Check for updates

Received: 10 July 2023 | Revised: 4 August 2024 | Accepted: 4 August 2024

DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12927

ARTICLE

Can foreign aid reduce the desire to emigrate? Evidence from a randomized controlled trial

Miranda Simon[1] | **Cassilde Schwartz**[2] | **David Hudson**[3]

[1]Associate Professor, Department of Government, University of Essex, Colchester, UK

[2]Associate Professor, Department of Politics & International Relations, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, UK

[3]Professor, International Development Department, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

Correspondence
Miranda Simon, Ph.D., Department of Government, University of Essex, Colchester, UK.
Email: miranda.simon@essex.ac.uk

Abstract
Parallel to traditional immigration control policies, states send substantial amounts of foreign aid to address the root causes of migration. Using a randomized controlled trial (RCT), we evaluate a representative type of "root causes" aid (RCA) project in Africa, implemented by the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM). We find the project reduced aspirations to migrate and slowed preparations for the journey. Multiple mediation analysis shows "instrumental place attachment"—or the ability to pursue important goals in one's place of residence compared to other destinations—is the main driver. However, effects wane 6 months after project end. That a small RCA project increased instrumental place attachment, albeit briefly, is significant given global inequalities. We explore this finding by conducting interviews with international organization (IO) and nongovernmental organization (NGO) practitioners to understand how development organizations affect instrumental place attachment, and with youth to understand how interventions (un)successfully moderate the choice to stay or migrate.

States use a variety of policies to limit immigration. Traditional means of control tend to be compulsory. They include restricting visa entries, building walls and fences, and deporting migrants who attempt to enter or settle without documentation. Parallel to these compulsory means of control, states pursue migration control through economic incentives. Specifically, states send significant amounts of foreign aid, often through international organizations, to areas with high migration propensity. This is referred to as "Root Causes Aid" (RCA). The intention of this aid is to make the option to stay more attractive through economic development, thereby stopping migration before it begins (Christensen & Simon, 2023; Clemens & Postel, 2018).[1]

[1] Online Appendix K considers ethical issues surrounding "root causes" aid (RCA).

Verification Materials: The materials required to verify the computational reproducibility of the results, procedures, and analyses in this article are available on the *American Journal of Political Science Dataverse* within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LLQ5ZL

Using aid to control migration has become more popular since the European and Central American refugee emergencies in the mid-2010s. In 2015, the European Union set up a financial instrument—the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF)—which allocated €4.5 billion in aid to projects aimed explicitly at limiting migration from the continent (Raty and Shilhav, 2020). The Obama administration set up a similar fund, which was revamped by the Biden administration. The Biden–Harris Root Causes Strategy is said to be a critical element in the United States' efforts to limit migration from Northern Triangle (Hesson & Spetalnick, 2021; White House, 2021).

However, despite its popularity, we still do not know whether foreign aid is an effective immigration control policy. Specifically, we do not know whether it reduces migration (e.g., Lanati & Thiele, 2018) or whether it, in fact, increases it (e.g., Berthélemy et al., 2009). Classical theory on the "migration hump" expects migration from low-income countries to rise with foreign aid. If aid makes individuals financially

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
© 2024 The Author(s). *American Journal of Political Science* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC on behalf of Midwest Political Science Association.

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

better off—but home countries continue to lack proper infrastructure and public services, political instability remains high and economic policies hamper growth—potential migrants may simply use this aid to offset the costs and risks of migration (Haas, 2007, p. 836).

To illustrate, consider a young potential migrant living in a country with poor prospects for economic growth. This person is selected to participate in an RCA project. Given low expectations that the political or economic situation in her home country will improve, she may find it difficult to put this aid to work there, and may be better off repurposing these gains into a migration rather than a livelihood project at home. In other words, because aid of any kind cannot credibly change her home country's political or economic situation within her working life, participating in this project may improve her exit options more than her options to stay. As a result, she may choose migration.

However, we argue that effective aid may also trigger a less equivocal psychological mechanism: instrumental place attachment (Ghosn et al., 2021; McKenzie, 2022; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Simon et al., 2022). People in high-emigration countries may display low attachment to their country of birth for a range of social and instrumental reasons (Conrad Suso, 2019; Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012).

From an instrumental perspective, we are likely to feel more attached to places that offer the things that we need to pursue important goals, and do so better than any other place (e.g., Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 6). We argue that development actors channeling foreign aid—international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—can positively reinforce instrumental place attachment by increasing people's access and understanding of how to use local assets (i.e., physical, natural, or financial resources). This, in turn, may be associated with the belief that specific livelihood goals can be better achieved locally than anywhere else. In other words, even if conditions abroad are generally better, development interventions may prompt the belief that "here, I know what I need and how to get it."

We test our argument through a randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluating a UK government Youth Employment Program (YEP), implemented by the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM). The UK-IOM project was carried out in The Gambia—a country with high rates of emigration—and its stated aim was to soften migratory aspirations. According to the IOM, Gambians have emigrated at a higher rate per capita than every other country in Africa in recent years (IOM, 2021), and most of these migrants are young adults (Armitano, 2017).[2] YEPs are representative of RCA sent for economic development in sub-Saharan Africa (Conrad Suso, 2019). For example, the economic development arm of the EUTF describes its mission statement, almost exclusively, as establishing "economic development programs addressing youths and vulnerable groups' employability" (EUTF, 2022). Youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa ranges from 18% to 50% (Adepoju, 2019), and it drives migration (Simon et al., 2022); approximately 95% of irregular migrants from The Gambia cite "lack of work" as their main reason for migrating (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

The 3-month project began in February 2021, roughly 10 months into the Covid-19 pandemic. At the time, mobility restrictions inhibited actual migration from the region. However, economic insecurities fuelled a greater aspiration to emigrate (Mixed Migration Centre, 2021). At the time the project began, sub-Saharan Africa had seen a loss in working hours equivalent to approximately 22 million full-time jobs (ILO, 2021). Moreover, young Gambians did not have confidence in their government's ability to ensure a quick economic recovery for the country (Simon et al., 2022). This context presents a particularly tough test for this RCA project, but usefully highlights salient features of our argument; it allows us to observe whether aid projects can create place-bound anchors, while economic conditions at an international level are particularly unequal.

We found that—in addition to the tangible, positive effects on starting or growing businesses—the project significantly reduced aspirations to migrate and slowed preparations for the journey. However, the program had no long-term effects on aspiration. We saw a reduction in the estimated effects of the project on aspirations when we followed up 6 months later. Instrumental place attachment is one of multiple mechanisms that may be triggered by an intervention of the kind we examined. Like many poverty-alleviation projects, the program was primarily intended to promote economic self-sufficiency by allowing participants to start or grow an existing business. Evaluations of educational programs—this one contained a skills training component—also tend to focus on self-efficacy (Banerjee et al., 2015; Beaman et al., 2012; Wuepper & Lybbert, 2017). Self-efficacy is an important development outcome in and of itself, because it can "empower" recipients to follow through with domestic goals and tackle political and institutional barriers. As we argue below, neither self-efficacy nor economic self-sufficiency are enough to reduce the aspiration to migrate, absent of instrumental place attachment. However, we expected these two mechanisms to play a supporting role.

We find that self-sufficiency and self-efficacy, while significantly improved in the short- and long term, do not channel the effects of the program to migration aspirations. In contrast, instrumental place attachment *does* transmit the effect. Specifically, we

[2] See Online Appendix E for further details on the case.

find that participants in the program were significantly more likely to report that it was easier for them to achieve their livelihood goals in The Gambia than abroad. This finding is particularly striking given real and perceived global inequalities in pandemic recovery. However, the program's effect on instrumental place attachment is the step of the causal chain that is most short-lived. As such, our analysis reveals the importance of instrumental place attachment for RCA, while also suggesting the challenge in maintaining these effects.

Having established through mediation analysis that instrumental place attachment is the primary aspiration-attenuating mechanism, we then examine how the IOM's RCA project triggered instrumental place attachment in the first place and why these effects were so short-lived. We conduct interviews with practitioners from international organizations and NGOs involved in the design and implementation of the program, as well as Gambian entrepreneurs who did not participate in the IOM project. This qualitative analysis highlighted two key dimensions affecting attachment to place: the ability to navigate government regulations and social capital through local networks of mentors and entrepreneurs. The IOM project intervened on these two dimensions with varying success, and descriptive quantitative analyses confirm that these dimensions significantly predict instrumental place attachment. We also find that young entrepreneurs value this kind of aid and its potential to help them pursue the specific place-bound goal they have chosen. However, our analysis also suggests why this aid fails young entrepreneurs in the long term, and why migration may enter their minds once again.

Our paper contributes to the growing literature on states' use of foreign aid in migration governance (e.g., Bermeo & Leblang, 2015; Blair & Wright, 2022; Gamso & Yuldashev, 2018; Lehmann & Masterson, 2020; Whitaker, 2008; Zhou & Shaver, 2021) by examining the psychological mechanisms connecting aid to migration aspirations. In doing so, we develop a general theory of instrumental place attachment that can be used to better understand how development organizations and origin country governments shape individual livelihoods and decision making (UNDP, 2017). Finally, we contribute to literature examining the effects and effectiveness of immigration policy (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005; Schon & Leblang, 2021) by evaluating states' alternative, "development-friendly" immigration policies (Gamso & Yuldashev, 2018, p. 809). We find that the RCA program had no long-term effect on migration aspirations, even if they were temporarily muted. From a policy perspective, it is important to contextualize this finding in terms of actual migration decisions that involve meticulous planning (UNDP, 2019) and can take years to execute (van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2015).

INSTRUMENTAL PLACE ATTACHMENT AND OTHER MECHANISMS OF "ROOT CAUSES" AID

RCA is usually targeted at countries and areas with a high propensity for emigration; its projects aim to address segments of the population who are more likely to emigrate; and RCA programs are often evaluated in terms of their migration outcomes (Raty & Shilhav, 2020). However, in essence, RCA projects resemble tried-and-tested development assistance projects or programs. We focus on RCA projects that help the poor pursue economic livelihood strategies. For example, these interventions aim to generate greater educational, recreational, and vocational opportunities; to support small ad medium-sized enterprises; or to improve trade. EU and US programs also fund basic services—shelter, water and sanitation, education, transport, electrical grids, and so forth—and support agricultural businesses and climate-change adaptation (Clemens & Postel, 2018; Raty & Shilhav, 2020). In our theory, we focus solely on projects delivered by non-state actors (see Dietrich, 2013).

RCA projects that help the poor pursue economic livelihood strategies intend to reduce migration through economic self-sufficiency (real and perceived), but they often hope to strengthen perceived self-efficacy or "empowerment" as well. These are classic features of poverty-alleviating interventions regardless of whether they intend to reduce migration (Barrett et al., 2016; Beaman et al., 2012; Wuepper & Lybbert, 2017). We introduce an additional mechanism relating specifically to migration outcomes—instrumental place attachment—and will argue that, while the two classic mechanisms can affect people's aspirations to migrate, these effects can go in either direction. Increasing instrumental place attachment will, more decisively, reduce migration aspirations.

Economic self-sufficiency

Donor governments are particularly interested in facilitating economic self-sufficiency, or economic independence (Hetling et al., 2016), among the young because young adults are the most mobile age group (Aslany et al., 2021). Lack of employment prospects in sub-Saharan Africa means young people face a prolonged and involuntary "period of suspension" between childhood and adulthood (Vigh, 2006, p. 27), which can fuel a desire to emigrate. In The Gambia, this feeling is known as "nerves syndrome" (Conrad Suso, 2019). Across studies, unemployment and underemployment tend to increase aspirations to migrate, particularly for the young (Aslany et al., 2021).

However, individual economic betterment is neither necessary nor sufficient to soften them. In fact,

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

being economically better off may *increase* aspirations to migrate because it can increase individuals' ability to meet the costs of migration (Haas, 2007; Martin & Taylor, 1996). Literature on sub-Saharan Africa suggests that people with the lowest incomes might lack the "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2004) but, once the opportunity to migrate becomes available, aspirations may follow.

Perceived self-efficacy

Perceived economic self-sufficiency may also be accompanied by other psychological mechanisms that pull toward home, however. International organizations and NGOs often aim to promote self-efficacy through education.[3] Increasing individuals' self-efficacy can give recipients the resources, confidence, and motivation to follow through with domestic goals (Bandura, 1977), and learn how to tackle any obstacles they encounter when doing so (Beaman et al., 2012; Wuepper & Lybbert, 2017). Self-efficacious individuals will also have greater perceived control over adverse events related to their domain of competence, and will tend to tackle these threats head-on (Bandura, 1977). It is possible, then, that recipients who perceive higher self-efficacy will see political and economic risks in their home country as ones they are competent to tackle (Ghosn et al., 2021).[4]

However, a root causes project that promotes self-efficacy may still be unsuccessful in reducing migration. Even if a person feels competent enough to deal with home country risks, she may consider risks in another country to be lower. For instance, Simon et al. (2022) find that higher risk aversion is associated with a higher, not lower, aspiration to migrate among Gambian youth. A stronger psychological threshold may need to be surpassed, one where the place of residence not only becomes a more favorable option than it used to be, but becomes a better option than anywhere else. This notion is captured by the concept of instrumental place attachment.

Instrumental place attachment

Place attachment is a cognitive and emotional bond between an individual and a place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Individuals will exhibit different degrees of place attachment as a result of different experiences within the course of their life. Much of the relevant literature examines the extreme end of the spectrum, focusing on how individuals with strong place attachment will have difficulty emigrating even if it would be most adaptive for them to do so (e.g., De Dominicis et al., 2015). This is partly because people endow places with culturally shared meaning, and staying gives them a sense of continuity of self (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Young people socialized as part of a strong "culture of migration" might be on the other side of the place-attachment spectrum. Indeed, young men in sub-Saharan Africa often derive culturally shared meaning from migrating, and migration is an important part of their identity (Conrad Suso, 2019; Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012).

We do not have clear expectations on how development actors might affect the identity-related aspects of place attachment. However, place attachment is a multidimensional concept. Aside from identity, security and "goal support" are the two most common dimensions considered in the literature (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 5).[5] We group these latter two dimensions into what we call instrumental place attachment. Instrumental place attachment relates to how well a place serves our goals, "given an existing range of alternatives" (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001, p. 234). We are likely to feel more attached to places that offer things that we need to pursue goals we consider important, and do so better than any other place. Because livelihood goals are particularly weighty or essential, places that support these goals also offer security (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983).

Instrumental place attachment is conditioned on the knowledge and familiarity to extract and use the resources needed to pursue these goals within the place (e.g., Ghosn et al., 2021; Landon et al., 2021). If a person's goal is to have a successful agricultural business, for example—she needs to have access to certain resources (i.e., good land and the technology and labor required to cultivate it). If these resources are available, the person knows how to access them, and, as a result, she expects her agricultural business to thrive, this person's attachment to her place of residence should be positively reinforced.

The poor may face significant disadvantages in terms of resources and knowledge on how to access existing resources in the origin country, and service providers may help bridge this gap. According to the sustainable livelihoods framework—which guides the interventions of major aid agencies (UNDP, 2017)—the pursuit of livelihood goals or strategies is given by access to five types of productive assets, or "capitals," in one's place of residence: natural resources,

[3] The belief "in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura et al., 1999, p. 3).

[4] Self-efficacy in one domain (e.g., managing a business) is not expected to translate into self-efficacy in another (e.g., making a migration journey). By the same token, Perceived Self Efficacy is only expected to influence risk attitudes within the specific domain in which it operates (see also Nicholson et al., 2005, on domain-specific risk attitudes).

[5] The identity dimension of place attachment relates to "continuity of self" over time—that is, historical attachments; or between the place and the person—that is, when a place matches people's personal values or seems to represent them (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

economic or financial capital, human capital, social capital, and physical assets such as infrastructure. Access to livelihood assets is, in turn, formally constrained by laws, policies, and institutions in the place where one lives (UNDP, 2017, p. 2). Corrupt or inefficient governments can make it more or less difficult for individuals to access credit—for instance, by obscuring or withholding the information needed to do so, or by explicitly excluding certain individuals; they can bar access to physical assets by limiting property rights (e.g., Leblang, 1996); less predictable, discriminatory or obfuscatory laws can also erode social capital (e.g., Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005).

When governments fail to provide access to assets in this way, development actors may step in and carry out specific governance roles (e.g., Risse & Stollenwerk, 2018). They may do so by making the resource available in the place, and by increasing people's knowledge and familiarity with accessing an existing resource. Given the theory described above, a development actor that does these things may increase instrumental place attachment. Through interviews with development practitioners, we will illustrate how development actors may increase instrumental place attachment by facilitating access to capitals. In the project we evaluate here, the IOM provided a good (education and financial aid), engaged with local governments directly to provide identity documents and access to credit, trained participants to understand and navigate local bureaucratic obstacles, and created environments that would strengthen social capital.

All in all, instrumental place attachment may be more decisive in reducing the aspiration to migrate. However, intuitively, it is also a difficult needle to move in a poor country with high migration propensity. This is because it requires believing that livelihood goals are more attainable in one's place of residence *than they are anywhere else*. It is intuitively difficult for (small) RCA interventions to change deep-seated conceptions of where one's country stands in contrast to wealthier nations, where resources may seem easier to access and livelihood goals easier to accomplish.

However, the extent to which an organization is able or willing to do this probably differs by context. First, the actors delivering aid are different in terms of their political incentives and the resources at their disposal. For example, NGOs' inherent political incentive to be accountable to their beneficiaries (Banks & Hulme, 2012) may make them better placed to enhance instrumental place attachment than IOs like the IOM. Specifically, their understanding of local obstacles and their embeddedness in the community may make them more efficient at helping beneficiaries access productive capitals and strengthen instrumental place attachment. The organization's resources and influence may also matter. As we discuss in our interviews below, organizations that are able to influence bureaucrats or policy may be more effective in promoting instrumental place attachment.

Aid modalities may also play a role. For example, although our paper focuses on aid delivered by non-state actors, we might also consider situations where aid is sent by the donor directly to the recipient government for disbursement. Donors may avoid this channel, due to concerns that the aid may not reach its intended beneficiaries (Dietrich, 2013).

Indeed, empirical research often finds a positive correlation between aid and corruption (Alesina & Weder, 2002, but see Menard & Weill, 2016). If, as we have argued above, corrupt and inefficient governments hamper instrumental place attachment and aid increases corruption, aid is likely to have the opposite effects on instrumental place attachment to the ones described.

In the absence of corruption, however, aid provided or disbursed by national rather than foreign bodies may be qualitatively different. For example, it may involve changing the laws, policies, and institutions that constrain access to assets—something that national governments are best placed to do. It is also important to note that, although, in this paper, we focus on aid delivered by IOs as a source of instrumental place attachment, there are other potential sources that need to be explored. For example, we do not know to what extent potential destination countries may influence instrumental place attachment through immigration policy, anti-immigrant attitudes, their economy, or diaspora networks.

THE INTERVENTION AND DATA COLLECTION

The intervention under examination seeks to tackle an important driver of migration from The Gambia—unemployment. As part of the program, participants received one-on-one and small group coaching as well as training in key skills, such as financial literacy and business management. Participants received a cash grant (approximately 1600 USD). They received the funds in two tranches, the first at the start of the program to help with start-up costs and the second at the conclusion of the program.

The empirical strategy for our evaluation was pre-registered (see Online Appendix R).[6] The program had an overall capacity of 400 participants, and treatment and control groups were randomly assigned from an oversubscribed list of applicants. First, we identified the 850 highest scoring applicants. Of these 850, the survey team was able to contact 829 for interviews

[6] Approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee, University of Birmingham (ERN 19-0742). See Online Appendix J on all ethics protocols.

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

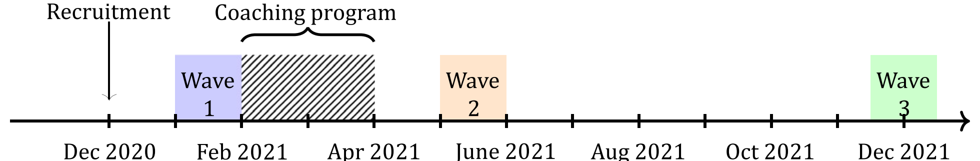

FIGURE 1 Timeline of intervention and data collection.

after three attempts. We used block randomization to randomly allocate these 829 respondents to the treatment (participation) or the control group. We blocked by regional training site to account for variation in capacity and project implementation across sites.

The IOM-led program-implementing team then called selected participants to start training. All applicants who the implementing team were unable to reach after several attempts were removed from the study. As shown in Online Appendix A, our resulting survey sample had 380 respondents in the treatment group and 416 respondents in the control group (48:52 ratio; total: 796). Randomization produced balanced treatment and control groups. We find no statistically significant differences between treatment and control groups in terms of gender, age, education, or score.

Figure 1 summarizes the timeline of the 10-week program and the evaluation. We collected data on program participants and their control group counterparts in January 2021 just before the program began, and then again in May 2021 just a few weeks after the program ended, and then again 6 months later in November and December 2021. To maximize retention and response rates, we offered approximately 5 USD worth of mobile phone credits in waves 2 and 3 (not in wave 1, to encourage voluntary participation in the study). We determined the incentive amount and method of delivery in discussion with our local survey firm. Online Appendix J contains a detailed description of our ethics protocol.

The timing of data collection around the intervention should ameliorate concerns that respondents would falsify their answers to satisfy the IOM. All outcome data were collected 1 month after participants had already completed their training and received both tranches of the cash grant. At the point of data collection, subjects were no longer dependent on the IOM for any additional funds or support. Additionally, respondents were assured of the independence of the evaluation, their anonymity, and, more specifically, that their survey responses would not be shared with the IOM.[7]

Online Appendix A reports the number of people who responded to our surveys in each wave.[8] Between waves 1 and 2, we maintained a recontact rate of 91.5%, but this decreased to 71% between waves 1 and 3. As we show in Online Appendix A, we find no significant differences in attrition across treatment and control groups in wave 2 or 3. However, if individuals left the study in order to migrate, this could lead to bias. To account for the possibility, we examine whether respondents who were more advanced in their migration plans in the baseline were more likely to leave the study, and we found no significant effects (Online Appendix F). In line with our pre-analysis plan, all our models include inverse-probability weights to compensate for systematic missingness across waves. We describe the weights and present unweighted results in Online Appendix I, and all results are substantively similar.

Taken together, our design has a number of strengths that allow us to causally identify the effects of the RCA program. Our treatment and control groups were drawn from precisely the same subject pool of highly qualified, young, aspiring entrepreneurs. Data on these individuals were collected before treatment allocation, 1 month after the end of the program, and again 6 months later, and we maintained high levels of response to each survey wave.

It is important to emphasize that our sample is not nationally representative. As such, we cannot draw inferences about the general population. Our study aims to understand the effects of regional, economic RCA programs on the populations they target. In Online Appendix N, we provide sample demographics and compare our sample to a nationally representative sample. Our baseline sample has a higher likelihood of employment and a higher level of education compared to the age-equivalent group in the representative sample, and includes 14% fewer women. In Online Appendix N, we weight our estimates using a nationally representative sample. Our sample has characteristics in common with the Gambian population most likely to migrate, but it is not representative of this population (Online Appendix O).

[7] To avoid inadvertent disclosures, enumerators had no information on treatment status.

[8] Some individuals (one in waves 1 and 2, nine in wave 3) were dropped because of repeated interviews. Where repeat interviews occurred, we randomly selected one to be included in the final data set.

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 1 Percent of control and treatment groups achieving key business outcomes.

	Control	Treatment	F-Test
Selected location	56.72%	66.79%	$F = 6.28$*
Opened business	34.21	54.05	$F = 20.21$**
Made purchases	30.60	58.94	$F = 44.32$**
Hired employees	22.39	35.74	$F = 11.30$**
Made profit	40.30	60.15	$F = 21.53$**
Closed business	22.85	24.52	$F = 0.36$

Note: Each percentage is calculated using the weighted mean, using inverse-probability weights. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) *F*-test indicates whether the weighted means of the treatment and control groups are significantly different.
†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

EFFECTS ON MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS

The program helped many of its participants to open and expand their own businesses. Table 1 shows the treatment group was significantly more likely to open a business, make purchases, hire employees, and earn a profit by the third wave of data collection.

Having established these outcomes, we examine whether the program affected migration aspirations and preparations for the journey.[9] We analyze the self-reported aspiration to migrate, as these are more informative measures than migration behavior in contexts of high immobility (i.e., Covid-19, visa restrictions; Carling & Schewel, 2018). In all waves, we measured aspiration by asking how much respondents would like to migrate within the next year, regardless of whether they are able to (5-point scale). We analyze the effects of the program in two ways: through a difference-in-means approach in outcome waves 2 and 3 and a difference-in-difference approach comparing baseline aspirations to migrate with outcome waves 2 and 3. All models include regional/training site fixed effects and inverse-probability weights (IPWs).[10] The difference-in-means models are shown in Equation (1):

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta Treat_i + \phi + \varepsilon_i, \tag{1}$$

where Y_i denotes the aspiration to migrate in each wave, $Treat_i$ refers to the program treatment assignment, ϕ is regional fixed effects (our blocking variable), and ε_i is the error term.

The difference-in-difference models follow Equation (2):

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta Treat_i + \gamma Post_i + \delta \left(Treat_i Post_i\right) + \phi + \varepsilon_i, \tag{2}$$

where Y_i the dependent variable, β is the treatment group—specific effect, γ is the effect of time, common to control and treatment groups. δ shows the effect of the treatment between two waves. Similar to Equation (1), ϕ represents our regional blocking variable and ϵ_i is the error term. We estimate two models to reflect the differences between waves 2 and 3, respectively, against the baseline.

We report the results of the program on the aspiration to migrate in Table 2. After z-standardizing the outcome, we see that the treatment reduced the aspiration to migrate by more than a quarter of a standard deviation 1 month after the program ended (in Wave 2), but the coefficient dropped to around a tenth of a standard deviation in Wave 3 (Online Appendix B). Models (1) and (3) are difference-in-means models for waves 2 and 3, respectively. Models (2) and (4) are difference-in-difference models showing short-term (difference between baseline and wave 2) and long-term (difference between baseline and wave 3) differences.

Beginning with the short-term effects of the program reported in Models (1) and (2), we see aspirations among the treatment group are lower than the control group. The difference-in-means reported in Model (1) shows that the mean-level aspiration among the control group was approximately 3.7, but the mean of the treatment group was reduced by .31. The difference-in-difference approach reflects virtually the same effects.

However, when we turn to the longer term effects of the program in Models (3) and (4), we see that the treatment effects are no longer statistically significant at the .05 level. Attrition in wave 3 reduced the precision of our estimates. However, when comparing wave 3 to wave 2, we also see a slight convergence in migration aspirations across treatment and control group respondents. This change is not statistically significant so it is difficult to draw conclusions.[11]

Migration outcomes can take many years to execute and were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic that coincided with our fieldwork. However, we have tentative evidence that program effects went beyond aspirations. In Online Appendix F, we find that treated respondents in both waves were less likely to pursue active plans to move abroad.

Online Appendix Q includes a detailed discussion of how Covid-19 may have impacted our results. Control group participants' migration planning grew steadily across waves, indicating that Covid-19 is likely to have negatively affected instrumental place attachment over the period of the survey. Treated respondents,

[9] Online Appendix D shows that the treatment did not affect individuals' choice to migrate regionally or outside of Africa.

[10] The inclusion of fixed effects is unlikely to bias our estimates because treatment assignment does not differ significantly across regions ($p = .826$).

[11] Online Appendix C considers a range of potential moderators, including demographic variables, business experience, and access to migrant networks. We find little evidence of the conditionality of the program's effects overall. However, we find that aspirations to migrate increased among treated individuals who already owned businesses when they applied to the program, compared to those who applied without existing businesses in wave 3.

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 2 Effect of program on the aspiration to migrate, ordinary least squares (OLS).

	Wave 2	Baseline to W2	Wave 3	Baseline to W3
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Treat assignment	−0.312**	−0.014	−0.187†	−0.061
	(0.086)	(0.082)	(0.097)	(0.094)
Post-treatment		−0.011		−0.060
		(0.080)		(0.093)
Treat × Post		−0.301**		−0.128
		(0.116)		(0.132)
Constant	3.660**	3.640**	3.560**	3.620**
	(0.070)	(0.062)	(0.080)	(0.072)
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IPW	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	686	1,365	529	1,053
R^2	0.031	0.023	0.010	0.012
Adjusted R^2	0.025	0.019	0.003	0.007

Note: This table shows results of OLS models including regional fixed effects and inverse probability weights. The dependent variable is the aspiration to migrate. Models (1) and (3) are difference-in-means models for waves 2 and 3, respectively. Models (2) and (4) are difference-in-difference models showing short-term (difference between baseline and wave 2) and long-term (difference between baseline and wave 3) differences.
†$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

endowed with cash and skills by wave 2, may have felt less vulnerable to the Covid-driven economic shock than control group respondents; planning among the treatment group decreased significantly by wave 2, before increasing in wave 3. Desire to migrate among the control group follows a similar pattern. We also find that greater Covid-19 uncertainty at an individual level is associated with lower instrumental place attachment.

MEDIATION ANALYSIS

Having shown that the program had some direct effects on migration aspirations, we will proceed by using multiple mediation analysis to identify the mechanisms by which those effects take root and eventually fade. We hypothesized three possible psychological mechanisms. In this section, we will describe how we operationalize each of these mediators, show how the program influenced each directly, and then use multiple mediation analysis to better understand the indirect effects of the intervention.

This paper proposes a new mediator—*instrumental place attachment*. Our item asks respondents to compare places (The Gambia and their preferred migration destination) in terms of how well they can accommodate the pursuit of livelihood goals. Specifically, we asked respondents to consider whether it would be easier to achieve their financial goals in The Gambia or in their preferred migration destination. This item is intended to capture the instrumental component of place attachment as defined by Jorgensen and Stedman (2001), Kyle et al. (2004), and others. That is, it captures how well a setting serves goal attainment given other alternatives.[12] Respondents were prompted to think about how circumstances might be "one year from now" so that we can draw inferences beyond the immediate circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The program explicitly intended to promote *economic self-sufficiency*. The cash grant, paired with a practical training program—which would allow participants to channel this investment into a money-generating enterprise—was expected to enable financial independence and, thereby, decrease aspirations to migrate. We measure economic self-sufficiency through a battery that asks respondents about their expected ability to meet their economic needs in 1 year. Because education is one of the main drivers of *perceived self-efficacy*, or the belief in one's capabilities to pursue a domain-specific goal, we expected participation in the skills and cash-grant program to affect this mediator as well. We include another battery to operationalize entrepreneurial self-efficacy. See Online Appendix P for question wording.

Before beginning our multiple mediation analysis, it is important to consider the correlation between our three mediators. This can help us establish whether our three concepts are not only theoretically distinct,

[12] We asked respondents their preferred migration destination earlier in the survey. For respondents who did not identify a valid destination country, the item piped in the word, "abroad."

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

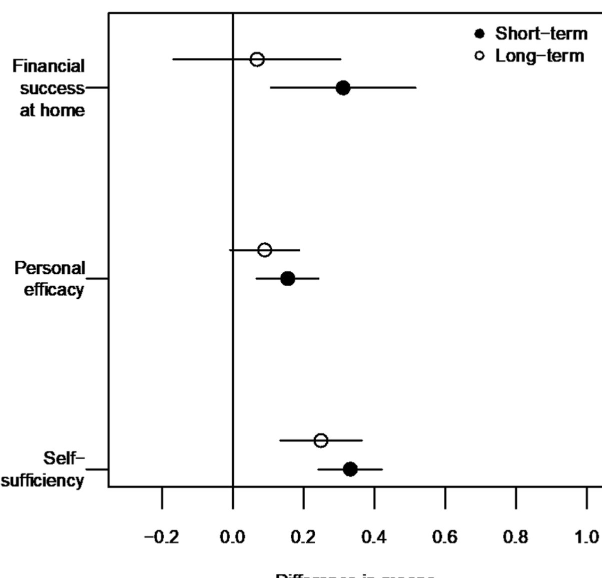

FIGURE 2 Treatment effects of the program on psychological mediators. *Note*: Results of ordinary least squares (OLS) models including regional fixed effects and inverse-probability weights. The black and white point estimates represent the difference-in-means between the treatment and control groups in waves 2 and 3, respectively. The figure includes 95% confidence intervals.

but are also distinct in practice. In Online Appendix G, we find a strikingly weak correlation between instrumental place attachment and our other two mediators ($r = .10$ and $r = .05$ for self-sufficiency and self-efficacy, respectively). Self-efficacy and self-sufficiency are moderately correlated ($r = .30$). Of our three mechanisms, instrumental place attachment is the one more closely related to our dependent variable, migration aspirations, because it explicitly elicits a comparison across countries.[13] However, it is also the most difficult item for the project to move. While self-efficacy and self-sufficiency should follow directly from a project of this kind, instrumental place attachment requires the project to compete against stark global inequalities that it cannot change.

Figure 2 reports the results of the treatment on each mediator. These results reflect between-subjects tests and are estimated through ordinary least squares (OLS) models including regional fixed effects and inverse-probability weights. The black point estimates represent the difference-in-means between the treatment and control groups at wave 2, and the white point estimates refer to wave 3. All dependent variables—the psychological mediators—are measured on 5-point scales, allowing us to make direct comparisons between the effects.

As we can see in Figure 2, the program achieved its anticipated effects on program participants, particularly in wave 2. Roughly 1 month after the coaching ended, program participants felt significantly more confident than the nonparticipating counterparts that they would be economically self-sufficient within the year. That perceived self-sufficiency persisted well into the third wave of data collection 6 months later. The magnitude of the effects decreased over time, but only very slightly, with a treatment effect of .33 in wave 2 and .25 in wave 3. The results were very similar for self-efficacy, but the change over time was somewhat greater. Relative to nonparticipants, program participants exhibited .32 points higher in self-efficacy in wave 2 and a difference of .15 in wave 3.

The change over time was most stark in terms of instrumental place attachment. In the short term, program participants felt that it was significantly easier to achieve financial success in The Gambia, relative to their nonparticipating counterparts. The difference between the two groups was comparable in magnitude to other wave 2 mediators at .31. However, the difference between participants and nonparticipants decreased dramatically to .8 by wave 3, and the effect is was no longer statistically significant.[14]

Therefore, we can confidently conclude that the program decreased the aspiration to migrate, at least in the short term, and we have also demonstrated that the program had its desired effects on self-sufficiency, self-efficacy, and instrumental place attachment (in the short term). We can now estimate the average causal mediation effect (ACME), or the indirect effects of the treatment to the outcome through the specified mediating mechanisms. This will enable us to quantify the extent to which each psychological mediator channels the effect of the program to migration attitudes.

To identify the independent effects of each mediator, we use multiple mediation analysis to control for alternative mediators using the multimed function of R's mediation package (Tingley et al., 2014). We also control for age, education, gender, whether the respondent owned a business at baseline, whether the respondent had owned a business in the past, and the IOM's application score for the respondent, to satisfy the *sequential ignorability* assumption in the second step of the mediation equation (Imai et al., 2011).

Figure 3 shows the ACMEs for each wave 2 mediator as they channel the effect to migration aspirations in wave 2 (short term, in black) and wave 3 (long term in white). We use wave 2 mediators for both short- and long-term estimates because they capture

[13] This comparative element may have elicited a different way of thinking (see McKenzie, 2022, on the psychological underpinnings of place attachment), and may have led to the weak correlation we observe between instrumental place attachment and our other mediators.

[14] As we mention in our theory section, there are many sources of instrumental place attachment. We control for all of these in Online Appendix M and our results remain substantively similar.

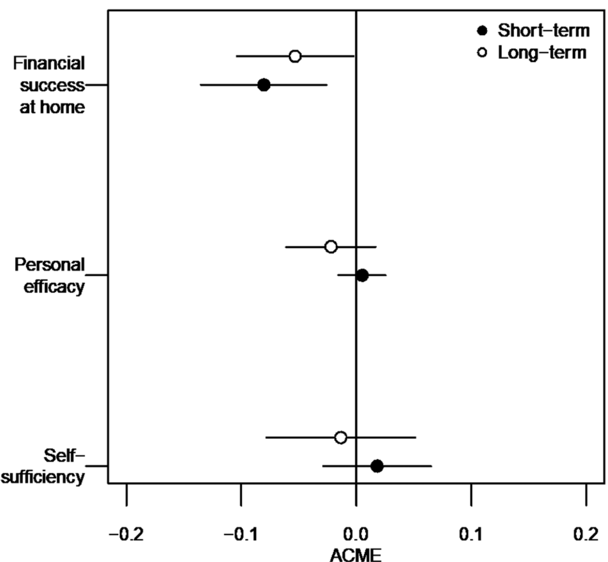

FIGURE 3 Average causal mediation effects: Multiple mediation models. *Note*: Results of multiple mediation models, where each point estimate is based on a separate causal mediation test. Black point estimates are based on wave 2 mediators and wave 2 aspiration to migrate; white point estimates are based on wave 3 aspiration to migrate. Each model includes the main mediator, all alternative mediators, and our control variables (age, education, gender, business experience, and applicant score). The confidence intervals are based on nonparametric bootstrapping with 1000 resamples. The models are based on ordinary least squares (OLS), and they include IPWs to account for attrition.

the immediate effects of the project and are, therefore, more likely to reflect its true causal effects. Each point estimate is based on a separate causal mediation test, reflecting which mediator is considered the main mediator in the model. Each model includes the main mediator, all alternative mediators, and our control variables. The confidence intervals are based on nonparametric bootstrapping with 1000 resamples. The models are based on OLS, and they include IPWs to account for attrition.

Based on Figure 3, we can draw some conclusions about the mediating mechanisms from the program to migration aspirations. Despite the strong short-term and long-term effects of the program on self-sufficiency and self-efficacy, neither of these mediators has a significant indirect effect on migration aspirations. For the most part, the point estimates are very near to zero and are not statistically significant. There is a near exception with the long-term effects of self-efficacy. The ACME for this mechanism is –.05, but it is not statistically significant.

The only mediator to significantly channel the effects of the program is *Financial Success at Home*, our instrumental place-attachment mechanism. That is, individuals softened their desire to migrate when they believed it easier to achieve financial success in The Gambia than abroad. This effect is significant for both short-term and long-term migration aspirations, though the magnitude of the indirect effect decreases from .08 to .05.

In short, our analysis reveals that even if RCA programs are effective in its direct aims—improving self-sufficiency and self-efficacy—only instrumental place attachment reduces aspirations to migrate.[15] These results are meaningful for various reasons. First, RCA programs are expected to shift migration aspirations through economic self-sufficiency. Our analyses do not find evidence for this effect. Second, as we mention earlier, instrumental place attachment requires believing that livelihood goals are more attainable in one's place of residence than a migration destination. That a small RCA project shifted aspirations through this channel is striking in the face of global wealth inequalities. We explore this finding further in the next section.

INTERVIEWS WITH DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS AND YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Questions remain regarding *how* the program was able to influence instrumental place attachment and why this influence was short-lived. We interviewed four IO and NGO practitioners involved in the design or implementation of the IOM's program and 10 young Gambian entrepreneurs who currently have businesses and did not participate in the IOM training program.

Among the place-bound constraints facing young entrepreneurs in The Gambia, all interviewees—practitioners and entrepreneurs—highlighted a lack of "developed" credit systems and a confusing and obscure bureaucratic and regulatory environment. For example, according to an independent consultant who led the design of the program (FP2),[16] registering a new business and paying taxes is very difficult in The Gambia. It is not obvious which authorities are responsible for taxes, and each authority might provide a widely different estimate on how much tax needs to be paid. This complex bureaucratic environment limits the potential impact of a skills-development program. "You can have the skills… you can learn about business," said FP1. "But in the end you are working in a certain environment where there are different outside obstacles."

These obstacles bar access to productive assets. For example, The Gambia–based Lead Program Manager

[15] In line with our results on economic self-sufficiency, Online Appendix H shows that business success in wave 3 does not significantly mediate aspiration to migrate.

[16] We identify our interviews by their gender, whether they are a practitioner or entrepreneur, and interview order. FP1 is Female-Practictioner-1

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

of the project (MP1) explained that a confusing regulatory environment bars entrepreneurs from registering their business, which, in turn, would allow them to access credit. All practitioners and entrepreneurs suggested that development organizations are in a position to step in and facilitate this access. According to MP1, "Even though [entrepreneurs] know they have the skills, even though they feel they're empowered, it's really still very difficult to navigate the [policy] environment without the assistance of an institute like IOM… or the coaches, or the mentors."[17]

All practitioners highlighted the same two dimensions as necessary for development interventions to succeed in doing this: helping participants *navigate government regulations*, or navigating them on their behalf and continued *social support* through local networks of mentors and like-minded entrepreneurs who graduated from the program. The Gambia project intervened on these two dimensions and may have, thereby, increased participants' perception that their financial goals were easier to achieve at home than anywhere else. First, the project organizers liaised directly with the government to facilitate participants' access to credit. "We linked up with the necessary government offices to [issue] identity cards," said MP1. This would "then enable them to get tax identification number […] to open a bank account. For the registration itself, we liaised with the Ministry of Justice, and we fast-tracked the registration itself." The project also embedded this practical know-how into the training program. Second, the intervention actively facilitated the formation of Gambian support networks with mentors and other participants, and organized a trade fair to allow for networking opportunities. "They created bonds… they had a group of people that were supporting them. It's very important that you feel that someone is not letting you fall…" said FP2, herself an entrepreneur. However, she recognizes the temporal limitations of this support. "I don't know how much they stayed in the networks," she acknowledged.[18]

Exploratory survey analyses (Online Appendix L) support practitioners' expectations that instrumental place attachment is fostered by local support networks and the ability to navigate the local bureaucratic environment. Moreover, we find that participating in the RCA project significantly impacted feelings of support across the two waves, though effects decreased over time. A drop in local support networks—as FP2 suspected—may explain the reduction in instrumental place attachment experienced in wave 3, and the program's limited long-term effects on migration aspirations (Figure 3). Participating in the YEP did not significantly improve entrepreneurs' perceived ability to understand local government regulations. FP2 came to believe that projects that actually change bureaucratic environments—as in, "work with the governments to change the law" rather than simply facilitating access—can have longer term impacts on instrumental place attachment.

Practitioners focused on how programming can be improved by countering bureaucratic obstacles and building networks, but there are also more essential ways a YEP may increase instrumental place attachment. Entrepreneurs may come to believe it is easier to pursue their goals in The Gambia because the content of the YEP is place-specific and not immediately transferable (MP3). In a typical YEP, NGO or IO practitioners will help an aspiring entrepreneur generate a business plan, which makes reference to legal, economic, and other aspects of the place. This involves identifying a unique market for goods or services, and what makes these goods and services unique there; identifying the materials the entrepreneur will need and where to acquire them in the place; identifying a locale, and considering any risks, costs, and benefits associated with that choice—that is, crime rate, location in relation to target market, quality of public services (Pinson & Jinnet, 1993). The local knowledge that generates–or is obtained through this process—may be associated with the belief that economic goals can be better achieved locally than anywhere else. Moreover, entrepreneurs' livelihood goals or plans are, themselves, shaped by what the place offers and permits; the goals adapt to the place.

By facilitating the process of matching goals to place, development actors may be promoting instrumental place attachment. In doing so, they may provide an opportunity—albeit imperfect and often ineffective—to "make it in The Gambia." Indeed, all young entrepreneurs interviewed valued the training and grants that IOs and NGOs could provide, if they could get a place on a program. However, they all noted how inadequate YEPs tend to be. Grants are small, if obtained, and oftentimes only provide them with materials rather than cash. As FE4 suggests, "in Gambia you can start your own business without going anywhere but… if you don't have access to [the right startup capital and materials] and the problem in The Gambia is too much…" she pauses. "[Migration] will not solve the problem. But if you are sitting here

[17] It is worth noting that MP1, FP2, and FP4's interviews can help us distinguish instrumental place attachment from the related concept—or drivers of self-efficacy. They suggest that "empowerment" is not enough; the ability to access resources within their place of residence is necessary for them to succeed.

[18] Networks might also counter instrumental place attachment. Migrant networks facilitate migration by passing on information about host policies and integration (e.g., Blair et al., 2021). Instrumental place attachment requires comparing home and potential destination countries. If individuals receive information from networks on how to access productive assets abroad or if the network can provide social capital, this may lend greater weight to the destination country in their comparative evaluation.

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

without doing anything, the only thing that come to your mind is to migrate."

DISCUSSION

In this paper, we sought to examine the mechanisms through which "Root Causes Aid" may shape migration aspirations. RCA is a non-compulsory form of immigration control, which seeks to make or improve the option to stay through economic development. We conduct an experimental impact evaluation of a YEP implemented by the IOM in The Gambia. These programs are representative of RCA sent for economic development in sub-Saharan Africa (Conrad Suso, 2019).

We find that the project helped participants start or grow businesses, reduced migration aspirations, and slowed preparations for the journey. However, the aspiration to migrate was attenuated only in the short term. We find that the primary acting mechanism through which aid shifts migration attitudes is instrumental place attachment—or the perceived ability to pursue important livelihood goals in one's place of residence compared to a potential migration destination. A development project may increase instrumental place attachment if it helps participants navigate place-specific obstacles to obtain access productive assets in their place of residence—for instance, access to credit or equipment. As such, we examine why instrumental place attachment rose and fell in tandem with aspirations through interviews with experts involved in the design and implementation of the project, interviews with entrepreneurs, and additional quantitative analyses.

We contribute to the literature on the effectiveness of development projects in stemming migration. By examining changes in migration aspirations prior to departure, we are better able to isolate the effects of economic development interventions in the presence of external migration control agreements, which often go hand in hand with RCA. Survey data also allowed us to examine the psychological effects of aid, allowing us to contribute to a mixed evidence base from a different angle. However, several questions remain about how these findings translate into behavioral migration outcomes other than preparation for the journey. One possibility—which we were unable to implement due to long-term Covid-19 mobility restrictions—would be to follow up some months later and ask respondents whether they have migrated. Although our endline results showed null effects, it is possible that migration aspirations among the encashed treatment group would have risen.

Our study is based on one origin country and one intervention. Furthermore, while the backdrop of the pandemic makes for a theoretically interesting context, it is also a unique period of history that may reduce the generalizability of our findings. Indeed, it is not necessarily the case that the results of this RCT will easily generalize to other YEPs, let alone other RCA projects in other contexts. Moreover, it is unclear whether and how the program would have worked in a country with lower levels of migratory aspirations. On one hand, high aspirations create a benchmark that should be easier to lower if the project is effective; on the other, high aspirations create obstacles that can render the project ineffective (Conrad Suso, 2019). We also encourage scholars to consider how the magnitude, frequency, and timing of aid flows affect place attachment, and the importance of the actor delivering or disbursing the aid.

Given limitations on the generalizability of our results, our quantitative and qualitative analyses focus on mechanisms. Specifically, we developed theoretical expectations on the drivers of migration aspirations and tied them to a general framework used by major aid agencies (UNDP, 2017). Through interviews, we aimed to identify project features that may elicit these mechanisms. This allows us to consider the potential for instrumental place attachment in other RCA projects such as, for example, building community sanitation works or providing technical assistance to local bureaucrats. These types of projects focus on place even more than the project we evaluated, which was primarily a labor "supply-side" intervention (Fox & Kaul, 2018).[19] However, instrumental place attachment is also driven by the ability to pursue a specific goal in a place, and this project focused on honing entrepreneurs' place-bound skills, knowledge, and plans in relation to that specific goal. As our expert interviewees suggest, an intervention that focuses on individual and place in equal parts may elicit instrumental place attachment more successfully and in the longer term.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to Niheer Dasandi, Matthew S. Winters, Jennifer Piscopo, Christopher Blair, and participants of the 2023 Southern Political Science Association conference; Cristina Bodea and participants of the 2022 European Political Science conference; Victoria Donnaloja, Renee Luthra, Sara Polo, and members of the University of Essex Migration Reading Group; as well as our three anonymous reviewers. We are also grateful to Denise Brennan, Kamila Czerwinska, Tchanlandjou Kpare, Aron Tekelegzi, Tauhid Pasha, Damien Jusselme, Jules Le Goff, Madeline Page, Katherine Tyson, Kumbale Goode, among other expert practitioners, for their patience with evaluation-related logistical issues. We would also like to thank Richard Black, Christina

[19] Future work should consider domestic aid, which may make citizens feel less dependent on foreign aid to pursue goals where they are.

Oelgemoller, Audrey Lenoel, and other members of the MigChoice project for their detailed comments on the survey. The research reported here was funded, in part, by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. The views expressed are those of the authors.

REFERENCES

Adepoju, Aderanti. 2019. "Migrants and Refugees in Africa." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Edited by Erin Hannah. Accessed: 11/03/2024. Online: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.723

Alesina, Alberto, and Beatrice Weder. 2002. "Do Corrupt Governments Receive Less Foreign Aid?" *American Economic Review* 92(4): 1126–37.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2004. "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition." In *Culture and Public Action*, edited by Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton. Stanford, Stanford, Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press. pp. 59–84.

Armitano, Florence. 2017. "Migration in The Gambia: A Country Profile 2017." Technical report International Organization for Migration.

Aslany, Maryam, J., Carling, M. B., Mjelva, and T. Sommerfelt. 2021. "Systematic Review of Determinants of Migration Aspirations." QuantMig Project Deliverable D2.2. Southampton: University of Southampton (870299).

Bandura, Albert. 1977. "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change." *Psychological Review* 84(2): 191.

Bandura, Albert, William H Freeman, and Richard Lightsey. 1999. Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control. Broadway UK: Worth Publishers.

Banerjee, Abhijit, Esther Duflo, Nathanael Goldberg, Dean Karlan, Robert Osei, William Parient´e, Jeremy Shapiro, Bram Thuysbaert, and Christopher Udry. 2015. "A Multifaceted Program Causes Lasting Progress for the Very Poor: Evidence from Six Countries." *Science* 348(6236): 1260799.

Banks, Nicola, and David Hulme. 2012. "The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Development and Poverty Reduction." Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper 171.

Barrett, Christopher B., Teevrat Garg, and Linden McBride. 2016. "Well-Being Dynamics and Poverty Traps." *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 8(1): 303–27.

Beaman, Lori, Esther Duflo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. 2012. "Female Leadership Raises Aspirations and Educational Attainment for Girls: A Policy Experiment in India." *Science* 335(February): 582–86.

Bermeo, Sarah Blodgett, and David Leblang. 2015. "Migration and Foreign Aid." *International Organization* 69(3): 627–57.

Berthélemy, Jean Claude, Monica Beuran, and Mathilde Maurel. 2009. "Aid and Migration: Substitutes or Complements?" *World Development* 37(10): 1589–99.

Blair, C. W., Guy Grossman, and J. M. Weinstein. 2021. "Liberal Displacement Policies Attract Forced Migrants in the Global South." *American Political Science Review* 116(1): 351–58.

Blair, Christopher W, and Austin L Wright. 2022. "Refugee Return and Conflict: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." Working paper No. 2021–82. Becker Friedman Institute. Accessed 11/03/2024. Online: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3885937

Carling, Jørgen, and Kerilyn Schewel. 2018. "Revisiting Aspiration and Ability in International Migration." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44(6): 945–63.

Christensen, James, and Miranda Simon. 2023. "Using Aid to Control Migration." *Political Studies* 72(3): 883–902.

Clemens, Michael A, and Hannah M Postel. 2018. "Deterring Emigration with Foreign Aid: An Overview of Countries". Center for Global Development (CGD) Policy Paper. Washington DC: Center for Global Development (February), pp. 1–28.

Conrad Suso, Catherine T. 2019. "Backway or bust: Causes and Consequences of Gambian Irregular Migration." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 57(1): 111–35.

Cornelius, Wayne A, and Marc R Rosenblum. 2005. "Immigration and Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 8: 99–119.

De Dominicis, Stefano, Ferdinando Fornara, Uberta Ganucci Cancellieri, Clare TwiggerRoss, and Marino Bonaiuto. 2015. "We Are at Risk, and So What? Place Attachment, Environmental Risk Perceptions and Preventive Coping Behaviours." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 43: 66–78.

Dietrich, Simone. 2013. "Bypass or Engage? Explaining Donor Delivery Tactics in Foreign Aid Allocation*." *International Studies Quarterly* 57(4): 698–712.

EUTF. 2022. "Greater Economic and Employment Opportunities." Accessed January 1, 2023. https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/thematic/greater-economic-and-employment-opportunities

Fox, Louise, and Upaasna Kaul. 2018. "The Evidence Is In: How Should Youth Employment Programs in Low-Income Countries Be Designed?" World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8500.

Gambia Bureau of Statistics. 2018. *The Gambia Labour Force Survey*. Banjul: The Gambia.

Gamso, Jonas, and Farhod Yuldashev. 2018. "Targeted Foreign Aid and International Migration: Is Development-Promotion an Effective Immigration Policy?" *International Studies Quarterly* 62(4): 809–20.

Ghosn, Faten, Tiffany Chu, Miranda Simon, Alex Braithwaite, Michael Frith, and Joanna Jandali. 2021. "The Journey Home: Violence, Anchoring, and Refugee Decisions to Return." *American Political Science Review* 115(3): 982–98.

Haas, Hein De. 2007. "Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration." *Development and Change* 38(5): 819–41.

Hernández-Carretero, M, and J Carling. 2012. "Beyond Kamikaze Migrants: Risk Taking in West African Boat Migration to Europe." *Human Organization* 71(4): 407–16.

Hesson, Ted, and Matt Spetalnick. 2021. *Exclusive U.S. Considering Cash Payments to Central America to Stem Migration*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/us/exclusive-us-considering-cash-transfers-central-american-countries-stem-causes-2021-04-09/

Hetling, Andrea, Gretchen L. Hoge, and Judy L. Postmus. 2016. "What Is Economic Self-Sufficiency? Validating a Measurement Scale for Policy, Practice, and Research." *Journal of Poverty* 20(2): 214–35.

ILO. 2021. *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021*. Geneva: International Labor Organization.

Imai, Kosuke, Luke Keele, Dustin Tingley, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2011. "Unpacking the Black Box of Causality: Learning about Causal Mechanisms from Experimental and Observational Studies." *American Political Science Review* 105(4): 765–89.

IOM. 2021. *Launch of Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Strengthens Migration Data in The Gambia*. International Organization for Migration. https://www.iom.int/news/launch-displacement-tracking-matrix-dtm-strengthens-migration-data-gambia

Jorgensen, Bradley S, and Richard C Stedman. 2001. "Sense of Place as an Attitude: Lakeshore Owners Attitudes toward Their Properties." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 21(3): 233–48.

Kumlin, Staffan, and Bo Rothstein. 2005. "Making and Breaking Social Capital: The Impact of Welfare-State Institutions." *Comparative Political Studies* 38(4): 339–65.

Kyle, Gerard T., Andrew J. Mowen, and Michael Tarrant. 2004. "Linking Place Preferences with Place Meaning: An Examination of the Relationship between Place Motivation and Place Attachment." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 24(4): 439–54.

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aips.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Lanati, Mauro, and Rainer Thiele. 2018. “The Impact of Foreign Aid on Migration Revisited.” *World Development* 111: 59–74.

Landon, Adam C, Kyle M Woosnam, Gerard T Kyle, and Samuel J Keith. 2021. “Psychological Needs Satisfaction and Attachment to Natural Landscapes.” *Environment and Behavior* 53(6): 661–683.

Leblang, David A. 1996. “Property Rights, Democracy and Economic Growth.” *Political Research Quarterly* 49(1): 5–26.

Lehmann, M. Christian, and Daniel T.R. Masterson. 2020. “Does Aid Reduce Antirefugee Violence? Evidence from Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.” *American Political Science Review* 114(4): 1335–42.

Martin, Philip L, and J Edward Taylor. 1996. “The Anatomy of a Migration Hump.” In *Development Strategy, Employment, and Migration: Insights from Models* edited by J. Edward Taylor, 43–62. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

McKenzie, David. 2022. “Fears and Tears Should More People Be Moving within and from Developing Countries, and What Stops This Movement?” Policy Research Working Paper, no. July. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Accessed from https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/international-migrant-stock-2019.html

Menard, Audrey-Rose, and Laurent Weill. 2016. “Understanding the Link between Aid and Corruption: A Causality Analysis.” *Economic Systems* 40(2): 260–72.

Mixed Migration Centre. 2021. “Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees and Migrants in West Africa.” Technical Report February.

Nicholson, Nigel, Emma Soane, Mark Fenton-O’Creevy, and Paul Willman. 2005. “Personality and Domain-Specific Risk Taking.” *Journal of Risk Research* 8(2): 157–76.

Pinson, Linda, and Jerry Jinnet. 1993. *How to Write a Business Plan: Managing and Planning Series.* U.S. Small Business Administration, Washington D.C.

Raty, Tuuli, and Raphael Shilhav. 2020. “The EU Trust Fund for Africa: Trapped between Aid Policy and Migration Politics.” London: Oxfam GB. pp. 1–40.

Risse, Thomas, and Eric Stollenwerk. 2018. “Legitimacy in Areas of Limited Statehood.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 403–18.

Scannell, Leila, and Robert Gifford. 2010. “Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organizing Framework.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30(1): 1–10.

Schon, Justin, and David Leblang. 2021. “Why Physical Barriers Backfire: How Immigration Enforcement Deters Return and Increases Asylum Applications.” *Comparative Political Studies* 54(14): 2611–52.

Shumaker, Sally A, and Ralph B Taylor. 1983. “Toward a Clarification of People-Place Relationships: A Model of Attachment to Place.” *Environmental Psychology: Directions and Perspectives* 2: 19–25.

Simon, Miranda, Cassilde Schwartz, and David Hudson. 2022. “Covid-19 Insecurities and Migration Aspirations.” *International Interactions* 38(2): 1–18.

Tingley, Dustin, Teppei Yamamoto, Kentaro Hirose, Luke Keele, and Kosuke Imai. 2014. “Mediation: R Package for Causal Mediation Analysis.” UCLA Statistics/American Statistical Association.

Twigger-Ross, Clare L, and David L Uzzell. 1996. “Place and Identity Processes.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 16(3): 205–220.

UNDP. 2017. *Application of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework in Development Projects.* UNDP Guidance Note. New York: UNDP, pp. 1–21.

UNDP. 2019. *Scaling Fences: Voices of Irregular African Migrants to Europe.* UNDP Guidance Note. New York: UNDP.

van der Velde M., and T. van Naerssen eds. 2015. *Mobility and Migration Choices: Thresholds to Crossing Borders.* Farnham: Ashgate.

Vigh, Henrik. 2006. “Social Death and Violent Life Chances.” In *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context*, edited by Catrine Christiansen, Mays Uyas and Henrik E. Vigh. Upsala: The Nordic Africa Institute. Pages 31–60.

Whitaker, Beth Elise. 2008. “Funding the International Refugee Regime: Implications for Protection.” *Global Governance* 14(2): 241–58.

White House. 2021. “U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America.” Technical report, White House, Washington D.C.

Wuepper, David, and Travis J Lybbert. 2017. “Perceived Self-Efficacy, Poverty, and Economic Development.” *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 9(11): 1–22.

Zhou, Yang-Yang, and Andrew Shaver. 2021. “Reexamining the Effect of Refugees on Civil Conflict: A Global Subnational Analysis.” *American Political Science Review* 115(4): 1175–96.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Simon, Miranda, Cassilde Schwartz, and David Hudson. 2024. “Can foreign aid reduce the desire to emigrate? Evidence From a randomized controlled trial.” *American Journal of Political Science* 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12927

15405907, 0, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12927 by Test, Wiley Online Library on [09/12/2024]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License