business then? There is no way to rent a store and buy stocks with the money IOM provides you. But you still believe in your policy but not in me the immigrant. So, if I get this car, register and work with it, I can get my daily bread. I can afford the school fees for my children. Even though I cannot save anything, I will survive. But it seems that you don’t want to understand.’” ~ Moses

10 “If IOM would have give an ear to what I wanted to do, things wouldn’t be like this. I wouldn’t have to sell my land and collect money from my family. The money I needed to register the car came from my family. I’ve planned everything before I returned to Ghana.” ~ Moses

11 “No, I won’t do it [contacting IOM again]. If they truly stick to their principles, they will help and I’m not supposed to call them.” ~ Moses

12 “They told me that maybe after six months or one year they will come around and check how things are for us and how the business goes. [However, so far,] I’ve not heard from them.” ~ Moses

13 “When we arrived, IOM gave us 100 USD per person. Then they gave us their phone number to call them if there is anything we wanna have what they can offer us.” ~ Charles

14 “I went there [IOM office] and they started processing my application but it took eight months. They helped to pay for my accommodation and my children’s school fees. The money which was left was given to me to start my business.” ~ Charles

15 “I was even honoured as the second best in my class. After that, we were grouped again for some coaching. The same trainer coached us for a month. For that one, we didn’t get any money for the transportation costs but before they did. Food and water, we had to pay ourselves. After that coaching, the trainer told us that we are ready now to start our own business. We were supposed to use the knowledge and skills we gained to start our own business. My husband didn’t benefit from IOM. There was another organisation which organised a training for both of us. We got a certificate again. It was about entrepreneurship but no financial help followed. Last month, they called me for an exhibition. I told them, ‘I told you about my problem. You’ve not solved my case. Now, you want me to bring things to exhibit. What should I exhibit? I’ve nothing to bring because I don’t have money to buy materials to sew things to bring them to the exhibition. I’ve nothing. I’ve no money!’” ~ Georgina

16 “IOM solved the problem for us where we live for one year. The same with the school for our children for one year. The rest of the money should be used for our jobs. However, getting that support wasn’t just done in one day. We had to struggle a lot to get this support from IOM.” ~ Georgina

¹⁷ “The money wasn’t even enough to set up this place. The money was used to buy this container but for the roofing we gave them the receipts and we didn’t get that money back. I had to borrow money. I had to borrow money for the galvanising and to buy all the necessary material like wood, plywood and cement which is needed for the building. Even the cement we had to pay and for all that I gave IOM the receipts. It was around 1,900 GHC. IOM hasn’t payed.”

~ Adam

¹⁸ “Now, we are just indebted. Above that, we had to put some protection glass here because the dust of the cars will make everything inside our shop dirty. That’s something we had to pay as well. And we have still no electricity. We are illegally tap the wire from my place. They also said that they will buy us an electricity meter. IOM hasn’t payed for all that yet. The money isn’t enough and IOM hasn’t even spent a single coin for my own future plans. If we cannot pursue our plans both, then my money should be rather used for my wife’s business. The money should be used for the meter. That’s what we decided. For now, I’m not doing anything. I’m at home. I also thought that IOM or UN could help me to get my money from Libya but they just said that they cannot do anything.” ~ Adam

¹⁹ “Unfortunately, it isn’t easy to get money from IOM. You have to go through a really tedious process with a lot of paper work like invoices. It takes sometimes several months before you get a reaction from them. It’s a problem.”

~ Adam

²⁰ “If IOM says that if you cooperate, you will get the help. That’s fine but why don’t you tell the returnee if something in his application process is wrong, to change it? In fact, IOM keeps your documents and waits three to four months before they call you to tell that the documents are incomplete.” ~ Adam

²¹ “I always charge my phone every day to not miss a call from IOM. At the end of the day, my money is finished because I have to pay for electricity and I still didn’t hear from them. Also because I always call them and the answering machine is picking the calls. That costs already and my money is gone by then. From where do I get the money to make another call again? We just gave up at a certain point because we called so often and didn’t get any answer. Sometimes, we just go there. Going to IOM and returning costs me 15 GHC. My children have to go to school and my job as a fashion designer highly depends on the season. So far, I didn’t establish myself. There are no contracts with customers which would give me some certainty of a daily income. However, so far my customers are only people who pass by.” ~ Georgina

²² “IOM wants to see what I have done with my money so far. If they like it, they want to continue supporting me. If they cannot, they will let me know.” ~ Georgina

²³ “IOM gives the money but to get it isn’t easy. You have to go back and forth over and over again. It takes a year until you get your money and in the meanwhile you had to waste a lot of money already. That’s a big problem. That’s really sad. IOM helped me to return and saved my life. Otherwise, I wouldn’t know what could have happened to me if I was still in Libya.” ~ Adam

²⁴ “It took me almost a year until IOM provided the assistance but my husband didn’t get anything so far because the money isn’t enough for starting his business.” ~ Georgina

5.4.5 Conclusion

In addition to financial aid and vocational training, the transit returnees consider the provision of orientation and guidance as extremely important for effective return and reintegration programmes. This includes both psychological and financial counselling. The respective organisation should personally engage with the transit returnee to provide short-term and everyday support. Monitoring and physical presence, including a focal person, are required. Moreover, the transit returnee's living environment should be taken into account. Information on awareness-raising should be disseminated in the community and neighbourhood to ensure that the environment is aware of its role and responsibilities. Similarly, transit returnees could serve as multipliers within the community. In Tamale, it is evident that IOM as an organisation needs to be better known among the target group.

Ali received business training from GIZ but did not receive financial assistance to implement the knowledge, nor did he seek it. Adam and Georgina Bati had a similar experience. Both illustrate that in addition to training, the provision of means of application is also required. Moreover, there is a generally unequal treatment of transit returnees in the nature and extent of support provided, even for those in the same AVRR programme, such as Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses, as well as Charles Frimpong and Adam and Georgina Bati, who benefited from the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. This causes irritation and frustration.

Prior to their return from Libya, there were no opportunities to prepare for the period after their return. This was difficult due to the circumstances, but Moses' example shows he was ready for it. His attempt to apply for reintegration assistance before his return and to discuss his business idea was rejected. Instead, IOM only promised to help him and his family after their return. In addition, the first response has been deficient. On the plane, the transit returnees were informed about the programme, with promises of financial support and additional assistance once their business thrived. Upon arrival at the destination airport, transit returnees were provided with food and drink, and some were interviewed and asked about their needs and those of their relatives. In addition, they were given approximately 100 USD in local currency as initial support, although the actual amount varied slightly from transit returnee to transit returnee. This and the amount of support were sometimes perceived as insulting.

To begin the application process for in-kind reintegration assistance, transit returnees were instructed to call a phone number provided to them once they arrived in their region of origin. However, this was sometimes not reachable or the responsible person was unavailable. In addition, there were no other contact details.

After the application process has started, the requirements until the application is approved, as well as the communication, are very time-consuming, complex, arduous, and costly for the transit returnee. At least three cost estimates for the necessary purchases for the desired business must

be submitted, some of which are barely affordable. The transit returnee must pay in advance, and any cost estimates not considered must be borne solely by the transit returnee. The desires of the transit returnees regarding self-employment are often ignored; instead, IOM's business idea is imposed on them. In addition, the other requirements for a successful application are often unclear to the transit returnees. They must constantly seek contact themselves, which is often costly and unsuccessful, even if the transit returnee personally visits the main office. Despite immense pressure from the applicants, the processing time can take months to years. Due to the lack of transparency, transit returnees do not know where they stand in the application process; what documents are still missing; which submitted papers are incorrect; and if, when, and why their application will be decided. Instead, transit returnees are reassured, old promises are renewed, and new promises are made which are not fulfilled. At the same time, transit returnees are invited to events to educate them about the dangers of undocumented migration, where promises regarding reintegration assistance are also reaffirmed. This creates enormous frustration, high costs, and avoidable disturbances on the part of the transit returnees. Some resign as a result of these experiences and remigrate instead.

If the application is approved, transit returnees will receive a check which they must collect in person at the headquarters, bearing the transportation costs themselves. Reintegration assistance is exclusively provided as in-kind assistance or cost reimbursements. As in the case of Charles Frimpong, this form of reintegration assistance carries the risk of being embezzled by third parties. In this case, the transit returnee bears the entire burden of the loss and IOM provides no support or compensation. Even after successfully launching their business, IOM's monitoring is only superficial or not at all. The promised follow-up support has yet to materialise. However, these promises are constantly being renewed. Additionally, some costs for the business need to be covered by the transit returnees themselves, despite an adequate budget remaining for the transit returnees. Bundling reintegration budgets for a common purpose is not possible, as demonstrated by the example of the Bati spouses.

The other circumstances and needs of the transit returnees beyond their business remain unconsidered or insufficiently and temporarily taken into account. Support for family members; housing; mental and physical health; job procurement; retrieval of frozen foreign funds; or other vital needs and ongoing costs are either not or only very limited provided. Even incidental costs, such as commission fees for housing allowances, are not reimbursed.

Those who have received reintegration assistance and have begun building their business are grateful, as in the case of Ebenezer, but also extremely frustrated, like Moses. The latter describes IOM's agenda as a lie and uses offensive language regarding the staff and the entire process.

6. Perceived Life Realities Upon Return – Conclusion

Every Ghanaian transit returnee's perceived life reality is highly complex, characterised by multifactorial interdependencies as well as dynamic changes and, above all, it remains individual. The focus of this research lies on the appearance and characterisation, the interplay and negotiation of the six themes motives and decision-making process; experiences in transit; social network; mental state; post-return behaviour; and experiences with Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) measures. Based on four examined cases, some aspects, characteristics, developments, and dynamics can be identified along the six mentioned aspects which shape the respectively perceived life reality upon return. There are similarities and differences, but how the themes converge in which way and how the respective transit returnee embodies and enacts such negotiation is always individual and makes each case unique. The uniqueness of each return experience is therefore not necessarily characterised solely by the particular appearance and manifestation of the factors themselves, but primarily by *how* these factors are configured and handled by the transit returnee. This research enhances a better understanding of Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived life realities upon return, allows a reflection on theory (6.1), indicates several considerations for AVRR policymakers and practitioners (6.2), and delivers food for thought and for future research (6.3).

As already mentioned, the first and only generally valid observation, which needs to be made when considering the life realities of Ghanaian transit returnees upon return is that these are always individual, complex and subject to constant change. All-encompassing generalisations, if-then causalities or predictions based on certain characteristics would not do justice to the individual case. Or in the words of Aristotle: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts".

Considering the drivers for migration, it is evident that the hope of having better income opportunities abroad unites all interviewed transit returnees at first glance. However, the initiation of migration and the individual motivation for it, in other words the decision-making process, are very heterogeneous. While Mohammed was rather reluctant to emigrate on his own initiative and, as a result of his older brother's unsuccessful attempts, felt almost compelled to try it himself for the benefit of his mother and siblings without being particularly eager to leave, Ebenezer's motivation to migrate was fuelled by great determination and euphoria. As the eldest son, he felt called upon to support the family financially. His personal environment, which included former migrants, attested that he had the necessary willpower, assertiveness and toughness to master the journey to Europe. He saw himself as a "typical migration type" as well. In spite of warnings from his half-brother Yan-Philipp, who lives in Malta, Ebenezer refused to be dissuaded from casting himself as a kind of saviour or hero for his family through his migration efforts. In this respect, the starting position for Mohammed was the complete opposite. He felt a tremendous amount of resistance within himself, which he had to overcome with great discomfort to embark on the dangerous overland route to Europe. When those around him found out about his journey, even his closest friends were very surprised, as they did not believe he was capable of travelling

to Accra and did not see him as the typical migration type. In both cases, the core family's hopes were pinned on them, albeit they were contrarily keen to fulfil this expectation. The core families financially contributed to the migration costs, including borrowing money from friends and acquaintances. While Ebenezer enthusiastically accepted this task, Mohammed was extremely reluctant to do so. In Moses' case, it was not the family household which he aimed to support, as his family was relatively wealthy anyway, but instead the pursuit of individual independence and emancipation drove him. By migrating, he hoped to achieve a form of economic liberation. However, due to limited financial resources, he had to reluctantly involve his core family, from whom he intended to break away in order to ask them for funding. Since his youth, his relationship with his nuclear family had been strained. His father and his brothers and half-brothers saw him as a hot-tempered troublemaker who disrupted the family hierarchy with his own will. In turn, Moses saw his relatives as spineless hypocrites and felt massively disadvantaged by his father and restricted in his development. He continued to have similar experiences with his professional superiors. This further encouraged his loner mentality and strengthened his desire to become independent of others and make it on his own. By migrating, Moses wanted to finally achieve justice and get what he felt he deserved from life. Similarly to him, Ali came from a former wealthy family. However, due to his late birth, he was denied access to education and prosperity compared to his older half-siblings. As the eldest son, Ali wished to take on responsibility and hoped that he could gain a certain reputation with a successful migration story. On the other hand, it was a reaction to the blow of the family's sudden economic decline, which he wanted to settle and do justice for himself, his mother and siblings. However, Ali tried to involve the core family as little as Moses.

Regardless of how much the social environment was involved prior to the start of the migration, the relatives always had their share in the migration and placed their expectations in the transit returnee's endeavour. From the moment they learnt about the migration at the latest, the expectation grew that they should benefit from this endeavour. Even if the relatives were left out of the decision-making and planning phase for migration, their involvement during the migration arose emotionally and financially. In the event of financial bottlenecks en route, the transit returnees asked stayees at home for support if they were unable to activate other sources of money. The stayees were surprised and irritated as they did not expect to have to send (additional) money, instead of receiving some. In addition to the financial burden, the core family and close friends are particularly emotionally distressed if they do not hear from their migrated family member or friend for a longer period of time. The knowledge of the dangerous situation for undocumented migrants in a civil war country like Libya is a source of great concern for the stayees, albeit the migrants attempt to paint a positive picture in order to avoid giving them any reason to worry. However, it is not always possible to disguise the bitter realities in a highly vulnerable and fragile situation. Ebenezer was robbed or arrested several times, resulting in gangs extorting money from him and his family. In fact, his mother in specific suffered mentally and physically from the critical condition of her detained son. Before their return, Ebenezer and Mohammed shared a prison cell with dozens of other migrants. Both families thought their loved

ones were dead since they did not hear from them for more than a year. Mohammed's family had even organised a funeral for him. Moses and Ali, on the other hand, were able to maintain contact with Ghana without any long interruptions. Ali had undertaken several migrations, deceiving his relatives about his migration intentions beforehand. They only heard from him when he had already returned to Libya. These deceptions were followed by other breaches of trust, as he pretended to want to return to his family in Ghana en route. However, Ali used the additional money provided by the family to finance another crossing from Morocco to Spain instead. As a result, the family's worry about him was mingled with frustration and suspicion. Nobody agreed with his repeated attempts to reach Europe. They begged him and tried to convince him after each migration that these further efforts made no sense and that a better life was possible in Ghana. Even during his time abroad, even his wife Rukaya's pleading did not seem to get through to him. Moses heard the contrary from his family when they found out that he wanted to return to Ghana instead of travelling on to Europe. They showed no understanding for his decision and rather expressed criticism as to why he would give up. At first glance, the diametrically opposite stances of Ali's and Moses' family are potentially surprising, as Ali's family's investment in the migration was comparatively high, while Moses' family's investment was comparatively low. In spite of the high investment, Ali was begged to return and never migrate again. And although Moses' family invested relatively little in his migration, they urged him to try for Europe instead of returning. This reveals that the purely economic dimension of the relationship between migrant and stayees is not the solely decisive factor, but is rather negotiated as one aspect among many on an interpersonal level. Depending on how this interpersonal negotiation process is organised and how the respective social environment and the returnee react to each other, widely differing conditions and return realities manifest themselves, which are by no means static, but alternate over time as well.

At first, Ali's, Ebenezer's and Mohammed's core families were not pleased that their family member has returned alive. However, their overall feelings remain ambivalent. The disappointed expectations and the mental, physical, and material consequences due to the migration weigh heavily on them. These circumstances burden both the relatives as well as the returnees since they feel responsible for it. In some cases, it severely affects the relationship with their relatives. Some families of Ali's environment even disowned their returned relative or humiliated them by assigning them unpopular tasks. In fact, Ali himself was marginalised in the family structure. He was excluded from important decisions and only consulted on minor occasions. Some transit returnees are even confronted with a certain pressure to remigrate. This can be expressed explicitly and openly expressed or implicitly without the family's concrete request. All transit returnees are confronted with various prejudices and stigmatised as failures by parts of their environment. They face indirect and direct bullying and exclusion. Former acquaintances and friends distinguish themselves from them, which further socially isolates the single transit returnee. Accordingly, they are relegated to having few social contacts who are encouraging towards them, whereby these are mostly drawn from networks of other returnees and a few trusted stayees. At the same time, transit returnees are dependent on their relatives in many

respects after their return. However, some transit returnees are even disowned by their core family. Even if the latter has not explicitly abandoned the returned family member, transit returnees experience implicit segregation within the family as happened with Ali, for example. While all interviewed transit returnees returned to their original place of residence or at least maintained contact with their core family, others chose to cut ties and make a new start unrecognised in a new place after their return. Mohammed hesitated to return to his family in Takoradi after his return from Libya, but was persuaded by his social environment after a few weeks. To this day, he has to share a room with several family members as he sold his former room to migrate. He experiences this situation as extremely stressful. Sometimes, he sleeps at a friend's house, at least to escape the family confinement for a brief moment. Yet he does not want to be a burden on his friend either. Apart from his own room, his most pressing desire is to escape his neighbourhood and live somewhere else in the city. Ali, Ebenezer, and Mohammed relate to this feeling of spatial confinement and the quest for self-determination. The permanent exposure with the core family burdens them likewise. It harms their mental health, whereas a certain socio-spatial distance provides relief for all parties involved. Even if the transit returnees wish to remain in contact with their community, to which they feel they belong and from which they feel accepted, they yearn for a clear spatial separation simultaneously. Ebenezer deliberately moved to another neighbourhood as soon as he could afford it. Ali commutes between Tamale, where his family lives, and Accra, where Mr Khamil resides. After a certain time, when the confrontation with his fellows in Tamale becomes unbearable, Ali escapes by fleeing to Accra for a few weeks. Moses approves of the idea of living in a place where he and his past are unknown as well. He keeps his distance from his neighbours and everyone else, since he fears mockery from the moment they learn of his time abroad. At least at the beginning, all the interviewed returnees conceive anonymity as a protective factor.

In fact, most transit returnees try to hide their migration history from non-initiated people since they fear the aforementioned stigma. However, Mohammed's openness to talk about his experiences en route was met with many open ears and sympathy. The reactions were predominantly positive. Ali has had the same experience and is now opening up more and more about his past, even to more casual acquaintances. In order to effectively and comprehensively counteract the stigma of being a good-for-nothing, it is helpful to take care of oneself and others in a self-determined way. Transit returnees from Ali's environment have learnt that financial autonomy is a prerequisite for a multi-year process of emancipation. Achieving this status of self-determination and economic independence enables them to gain the general acceptance of their social environment and free themselves from marginalisation. If the work and activities of the transit returnees provide direct added value for the community, it potentially accelerates such development. This is particularly evident in the case of Ebenezer, who was able to literally earn recognition and respect through his business and craft services for the community.

However, the transit returnees initially experience the described social and personal marginalisation. In response, they tend to isolate themselves from their remaining social contacts.

In those introverted moments of solitude, they brood and ponder what they have experienced and the devastating consequences of their migration for themselves and others. In doing so, they lose their minds repeatedly in what-if scenarios or comparisons with other migrants or stayees. In this phase, they see no prospects for themselves and are extremely desperate, disoriented, powerless and lethargic. This post-return state is a widespread phenomenon and applies equally to Ali, Mohammed, Ebenezer, and Moses. At the same time, the burden of debt imposed by the migration costs is crippling in many ways. His job at the British embassy left him with only his family's remaining debts. Even though all his savings had been used up as well, Moses found himself in a relatively comfortable position. However, Ali, Mohammed and Ebenezer were plagued by great remorse after their return, since they had witnessed with their own eyes the economic sacrifices their relatives had made for them. Family members and friends sold their economic livelihoods in order to have their son or brother back with them alive. As already mentioned, despite these financial sacrifices, the returned family members are still dependent on them afterwards, which means that the financial strain continues even after their return. The resulting limited autonomy and dependence on third parties are additionally burdensome for the transit returnees. Essential aspects of life, such as housing, food, and clothing, among others, are often unaffordable without the support of others. The situation is particularly precarious for Mohammed, who still needs the support of others in all the aforementioned areas and whose mental health can therefore be described as severely devastating.

Thus, the time abroad leaves its marks on the transit returnees beyond their return and continues to affect the present. Aside the material dimension, the transit returnees are disoriented, unstable, and extremely depressed upon return. Their hopes, associated with migration, were ultimately dashed with their return. Mohammed reports that the traumatic experiences en route are manifested in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. At this stage, criminality, as well as alcohol and drug abuse, among some transit returnees occurs as well. The environment of the transit returnees observes certain changes in their personality. In their eyes, some seem to adopt ruthless traits, whereas others seem to be more humble, grateful and considerate by contrast. The four interviewees describe an increased awareness of life in freedom. Due to the mastered hardships abroad, they have developed resilience and determination to improve their living situation. The latter is particularly noticeable following the initial lethargy. Driven by the desire for self-determination, they have various ideas on achieving economic independence but need financial means to implement these plans. Some consider remigration as a kind of escape from their misery. This state of psychological uprootedness after return, coupled with the thought of not making it in the country of origin and the hope of having higher chances of success abroad, was characterised as *mental transit* by one of Ali's half-brothers. This mental transit prompted Ali to try repeatedly to make it as a migrant, which was a form of escape from the constant confrontation with his old environment and his own perceived failures as well. In the meantime, those around him attest that his mindset has changed and that he is particularly focussed and determined to achieve his own prosperity in Ghana. Compared to their pre-migration state, Mohammed's, Ebenezer's, and Moses' respective environment likewise recognises this increased will and

determination in the post-return phase. However, it is clear that determination alone does not automatically lead to impactful achievements.

First of all, the immediate environment's support and encouragement are paramount in particular in this delicate initial phase upon return. The core family and close friends have a decisive role to play here. They can help to mentally rebuild the transit returnees in their psychological fragility and show future-oriented perspectives and ways to create self-efficacy. The interviewed transit returnees report that the more they told selected people from their environment about their experiences abroad, the greater their compassion and solidarity was. In this context, individuals from the social environment can take on the role of a mentor and be particularly helpful in providing orientation. The more unstable the transit returnee is, the more the function of a mentor proves to be necessary. Considering the given situation and the transit returnee's personality, needs, requirements, and abilities, it is crucial that the mentors closely accompany the transit returnee and try to provide tailor-made support. In this way, people close to the transit returnee can also provide practical assistance and become part of the transit returnee's livelihood strategies. By sincerely taking care of them, they gain genuine and lasting connection to the transit returnee. Here are the examples of Ali, for whom his half-brother Mr Khamil was an important figure of reference, and Ebenezer, for whom his cousin George provided great assistance and support as well. The need for appropriate and comprehensive guidance to free transit returnees from their mental transit is essential and a pre-condition the more fragile the situation upon return is. This paves the way and enables the returnee to implement livelihood strategies.

Being an integrated part of the family entrusted with responsible roles has shown to be helpful for transit returnees in the family context. From the feeling of being respected and needed instead of being ignored and left alone, a sense of belonging and self-efficacy can evolve. Such a development can be seen particularly clearly in the example of Ali. Here, the family realised that they had to include him in their family life on an equal footing and even provide him with special care. As a result, he was not only given responsible tasks, but all relatives sought to maintain close contact with him and meet him regularly or at least speak to him on the phone. Mr Khamil confirms that his half-brother is no longer in mental transit, which is largely attributable to the family's change in behaviour. As motivation for Ali to make him realise that he can make it in his home country as well, his relatives constantly referred to people around him who spent their whole lives in Ghana and still managed to achieve prosperity. However, these examples tended to demoralise him in his initial depressed state, since all he saw was the gap between them and himself. Due to his more self-confident mindset, the previously inhibiting examples of stayees who managed to prosper without migration appear as a motivating incentive and proof that it is possible. Furthermore, friends and family can counter any form of verbal exclusion and other psychological pressure on the transit returnee, thus protecting them. If the core family resolutely opposes accusations of guilt towards the transit returnee or keeps the issue of debts resulting from migration fully away from them, it strengthens their mental wellbeing. Ebenezer's family

reacted to intra-family blaming by calling one of his cousins to order. The names of those from whom the family borrowed money for the migration are deliberately concealed by Ali's and Mohammed's family to minimise the mental burden on their returning family member. However, the immediate social environment is not always fully aware of their role and the special impact and effect of their behaviour on the transit returnee. In this regard, some undergo a dialectical process of becoming sensitised over time. As a result, they may try to adapt their behaviour for the transit returnee's wellbeing as described in the case of Ali. His example of recurring migrations shows that transnational contacts can likewise play an important role in this respect. During their time in transit, some migrants have been embedded in transnational communities. Especially in the disorientated phase of mental transit, these and other contacts are partly maintained after the return and potentially put the transit returnee in a permanent temptation to return to this community. However, contacts with other transit returnees are particularly relevant in the immediate post-return phase when they find themselves in a highly vulnerable and marginalised situation. Among each other, they develop and sustain a special cohesion. Similar to the transnational communities abroad, the transit returnees group is a community of mutual understanding, destiny and mental safe space where compassion, trust and solidarity prevail. These communities are vital for their mental wellbeing and have the practical ability to mobilise information about income-generating activities and financial resources or to initiate such activities collectively.

Nonetheless, the strong ambition and clear focus among transit returnees to improve their economic situation for themselves and their families, as described above, are thwarted by the inaccessibility of the labour market. While some transit returnees were able to build on existing skills or acquire new ones during their time abroad, re-entering or re-establishing themselves in the job market remains challenging due to the market, societal and systemic changes during their absence, as there was usually no opportunity to prepare for the altered environment before returning. However, many transit returnees are more adaptable than they were before their migration or in comparison with stayees due to the increased mental and physical resilience they gained through the migration experience. They are willing to perform unpopular and demanding activities. Since salaried jobs are scarce or poorly paid, most transit returnees are seeking to build their own business. In this case, the lack of the required start-up capital, on the one hand, and the necessary know-how and social environment for the realisation of the business idea, on the other hand, are the most critical factors. The time in transit generally prevented them from building up financial reserves for various reasons. After the return, new funds cannot be acquired as the willingness to lend money to the transit returnee is low due to the negative reputation. Furthermore, it is difficult to implement a business as a single person. In this regard, it usually takes several determined people who trust each other and bring the necessary knowledge. Both prerequisites, the necessary start-up capital and a functional network, were given in Ebenezer's case, which is why he successfully implemented his business idea. The situation was similar for Moses, although he was not dependent on any business partners since he was solely self-employed as a car driver. The failed attempts of Charles Frimpong and Ali illustrate what may

happen if the start-up capital is given, but the social network is dysfunctional or the knowledge of business basics is lacking. In Mohammed's case, neither the social environment nor the monetary basis was given.

On the one hand, the mentioned cases reveal that institutionalised reintegration assistance can improve the living situation of transit returnees. On the other hand, it also becomes clear that the journey towards this goal is often challenging for them, as material support alone is no guarantee of a better life, but other factors are essential for success. However, even the application process for reintegration assistance is a challenge. Taking the reintegration assistance of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration as an example, the application process is revealed to be complex, bureaucratic, in-transparent, time-consuming and cost-intensive. Without the motivation of George and the support of his friend and mentor Emmanuel, Ebenezer would not have been able to cope with the bureaucratic requirements and would have given up early on his own initiative. Moses was asked to submit cost estimates for the purchase of a car for his intended job as a car driver, which he was only able to pay for with family support. Mohammed does not receive any support from those around him during the application process, meaning that he is still trying in vain to obtain institutionalised support. This laborious process, which can take months and sometimes years, creates great frustration, leading many transit returnees to stop their efforts, and some even remigrate. As exemplified, mentors and other people of the social network can be a supportive factor in this endeavour.

Beyond family, friends and other transit returnees, there are various self-help groups and other gatherings at neighbourhood and community level. These groups provide leisure time activities and a sense of belonging and meaning; create identity and routines; offer a distraction from everyday worries; and open up space for joint activities and mutual support. In particular for job-seeking transit returnees, these social spaces are essential as they provide information, facilitate contacts, and contribute to mental stability and physical health. Whereas Ebenezer and Moses are fully focussed on their jobs and tend to avoid such gatherings, these informal meetings are all the more important for Mohammed and Ali. For all four of them, faith is an important coping strategy. Spirituality and the belief in God are a source of hope and mental strength. The idea that God ordains one's path relieves the individual transit returnee that the previous failure to achieve one's own goals did not occur due to one's inability but is the result of a higher power. According to Ali and Mohammed themselves, their belief coupled with the disassociation strategy described above, saved him from suicide.

6.1 Reflection on Theory

In this section, the four cases are classified and discussed in the context of the return migration theories and taxonomies presented in *Chapter 2*. Furthermore, other selected findings, which have not yet been specifically addressed in the previous chapters, will be reflected regarding the academic discourse.

Within the framework of the success/failure paradigm, all eight return migrations from the four cases can be typologised as failures in the neoclassical sense. However, this binary classification already reveals that this very generalised classification cannot represent the individual circumstances of the return. Cassarino (2014) allows a more precise depiction of the context of return. Here again, the distinction between an incomplete migration cycle and an interrupted migration cycle based on the return motivation is not unambiguous. While Pennington and Balaram's (2013) taxonomy describes four possible return

scenarios, Ali's last two return stories reflect the spontaneous-chosen nexus, Moses' first the spontaneous-compelled nexus, his second the assisted-chosen nexus, and the other four returns represent the assisted-compelled nexus. Nonetheless, various differences are apparent when comparing the respective returns of the same categorisation. For example, the return stories of Mohammed and Ebenezer from Grayan prison appear to be not assisted to the same degree despite the fact that they benefited from the same AVR program. If one compares Ali's first two returns with those of Mohammed and Ebenezer, the scope of the assistance is significantly reduced. The return in 2011 was organised as part of an evacuation programme by IOM following the outbreak of the Libyan civil war. It was not carried out through the aforementioned AVR program. In 2007, he was deported from Spain. All four returns are assisted-compelled, although the degree of compulsion of at least one of Ali's two returns differs from the others. At the same time, Ali's circumstances, in these cases, appear to be clearly compelled and not chosen as well. Still, he had a comparatively higher degree of freedom of movement and physical integrity prior to his returns. This comparative example of four assisted-compelled returns shows that even within these categorisations, nuances exist, which are sometimes more and sometimes less obvious. Instead of a rigid categorisation, a fluid scaling reflects the respective return stories more accurately and raises the question for revision of such paradigms.

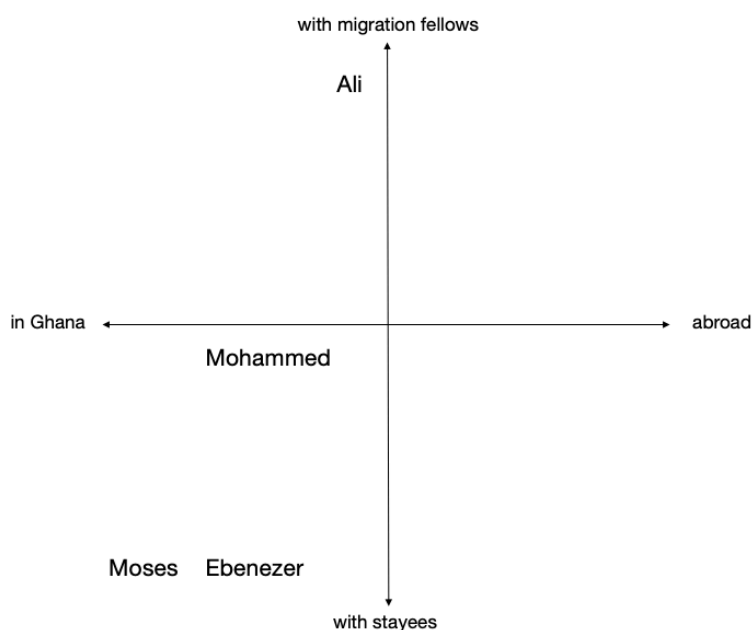


Figure 12: Contacts with people by place of residence and migrational affiliation in relation to the respective transit returnee

In their migration period, the interviewed transit returnees selected all their relationships and contacts based on both individual attributes and the commonality of interest. One factor in the development of these was the common language. While English was sufficient as a first basis for communication, in the long term, the networks of all transit returnees were made up of migration fellows who spoke the same or a similar local language, following the lines of ethnicity. The established connections and networks were based on mutual interest, practical support and

solidarity. Thus, the initial contact based on a common language could be explained from a transnational perspective and the consolidation and establishment of contacts and networks as a result of common interests in the sense of social network theory. Accordingly, the semantics of transnational relations and networks are accurate. For the individual, this transnational network was of great relevance during the time abroad owing to the challenging circumstances. In those networks, everyone was united by their exposure to an adverse environment in which they tried to survive and earn livelihoods for themselves and others. After their return, those networks formed abroad continued to exist. Although the location changed, the challenges and circumstances remained similar, albeit in their home country Ghana instead of Libya. One example is the Great Jamahiriya Peace Club (GJPC) network. This group was established in Libya and consisted of men from the ethnic group of Dagomba. In 2004, they jointly tried to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea and were rescued by the NGO Cap Anamour. After the subsequent repatriation, all GJPC members live in Tamale today and carry out collective activities. This shows that these transnational networks are created during migration and sustained even after the return. At the same time, all the interviewed transit returnees tried to maintain contact with family and friends back home during the migration period. Thus, the structuralist idea of alienation between stayees and returnees can be invalidated empirically. Eventually, they all refer without hesitation to their ethnic origin and home country Ghana regarding their identity. Nonetheless, after their return, they still cultivate contacts in the USA, Europe and the MENA region. However, this post-return networking behaviour varies considerably and is individual from transit returnee to transit returnee. Whereas Moses does not maintain any contacts abroad or, with a few exceptions, with other transit returnees in Ghana, the situation is similar with Ebenezer, but he still keeps some contacts abroad. The situation is very different for Mohammed and especially for Ali, who still fosters contact with former migration fellows in Ghana (see *Figure 12*). In the case of the members of the GJPC in particular, it is already evident from their group name that they simultaneously carry their Libyan identity in addition to their ethnic and national identity. All of them still feel strongly attached to Libya, especially to the time under Muammar Gaddafi. To this day, there is a close affection for the former ruler, whose portrait most of them have as their background or lock screen image on their mobile phones. They even organised a bus trip from Tamale to Accra to support a Libyan football team when they played a friendly match against a Ghanaian team. Among themselves, they refer to each other as Libyan friends. This example shows that there is a combination of multiple identities in the transnational sense. Similarly, the transnational understanding of some transit returnees confirms that return is followed by repeated migration. This behaviour confirms the argument of circular migration. In the cases of those who undertake repeated migrations, it becomes apparent that with each migration, the thresholds of physical, social, economic, and cultural barriers become easier for both Moses and Ali to navigate. In these cases, their transnational network proved to be a critical resource for providing information and financial resources (compare Massey et al., 2004).

In addition, the trajectories confirm that the categorisation and demarcation of transit and destination country are flexible and that a transit country can become a destination country and

vice versa. Migration is not as unidirectional and linear as the term *transit* implies (Schapendonk, 2012). The examples of Ali and Moses, in particular, show that the dynamics of the migrants' trajectories were subject to processual factors which changed over space and time. In fact, the abstract long-term destination of Europe was fixed for both of them at the beginning of their first migration. However, during their first and subsequent migrations, in phases, it receded completely into the background. The supposed transit country of Libya became a home-like country. Along various mobility/immobility periods, the trajectories were organised step-by-step, guided by changing migration aspirations (compare Grillo, 2007). For instance, Moses gave up his aspiration to reach Europe after some time. Ali had changed his aspiration repeatedly.

The role of the family situation in the decision to migrate has previously been outlined. For all cases and the respective migrations, the criticism of De Haas and Fokkema (2010) that household models obscure the actual reasons and cause for the individual migration decision is confirmed. The intra-household perspective revealed "inequalities and conflicts of interest along the lines of gender, generation, and age" (Castles et al., 2014, p. 39). This focus on intra-household power struggles made it possible to understand, for instance, Moses' migration as a kind of liberation and emancipation from social control and restriction within the family. Or Ali's intra-familial disintegration and unequal treatment as circumstances which partly motivated his repeated migrations.

6.2 Policy Considerations

From this research, policy considerations can be derived for practitioners who are involved in the field of return migration and reintegration. While the described life realities in this study relate to experiences in the Ghanaian context, they can be applied to other environments as well. The same pertains regarding the country from which the transit returnees emigrated. Indeed, returns from transit are associated with special circumstances. However, the implications are still transferable to other types of returns. In spite of the fact that the study was conducted within the context of one particular AVRR programme to which it speaks back, the policy considerations are universally transferable and applicable to any form of reintegration assistance.

Different challenges for migrants shape the time after returning from transit. These challenges are not only faced by the individual transit returnee but the social environment is likewise affected. The latter, in turn, can have a considerable influence on the agency of the transit returnee. Taking this into account, AVRR policies should seek to address all challenges and their causes. Furthermore, it is crucial to exploit the potential which lies in the beneficiary and their environment. On the one hand, this means broadening the perspective and not only aiming at the single transit returnee, but considering the social environment, such as social spaces, peer groups and individuals relevant to the beneficiary as well as their respective significance and function. Secondly, the analytical focus should not be limited to the post-return phase, but also analyse the phase before and during migration for each case in detail. Only in this way can a

holistic understanding of the individually perceived life reality of the particular transit returnee emerge and decisive causes, actors, challenges, and potentials be identified. Instead of a one-size-fits-all solution, an individualised, customised, needs-oriented, context-specific, and sustainably effective assistance can be derived for the benefit of the transit returnee based on the suggested analysis. All measures should empower the beneficiary and correspond to their ideas instead of being imposed on them against their will.

The organisation providing reintegration assistance should guarantee access to any support it offers as quickly as possible, without bureaucracy and to the extent adapted and sufficient for the purpose. For the beneficiary, each process should be understandable, transparent, and linked to clear and reliable expectation management. All beneficiaries should be treated fairly, equally, and with respect. The communication between the organisation and the beneficiary should be fully barrier-free and ideally supported by a contact person on the ground who can be reached anytime. It must be ensured that the transit returnee can articulate needs and complaints at any time and are heard and taken seriously. All measures described below should be prepared, initiated or implemented as early as possible. Ideally, all measures should be planned or initiated before the actual return.

Before or immediately after return, beneficiaries should have full access to relevant information and be guided, advised, and supported in their ideas and needs to be best prepared for the post-return phase. In principle, migrants should be supported in implementing their accumulated capital abroad in such a way that they can securely dispose of and use it after their return. In order to cover urgent needs, access to cash should be facilitated immediately after return. Such needs should be broadly identified and the transit returnee should be supported financially and practically to meet needs such as food, a decent place to live, a suitable school for the children, vocational and other training, and many more needs. In the long term, the transit returnee should be supported in their quest for independence and autonomy. If necessary, this includes the ability to gain knowledge on financial literacy and how to safely invest money earned abroad.

As economic support is essential, it should neither be decontextualised nor exclusively provided but rather embedded in a mix of different support measures, considering the social environment. In the case of entrepreneurship support, the business idea should coincide with the genuine will of the beneficiary as a result of a bottom-up approach and be provided in cash. In addition, the local market situation and profitability, which other actors are needed for realisation and what profile they should bring with them must be determined. Additional partners should be recruited from the immediate environment of the beneficiary to create a trusting and functioning team that can be successful in business operations.

Furthermore, transit returnees should receive psychological support to be mentally stabilised, be self-effective and gain orientation for themselves. The environment should also be provided with psychological support to find an adequate way to cope with the situation. In particular, the

immediate environment should be aware of its role in dealing with the transit returnee. Especially the transit returnee's closest confidants, who can act as mentors, should be trained with practical advice. Special attention should be paid to the family and the embeddedness of the transit returnee in the family setting. The extended environment should also be addressed to establish awareness among them for constructive behaviour. Targeted awareness-raising should be carried out via previously identified communication channels and influential opinion leaders, such as radio, social media, television, community groups, mosque or church congregations, associations, peer groups and many more. Apart from that, the transit returnee should have a personal and neutral contact person like a social worker with whom they can confidentially exchange information.

Furthermore, the transit returnee should be supported in participating in activities of their choice and interacting with fellow human beings on an equal footing. If this corresponds to the wishes of the transit returnee, this should include meetings with stayees, sports or other leisure activities. Along similar lines to psychological support, transit returnees and their environment should also be given access to necessary medical treatment.

6.3 Future Research

The research has uncovered several phenomena that would be worth investigating in greater depth in future research. First, it is worth scrutinising the five findings mentioned in the final paragraph in *Section 2.4* which lie outside the research objective. Secondly, opportunities to shed light on blind spots in the research arise from the limitations described in the previous section. In this regard, Ghanaian transit returnees' perceived life realities beyond the male gender would need to be examined as well as those who did not return to their usual environment but returned clandestinely. In addition, future research could focus on those transit returnees who returned assisted-compelled and spontaneous-chosen. Regarding the timing of the case study, an earlier or closer to the return day and a longer period for fieldwork could be chosen to provide a more valid basis for data collection for behavioural phenomena. In addition, several phenomena are discussed in the research but could be further investigated in future research. These include the transnational network of Ghanaian transit returnees, the perspective of and impact on family members along the respective phases, the role of masculinity, religion and its representative stakeholders as well as the placemaking of Ghanaian transit returnees after their return. Regarding the latter, the research already indicated the importance of informal gatherings and groups, such as in the case of Mohammed with various joint tea areas and other more formalised self-help groups. A detailed examination of these peer groups could be scientifically valuable.

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Summary

The case study promotes an understanding of transit returnees' perceived life realities. Employing the practice theory approach, four return stories, including experiences with Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) measures, are analysed in-depth. Apart from transnational identities and placemaking, the role of biographical and characteristic features, the social environment as well as its meaning and function for their wellbeing and aspired livelihood strategies are discussed.

Every perceived life reality is highly individual and complex, represented by multifactorial interdependencies and dynamic changes. Upon return, transit returnees are mentally and socio-economically highly vulnerable. In both regards, the major challenge lies in developing self-efficacy as a prerequisite for establishing autonomous livelihood strategies. Along this process, the social environment, with individuals potentially acting as mentors, can have influence on their wellbeing and agency by providing with material and immaterial resources.

Thus, AVRR programmes should sensitise and involve the entire social network in their support measures. At first, it is required to thoroughly scrutinise the various needs. Adequate assistance must remain individualised, customised, needs-oriented, context-specific, unbureaucratic, transparent, sustainably effective, and carried out as early and quickly as possible. All transit returnees ought to be treated fairly, equally, and respectfully.

Annex

Annex 1: Interview guide transit returnees

Introduction

This is a case study carried out as part of my Master's thesis having transit returnees' perceived life realities upon return as its topic. Thank you very much for participating as an interviewee in this research. In the subsequent, I will be asking you some questions about your life, your migration and your time before and upon return. I am interested in you as a person and your perception, feelings and attitudes. I will also ask for your social network, people who played and still play a crucial role in your life.

You can answer the questions however you want to. There is no time limit or any other restriction. Just be yourself and share what is on your mind. If you feel like not responding to a question, you can do so, of course. If you do not understand a question, please ask for clarification. If you need a break or have any feelings of discomfort, please let me know. At any time during the interview, you can also decide to stop. The interview will be recorded with your consent. If you change your mind about the tape, such as that you wish that the recording should be deleted, I will do so as well. The recording is just necessary for the research analysis and will be deleted afterwards anyways. No other person apart from me and the personnel from the university is allowed to listen to it. There will be a written transcript of our conversation. The same in terms of access apply to this very transcript. However, the sense and some quotes of this interview might be mentioned in the case study. After the academic approval, the Master's thesis will be published online to the public. If you do not wish to be identified, your name will be anonymised. During the interview, you might mention other people's names. If you wish to anonymise their names as well, please let me know. Before we start the interview, you have the chance to express your will with regard to your own and other people's identities and again state if or if not you are fine with the interview being recorded and transcribed afterwards. Once again, it is important to me to say that everything you are telling me I will hold it to myself and not talk about anything that happened during this interview to any other person without your consent. Everything said will remain confidential. I will not talk to any individual or any authority. I am saying and stressing this because I want you to feel comfortable and to have a nice atmosphere in which we can openly talk. Do you have any questions so far? Do you agree with recording and transcribing the following interview? Do you also agree with the use of quotes from this conversation for the purpose of the case study? Do you agree with using your real name, or do you want to be anonymised? In case you mention other people's names, do you want to anonymise them? I will start the recording now, and I will introduce myself and you as my interview partner and summarise what I told you and your responses. You have to say again that everything I said is the

truth. After that, I will state the location where we are right now, the date and the time before we can finally start with the interview.

Recorded interview

This is interview number X. My name is John Contentius. I am a current Master's student at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. In the subsequent, I will conduct an interview with a Ghanaian transit returnee. (His name is X). Before this recording was started, I familiarised my interview partner with the purpose and the usage of the conversation. The interviewee gave his consent to the recording of the talk, the fact that it will be recorded, transcribed and used for the purpose of the research. (She/He wishes to be anonymised as well as other people's names she/he will mention.)

Theme 1: Childhood

Can you give me some biographical insight into your life course, starting from your birth to the point you decided to leave Ghana? Let us start with your childhood. Where did you grow up? With whom? What were your parents doing when you were a child? How was your relationship with your parents when you were a child? Who was taking care of you? Do you have siblings? How would you describe the relationship? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not? Where did you go to school? What did you do as a child in your free time? How many friends did you have? How would you describe the relationship? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not? Were there other people you had a relationship with? How would you describe the relationship? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not? Who were the most significant people in your life as a child? If you had a problem, to whom did you go then? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not?

In general: What made you happy/sad in your childhood? How would you describe yourself as a child? Were there some remarkable things happening in your childhood? Something you would say affected and/or shaped you. What was your plan at this time for your future? What problems did you have? What issues did you struggle with? If you could abandon something from your childhood, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What did you really enjoy as a child? If you could preserve something from your childhood to your current life, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What do you feel thinking back to this time of your childhood? What was your plan at this time for your future?

Theme 2: Adolescence

What happened after graduating from junior high school? Did you continue your education? Why/why not? Where did you live then? With whom? What was your role within your household? How

did the relationship with your parents/siblings/childhood friends develop? How many friends did you have? How would you describe the relationship? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not? Were there other people you had a relationship with (e.g., pastor/partner/neighbours/teacher/other mentors)? People who were important in your life as a teenager? How would you describe the relationship? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not? In general: What made you happy/sad during your childhood? How would you describe yourself as a teenager? Were there some remarkable things happening during your adolescence/teenage time? Something you would say affected and/or shaped you. What was your plan at this time for your future? What problems did you have? What issues did you struggle with? If you could abandon something from your childhood, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What did you really enjoy as a child? If you could take something from your childhood to your current life, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What do you feel thinking back to this time of your childhood? What was your plan at this time for your future?

Theme 3: Adulthood

So far, you told me a bit about your childhood and the following time as a teenager. What's next? How did it go on when you became a young adult? Or, to put it in other words: How did your life look like before you decided to leave Ghana? Where did you live? With whom? What was your role within your household? Did you have a partner? Did you have children? What did they do? How was your relationship with them? What role did they have in your life? How did the relationship with your parents/siblings/friends/those people you were close to/who were significant to you develop? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not? Were there other people you had a relationship with? Maybe new people occurred? How would you describe the relationship? Who were the most significant people in your life back then? If you had a problem, to whom did you go then? How did you make money? How did you get into this job? Who helped you get the job? What did you do at your workplace? How was the atmosphere there? Did you get along with colleagues/customers/the boss? Did you like your job? How many hours per week did you work? What was your salary? How did other people see your job? In what kind of social environment where you embedded in? What was your neighbourhood like? How was your relationship with your neighbours? Were there family relations with other families? Were you a member of an organisation/association/club/church? What was your position there? What was the relationship with the other people like? What kind of roles/positions did the people have? What was your role/position? Were you participating in community activities? How did you see the community? What characterises the community? How would you describe living in this community? How did your personal life in the community look like? Did you feel like being a part of the community? Why/why not? Were you accepted? Why/why not? How is it organised? What values were important in the community? Were there conflicts within the community? Did you have conflicts with community members/the community? What kind of roles/positions did in the community exist? What was your position? Did your position change over time (beginning from

your adolescence)? How did you feel in this position? What is a good/bad thing about the community? What was problematic?

In general: How did a typical working day look like? What did you do in your free time? With whom? How did other people see you? What did you like/dislike during the time living (with your family) in the community? Towards who in the community or what did you orient yourself? Did you have role models? What was important to you in your life? Were you religious? Why/why not? What were you thinking the meaning of life was? What were you thinking does it worth living for? Where did you belong(e.g., community, church etc.)? Who/what kind of person did you want to be? What made you happy/sad? What motivated/frustrated you? What were you proud/ashamed of? What did you like/dislike most about yourself? What was your strength/weakness? How would you describe yourself back then? What kind of person were you? Were there some remarkable things happening during that time? Something you would say affected and/or shaped you. What was your plan at this time for your future? What problems did you have? What issues did you struggle with? If you could abandon something from that time, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What did you really enjoy back then? If you could take something from that time to your current life, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What do you feel thinking back to this time? What was your plan at this time for your future?

Theme 4: Decision to leave

What did the decision-making to leave Ghana look like? When did you start to think of leaving Ghana? Why did you start thinking that? When and why did you determine your decision to migrate? Who was involved in/tried to influence your decision? What did those knowing of your intentions think of it? Who supported/discouraged you? Why? What were your personal thoughts on it (doubts/hopes/wishes)? Was it finally your own decision, or did you also feel some social pressure to migrate? How did you plan to finance your migration process? Who wanted to help you? What did you know about the migration route? Where did you want to arrive? And what was your plan to do there? How did you get the information about this destination? How did you prepare yourself for the move?

Theme 5: Migration experience

Can you describe to me, starting from the day of departure, how the journey passed off? When did you leave your hometown? How? With whom? To where? And how did it go on? What did you experience on the move? Did you have contact with people back home? Why/why not? How? When? How often? With whom? What were you talking about? What did they tell you? What did you tell them? Did something unexpected happen? What were some difficulties you encountered? Did anyone support you (money, information, emotional, other resources)? How did you make money? Was anyone asking you for money? Did you give/send money home?

What kind of people did you encounter? Did you make new friends? How would you describe the relationship? What did you discuss with them? Did you feel like being part of a new community? How did this and your overall migration experience affect your sense of belonging/values/identity? How did it shape you positively/negatively? How were you treated by the locals? How did this make you feel? What did you learn from your experiences?

Theme 6: Decision to return

How would you describe your decision-making to return take place? When and why did you decide to return to Ghana? What did you expect from returning? Who was involved in the decision-making and knew your intentions? What was their opinion on that? Did you feel some pressure in your decision-making process from any side towards any direction? If not, was it, therefore, your own will? Did you want to go back to your hometown? What were your thoughts on how the others would receive you? How did you become aware of AVRR? Who assisted you in the return process? What did this assistance look like?

Theme 7: Time upon return

What characterises your time upon return? How, when and with whom did you return? Where did you arrive? Where did you go from there? Where did you end up living? Why did you return to this place? With whom? How did your partner/children/family/friends/community members receive you? How did they react to your return? What were you talking about with them? How did their situation change while you were absent? What was your role within the household? What role did and do they (family/friends...) play in your life? How did the relationship with your partner/children/family/friends/those people you were close to/who were significant to you develop in the following? Do you still have contact with some of them? Why/why not? Were there other people you had a relationship with? Maybe new people occurred in the following? How would you describe the relationship? Did you maintain relationships with the people you met during your migration? Who were the most significant people in your life upon return? If you had a problem at that time, to whom did you go then?

In case new people are mentioned: How did the relationship with these people develop until nowadays? Who else helped, and who refused you? Why/how did they help/refuse you?

Back to the day of arrival in your old and new home: What happened after you arrived? How was it to be back for you? What did you expect? What disappointed/surprised you negatively? What surprised you positively? What was the plan for your future at the time of return? What was your idea to do? What did you do, actually? How did you feel the community reacted to your return? What was different when you returned? Did or do people treat you differently? In what way? How does this make you feel? In what kind of social environment were you embedded in? What was your neighbourhood like? How was your relationship with your neighbours when you returned?

How is it nowadays? Were there some remarkable things happening during your time upon return until nowadays? Maybe something you would say affected and/or shaped you? What problems did you have? What issues did you struggle with? Why? Were other people affected due to your migration which still played a role even at the time of your return? If you could abandon something from that time when you returned, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What did you really enjoy back then? If you could take something from that time to your current life, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What do you feel thinking back to this time? How did you initially make money? Who helped you out? What else did you do as income-generating activities? How many hours per week did you work? What was your income? How did your situation change over time, and how is it nowadays? How do other people see your situation? Were you participating in community activities/local/cultural events upon return? Why/why not? Did this change? Were you (again) a member of an organisation/association/club/religious community? Why/why not? What was your role/position there? What kind of roles/positions did the other people have? What was the relationship with the other people like? And how did it develop until nowadays? How did you see the community when you returned? What was your feeling about returning to this kind of social environment? Were there conflicts within the community when you returned? What was problematic when you returned? Were you confronted with something? Did you have conflicts with community members/the community? Did something change in comparison to the time you left? How did your personal life in the community look like in the beginning and nowadays? What did you do in your free time and what nowadays? With whom? What did you like/dislike when you returned to living (with your family) in the community? What do you like/dislike about living (with your family) in the community nowadays? What changed? Did you feel being a part of the community when you returned? Why/why not? Are you part of the community nowadays? Why/why not? Are there conflicts in the community right nowadays? How would you describe life in this community in general? What are the good/bad things about the community? What values are important in the community? How important is clannishness/cohesion/solidarity in the community? Towards who (in the community)/what did you orient yourself upon return? Towards who (in the community)/what do you orient yourself to nowadays? Did you have role models when you returned? Do you still have them nowadays? What makes them your role models? Was it possible for you to identify yourself with the values of the community? How is it going nowadays? What was important to you in your life when you returned? What is important to you in your life nowadays? Did you vote in the past? Why/why not? Do you vote/plan to vote nowadays? Why/why not? Are you religious? Why/why not? Did your faith change over time? What were you thinking the meaning of life was when you returned? What do you think nowadays? What were you thinking does it worth living for? What do you think nowadays? Where did you belong when you returned? Where do you belong nowadays? What characterises being *home* for you? What makes a home for you to be your home? Who/what kind of person did you want to be upon return? And who/what kind of person do you want to be nowadays? What made you happy/sad during your time after your return? Why? What makes you happy/sad nowadays? What motivated/frustrated you at the time of return? Why? What motivates/frustrates you nowadays? What were you proud/ashamed of when

you returned? Why? What are you proud/ashamed of nowadays? What did you like/dislike most about yourself when you returned? Why? What do you like/dislike most about yourself nowadays? What was your strength/weakness when you returned? Why? What is your strength/weakness nowadays? How would you describe yourself back then?/What kind of person were you? How would you describe yourself nowadays?/What kind of person are you nowadays? What are the key differences between your life nowadays and your life before your migration? How did you experience the time of readjustment in general? If you look back, what would you do differently in terms of reintegration? How did IOM promise to help you? What actual assistance was IOM giving you? How did this assistance help you? Why/why not? How do you assess the assistance IOM gave you in detail? What was good/bad? Did IOM also try to incorporate your social environment? What would you suggest to them to do better? What do you think of IOM in general? Were there other things helping you to readjust? How did your time abroad help/hinder you to readjust? Which person(s) played an important role in your reintegration process? Who made your reintegration more difficult/easier? If you look back, what would you do differently in terms of reintegration? What is on your mind if you hear of Europe? Do you have an opinion on the European Union? Who is responsible for the fatalities on the migration route to Europe? Why? If you had the power, what would you change in terms of migration policy? What do you like/dislike about your life nowadays? How do you see your current living standard (comfortable/doable/struggling), and why so? If you could abandon something, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What do you really enjoy in your life? If you could preserve something from your current life, what would that be (e.g., item, feeling, attitude, person etc.)? What is on your mind if you compare your life nowadays to the situation before you started your migration? Do you have more or less freedom/happiness/agency in your life nowadays, and why so? Do you feel respected by your family/friends/etc., the community and the society as a whole? More or less in comparison to the time before you migrated? Why/why not? Is there something from your time abroad you miss? Something you still carry on (habits, values)? How would you describe your cultural orientation? Do you feel your perceptions or your world views have changed after your migration experience? Do you feel changed by your migration? In what ways? How does that affect your life nowadays? What do you feel thinking about yourself nowadays? How would you define yourself nowadays? What do you want to do better in the future? What are your plans for the future? Are you optimistic about your future? Why/why not? Do you plan to migrate again? Why do/don't you want to migrate? Would you encourage others to migrate?

Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Neighbourhood

How would you describe the community?

How did life or living together in the community change over generations? What characterises the mindset of the older generation and what of the younger one?

How does the fact that most young male people are leaving the community trying to migrate to Europe affect the community?

What do you think makes people leave this place? Do you understand their motivations?

Community

What do you think of those who want to leave the country and decide to emigrate? Do you understand their motivations?

Do you have a migration experience yourself?

If yes: What kind of?

If no: Do you know other people who underwent migration?

If yes: Who? What kind of?

What do you think of people returning from Libya?

How did you get your information about the issue of transit returnees (apart from the story of X)?

not family: How does the return of transit returnees affect the neighbourhood/the life in X/the business environment?

Do you know X? What comes into your mind if you think of this person? What characterises him?

What is your relationship with X?

How often are you in contact with him?

How often do you talk (either personally or on the phone)?

not family: Since when do you know him?

Since you know him before he migrated, was the relationship different before he left? How did X change in terms of his personality upon return? How do you see that?

How did you and others receive him after he returned from Libya?

family; friends/mentors; neighbourhood: How did the return of X affect the family life/your life?

How do you feel he was received by the neighbourhood/family/the business environment/others?

Does a nickname for him exist?

If yes: What is it and why?

To what extent is he reintegrated?

Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Annex 3: List of informants

First Case: Ali Alhassan					
Name	Age	Gender	Role	Interview location	Duration
Ali	34	M	Returnee	Tamale	6:39:10 h
Abdul	40	M	Neighbour T-Poly (area)	Tamale	15:33 min
Aziz	37	M	Childhood friend; Migration fellow	Tamale	13:44 min
Baki	39	M	Teenage friend; Migration fellow	Tamale	24:34 min
Habiba	69	F	Mother	Tamale	-:-
Lukman	38	M	Childhood friend; Migration fellow	Tamale	13:54 min
Masahudu	56	M	Butcher; cousin	Tamale	18:10 min
Matthäus	43	M	Migration fellow	Tamale	23:46 min
Mawiya	40	M	Migration fellow	Tamale	12:14 min
Mohammed	40	M	Butcher; Rukaya’s cousin	Tamale	23:43 min
Mr Khamil	45	M	Half-brother (mentor)	Accra	49:55 min
Mumuni	29	M	Neighbour T-Poly (area)	Tamale	10:43 min
Mussah	31	M	Neighbour T-Poly (directly); friend	Tamale	16:21 min
Mustafa	28	M	Brother	Tamale	20:21 min
Nafisa	36	F	Sister	Tamale	16:58 min
Nardia	65	F	Aunt	Tamale	22:20 min
Nurudeen	44	M	Migration fellow	Tamale	15:16 min
Odum	38	M	Migration fellow	Tamale	13:42 min
Rukaya	28	F	Wife	Tamale	14:34 min
Saani	30	M	Butcher; Half-brother	Tamale	8:51 min
Sadia	40	F	Sister	Tamale	30:08 min
Sedu	58	M	Uncle	Tamale	17:21 min
Ali*	34	M	Returnee	Tamale	1:23:21 h
Aziz*	37	M	Childhood friend; Migration fellow		
Baki*	39	M	Friend; Migration fellow		
Matthäus*	43	M	Migration fellow		
Mawiya*	40	M	Migration fellow		
Odum*	38	M	Friend; Migration fellow		
					14:24:39 h

*The interviewee was one of six participants in a joint focus group interview.

Second Case: Mohammed Mumuni					
Name	Age	Gender	Role	Place	Duration
Mohammed	34	M	Returnee	Takoradi	2:52:59 h
Adams	35	M	Childhood friend; Migration fellow	Takoradi	13:25 min
Ali	39	M	Childhood friend	Takoradi	25:31 min
Amimatu	68	F	Mother	Takoradi	18:08 min
Alimatu	32	F	Sister	Takoradi	20:30 min
Aziz	33	M	Childhood friend	Takoradi	24:53 min
Ibrahim	33	M	Friend	Takoradi	12:49 min
Mamudu	37	M	Friend	Takoradi	14:39 min
Peter	16	M	Friend; foster-son	Takoradi	12:23 min
Rahman	38	M	Childhood friend	Takoradi	28:09 min
Samuel	35	M	Migration fellow	Mile 11	6:56 min
Sumaila	33	M	Childhood friend; Migration fellow	Kasoa	47:30 min
Yunusah	34	M	Childhood friend	Takoradi	24:54 min
Zakari	42	M	Brother	Takoradi	23:50 min
Abdel*	36	M	Compound area	Takoradi	20:57 min
Said*	24	M	Compound area		
Suleiman*	39	M	Compound area		
Mohammed**	32	M	Las Palmas Club	Takoradi	11:58 min
Aminu**	34	M	Las Palmas Club		
Suleiman**	39	M	Las Palmas Club		
Suraka**	42	M	Las Palmas Club		
					7:59:23 h

*The interviewee was one of three participants in a joint focus group interview.

**The interviewee was one of four participants in a joint focus group interview.

Third Case: Ebenezer Bae					
Name	Age	Gender	Role	Place	Duration
<i>Ebenezer</i>	25	M	<i>Returnee</i>	<i>Drobo</i>	<i>7:27:08 h</i>
Abraham	39	M	Neighbour Mechanic Area	Drobo	19:10 min
Agnes	36	F	Neighbour Container	Drobo	12:45 min
anonymous	50	F	Neighbour Container	Drobo	12:05 min
Atta	39	M	Carpentry boss; Friend (mentor)	Drobo	14:29 min
Awukye	26	M	Football team Krupiase Lovers	Drobo	14:37 min
Daniel	36	M	Neighbour Itel-Shop	Drobo	8:03 min
Emmanuel	27	M	Friend (mentor)	Drobo	26:38 min
Francis	44	M	Acquaintance	Taino I	15:34 min
George (Classmate)	26	M	Co-worker	Drobo	18:40 min
George (Cousin)	27	M	Cousin (mentor); Co-worker	Drobo	19:47 min
Gyan	65	M	Uncle	Taino I	16:23 min
Iky	24	M	Co-worker	Drobo	13:59 min
Isaac	31	M	Half-brother	Taino I	28:39 min
John	29	M	Childhood friend; Football team Krupiase Lovers	Drobo	21:11 min
Joustina	56	F	Mother	Drobo	20:09 min
Kwaku	63	M	Father	Taino I	23:31 min
Michael	22	M	Brother	Drobo	11:19 min
Paulina	30	F	Sister	Drobo	12:00 min
Richard	43	M	Neighbour Itel-Shop; Friend (mentor)	Drobo	10:49 min
Stephen	X	M	Uncle	Drobo	39:53 min
					13:26:49 h

Fourth Case: Moses Gafah					
Name	Age	Gender	Role	Place	Duration
Moses	43	M	Returnee	Weija	5:56:00 h
Adam*	48	M	Migration fellow	Budu-buram	48:49 min
Georgina*	35	F	Migration fellow		
Caroline	58	F	Cousin; Migration fellow	Mile 11	9:05 min
Charles	50	M	Migration fellow	Weija	10:57 min
Edward	46	M	Half-brother	Accra	11:11 min
Patrick	41	M	Childhood friend	Cape Coast	6:44 min
Salome	63	F	Mother-in-law	Accra	43:08 min
Vincent	53	M	Half-brother (antagonist)	Beposo	48:05 min
William	46	M	Half-brother	Beposo	37:43 min
					9:31:42 h

**The interviewee was one of two participants in a joint focus group interview.*

Annex 4: ATLAS.ti Report

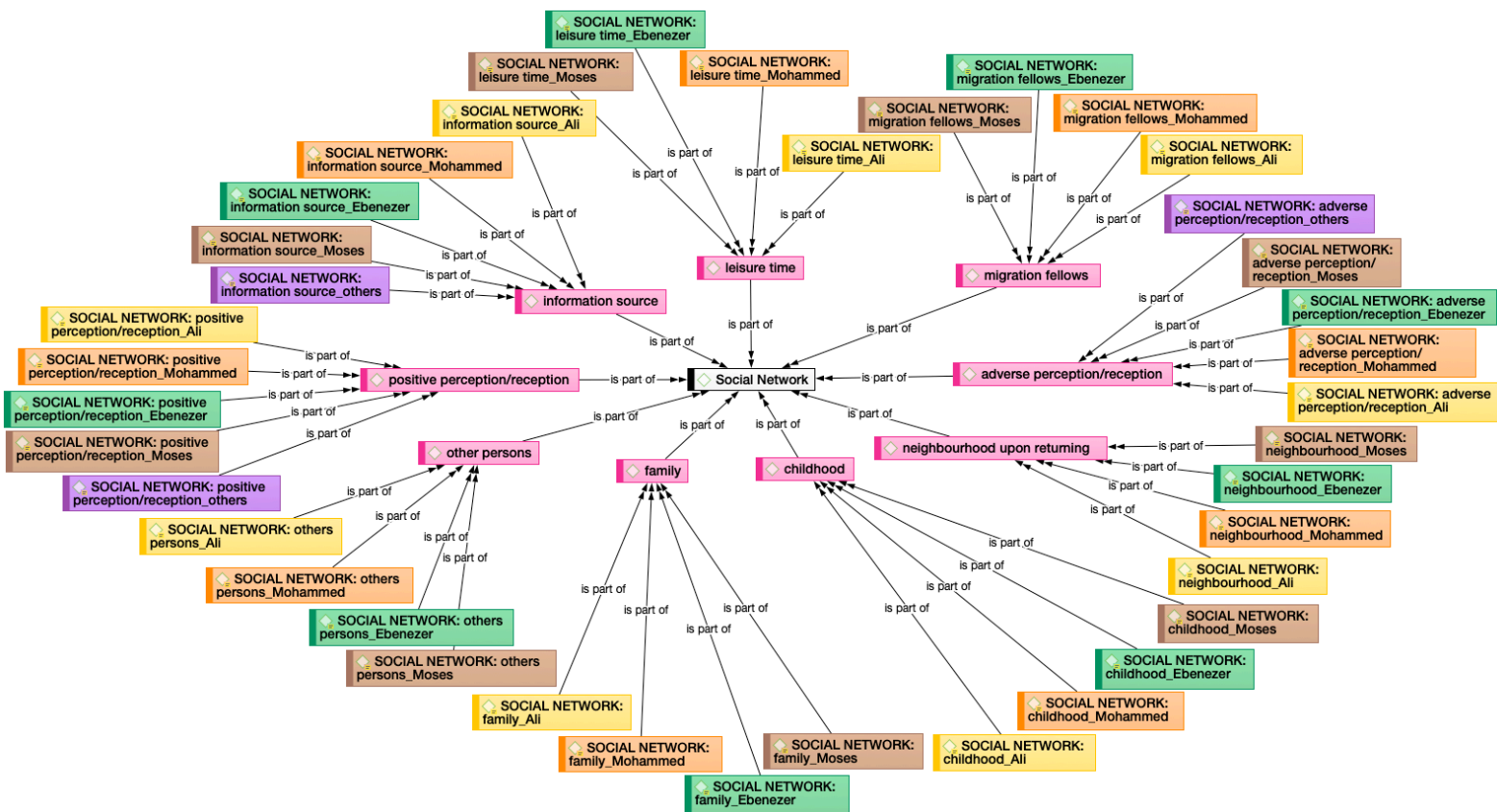
Codes:

Colour	Name	Grounded -ness	Density	Comment
●	adverse perception/reception	0	6	Definition: Group code adverse perception/reaction
●	assistance	0	6	Definition: Group code assistance
●	AVRR	0	3	Definition: Theme AVRR
●	AVRR: assistance_Ali	4	1	Definition: Provided reintegration assistance for Ali
●	AVRR: assistance_Ebenezer	4	1	Definition: Provided reintegration assistance for Ebenezer
●	AVRR: assistance_Mohammed	2	1	Definition: Provided reintegration assistance for Mohammed
●	AVRR: assistance_Moses	2	1	Definition: Provided reintegration assistance for Moses
●	AVRR: assistance_others	5	1	Definition: Provided reintegration assistance for other transit returnees
●	AVRR: perception_Ali	2	1	Definition: Other returnees' opinion/perception on (the given) reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: perception_Ebenezer	8	1	Definition: Ebenezer's opinion/perception on (the given) reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: perception_Mohammed	6	1	Definition: Mohammed's opinion/perception on (the given) reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: perception_Moses	6	1	Definition: Moses' opinion/perception on (the given) reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: procedure_Ali	0	1	Definition: Information from Ali on the provision of the reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: procedure_Ebenezer	19	1	Definition: Information from Ebenezer on the provision of the reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: procedure_Mohammed	8	1	Definition: Information from Mohammed on the provision of the reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: procedure_Moses	19	1	Definition: Information from Moses on the provision of the reintegration assistance
●	AVRR: procedure_others	14	1	Definition: Information from other transit returnees on the provision of the reintegration assistance
●	belonging	0	5	Definition: Group code belonging
●	character	0	5	Definition: Group code character
●	childhood	0	5	Definition: Group code childhood
●	decision-making	0	6	Definition: Group code decision-making
●	Experiences in transit	0	3	Definition: Group code experiences in transit
●	family	0	5	Definition: Group code family
●	family background	0	5	Definition: Group code family background
●	general perception	0	5	Definition: Group code general perception
●	hindrance	0	7	Definition: Group code hindrance
●	information source	0	6	Definition: Group code information source
●	leisure time	0	5	Definition: Group code leisure time
●	leisure time activities	0	5	Definition: Group code leisure time activities
●	Livelihood strategies	0	2	Definition: Theme Livelihood strategies
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: belonging_Ali	5	1	Definition: Ali's sense of belonging and definition of home
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: belonging_Ebenezer	7	1	Definition: Ebenezer's sense of belonging and definition of home
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: belonging_Mohammed	7	1	Definition: Mohammed's sense of belonging and definition of home
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: belonging_Moses	8	1	Definition: Moses' sense of belonging and definition of home
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: character_Ali	14	1	Definition: Ali's charatcer
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: character_Ebenezer	39	1	Definition: Ebenezer's charatcer
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: character_Mohammed	15	1	Definition: Mohammed's character
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: character_Moses	21	1	Definition: Moses' character
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: general perception_Ali	17	1	Definition: Ali's perception of life in general and his own life in particular
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: general perception_Ebenezer	42	1	Definition: Ebenezer's perception of life in general and his own life in particular
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: general perception_Mohammed	16	1	Definition: Mohammed's perception of life in general and his own life in particular
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: general perception_Moses	14	1	Definition: Moses' perception of life in general and his own life in particular
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: leisure time activities_Ali	0	1	Definition: Ali's leisure time activities
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: leisure time activities_Ebenezer	2	1	Definition: Ebenezer's leisure time activities
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: leisure time activities_Mohammed	5	1	Definition: Mohammed's leisure time activities
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: leisure time activities_Moses	4	1	Definition: Moses' leisure time activities
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration aspiration_Ali	8	1	Definition: Ali's current migration aspiration
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration aspiration_Ebenezer	5	1	Definition: Ebenezer's current migration aspiration
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration aspiration_Mohammed	8	1	Definition: Mohammed's current migration aspiration
●	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration aspiration_Moses	2	1	Definition: Moses' current migration aspiration

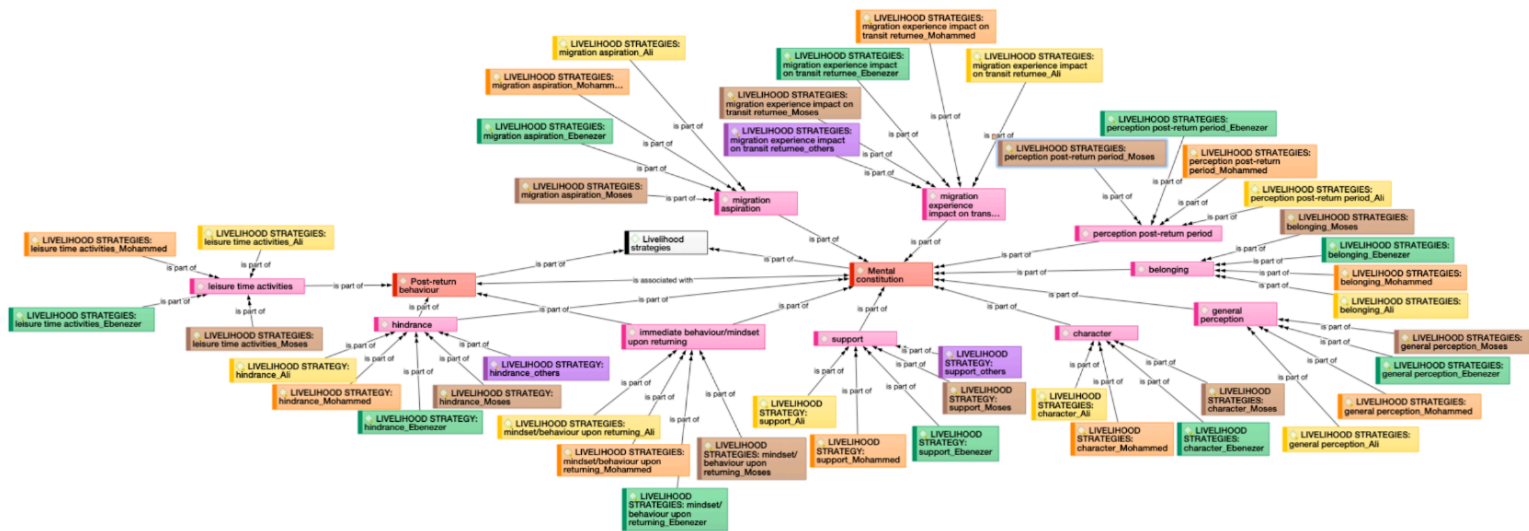
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration experience impact on transit returnee_Ali	7	1	Definition: Impact of the migration experience on Ali
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration experience impact on transit returnee_Ebenezer	5	1	Definition: Impact of the migration experience on Ebenezer
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration experience impact on transit returnee_Mohammed	13	1	Definition: Impact of the migration experience on Mohammed
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration experience impact on transit returnee_Moses	7	1	Definition: Impact of the migration experience on Moses
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: migration experience impact on transit returnee_others	1	1	Definition: Impact of the migration experience on other transit returnees
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: mindset/behaviour upon returning_Ali	28	1	Definition: Ali's mindset and behaviour upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: mindset/behaviour upon returning_Ebenezer	25	1	Definition: Ebenezer's mindset and behaviour upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: mindset/behaviour upon returning_Mohammed	21	1	Definition: Mohammed's mindset and behaviour upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: mindset/behaviour upon returning_Moses	18	1	Definition: Moses' mindset and behaviour upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: perception post-return period_Ali	22	1	Definition: Ali's and his social environment's perception of his post-return period
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: perception post-return period_Ebenezer	32	1	Definition: Ebenezer's and his social environment's perception of his post-return period
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: perception post-return period_Mohammed	28	1	Definition: Mohammed's and his social environment's perception of his post-return period
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES: perception post-return period_Moses	14	1	Definition: Moses' and his social environment's perception of his post-return period
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: hindrance_Ali	34	1	Definition: Adverse factors for Ali upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: hindrance_Ebenezer	12	1	Definition: Adverse factors for Ebenezer upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: hindrance_Mohammed	20	1	Definition: Adverse factors for Mohammed upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: hindrance_Moses	15	1	Definition: Adverse factors for Moses upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: hindrance_others	28	1	Definition: Adverse factors for other transit returnees upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: support_Ali	36	1	Definition: Support Ali received upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: support_Ebenezer	26	1	Definition: Support Ebenezer received upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: support_Mohammed	19	1	Definition: Support Mohammed received upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: support_Moses	10	1	Definition: Support Moses received upon returning
•	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY: support_others	27	1	Definition: Support other transit returnees received upon returning
•	Mental constitution	0	11	Definition: Sub-theme of livelihood strategies
•	Migration	0	2	Definition: Theme Migration
•	migration aspiration	0	5	Definition: Group code migration aspiration
•	migration experience impact on transit returnee	0	6	Definition: Group code migration experience impact on transit returnee
•	migration fellows	0	5	Definition: Group code migration fellows
•	MIGRATION: decision-making_Ali	8	1	Definition: Ali's decision-making for migration and the involved actors
•	MIGRATION: decision-making_Ebenezer	15	1	Definition: Ebenezer's decision-making for migration and the involved actors
•	MIGRATION: decision-making_Mohammed	14	1	Definition: Mohammed's decision-making for migration and the involved actors
•	MIGRATION: decision-making_Moses	9	1	Definition: Moses' decision-making for migration and the involved actors
•	MIGRATION: decision-making_others	9	1	Definition: Other transit returnees' decision-making for migration and the involved actors
•	MIGRATION: family background_Ali	6	1	Definition: Ali's parental socio-economic background, number of siblings, and position and role within the family
•	MIGRATION: family background_Ebenezer	19	1	Definition: Ebenezer's parental socio-economic background, number of siblings, and position and role within the family
•	MIGRATION: family background_Mohammed	11	1	Definition: Mohammed's parental socio-economic background, number of siblings, and position and role within the family
•	MIGRATION: family background_Moses	6	1	Definition: Moses' parental socio-economic background, number of siblings, and position and role within the family
•	MIGRATION: motives_Ali	12	1	Definition: Ali's motives and drivers for his migrations
•	MIGRATION: motives_Ebenezer	22	1	Definition: Ebenezer's motives and drivers for his migration
•	MIGRATION: motives_Mohammed	16	1	Definition: Mohammed's motives and drivers for his migration
•	MIGRATION: motives_Moses	8	1	Definition: Moses' motives and drivers for his migrations
•	MIGRATION: motives_others	44	1	Definition: Other transit returnees' motives and drivers for migration
•	MIGRATION: negative experience_Ali	39	1	Definition: Ali's negative experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
•	MIGRATION: negative experience_Ebenezer	29	1	Definition: Ebenezer's negative experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
•	MIGRATION: negative experience_Mohammed	4	1	Definition: Mohammed's negative experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
•	MIGRATION: negative experience_Moses	13	1	Definition: Moses' negative experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
•	MIGRATION: neighbourhood_Ali	10	1	Definition: Ali's childhood's neighbourhood's sense of togetherness, socio-economic situation and educational & professional background of its residents
•	MIGRATION: neighbourhood_Ebenezer	3	1	Definition: Ebenezer's childhood's neighbourhood's sense of togetherness, socio-economic situation and educational & professional background of its residents

●	MIGRATION: neighbourhood_Mohammed	18	1	Definition: Mohammed's neighbourhood's sense of togetherness, socio-economic situation and educational & professional background of its residents
●	MIGRATION: neighbourhood_Moses	0	1	Definition: Moses' childhood's neighbourhood's sense of togetherness, socio-economic situation and educational & professional background of its residents
●	MIGRATION: positive experience_Ali	15	1	Definition: Ali's positive experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
●	MIGRATION: positive experience_Ebenezer	2	1	Definition: Ebenezer's positive experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
●	MIGRATION: positive experience_Mohammed	0	1	Definition: Mohammed's positive experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
●	MIGRATION: positive experience_Moses	9	1	Definition: Moses' positive experiences in transit and its impact on his social network
●	MIGRATION: preparation_Ali	7	1	Definition: Ali's preparation for migration
●	MIGRATION: preparation_Ebenezer	7	1	Definition: Ebenezer's preparation for migration
●	MIGRATION: preparation_Mohammed	8	1	Definition: Mohammed's preparation for migration
●	MIGRATION: preparation_Moses	9	1	Definition: Moses' preparation for migration
●	mindset/behaviour upon returning	0	6	Definition: Group code mindset/behaviour upon returning
●	motives	0	6	Definition: Group code motives
●	Motives and decision-making	0	6	Definition: Sub-theme of migration
●	negative experience	0	5	Definition: Group code negative experience
●	neighbourhood before migration	0	5	Definition: Group code neighbourhood before migration
●	neighbourhood upon returning	0	5	Definition: Group code neighbourhood upon returning
●	other persons	0	5	Definition: Group code other persons
●	perception	0	5	Definition: Group code perception
●	perception post-return period	0	5	Definition: Group code post-return period
●	positive perception/reception	0	6	Definition: Group code positive perception/reception
●	positives experience	0	5	Definition: Group code positive experience
●	Post-return behaviour	0	5	Definition: Sub-theme of livelihood strategies
●	preparation	0	5	Definition: Group code preparation
●	procedure	0	6	Definition: Group code procedure
●	Social Network	0	9	Definition: Theme social network
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: adverse perception/reception_Ali	13	1	Definition: Ali's social environment's adverse perception and reception upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: adverse perception/reception_Ebenezer	11	1	Definition: Ebenezer's social environment's adverse perception and reception upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: adverse perception/reception_Mohammed	8	1	Definition: Mohammed's social environment's adverse perception and reception upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: adverse perception/reception_Moses	5	1	Definition: Moses' social environment's adverse perception and reception upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: adverse perception/reception_others	47	1	Definition: Other transit returnees' social environment's adverse perception and reception upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: childhood_Ali	7	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ali's childhood
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: childhood_Ebenezer	5	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ebenezer's childhood
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: childhood_Mohammed	4	1	Definition: Influential persons from Mohammed's childhood
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: childhood_Moses	3	1	Definition: Influential persons from Moses' childhood
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: family_Ali	8	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ali's family
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: family_Ebenezer	7	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ebenezer's family
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: family_Mohammed	3	1	Definition: Influential persons from Mohammed's family
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: family_Moses	2	1	Definition: Influential persons from Moses' family
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: information source_Ali	6	1	Definition: Information source(s) of Ali's social environment concerning the situation of transit returnees en route and upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: information source_Ebenezer	7	1	Definition: Information source(s) of Ebenezer's social environment concerning the situation of transit returnees en route and upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: information source_Mohammed	2	1	Definition: Information source(s) of Mohammed's social environment concerning the situation of transit returnees en route and upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: information source_Moses	0	1	Definition: Information source(s) of Moses' social environment concerning the situation of transit returnees en route and upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: information source_others	4	1	Definition: Information source(s) of other transit returnees' social environment concerning the situation of transit returnees en route and upon returning
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: leisure time_Ali	4	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ali's leisure time activities
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: leisure time_Ebenezer	3	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ebenezer's leisure time activities
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: leisure time_Mohammed	1	1	Definition: Influential persons from Mohammed's leisure time activities
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: leisure time_Moses	1	1	Definition: Influential persons from Moses' leisure time activities
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: migration fellows_Ali	19	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ali's time abroad
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: migration fellows_Ebenezer	5	1	Definition: Influential persons from Ebenezer's time abroad
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: migration fellows_Mohammed	3	1	Definition: Influential persons from Mohammed's time abroad
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: migration fellows_Moses	12	1	Definition: Influential persons from Moses' time abroad
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: neighbourhood_Ali	7	1	Definition: Ali's current neighbourhood's sense of togetherness, socio-economic situation and educational & professional background of its residents
●	SOCIAL NETWORK: neighbourhood_Ebenezer	15	1	Definition: Ebenezer's current neighbourhood's sense of togetherness, socio-economic situation and educational & professional background of its residents

Simplified code network on social network:



Simplified code network on livelihood strategies:



Simplified code network on AVRR:

