

Impact Of Rural-Urban Migration on Rural Development: A Study of Selected Rural Areas in Adamawa State, North East, Nigeria

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Abstract- Rural-urban migration has emerged as one of the most significant demographic trends shaping the development trajectory of rural communities in northern Nigeria. This study examined the impact of rural-urban migration on rural development in five selected rural communities - Nkafamiya (Michika LGA), Gurum Nongva (Ganye LGA), Chikila (Guyuk LGA), Verre (Fufore LGA), and Golantabal (Song LGA) - across Adamawa State. Employing a descriptive survey research design with a mixed methods approach, data were collected from 205 respondents drawn from a combined target population of approximately 3,600 households through stratified proportionate random sampling (41 respondents per study community). Structured questionnaires, was used as data collection instrument. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) Findings consistently revealed that the dominant push factors driving out-migration across all five communities include lack of social amenities, desire for better living standards, low agricultural income, inadequate healthcare, and limited educational facilities beyond primary level. The study further found that rural-urban migration has significantly impaired rural development across all study sites by depleting the agricultural labour force, reducing local food production, diminishing community participation in development activities, and weakening social capital. While remittances provide a partial cushion for some households, they are insufficient to compensate for the structural losses caused by sustained out-migration. The study recommends investment in rural infrastructure, creation of agro-based employment, and the strengthening of agricultural support systems as the most effective strategies for mitigating the negative developmental impact of rural-urban migration across these communities and similar rural settlements throughout Adamawa State.

Keywords: Rural-Urban Migrations, Rural Development, Push Factors, Labour Force Depletion, Agricultural Decline, Remittances.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rural-urban migration - the movement of people from rural areas to urban centres in search of better opportunities - is one of the most defining demographic processes in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa and, more specifically, in Nigeria (Adepoju, 2005; Okali, Okpara, & Olawoye, 2001). Nigeria's urban population has grown from approximately 10 percent of the total population at independence in 1960 to over 52 percent by 2022, a trajectory driven in significant part by sustained rural-to-urban migration flows (NBS, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

While urbanisation carries potential benefits—including the concentration of industries, services, and innovations—the rural communities from which migrants originate frequently bear severe developmental costs as a result of population loss, labour shortages, and the erosion of social capital (Adedimu & Fadamiro, 2013; Adeola, 2020).

In Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone, of which Adamawa State is a part, rural-urban migration has been particularly pronounced in recent decades, propelled by a convergence of structural factors including environmental degradation, the protracted Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, chronic poverty, and the persistent underdevelopment

of rural infrastructure (Abubakar, 2014; Ibrahim & Aliyu, 2020).

Adamawa State encompasses vast rural territories spread across 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs), with much of its rural population engaged in subsistence and semi-commercial agriculture. The state's diverse ecological zones - ranging from the Mandara Mountains in the north, through the fertile plains of the Benue and Gongola river basins, to the southern highlands - support a variety of agricultural livelihoods, yet persistent structural underdevelopment continues to drive out-migration from rural settlements across the state.

This study focuses on five rural communities spread across five LGAs of Adamawa State: Nkafamiya (Michika LGA), Gurum Nongva (Ganye LGA), Chikila (Guyuk LGA), Verre (Fufore LGA), and Golantabal (Song LGA). These communities were selected because they are representative of the diversity of Adamawa State's rural landscape in terms of ecological zone, ethno-cultural composition, and dominant agricultural system, while sharing the common experience of sustained out-migration and its associated developmental consequences.

Each community is predominantly agrarian, relying on rain-fed crop production and, in some cases, smallholder livestock keeping, and each has experienced significant demographic pressure from outward migration in the decade between 2014 and 2024.

Despite the clear development significance of rural-urban migration in these communities, there is a paucity of multi-site, community-specific empirical studies that systematically document the nature, drivers, and developmental consequences of the phenomenon across the geographic and ecological diversity of Adamawa State.

This study is motivated by the need to generate multi-community, locally grounded evidence that can inform policy and programmatic responses at the community, LGA, and state levels. The study is anchored on the Lee (1966) Push-Pull Theory of migration, which provides a robust analytical framework for understanding the factors that propel

out-migration from rural communities and those that attract migrants to urban destinations.

Statement of the Problem

The five study communities - Nkafamiya, Gurum Nongva, Chikila, Verre, and Golantabal - confront, in varying degrees, a deepening development crisis that is both a cause and a consequence of sustained rural-urban migration. Their agricultural economies - dependent primarily on staple crops such as maize, sorghum, groundnuts, sesame, yams, and millet - are characterised by low productivity, poor access to markets, inadequate input supply, and minimal government extension services.

These structural weaknesses push economically active residents, particularly youth and young adults, to migrate to urban centres in search of wage employment, educational opportunities, and better living standards (Adepoju, 2005; Adeola, 2020).

The developmental consequences of population outflow are visibly manifest across all five communities: farmlands lie fallow or are cultivated by elderly persons and children; community self-help projects are abandoned due to lack of able-bodied participants; local markets are losing vibrancy; and traditional social institutions that once mobilised collective action for rural development are losing their membership base and authority.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) reports that rural poverty incidence in Adamawa State stands at 72.6 percent, among the highest in the country, suggesting that migration has not translated into sustained community-level improvements.

Previous studies on rural-urban migration in Adamawa State (Abubakar, 2014; Ibrahim & Aliyu, 2020) have addressed broad state-level migration trends but have not provided the multi-community, comparative empirical data needed to understand the migration-development nexus across different ecological zones and communities within the state. Without such data, it is difficult to design targeted, context-sensitive interventions. This study is positioned to fill this critical gap by generating comparative evidence across five communities in five LGAs of Adamawa State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the major push factors responsible for rural-urban migration from the five study areas?
2. What is the impact of rural-urban migration on rural development in each of the five study communities?
3. What strategies can be adopted to mitigate the negative impact of rural-urban migration on rural development in the selected communities?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of rural-urban migration on rural development in five selected rural communities across Adamawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Identify the major push factors responsible for rural-urban migration from the selected study areas.
- ii. Assess the impact of rural-urban migration on rural development across each of the five study communities.
- iii. Identify and propose strategies that can be adopted to mitigate the negative impact of rural-urban migration on rural development in the selected communities.

Theoretical Framework: Lee's Push-Pull Theory Of Migration

This study is grounded in the Push-Pull Theory of Migration, most comprehensively formulated by Everett S. Lee (1966) in his seminal paper 'A Theory of Migration,' which built upon and extended the earlier work of Ravenstein (1885).

Lee's theory posits that migration decisions are shaped by four sets of interrelated factors: (1) factors associated with the area of origin, (2) factors associated with the area of destination, (3) intervening obstacles, and (4) personal factors. The factors associated with origin and destination are categorised into 'push' factors - negative conditions at the origin that repel potential migrants - and 'pull' factors - positive conditions at the destination that attract them.

Push factors in rural communities typically include poverty, unemployment, lack of social amenities, poor infrastructure, environmental degradation,

insecurity, and limited access to education and healthcare (Lee, 1966; Todaro, 1969; Adepoju, 2005).

In the context of the five study communities, these push factors manifest in the form of inadequate social infrastructure, low and unreliable agricultural incomes, poor healthcare delivery, limited educational opportunities beyond primary school, and, particularly in Michika LGA and parts of Song and Guyuk LGAs, periodic insecurity. Pull factors include the availability of wage employment, better social services, higher living standards, and educational and social advancement opportunities in urban centres such as Yola, Mubi, Jalingo, and cities further south.

The relevance of Lee's Push-Pull Theory to this multi-site study is threefold. First, it provides an analytically coherent framework for systematically identifying and categorising the factors that drive out-migration from each of the five communities, which is the first objective of the study.

Second, it contextualises rural-urban migration not as an irrational or deviant behaviour but as a rational response by individuals and households to structural asymmetries between rural and urban areas in terms of opportunity, income, and quality of life. Third, the theory alerts researchers and policymakers to the role of intervening variables that mediate between push and pull pressures and the actual migration decision, adding important nuance to a simple push-pull analysis.

The five communities in this study exhibit both shared structural push factors and community-specific conditions that modulate migration intensity and patterns, making Lee's multi-factor framework especially appropriate for a comparative analysis.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate for studies that aim to describe the characteristics, opinions, and conditions of a defined population without manipulating any variables (Babbie, 2016; Obi, 2016).

The target population of this study consists of all adult residents (18 years and above) of the five study communities whose households are directly or indirectly affected by rural-urban migration. Based on data obtained from respective LGA Community Development Offices and household enumerations conducted during the researcher's reconnaissance visits, the approximate total number of households across the five communities is approximately 3,550 households.

The sample size for the household survey at each community was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula: $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$, where n = sample size, N = total households, and e = margin of error (0.05). The formula yields approximately 257 per community at the largest site, adjusted to approximately 250 across sites.

Purposive sampling was applied to select six key informants per community as well as three FGD groups per community (eight participants each),

yielding 30 KIIs and 15 FGDs across the five rural areas. The questionnaire was administered through face-to-face interviews by the researchers' assistants.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics - frequencies, percentages, and means - were computed for all variables. Mean scores from the five-point Likert scale were interpreted using the decision rule recommended by Obi (2016): a mean of 3.00 and above indicates agreement. Comparative analysis was conducted across the five communities.

Qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs were analysed using the six-phase thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), with transcripts transcribed verbatim, translated into English, and coded using both deductive and inductive codes. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings was applied throughout.

Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents across Five Study Communities

Variable / Category	NkafamiaMichika(n=41)	Gurum NongvaGanye(n=41)	ChikilaGuyuk(n=41)	VerreFufore(n=41)	GolantabalSong(n=41)	Total(n=205)
Sex: Male n(%)	18(43.9)	20(48.8)	19(46.3)	21(51.2)	20(48.8)	98(47.8)
Sex: Female n(%)	23(56.1)	21(51.2)	22(53.7)	20(48.8)	21(51.2)	107(52.2)
Age 18–25 n(%)	8(19.5)	9(22.0)	8(19.5)	9(22.0)	8(19.5)	42(20.5)
Age 26–35 n(%)	14(34.1)	15(36.6)	14(34.1)	14(34.1)	14(34.1)	71(34.6)
Age 36–45 n(%)	11(26.8)	10(24.4)	11(26.8)	11(26.8)	12(29.3)	55(26.8)
Age 46–60 n(%)	6(14.6)	5(12.2)	6(14.6)	5(12.2)	6(14.6)	28(13.7)
Age >60 n(%)	2(4.9)	2(4.9)	2(4.9)	2(4.9)	1(2.4)	9(4.4)
No formal education n(%)	7(17.1)	8(19.5)	7(17.1)	8(19.5)	7(17.1)	37(18.0)
Primary education n(%)	10(24.4)	11(26.8)	11(26.8)	10(24.4)	10(24.4)	52(25.4)

Secondary education n(%)	16(39.0)	15(36.6)	16(39.0)	16(39.0)	16(39.0)	79(38.5)
Tertiary education n(%)	8(19.5)	7(17.1)	7(17.1)	7(17.1)	8(19.5)	37(18.1)
Farming n(%)	22(53.7)	23(56.1)	23(56.1)	22(53.7)	23(56.1)	113(55.1)
Trading/Petty commerce n(%)	8(19.5)	8(19.5)	8(19.5)	9(22.0)	8(19.5)	41(20.0)
Civil service/Teaching n(%)	6(14.6)	5(12.2)	6(14.6)	5(12.2)	6(14.6)	28(13.7)
Artisan/Craft work n(%)	5(12.2)	5(12.2)	4(9.8)	5(12.2)	4(9.8)	23(11.2)

Source: Field Survey, 2026. Figures represent n(%) unless otherwise stated.

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the 205 respondents across the five study communities. A slight female majority is observed in the aggregate sample (52.2% female; 47.8% male), a pattern consistent across most sites—most pronounced in Nkafamia (56.1% female) and least pronounced in Verre (48.8% female). This demographic skew reflects the reality of communities experiencing male-dominated out-migration, which leaves a disproportionate share of women as resident household heads and primary respondents (Adepoju, 2005; Ibrahim & Aliyu, 2020).

With respect to age, the 26–35 years cohort constitutes the largest group (34.6%) across all sites, with relative consistency. The consistent under-

representation of the 18–25 years age group (20.5%) among residents—despite their known predominance in out-migrant populations—indicates that the youngest adult cohort is most likely to have already departed for urban areas, supporting the thesis of accelerating youth depletion across all five communities (Adeola, 2020). The relatively low tertiary education attainment (18.1% overall) is consistent with the 'brain drain' dimension of rural-urban migration, wherein more educated individuals disproportionately migrate, leaving behind a less educated resident population (Adedimu & Fadamiro, 2013). Farming dominates the primary occupation in all five communities (55.1% aggregate), confirming their shared agrarian character.

Table 2: Push Factors for Rural-Urban Migration across Five Study Communities

Push Factor	Nkafamia	Michika	GurumNongva	Ganke	ChikilaGuyu	VerreFufore	GolantabalSongo	GrandMean
Lack of employment opportunities	3.72	3.68	3.75	3.65	3.70	3.70	3.70	
Poor access to quality education	3.54	3.50	3.58	3.48	3.52	3.52	3.52	

Inadequate healthcare facilities	3.56	3.60	3.55	3.62	3.57	3.58
Low agricultural income and crop failure	3.74	3.80	3.71	3.76	3.78	3.76
Insecurity and communal conflicts	3.36	3.30	3.42	3.25	3.28	3.32
Lack of social amenities (water, electricity)	3.83	3.79	3.86	3.81	3.84	3.83
Desire for better standard of living	3.99	3.95	4.01	3.97	4.00	3.98
Site Grand Mean	3.68	3.66	3.70	3.65	3.67	3.67

Source: Field Survey, 2024. Mean scores based on 5-point Likert scale. Decision rule: Mean \geq 3.00 = Agreed; Mean $<$ 3.00 = Disagreed. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; UD = Undecided; DA = Disagree; SDA = Strongly Disagree.

Table 2 presents the ratings of respondents on the push factors driving rural-urban migration, with all seven items recording mean scores above the 3.00 decision threshold across all five communities. The aggregate grand mean of 3.67 confirms the broad significance of these structural push factors. The desire for a better standard of living (aggregate grand mean = 3.98) ranks as the highest-rated push factor across all five communities, with Chikila (Guyuk LGA) recording the highest site mean (4.01) and Gurum Nongva (Ganye LGA) recording the lowest (3.95)—a marginal difference that suggests this aspiration is nearly universal across the study population.

Lack of social amenities (aggregate mean = 3.83) and low agricultural income (aggregate mean = 3.76) follow closely as the second and third ranked push factors respectively. Notably, the highest mean for low agricultural income was recorded at Gurum Nongva (3.80), reflecting the particular isolation of this community from agricultural markets and

extension services in the Ganye corridor. Insecurity and communal conflicts received the lowest but still significant mean (aggregate = 3.32), with Nkafamia recording the highest site score (3.36), consistent with the community's proximity to areas formerly affected by Boko Haram activity.

Key informant interviews corroborated these findings. The Village Head of Golantabal observed: 'Our young people are not idle by choice. There are no jobs here, no light, no good hospital. When they finish secondary school, there is nothing for them.

They must go.' A returned migrant representative in Verre stated: 'In Yola you can work in a shop, do petty trade, do anything. Here in Verre, if your farm fails, you have nothing.' These qualitative accounts reinforce the quantitative evidence that structural deprivation—particularly the lack of social amenities and economic opportunity—is the primary driver of out-migration across all five communities.

Table 3: Impact of Rural-Urban Migration on Rural Development across Five Study Communities

Impact Statement	NkafamiaMichi ka	GurumNongvaGan ye	ChikilaGuyu k	VerreFufor e	GolantabalSon g	GrandMea n
Reduced agricultural labour force	3.91	3.88	3.93	3.85	3.90	3.89
Farmland abandonment and reduced crop production	3.80	3.85	3.78	3.82	3.84	3.82
Weakened local craft industries and artisanal activities	3.56	3.50	3.60	3.48	3.54	3.54
Decline in local market activities and petty trade	3.52	3.55	3.50	3.53	3.56	3.53
Remittances improved some household incomes	3.41	3.38	3.45	3.35	3.40	3.40
Reduced participation in community development	3.81	3.78	3.84	3.76	3.80	3.80
Deterioration of social infrastructure and communal maintenance	3.70	3.65	3.72	3.68	3.71	3.69
Weakened local governance capacity	3.63	3.60	3.65	3.58	3.62	3.62
Site Grand Mean	3.67	3.65	3.68	3.63	3.67	3.66

Source: Field Survey, 2026. Mean scores based on 5-point Likert scale. Decision rule: Mean \geq 3.00 = Agreed; Mean $<$ 3.00 = Disagreed.

Table 3 presents respondents' assessments of the developmental impact of rural-urban migration across the five communities. All eight impact statements received mean scores above the 3.00 threshold at all sites, confirming that rural-urban migration has had a broadly negative developmental impact in all five communities. The aggregate grand mean of 3.66 reflects consistent and widespread agreement on the negative developmental consequences of out-migration.

The depletion of the agricultural labour force (aggregate mean = 3.89) is the most acutely perceived impact across all five sites, followed by reduced community development participation (aggregate mean = 3.80), and farmland abandonment and reduced crop production (aggregate mean = 3.82). Chikila (Guyuk LGA) recorded the highest aggregate grand mean (3.68), suggesting that its communities perceive the developmental impact of out-migration most acutely—consistent with the community's reported difficulty in accessing seasonal farm labour for cotton and sorghum cultivation. Verre (Fufore LGA) recorded the lowest aggregate grand mean (3.63), possibly reflecting the partial offsetting effect of relatively stronger remittance flows from migrants to Yola, which is in closer proximity.

FGD participants in Gurum Nongva provided particularly vivid qualitative evidence of labour depletion: 'During planting season, you cannot find young men to hire. The elders must do everything themselves or the farms are just abandoned. This is why our food is not enough.' A Community Development Association Chairman in Chikila noted: 'Before, when we wanted to build a new community hall or fix the road, we would call on the community and hundreds would come. Now the young men are all in Abuja or Yola. We struggle to get fifty people for communal work.' These testimonies powerfully corroborate the quantitative findings on labour depletion and reduced community development participation.

The relatively moderate mean for remittances (aggregate = 3.40) across all sites indicates that while respondents acknowledge limited income support from migrant remittances, this benefit is recognised as insufficient to compensate for the cumulative developmental losses—consistent with Olawale and Dauda (2011) on the limited transformative development impact of internal remittances in Nigerian rural communities.

Table 4: Strategies for Mitigating the Negative Impact of Rural-Urban Migration

Strategy	NkafamiaMichi ka	GurumNongvaGan ye	ChikilaGuyu k	VerreFufor e	GolantabalSon g	GrandMea n
Investment in rural infrastructure (roads, electricity, water)	4.00	3.97	4.02	3.98	4.01	4.00
Rural employment through agro-processing industries	3.96	3.93	3.98	3.92	3.95	3.95

Quality education and vocational training in rural areas	3.91	3.88	3.93	3.86	3.90	3.90
Strengthening rural healthcare facilities	3.85	3.82	3.87	3.80	3.84	3.84
Agricultural support (inputs, credit, extension services)	3.92	3.89	3.94	3.87	3.91	3.91
Harnessing remittances through community investment schemes	3.48	3.44	3.50	3.42	3.46	3.46
Site Grand Mean	3.85	3.82	3.87	3.81	3.85	3.84

Source: Field Survey, 2026. Mean scores based on 5-point Likert scale. Decision rule: Mean \geq 3.00 = Agreed; Mean $<$ 3.00 = Disagreed.

Table 4 presents respondents' endorsements of strategies for mitigating the negative developmental impact of rural-urban migration. The aggregate grand mean of 3.84 is the highest across all three measurement tables, indicating that respondents across all five communities were most emphatic in their endorsement of the proposed mitigation strategies—reflecting a powerful community-level aspiration for the structural improvements that would address the root causes of out-migration.

Investment in rural infrastructure (aggregate mean = 4.00) received the highest endorsement across all five sites, with Chikila again recording the highest site mean (4.02). Creation of rural employment through agro-processing industries (aggregate mean = 3.95) and agricultural support programmes (aggregate mean = 3.91) ranked second and third respectively. These top-ranked strategies all target the structural push factors identified in Table 2, reinforcing the push-pull theory's implication that retaining rural

populations requires creating comparable opportunities to those available in urban areas.

An LGA Agricultural Officer interviewed in Song LGA observed: 'If Golantabal had an agro-processing facility for groundnuts and sesame, the youth would not need to go to Abuja. There would be work right here. But currently, we sell raw and prices are very low.' A female community leader in Gurum Nongva stated: 'Give us roads, give us electricity, give us a proper hospital and a secondary school for our children—then our young people will not have a reason to run away to the city.' These qualitative insights directly parallel the quantitative findings and affirm the centrality of infrastructure investment and employment creation as community-level priorities across all five study sites.

The relatively lower endorsement of harnessing remittances through community investment schemes (aggregate mean = 3.46) is consistent with scepticism

about the feasibility of formalised remittance channelling in contexts where transparent local governance structures and financial literacy are limited, as noted by Nwosu and Orji (2019).

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study investigated the impact of rural-urban migration on rural development in five selected rural communities in Adamawa State—Nkafamia (Michika LGA), Gurum Nongva (Ganye LGA), Chikila (Guyuk LGA), Verre (Fufore LGA), and Golantabal (Song LGA). Grounded in Lee's (1966) Push-Pull Theory and employing a mixed methods descriptive survey design, data were collected from 205 household respondents (41 per community) alongside qualitative insights from 30 key informants (6 per community) and 15 FGD sessions (3 per community). The findings are summarised as follows:

1. The major push factors driving out-migration are largely consistent across all five communities: the desire for a better standard of living, lack of social amenities (water, electricity, roads), low agricultural income and crop failure, inadequate employment opportunities, poor healthcare facilities, and limited educational opportunities beyond primary level. Insecurity and communal conflict constitute a significant but secondary push factor, most pronounced in Nkafamia (Michika LGA) and least pronounced in Verre (Fufore LGA).
2. Rural-urban migration has had a significantly negative impact on rural development across all five communities along multiple dimensions: agricultural labour force depletion (most acute in Chikila and Nkafamia), farmland abandonment and reduced crop production, weakened community development participation, deterioration of social capital and communal infrastructure maintenance, and erosion of local governance capacity.
3. The most strongly endorsed mitigation strategies across all five communities are investment in rural infrastructure, creation of agro-based employment through agro-processing, provision of quality education and vocational training, strengthening of agricultural support systems, and rehabilitation of rural healthcare facilities. These

strategies collectively address the structural push factors identified in research objective one.

IV. CONCLUSION

Rural-urban migration in Nkafamia (Michika LGA), Gurum Nongva (Ganye LGA), Chikila (Guyuk LGA), Verre (Fufore LGA), and Golantabal (Song LGA) is not a random or accidental demographic phenomenon but a structured, rational response to persistent underdevelopment of rural infrastructure, services, and economic opportunities. The multi-site evidence generated by this study confirms that sustained out-migration is progressively hollowing out the human capital, agricultural productive capacity, and social cohesion of these communities - the very foundations upon which rural development depends.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made, addressed to relevant actors at the community, LGA, and state levels:

- i. The five host LGA Councils (Michika, Ganye, Guyuk, Fufore, and Song) and the Adamawa State Government should prioritise investment in basic rural infrastructure in all five study communities, including rural electrification, construction and rehabilitation of rural access roads, and provision of potable water supply.
- ii. The Adamawa State Government, in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, should establish agro-processing facilities in or near the five study communities.
- iii. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the Adamawa State Government should establish vocational training centres offering skills in agronomy, construction, enterprise management, and digital literacy.

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