

Transnational Family Strategies in South-South Migration: A Study of Chinese Migrants in Zambia

In recent decades, Chinese migration has expanded beyond the traditional destinations in North America and Europe to a more diverse set of regions, including many countries in the Global South. The African continent has emerged as an important frontier for Chinese global migration, offering fertile ground for theorising contemporary forms of South-South migration. While existing studies have focused primarily on Chinese investment, entrepreneurship, and labour migration in Africa, much less attention has been paid to the family arrangements that structure migrants' mobility and settlement decisions. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews in Zambia from 2023 to 2024, this presentation highlights the complexities in how Chinese migrants strategically arrange their families in their cross-border movements. Rather than a binary decision of whether to migrate alone or with family members, Chinese migrants carefully navigate who they move with (spouse, children, and parents), when they relocate families, and to what extent they integrate with the local society, resulting in variegated forms of transnational migration. It argues that Chinese migrants' family arrangement strategy in Zambia is shaped by the interaction among their work characteristics, their experience and perception of the host environments, and expectation of future household achievements (in particularly, children's educational outcomes). At the same time, family arrangements themselves reshape migrants' career paths and mobility trajectories by constraining certain opportunities while enabling others. Different from the previous generation, contemporary Chinese migration in Zambia is less defined by long-term settlement or prolonged family separation and more by flexible transnational family arrangements that are continually reconfigured across borders. By examining family strategies as a central dimension of mobility, this paper contributes to scholarship on Chinese global migration and offers new insight into how transnational households navigate opportunities and uncertainties within emerging South–South migration corridors.