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Title: Rural In-Migration in Zambia: Patterns, Drivers and Implications for Rural Development



The bulk of migration literature in Africa has focused on the movement of people from rural to urban areas. Much less is known about migration to rural areas -- its magnitude, its drivers, and implications for rural development – in spite of mounting evidence that rural-rural and urban-rural migration flows are the dominant labor flows in much of Africa. Our study uses nationally representative data from 2012 and 2015 on rural Zambian households to document high levels of rural in-migration and show that this movement is correlated with both land and labor market conditions. Roughly 20% of rural households on average relocated to their current residence from elsewhere, with much higher in-migration rates in some areas. Furthermore, there are distinct patterns to rural-rural movement: in-migration rates are generally highest (approaching 30%) in relatively densely populated and accessible areas, reflecting the importance of wage-employment and services as pull factors. Nonetheless, in-migration rates in relatively wage-scarce, land-abundant areas (which are generally more remote) is also non-trivial. Rural in-migrants in more accessible areas are wealthier than in-migrants in less accessible areas, although in-migrants are wealthier than non-migrants in all areas. Furthermore, rural in-migrants exhibit greater use of inputs, agricultural productivity, land use intensity and market integration than their non-migrant neighbors. Impacts of in-migration on host communities appear to be virtuous: in addition to descriptive indicators that indicate cash injections into local economies (e.g. through greater propensity to hire in of labor and services), we find econometric evidence of positive spillover effects of neighborhood in-migration rates on land productivity rates. This research contributes novel empirical data to the understudied rural-rural component of migration in Africa, and concludes that the benefits of migration are certainly not confined to rural-urban movements. Rural-rural migration may have important positive impacts on local rural development trajectories that interact favorably with urban development.