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## Labor Mobility in the Mandoul Oriental/Southern Department of Chad: Social Ascension Strategy for Young Rural People

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The strong attractiveness of cities and poverty in the countryside of sub-Saharan Africa have resulted in the massive movement of young people to large cities. Added to this are soil degradation, conflicts between farmers and herders, social influences, etc., which accentuate the repulsive factors in the Sudanese countryside of Chad. It is in this context that this study is positioned to analyze the labor mobility of young people from Mandoul Oriental to other localities in search of socio-economic opportunities. It mobilizes documentary and empirical data. The latter come from direct observation, individual interviews and/or focus groups and questionnaire surveys. The results of this research show that Mandoul Oriental is a labor mobility area for young people looking for economic opportunities. This mobility is due to the difficult living conditions of households and the repulsive nature of the Mandoul Oriental countryside. It is marked by national reception centers, the main ones of which are N'Djamena, Abéché and Kouri Bougoudi, and international centers of the Central African Republic and Libya. The results also show that the impacts of this labor mobility include, among other things, the social advancement of young people upon their return after the cycle of labor mobility and the improvement of their means of existence. Finally, they allow us to put into perspective local policies relating to the rural exodus of young people and the potential issues in this context of mobility.

**Keywords:** labor mobility, young people, social advancement, improvement of livelihoods, Oriental Mandoul

#### INTRODUCTION

The polarization of the Chadian space has been characterized since 1960 by urban centers, the most attractive of which are N'Djamena, Moundou and Abéché. If, from 1960 to 2000, internal mobility took place from north to south, over the last twenty years we have noted massive movements of people leaving the south towards the north of the country. This social phenomenon anchored in the history of the country has exploded in the last three decades to the point of becoming morbid and pathological (Mbete, 2020). This mobility, long marked by adult men and women, is experiencing notable dynamics. Indeed, in recent years, young boys and girls have been massively influenced by urban behavior. In almost all of the Mandoul Oriental countryside, there are massive departures of young people to N'Djamena, Faya Largeau, Tibesti, Libya and other areas of Chadian territory. According to INSEED (2014), this situation places Mandoul among the provinces with a high mobility index (14.1). In N'Djamena, these young people are employed in domestic services and street activities to the point of being nicknamed "rue de 40 civil servants" after the name of a neighborhood renowned for these activities. This form of mobility strongly contributes to the imbalance in land use and the overcrowding of urban centers where activities providing paid employment develop (INSEED, 2014). It also has social impacts, including the depopulation of the countryside, the paltry increase in wages, sexual exploitation with the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, crime in large centers, alcoholism, etc. (Union of Postal and Telecommunications Agents of

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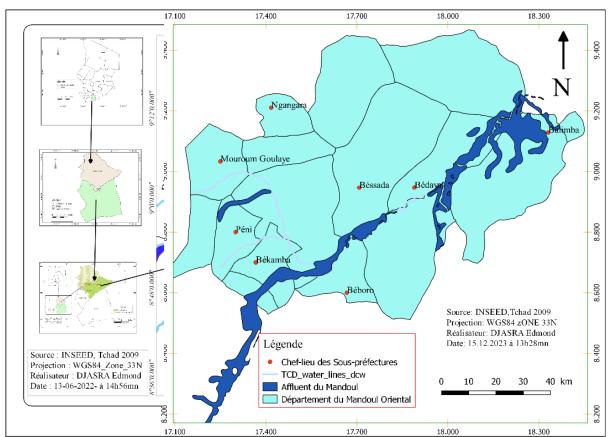
Chad-CHAD, 2019). Based on these contextual elements mentioned above, this article seeks to analyze the causes of this phenomenon which is emptying young people from the countryside of Mandoul Oriental, to analyze the impacts and finally to offer the prospects for solutions.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

#### Presentation of the Study Area

The department of Mandoul Oriental extends between 8°37'00" and 9°17'00" of North Latitude and 17°16'00" and 18°12'00" of East Longitude. It is limited to the north by the subprefecture of Ngangara, to the east by the sub-prefecture of Balimba, to the south by the subprefecture of Béboro and to the west by the sub-prefecture of Péni. It is made up of three subprefectures (Bédaya, Bessada er Koumra rural) and has 135,602 inhabitants.

The department benefits from high average annual rainfall of 800 to 1000mm. The soil is essentially clayey-sandy in the plain, but with very large regions dominated by laterite; overall the soils are only moderately fertile. Food crops are replacing cash crops, particularly sesame and peanuts, due to strong demand. Concerning the waterways, the Mandoul tributary allows local rural residents to fish. Likewise, there are also lowlands where the humidity of the clay soils allows the production of market garden crops.



**Figure 1: Location of the study area** Source: ATLAS Chad database, 2020

#### **Choice of Study Area**

The choice of the department of Mandoul Oriental in the context of the mobility of young rural people is justified by the massive presence of young girls and boys from Mandoul commonly called in N'Djamena "rue de 40 civil servants" and/or "Magueurs"; the persistence

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of young people leaving the villages. Thus, this article makes it possible to highlight the causes of their departures from the villages, the consequences endured in the places of reception, the social ascension of those who returned to the villages.

#### **Methodological Approaches**

This article uses primary and secondary data. For secondary data, scientific productions related to this subject were consulted. For primary data, the data collection methods used are direct observation, individual interviews and/or focus groups and questionnaire surveys. Direct observation of the study area made it possible to identify the abandonment of the countryside by young people and the impacts linked to this mobility. Individual interviews and/or focus groups and the questionnaire survey made it possible to question seventy (70) people distributed as follows: a) village chiefs (10) and resource people (20) who are eyewitness accounts of the incessant departures of young people. They gave the causes of departures from the villages and proposed solutions likely to keep young people in the villages; b) young people who are not enrolled in the rural exodus (15) to collect their perceptions on the rural exodus; c) the returnees (15) to gather their points of view on the causes of their departures to the villages, their activities in the host towns, their investments after their returns, their advice for young people who wish to follow in their footsteps; d) the city dwellers of Koumra (10) to receive from them assessments on the rural exodus of young people; and NGOs and administrative authorities to collect and read the works to be carried out to maintain young people in the villages.

#### **RESULTS**

# Mandoul Oriental: Mobility Pool for Young People Looking for Economic Opportunities Difficult living conditions for households in eastern Mandoul

The Mandoul Oriental department is populated by 135,602 inhabitants, more than half of whom live in the countryside (INSEED, 2009). The share of young rural people is very significant (around 60%). These young people are engulfed in extreme poverty which peaks at 14.5%. In this regard, to fight against this poverty and taking into account the impacts of climate change on agricultural activities, young people in Mandoul Oriental are resolutely turning towards income-generating activities, in support of agriculture (Figure 2).

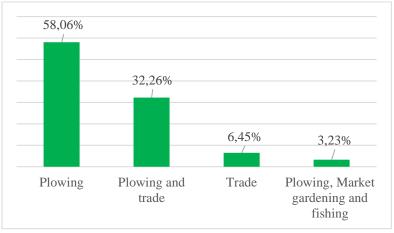


Figure 2: Main activities of young people in the villages
Source: Field survey

Figure 2 highlights the types of activities practiced by young people in rural areas before embarking on the makeshift boat. Thus, 58.06% of young people are in plowing. It is important

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to point out that three years ago, the majority of rural people, especially young people, abandoned the food crop that peanuts had become a cash crop in favor of sesame. Because the latter holds the record for demand on the market with a price of more than 500f per kilogram at the moment. However, plowing alone does not solve the needs of young people, well, 32.26% combine plowing and commerce. This is an important strategy to combat the early destruction of agricultural yields and to combat certain social problems.

These activities that these young people carry out are at the state of local and empirical knowledge since 90.32% of respondents confirm that no institution of development actors and/or government comes to their aid in the field of technical supervision especially in incomegenerating activities. However, 9.68% testified to the technical support of RAPS-Development in the field of compost manufacturing. The general observation is that NGOs have decided to finance the empowerment of women, particularly the processing of local products. Despite these lack of supervision of young people by specialized institutions, they organized themselves either individually or collectively (group and/or mutual aid system (assistance in field work by turns)) for all the achievements of village activities (Figure 3).

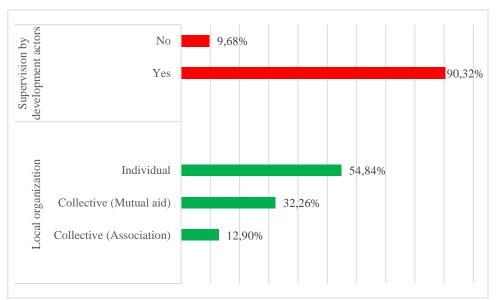


Figure 3: Lack of supervision and modes of internal organization of young people Source: Field surveys

In eastern Mandoul, there is a lack of support structures for young people. Most of them (90%) say that no development institution assists them. This is the reason why 54.84% chose to work individually compared to 32.26% in mutual aid and 12.90% in groups. It is important to point out that in the era of climate change, practicing agriculture without any technical assistance from experts is a great risk since the yields would obviously be uncertain. This is what often happens to young people who work individually and in the end, they take the path of the rural exodus.

# Factors pushing young people from the countryside of Mandoul Oriental towards activity centers

The causes of the mobility of young rural people are relatively well known. For some, it is the search for well-being, for others, it is local conflicts, the weight of tradition. As part of this research, those concerned and resource people mentioned points such as: imitation (22.58%); infertility of agricultural soils (16.13%); dissatisfaction of young people's needs by parents (19.35%); destruction of fields by the oxen of nomadic and/or sedentary breeders and once the matter is brought to the administrative authorities, justice is no longer served

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(16.13%); discovery of another life (9.68%). Some respondents break their silence by saying that it is very difficult to determine (16.13%) the departures of certain young people who have, moreover, established a good base in the village. Regarding this point, a supervisor from the Lycée Collège Chrétien de Bessada testified as follows:

In a village of Moskilim, there was a young man well established in his commercial and agricultural activities. He gives money on credit to villagers and certain young people who want to go to gold mining sites. One day, he abandons his possessions and takes the road to Kouri Bougoudi. To go, you need a sponsor who must take care of the transport costs. Once you get off, you will work to reimburse these transport costs which generally amount to 500,000 CFA francs. While logically this cost does not reach 500,000F. But as this young man had to pay his own transport costs, when he arrived at the place of exploitation, he was refused to work, telling him in this way: "As you make yourself rich by paying for your journey, you should also pay your gold detecting machine." Finally, he returned to the village empty-handed.

Concerning their departures, these young people, especially those who leave for gold mining and herdsmen or even some girls bound for N'Djamena, do not report it to any of their parents. They agree with their so-called godfather accomplices to leave the villages and once they arrive in Abéché, at this time they will report to the parents. They do this because, in N'Djamena, the nationals of the Bédaya and Bessada Cantons, in agreement with the bases, have set up the network of obstruction of young people who want to go on adventures in the exploitation sites of the gold. According to the respondents, 54.84% did not inform the parents of their adventures compared to 22.58% who informed their parents. On this point, a notable of the Chiefdom of Bessada said:

Most of the young people who leave the villages are adults. Some started their families by having children. When they found that agricultural yields were not favorable following the devastation of the fields by herders and that justice had not been done, they abandoned their households by taking the road to the gold mining sites. Thus leaving a heavy burden on their parents who also have their responsibilities.

# Labor Mobility of Young People from Mandoul Oriental Marked by National and International Reception Centers

In Mandoul Oriental, the departure of young rural people to urban areas is commonplace. These young people stand out for their promiscuity in the districts of N'Djamena, notably Wallia, Atrone, Boudalbagara and Chagoua. They are nicknamed "Officials of the street of 40". This statement is also that of Bossennec (2019:1): "N'Djamena has for several years been the scene of a massive arrival of young people from villages in southern Chad. Hoping to find income opportunities in the capital that are more accessible than in their provinces – to "look for it", according to the expression of one of them, they do small jobs as servants or street sellers. These young people, men and women, among whom there are many minors, are called by the people of N'Djaménois the "rue de 40 civil servants". Believing to find the peace lost in the capital N'Djamena, these young people live the ordeal in the households where they work, especially the girls are exposed to everyone. Apart from the capital, considered their strongholds, in the last three years, the preferred destinations are the gold panning locations, notably Kou-ri Bougoudi and South Libya (Figure 4).

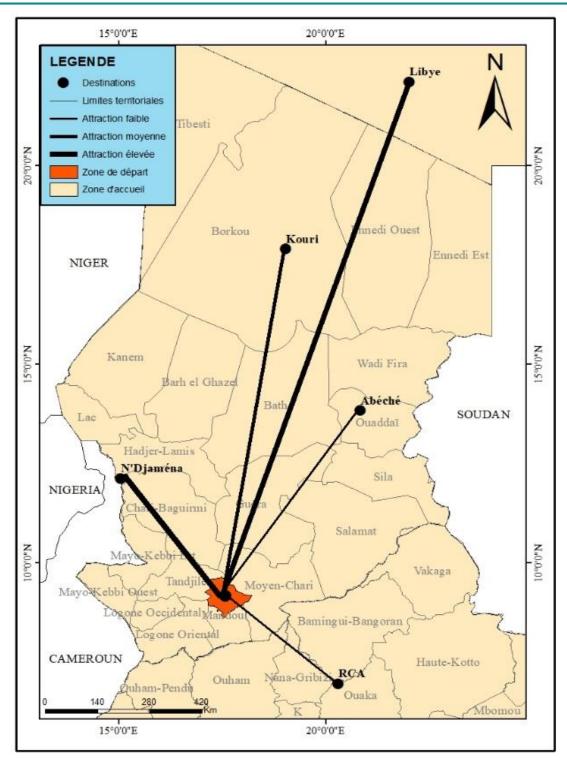


Figure 4: The labor mobility hubs of young people in Mandoul Oriental Source: ATLAS Chad database, 2020; Field investigation

Figure 4 clearly shows the reception areas of young Eastern Mandoulais who empty the villages of their presence in search of a better life. Outside of N'Djamena, 25.81% left their beacons in Libya and Kouri Bougoudi (Region located in Tibesti). In these two localities, young people are used as gold sinkers by their masters. A highly risky activity. In the same direction, 16.13% came to Libya for domestic work. The practice of cowherding is also spreading in Mandoul Oriental, which is why, as part of this research, 6.45% of young people

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decide to raise the oxen of nomadic and/or sedentary breeders in return of a calf of three to six months for a shepherd's duration of six months.

The departure periods have three waves: first, 45.16% of the boys left the villages at any time to go to the gold panning sites. Secondly, 38.71% headed to N'Djamena at the start of the dry season. According to testimonies, from October, young city dwellers are almost in schools so these rural people can very quickly find work as waiters and managers of refreshment bars or even sentry duty. This departure category concerns both sexes since they go in search of domestic work. Third, 16.13% preferred to leave the villages between April and June. Their reason for leaving is that they have not found a piece of land to exploit so they prefer to go to town to find one.

## Impacts of Youth Labor Mobility in Eastern Mandoul

## Social ascension of young people upon return to eastern Mandoul

Quite often young people have in mind that going is also synonymous with success. This is how those of Mandoul Oriental go in search of material and financial goods outside their region which is the village. But once you leave, your return is analyzed by resource people and other young people who have not yet left. In this regard, the findings are varied and the statements are summarized in Figure 5.

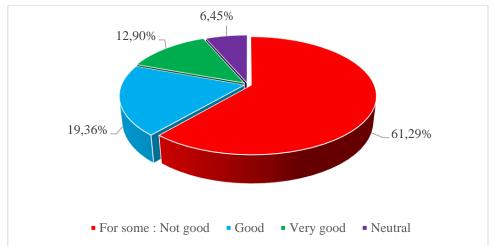


Figure 5: Assessment of the financial and material situations of returnees by respondents

Source: Field surveys

In Figure 5, the respondents expressed their views on the young people's feedback. 61.29% said that the situation of some returnees is not good, however 19.35% and 12.90% declared "good" and "very good" respectively. When approaching the investments themselves, 67.76% confirmed with "yes and no" the investments of the returnees despite the fact that some do not hold their material goods for long. Concretely, 25.81% of returnees invested positively in the villages (Figure 6).

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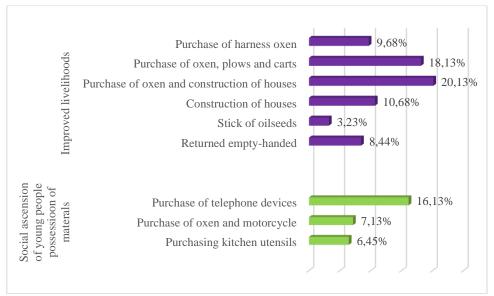


Figure 6: Social investments and possessions of materials by returnees Source: Field surveys

Figure 6 highlights the investments of young people returning from the rural exodus. Some who have the vision of agricultural production buy the oxen and build sheet metal houses (20.13%), in short, the means of transport and plowing in particular cart, motorcycle and plow. Those who have bought motorcycles put them on the roads as inter-village-Koumra taxis. Some have stocked up on cereals, oilseeds and protein crops to release them at the appropriate time. Girls, for their part, generally prepare to set up their future home by purchasing kitchen utensils and beauty ornaments. As mentioned above, 8.44% of returnees came back empty-handed, creating even more situations of poverty in the villages. With regard to these investments, a young shopkeeper from Bédaya made comments that echo those of a resident of Canada, a small village located 6km from Bessada: "The possession of the material goods of returnees is very ephemeral. For once the money in hand is exhausted, they all sell what they have. An Android phone costing 80,000F CFA would be resold at 40,000F or 30,000F.

#### Improving livelihoods

In the same logic of investments, following the testimony of a returnee from the village of Kemkada:

My name is Asrangar Jordan, 28 years old. As a young person, I embarked on the discovery of life by traveling from Kemkada to Abéché via N'Djamena. I left like any other young person hoping to return with a substantial sum allowing me to engage in agricultural activities. In the end, it's a big disappointment. But thank God, I struggled to get out of the tunnel. One observation that is unforgettable to me is that my boss considers me a slave. Besides, sometimes the slaves rest. In Abéché, I was working with my boss and I had a problem with him regarding my work being too intense. Once fired, with my small savings, I launched into small business. I was trying to save up to a year. Having a lot of capital, I told myself that I had to come back to Kemkada to settle down. This is how I am today with my small shop of manufactured items. If it would be a question of advising other young people who have not yet attempted the adventure, then it is not wise to leave if you have not previously decided on an objective.

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From the above, it is wise for the respondents to compare the returnees of the rural exodus and the non-partisans. So, the perceptions are not the same. Some (38.71%) positively appreciate those who leave and return to invest in means of transport and travel, tools and materials for agricultural activities, and the construction of homes. Since, being in the villages, it is not easy to achieve these points mentioned in one year. Given on the one hand, the agricultural land is mostly infertile, on the other hand, the climatic vagaries (flooding, inadequacies, irregularities and early start of rain), the devastation of the fields by the oxen of the nomads. Others (16.13%) indicated that the socio-economic situations of returnees are not better. Some are in a state of stagnation. To this end, a teacher from Kemkada testified:

I find some people who return from the rural exodus too miserable. Sometimes, initially, they have nothing and hoping to find better elsewhere, they are faced with multiple difficulties that they come back empty-handed. Sometimes they call their wives or relatives here in the villages to get money back. Also, those who return with a few things try to restore their sometimes collapsed huts, in short, rebuild themselves from scratch. While those who were there maintain their socio-economic situation course and therefore progress.

#### Consequences of labor mobility of young rural people

In all regions of the rural world, the massive presence of young people constitutes a driving form of multidirectional development. Thus, in Mandoul Oriental, 93.59% of respondents confirmed the departure of young people for city destinations. No one can ignore that in adventure, everything is not rosy. This is how resource people testified to the consequences endured by young people in reception areas:

Box 1: "The massive departures of young people from the village has a negative impact on our locality of Douyou because, according to a general observation, some households have draft oxen but there are, sometimes, no young people to drain them in plowing. What shocks the most, once they arrive in town, not having a diploma for certain jobs, they end up working as servants for a meager sum of money or sometimes their bosses chase them away at the end of the month under the pretext that they stole something. In the end, they call the villages to send them money for the return."

Box 2: "The rural exodus of young people is an evil that is plaguing our society and it is also very difficult to alleviate it. A sad example is seen in Kemkaga, a village located about 5km from Koko where a household has four boys. These boys agreed to go to the gold mining site without parental approval. Just a few months, two of the four died, further grieving and impoverishing the family."

Apart from these examples, the list of which is not exhaustive, it should be noted that the labor mobility of young rural people has more negative than positive consequences. We can mention, among other things, cases of death creating moral and material shocks; sexually transmitted diseases, hepatitis, anemia, cirrhosis; pregnancies not supported by the

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perpetrators; exhaustion of physical strength (incapable of meaningfully working the land when they return from gold panning especially); change in behavior harmful to society: too aggressive, heavy alcoholics and smokers, pet thieves; abandonment of women who are sometimes pregnant and with children; loss of socio-economic and spatial balance of returnees. The findings are summarized in Figure 7.

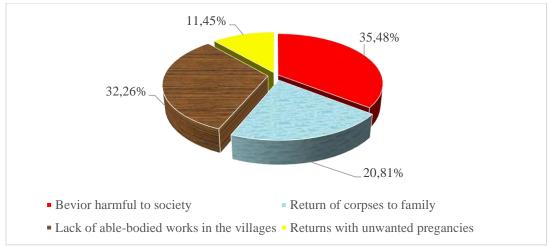


Figure 7: Consequences of the rural exodus of young people mentioned by the respondents

Source: Field survey

Figure 7 shows the percentages of villagers' views on the labor mobility of rural youth. Thus, 35.48% declared the bad behavior of young people returning from the rural exodus, especially those returning from N'Djamena. Some young people who were polite, upon returning from N'Djamena, become thieves, alcoholics, women's runners, great spinners of motorcycles, authors of loud noises every night with a big amplifier thus creating noise disturbances in society. In the same vein of ideas, 32.26% made a bitter observation about the village because the departure of able-bodied workers greatly handicaps the agricultural sector. Concerning girls, 6.45% denounced the return of girls with pregnancies whose perpetrators are either unknown or remained in N'Djamena. In short, these are girls who are abandoned by their friends so the burden falls on the parents, thus increasing the weight of poverty.

Naturally, man must migrate to make discoveries, particularly physical, scientific, cultural, and specifically, rural people must do the same for cultural discoveries. Unfortunately, for young people in the Mandoul Oriental department, we see a clear exaggeration of departures villages for cities. Based on this disastrous observation, 93.55% of respondents testified that the majority of those returning from labor mobility had not come in glory. They always return with a handicap, either moral or physical, or both. In these cases mentioned, it is the parents who pick up the pieces, further increasing their pain.

#### The prospects for youth labor mobility in Mandoul Oriental

The Mandoul Oriental department is an area which is not entirely infertile. It is a Sudanian area therefore favorable to agropastoral activities which would be well exploited by young people if and only if they would be well supervised by rural development actors. Unfortunately, it is a few women who benefit from supervision in the field of processing local products. This observation led a teacher awaiting integration residing in Kemkada to express himself in these terms: "Politicians and NGOs very often shout in the media that they give priority to the rural world, especially young people and women. But concretely on the ground, young rural people are excluded from projects by the eligibility criteria. The telling example is that of "50,000 jobs" intended for young people, most of the winners come from urban areas.

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Moreover, man is changeable and if development actors effectively combine their efforts in favor of young rural people then they will be more candidates for rural exodus. Indeed, the following actions are proposed by the respondents to keep young people in the villages: promote a better education policy; recruit the children of the poor to the civil service and/or to NGOs; finance youth activities; create management structures in the field of income-generating activities; organize events and awareness days while giving bitter examples of the rural exodus; guide young people to set up common interest groups; effectively combat misuse of rural development projects; provide and/or subsidize tools and materials for agricultural production; educate parents not to push young people to go in search of a better life; raise awareness among breeders to properly train oxen so that fields are no longer devastated; administer justice (administrative and judicial authorities) in the event of destruction of fields; check (Police) the age of young people traveling and identify their companions; otherwise, intercept them and return them to the villages of origin.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study show that Mandoul Oriental is a mobility area for young people looking for economic opportunities. In this department, as elsewhere in Chad, the countryside is emptying in favor of large cities. This observation is also that of Mbeté (2020) who shows that the rural exodus in Chad is a historical social phenomenon which has been in perpetual evolution over the past three decades to the point of becoming morbid and pathological. The results presented also show that the living conditions of households in Mandoul Oriental are difficult. These harsh living conditions due to the extreme poverty of Mandoul are not a situation specific to this area. Neighboring regions are equally impacted by the massive displacement of young people.

The factors pushing these young people from the countryside in Mandoul Oriental towards the centers of activity which this study has reached are, among others, the infertility of agricultural soils, the unsatisfaction of the needs of young people by parents, the destruction of fields by oxen, the discovery of another life etc. This result matches that of Patrice LeBlanc et al (2003) who show that young people leave their region for multiple reasons which relate more generally to the need to free themselves and take care of themselves. In the same context, Tchrnwouo and Yemmafouo (2021) go further to show that monetary poverty, poor housing conditions and the invasion of the countryside by neo-rurals, who have become owners of the means of production, push the rural areas to labor mobility in cities.

Furthermore, this work also analyzes the mobility centers of these young people from Mandoul Oriental at the national and international level. From this perspective, it embraces the results of Ramadji and Tchékoté (2020) which show that agricultural mobility is a resilience strategy for city dwellers. The authors present that the "city farmers" of Moundou move internally in the agricultural hinterland of Moundou in search of favorable land. Indeed, Kuété and Ngankeu (2021) highlight mobility trajectories in their study on labor mobility in Mbouroukou (Cameroon). The authors showed that three forms of trajectories exist, including commuter mobility, national and international migration. This study also shows that the labor mobility of young people in Mandoul Oriental presents itself as a strategy for social advancement of young people and a means of improving living conditions. This is the result reached by Charbit and Feld (2008). These latter show migrations have favored the economic development of the localities of departure. However, they put into perspective that this is not the same everywhere, because in other localities, the results seem much more mixed. On the other hand, positioning themselves in a context of return migration, Mboha and Essono (2022) show that return migration involves factors that limit reintegration and therefore the improvement of livelihoods. The authors supported their analysis based on the return of

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Cameroonian students. They emphasize that poor preparation for return, the scarcity of economic opportunities, etc., are the factors that block the reintegration of migrants.

#### **CONCLUSION**

At the end of this study devoted to the analysis of the labor mobility of young people in search of economic opportunities, it appears that the countryside of the Mandoul Oriental department constitutes a massive source of departure for young people. Questioned, young people affirm that this movement is caused by a certain number of repulsive factors including imitation (22.58%), infertility of agricultural soils (16.13%), dissatisfaction of the needs of young people by parents (19.35%), the destruction of fields by the oxen of nomadic and/or sedentary breeders and once the matter is brought to the administrative authorities, justice is no longer served (16.13%), the discovery from another life (9.68%). The labor mobility of these young people has two trajectories. The national trajectory which is marked by the cities of N'Djamena, Abéché and Kouri Bougoudi while the international trajectory is characterized by Libya and the Central African Republic. This mobility has implications in the localities of departure and for the migrants themselves. In this context, we can note the social advancement of migrants in the territories of departure and the improvement of livelihoods. In terms of prospects, it is worth noting the implementation of public policies in Mandoul Oriental emanating from NGOs. But these policies remain far from supporting the majority of migrants they cover only 10% of young people.

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