

Exploring socio-economic characteristics of migration streams in urban Malawi; preliminary findings from the establishment of the Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System

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INTRODUCTION

Migration has become a topic of major focus in development policy and academic circles. The proportion of the world population living in urban areas rose from about 30% in 1950 to 54% in 2015 and is projected to rise to 66% by 2050 (UN-DESA 2014). We explore migration streams in urban Malawi and socio-economic characteristics of urban migrants.

METHODS

We analyzed data from 21,224 individuals of all ages recruited in the on-going establishment of the Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System in Lilongwe, Area 25. We defined a migrant as any person who moves away from their usual place of residence, whether internally or across a border, regardless of whether the movement is 'forced' or voluntary, and further, regardless of whether the movement is from within Lilongwe city or outside. We categorized movement into two, movement from an urban setting and movement from a rural setting. We also explored urban to urban household membership pull factors for in-migrating individuals and their socio-economic characteristics at the place of residence.

RESULTS

Sex-Age Distribution

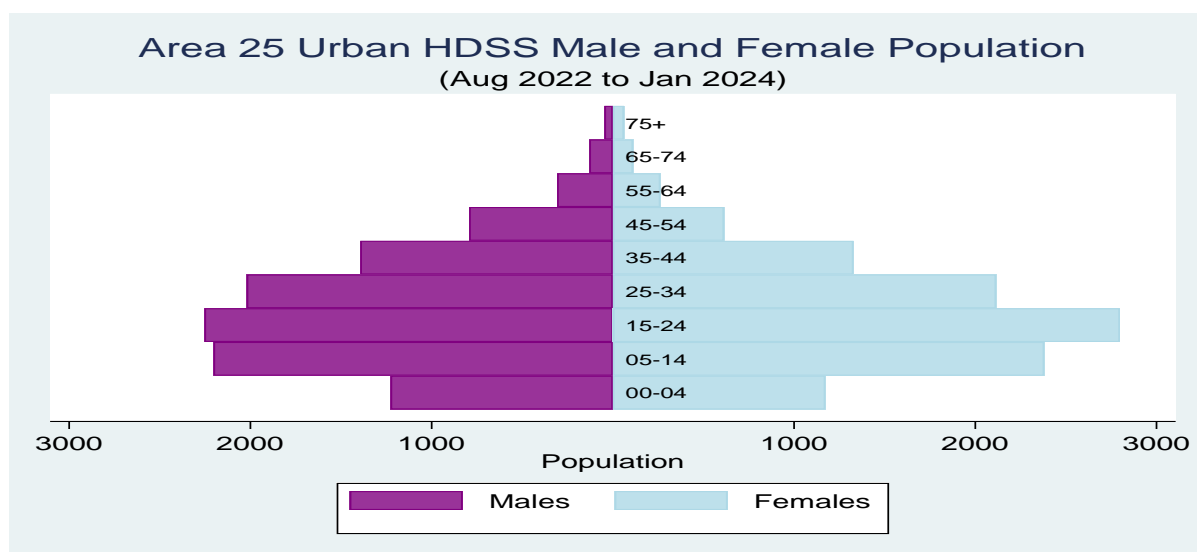


Figure 1: Area 25 Urban HDSS male and female Population

Out of the 21,224 individuals recruited in the ongoing establishment of the urban HDSS, the slight majority (10,846; 51%) are females and 10,378 (49%) are males. By age, a majority [5,502; 24%, 95% CI (0.2323 - 0.2438)] fall in the age group 15-24 seconded by the preceding age group of 5-14 [4484; 22%, 95 CI (0.2105 - 0.2216)]. Those aged 45 years or older make up a proportion of 11%.

Migration and stay duration in the dwelling unit

Of the 21,224 registered in the HDSS, 78% [95% CI (0.7724- 0.7836)] lived elsewhere and they had at least one known previous location while 22% [95% CI (0.2164 - 0.2276)] had lived in the dwelling unit since birth. Of the individuals that had lived elsewhere, the majority out-migrated from an urban setting (91%) [95% CI (0.9102 - 0.9188)] and the minority out-migrated from a rural setting (9%) [95% CI (0.0812 - 0.0898)]; hence 15,054 comprised the urban-urban migration stream and 1,335 comprised the rural-urban migration stream. Of the 15,054 in the urban-urban migration stream, the large majority (11937; 79%) [Proportion 0.79, 95% CI (0.7864 - 0.7993)] had 2 or more known previous locations while 3,117 (21%) [Proportion 0.21, 95% CI (0.2007 - 0.2136)] had one known previous location.

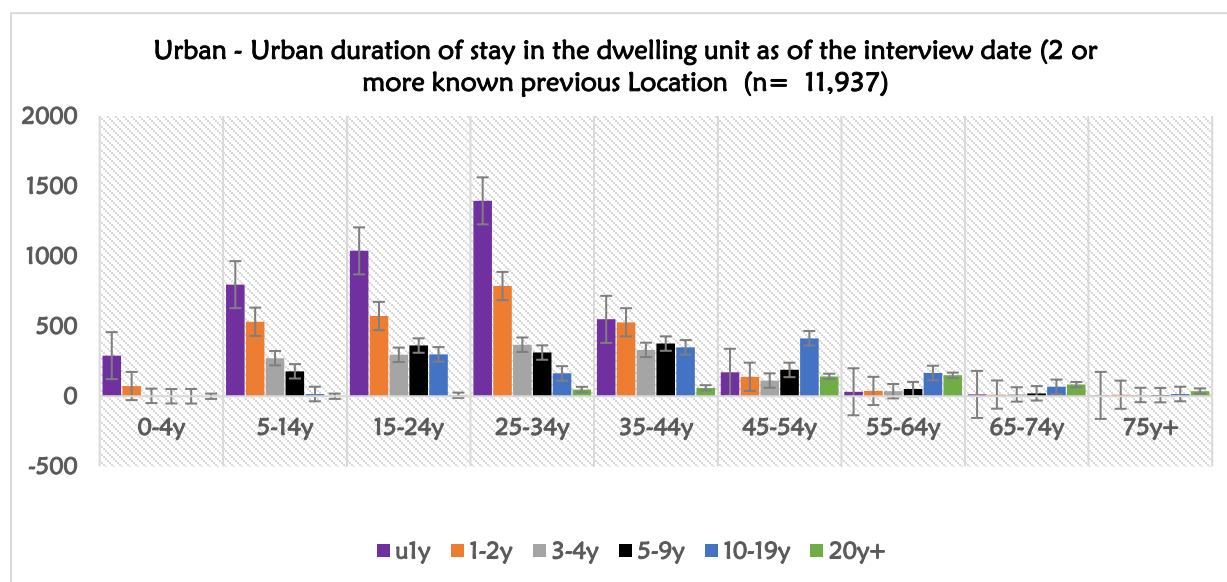


Figure 2: Duration of stay in the dwelling unit as of the interview date

For duration of stay for each age group for the majority with two or more known previous location (Figure 2) in the urban-urban stream as of the interview date in the HDSS, a majority of individuals aged 44 years or less had only lived in the dwelling unit continuously as permanent residence for less than 2 years (with significant within-age group-stay-duration differences for ages 5 to 34). For ages 45 and over, a majority of individuals lived in the dwelling unit for longer period of 10 years or over.

Socio-economic characteristics

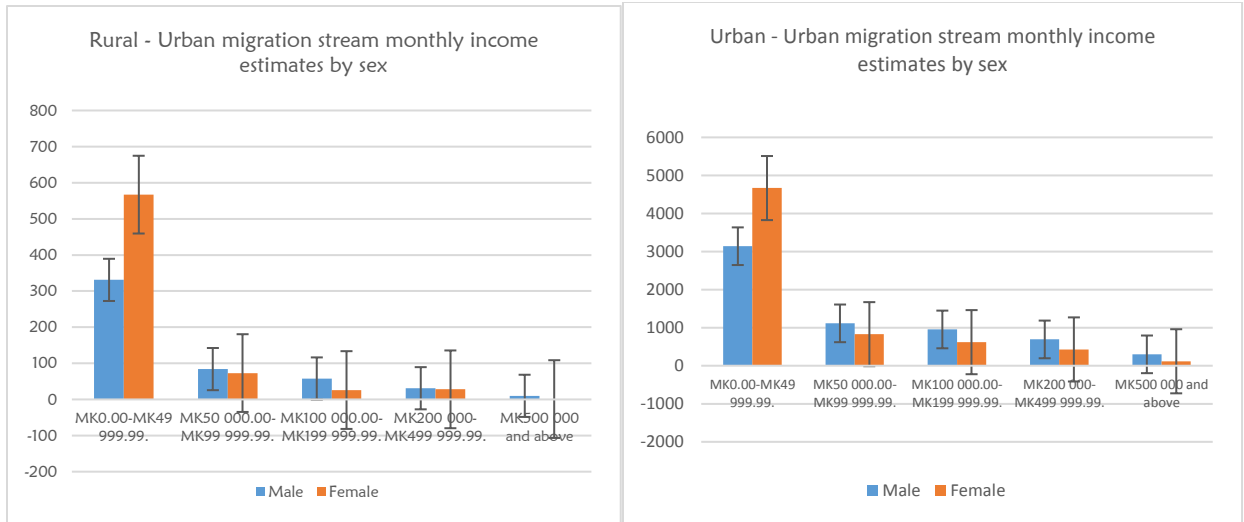
Crudely, for urban to urban and rural to urban migration regardless of the number of known previous locations and setting, the top 3 reasons for household and dwelling unit membership were marriage, work and to “stay with parents/ guardians”. For marriage, individuals from both

migration streams had more women join a household because of marriage (own). For instance, 61% and 71% of women from urban and rural setting joined their current households for reasons related to marriage (own). For work as reason for a relocation or joining a household, the large majority were men in both streams. For instance, 82% and 71% of males from urban and rural sending setting reported “starting own work” as a reason for a move compared to 18% and 19% for women respectively.

Table 1: Top 10 main occupation of in-migrated HDSS participants

Rural – Urban (N = 1,335)				Urban – Urban (N = 14,153, m = 901)			
Occupation	Males (n=574)	Females (n=761)	Total	Occupation	Males (n=6,890)	Females (n=7263)	Total
Not working	53%	70%	63%	Not working	44%	62%	53%
Small family business	3%	6%	5%	Small family business	5%	11%	8%
House boy/girl	2%	4%	3%	Other skilled manual	8%	1%	4%
Other unskilled manual	5%	2%	3%	Managing small family business	3%	4%	3%
Other skilled manual	5%	1%	3%	Driver/assistant driver	6%	0%	3%
Other manual work	5%	1%	3%	Other professionals	4%	1%	3%
Managing small family business	1%	3%	2%	Other unskilled manual	4%	1%	3%
Modern skills	3%	1%	2%	Other manual work	3%	1%	2%
Small trader/store keeper	2%	2%	2%	Laborer	3%	1%	2%
Laborer	2%	1%	2%	Modern skills	3%	1%	2%

For occupation at the time of the interview, regardless of the number of known previous locations, over half of the subjects reported not working (51%). By Migration type, rural to urban migration had 10% more people (63%) unemployed compared to 53% unemployed for urban to urban migration. By sex, in both migration streams, a majority of those not working were females compared to males (Table 1). Females compared to males in both migration streams were more actively involved in running small family business. The top 10 for rural-urban migration stream contain unique occupations such as house boy/girl and Small trader/store keeper. While the top 10 occupations for urban-urban migration stream contains unique occupation such as other professional driver/assistant driver.



In both migration streams, a majority of the participants have an estimated monthly income of less than MK50, 000 with a significant majority of females generating MK0.00 to MK49, 999.00 compared to men. On average for both streams, more men have an estimated monthly income of MK50, 000 or more compare to females.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Understanding the relationship between urban migration and socio-economic indexes is important for stakeholders to design interventions that align with community needs. By understanding these dynamics, policymakers, urban planners, and development practitioners can design more effective strategies informed by the understanding of various socio-economic indicators of urban migrants. For instance, high rates of urban to urban migration for a majority of people with a small income may indicate high rates of seasonal jobs and piece works, which pushes people to move back and forth across urban areas where they can generate income. This has impacts such as pressure on public services and high number of slum settlement which leads to pollution.