Ethiopian Labour Migration to the Gulf and South Africa

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About FSS

The **Forum for Social Studies (FSS)** is a non-government, non-profit institution engaged in conducting and sponsoring policy-oriented research and promoting informed public debate on a wide range of development issues. It was established in 1998 by a group of academics and CSO activists whose aim was to help deepen and broaden a democratic tradition of public debates. Its work is guided by the conviction that enhancing the public-government decision-makers interface on key social and economic issues can promote a transparent, participatory and all-inclusive policy-making and implementation process.

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As part of its research activity, FSS has in the past successfully launched two major book projects, viz. Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below, and Democratic Assistance to Post-Conflict Ethiopia: Impact and Limitations. Since then it has published books and monographs on a wide range of development and policy issues, including, poverty and poverty reduction, natural resource management, decentralization, the quality of higher education, culture and development, and environment and climate change. Its publications have been disseminated to decision makers, institutions of higher education, academics and researchers as well as non-government and international donor organisations to stimulate further discourse and reflection.

This monograph on **Ethiopian Labour Migration to the Gulf and South Africa** is a continuation of that tradition, and is intended to examine current labour migration issues in Ethiopia from different perspectives to promote dialogue and constructive debate on the subject among different stakeholders.

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List of Acronyms

EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDGs	Focus groups discussions
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
NBE	National Bank of Ethiopia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEAs	Private Employment Agencies
SADEC	Southern African Development Community
UEA	United Arab Emirates
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WIC	Walta Information Centre

1 Introduction

> Ethiopians are on the move. Not only are more rural people relocating to towns and cities, but the number of Ethiopians leaving the country has also ballooned in the last few years. Many are trying to reach Saudi Arabia via Yemen, while thousands of others head for South Africa, Israel and Europe, crossing deserts and seas and placing their lives in the hands of smugglers who often have little regard for their well-being (IRIN, 2011).

The above statement aptly captures the recent surge of international migration from Ethiopia. A large number of Ethiopian youth are on the move thinking that they will have better chances in life by moving out of their country. An official within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) said, people are animated to move and it is impossible for the government to stop this outburst. What can be done is minimize illegal migration and expand the number of Private Employment Agencies (PEAs), which are involved in this enterprise and boost the legal outflow of migrant workers. The official further stated, though we have limited ability in providing protection, the regulation of labour migration would at least allow the government to keep track of the state of affairs regarding the matter.[1]

Africa's share in global migration, due to economic underdevelopment, remains very low. While three per cent of the global population engages in international migration flows, Africa's rate of international migration is estimated at 1.9 percent of the overall population (UNDP, 2009). Black and his colleagues underline the difficulty of producing a reliable figure on African international migration as the flows are usually undocumented, the data incomplete and often out-dated. But there are strong indications that millions of Africans are engaged in international migration. For instance, a 2011World Bank study estimated that 'about 30 million Africans have migrated internationally' (World Bank, 2011b; Ratha *et al*, 2011). The other important indication about the growing importance of international migration in the continent is the unprecedented growth in the amount of remittance flows to the continent. According to the estimates of the World Bank (2011b), 'remittance inflows to the continent have seen a fourfold increase in the past 20 years, and were estimated at nearly 40 billion USD, 2.5 % of the entire continent's GDP in 2010. The inflow of remittances to Africa exceeds the amount of official

[1] Interview with an official of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Addis Ababa (May 20, 2013).

aid and is the second largest source of net foreign capital inflow after foreign direct investments' (Ratha *et al*, 2011).

The largest sources of migrants in Africa include Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Somalia, Ethiopia and Senegal (Black, *et al* 2006: 6). The rate of Ethiopia's international migration is estimated at 0.6 percent, which is much lower than the African average, 1.9 percent (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009). The dismal figure is another expression of the country's underdevelopment. But the rate of international migration appears to have increased significantly in the last few years, as indicated in chapters 3 and 4.

There is a long history of population movements and migrations in the Horn of Africa. In recent decades, particularly since the 1960s the region produced hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced peoples (IDP) because of inter-and intra-state conflicts. In addition to conflict, environmental degradation and the growth of economically active population is accelerating the rate of internal and international migration (ICMPD, 2008: 14). In Ethiopia, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to leave their country during the political turbulence of the 1970s and 80s. However, the contribution of labour migration to Ethiopia's overall international migration during the 1970s and 80s was limited. Indeed, the military government that ruled the country from 1974 - 1991 severely restricted labour migration. The ban was only lifted in 1981 (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009). But since the beginning of the 1990s, there is a steady rise of labour migration from the country.

Particularly, as will be explained in detail later on, the short-lived (from 2012 to 2013) arrangement reached between Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia facilitated the sending of a massive number of domestic workers (45 thousand per month). This phenomenon, which we call in this monograph, the '*Saudi big bang'* popularized the idea of overseas domestic work throughout the country. Before the Ethiopian government banned the sending of domestic workers to Saudi Arabia in 2013, the long queuing of hundreds, perhaps, thousands of prospective domestic workers in front of immigration offices that provide passports was a ubiquitous scene. Though the Ethiopian government put a temporary ban on the sending of domestic workers in October 2013, the short and yet decisive experience has animated the quest for overseas work in much of the country. It has also led to the massive expansion of the network of legal and illegal brokers, specializing in labour migration.

Migrant labour in the present globalized world has been commoditized. But because of the fact that human beings are subjects of this transaction, the global

business in the marketing of labour will always be complex and difficult. The Swiss author Max Frisch aptly captured the problem by saying ‘we called for workers, and there came human beings’ (cited in Bartram, 2005:1). Migrant workers who were brought from less prosperous countries like Turkey and north Africa to western Europe as ‘guest workers’ to work in the rebuilding of Europe after the mayhems of the Second World War were expected by the receiving countries to go back to their countries after finishing their work and saving some money. However, the majority of these ‘guest’ workers decided to stay in the receiving countries like Germany, the Netherlands and others, thus, engendering the problem of ‘integration’.

The treatment that migrant workers receive to a large measure depends on the social, economic and political conditions of the receiving as well as sending countries. Some of the major factors that contributed to the eventual settlement of ‘guest workers’ who were brought to Western Europe after the Second World War were ‘legal and political constraints of democratic countries [that] make large-scale deportation difficult’ (Hollifield, 1992 cited in Bartram, 2005: 6). Whereas, in Gulf countries where ‘migrant workers’ are given lower class and racial status, and denied of their basic human rights, severe crackdown on ‘undocumented’ migrant workers without due process of law is possible. The 2013 Saudi crackdown on Ethiopian undocumented migrant workers in which the lives of scores of people were lost is a good testimony of how the authorities in the Gulf countries with scant regard to the wellbeing of the migrant workers could undertake massive expulsions. The treatment of the Saudi government and the vigilantes who were attacking ‘illegal’ workers in late 2013 and early 2014 was not an isolated incident. Rather, abuse and brutal treatment of domestic workers in the Gulf is a chronic problem, which happens too frequently to the citizens of the major labour sending countries like the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Such abuses usually happen with little international outcry excepting the voices of international human right groups like Human Rights Watch (HRW). The fact that the people who are involved in labour migration come from the lowest social and economic strata of some of the poorest countries in the world contributes to the muted reaction of global powers and western media to maltreatment of migrants in such countries like Saudi Arabia.

One may ask why migrant workers in general and domestic workers in particular are vulnerable to massive violations of rights and abuses with little international outcry. The most plausible and convincing explanation to this question lies in the makeup of the migrant workers themselves. The majority of those who migrate to work as domestic workers in the Gulf countries originate from the fringes of their

own communities with lower economic, political and social status. Kevin Bales, who produced the bestseller book on modern day slavery entitled *Disposable People,* identified two important factors that characterize modern day servitude. First, those who use the labour of people under servitude have the power to control their subjects – control could come in the form of unfair contracts, debt bondages and also the use of sheer violence. Second, people in modern servitude are disposable; they can be easily thrown away and replaced by newer individuals or groups (Bales 2012: 26). Both the control and disposability elements of modern day servitude that Bales identified are to a certain extent applicable to domestic workers in the oil rich Gulf countries, as will be discussed in this monograph.

On the other hand, most of the countries that send domestic workers are poor with little institutional capacity and political will to regulate labour migration; and little bargaining power to negotiate good working condition and protection for their migrant citizens in the host countries.

Unlike Ethiopian migrants to the Gulf, migrants to South Africa are not by and large formally employed. They are engaged in petty businesses. While they are not bonded by unfair contracts with employers, they face immense challenges both in transit countries and in South Africa itself. In recent years, horror stories of physical and human rights abuse of Ethiopian migrants in South Africa have become a common experience in international media as will be discussed in chapter 4 of this study.

Even if the rate of Ethiopian international migrations is still lower than the African average, as discussed above, it has been increasing in the last few decades. The first wave of international migration had happened in the 1970s and 80s, and those who left the country during this period were forced migrants who left the country to escape political violence and repression. The majority of these migrants were political refugees who fled political persecution and conflict and headed for North America, mostly to USA and Canada, Western Europe and Australia. The majority of these refugees used the neighbouring countries of Kenya, Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia as transit points.

The second wave of migration, one could argue, began after the beginning of the 1990s. Migration in this period is profoundly different from the earlier experience. While the majority of the migrants in preceding the 1990s were political and their destination countries were in North America and Western Europe, a significant portion of Ethiopian migrants in the post-1990 period are destined to the oil rich Gulf countries and the Republic of South Africa. Even if migration from Ethiopia

is mixed comprising of political and economic refugees and labour migrants, in the post-1990 period, labour migration, which was insignificant in the earlier period, has emerged as an important feature of international migration. In fact, it would not be an overstatement to say that large scale (mass) international migration started in the post-1991 period.

There are two major factors that facilitated the large-scale migration of Ethiopians out of the country at least to the oil rich Gulf countries and South Africa in this period.[2] The first factor was the internal political changes that took place in Ethiopia. In May 1991, the military *junta*, commonly known as the *Derg*, that ruled the country for about two decades (1974-1991) was overthrown by a coalition of rebel forces under the umbrella of Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Soon after a transitional government was established; and some fundamental political, economic and social changes were introduced. One of the areas where the Transition Government introduced changes was in relation to human and political rights. The *Derg*, among other things, was accused of severe violation of such rights including restriction of movement of citizens both within and outside the country. Partly due to the internal conflicts in different parts of the country by various armed opposition groups, the *Derg* restricted the movement of people within the country itself; and one was expected to get special permission to travel to the border areas such as Moyalle, Assab and Metema that were often used as outlets to illegally enter into the neighbouring countries. The restriction became severe in the later years of the *Derg* as the internal political struggle intensified.

Likewise, travelling outside the country was highly restricted. In order to apply for a passport, one had to secure clearances from various government offices including Internal Security Office, the Police, Inland Revenue Office and Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. Thus, during the *Derg* period, obtaining a passport was considered as a privilege. To undertake international travel, one also had to get an exit visa from the Immigration Office, in addition to an entry visa to a foreign country.

Following the overthrow of the *Derg*, this policy of restricting the movement of citizens was changed. The new government introduced a radically different approach and, from the outset, it declared that all human rights, including the right

[2] Traditionally, the major destinations of Ethiopian migrants were Western Europe, USA, Canada and Australia. Migration to the neighbouring countries of Kenya, the Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia were taken as rendezvous rather than ultimate destinations. However, large number of Ethiopian migrants who were unable to transit to their dreamed destinations remained in these neighbouring countries as refugees and/or asylum seekers. As a result, there is high Ethiopian migrant population in these countries.

of citizens to free movement, are unconditionally respected. Article 1 of the *Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia*, adopted on 22nd of July 1991 and served until a new Constitution was adopted in August, 1995, stated that "*based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, adopted and proclaimed by the general Assembly by resolution 217 A (III) of 10 Dec. 1948 individual human rights shall be respected fully, and without any limitation whatsoever.*"[3]

Accordingly, the government recognized the right of citizens to obtain travel documents, such as passport, without preconditions. People were also allowed to travel to any parts of the country without any restriction. Later on, the right of movement was further enhanced when the government lifted the requirement for exit visa for international travel in July 2004. These changes greatly facilitated both legal and illegal international migration out of the country. Those who can secure an entry visa to a foreign country could travel without inhibition, while those who seek to use the neighbouring countries as transit points for their travel can easily travel to the border towns such as Moyalle and Metema which serve as transit corridors for illegal migration.

The second factor that greatly contributed to the massive expansion of international migration to the Gulf countries and South Africa from Ethiopia since the beginning of the 1990s relates to the favourable atmosphere that emerged in the receiving countries. While the ever increasing demand in the Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates/UEA) for migrant labour helped spur Ethiopia's labour migration after the 1990s, the ending of apartheid in South Africa somehow led to the greater opening of the country's borders to African migrants including Ethiopians. The dramatic political changes that happened after the ending of white minority rule in South Africa were reflected in the country's migration policy. Accordingly, South Africa signed the first Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1993 to allow refugees to enter the country. Likewise, a Refugee Act that provides any person a right to apply for asylum in the country was enacted in 1998 (Liqu, 2007). These changes paved the way for migration of a large number of both documented and undocumented migrants from other non-Southern African Development Community (SADEC) countries (including those from East and Horn of Africa

[3] Article 13 of the above mentioned UN Declaration states that "1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. 2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country" (UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

countries to migrate to South Africa[4] (Landau and Segatti, 2009). Taking this opportunity, Ethiopian migrants looking for economic opportunities in the country as well as those who hoped to use it as a springboard to migrate to other countries (often to Northern hemisphere) began to migrate to the country. In addition to the migrant-friendly policies that were introduced by the African National Congress (ANC) government, the history of labour migration to South Africa somehow contributed to the tolerance of the authorities to undocumented migrants to the country.

Even if international migration from Ethiopia is complex and is growing at faster rates, much of the debate about it is dominated by adverse stories. But international migration has both negative and positive features. In spite of the widely reported adversities that Ethiopian migrants face both in their transit and destination countries, there is still a very high interest among the youth for international migration. The desire to try one's luck outside the country feeds the lucrative and expanding business of international smuggling. In the context of the impending social, political and economic significance of international migration, this research mainly aims at examining the policy and institutional lacuna that prevails in the management of labour migration from Ethiopia.

1.1 Objectives of the research

The major objective of the research is to produce evidence-based knowledge on the social and economic impacts of labour migration by looking at the challenges and opportunities of Ethiopian labour migration to the Gulf and South Africa. On the one hand, international migration from Ethiopia could be considered as an aspect of development problem. The major push factors that forces Ethiopian migrants to the Gulf and South Africa are economic/developmental problems ranging from lack of employment opportunities to wage differentials. On the other hand, international migration could be considered as an important resource that could be tapped for accelerating socio-economic development.

At the general level, this research aims to examine the successes and failures of policies and institutions in realising the potentials of international migration for socio-economic development of the country and minimizing its adverse impacts. At the same time, the growing problem of illegal migration will be examined.

[4] Studies show a drastic annual increase in the number of temporary work, study and tourist permits granted in South Africa after the end of apartheid era. For instance, the number of temporary work visas and permits given had increased from 3 million in 1992 to around 9.9 million in 1999 (Landau and Segatti, 2009: 7).

In addition to the above general objectives, the research has the following specific objectives.

- Examine the policy and institutional framework in the management of migration in Ethiopia;
- Explore trends in international migration and trafficking from Ethiopia and the migration corridors;
- Examine the contribution of international migration to Ethiopian socio-economic development at national and local levels;
- Examine local perspectives and social ethos in selected sites on international migration;
- Explore the provision of support services to migrant workers through pre-departure orientations; and
- Examine the extent to which Ethiopia is working to enhance the benefits of labour migration through the development appropriate technical skills.

1.2 Methodology and methods of data collection

The research used both primary and secondary data collected from different areas using different data collection methods. The primary data are largely collected from areas where high level of labour migration is exhibited. Accordingly, Arsi and South Arsi Zones of Oromia Regional States and South Wollo and north Wollo Zones of Amhara regional states were selected purposefully for qualitative data collection for their high prevalence of labour migration to the Gulf. Similarly fieldwork is conducted in Hadiya, Kembata-Tembaro zones, Halaba Special *Woreda* and Hawassa town to gather information and data regarding migration to South Africa.

A three round fieldwork were conducted in these areas. The first round fieldwork was undertaken between December 17 to 29, 2012 in Southern region, in which data and information were collected from Hawassa, Halaba, Durame, Hosaina and Bonesha towns. The second round fieldwork was conducted in Arsi, and South Arsi zones of Oromia regional State from April 3 – 18, 2013 in which information were collected from Shashemene, Arsi Negele, Kofele, Asella and Iteyya towns. The last round of field work was conducted in Amhara regional State from June 4 to 20, 2013 in which information were collected from different *woreda* of North and South Wollo Zones.

Most of the data generated from the field were qualitative in nature. Semi-structured interview was the main data collection tool used in the field. In-depth-interview were held with returnees, families of migrants, local elders and religious leaders, local government officials, teachers and school administrators. Heads and experts of Zonal and *woreda* Administrations, Labour and Social Affair departments and Police department were particularly interviewed as they respectively deal with the regulation of labour migration and prevention of human trafficking. An in-depth-interview was also held with experts in MoLSA in Addis Ababa and some private employment agencies in Addis Ababa and Regions.

Focus groups discussions (FDGs) were held among different groups. Women returnees, unsuccessful migrants, migrant families, students and would be migrants were some of the groups used for FGD. Interviews and FGDs focused primarily in understanding socio-economic drivers of migration, the problem of smuggling, the positive and negative impacts of migration and also the problem of the reintegration and welfare of return migrants.

The quantitative data was mainly secured from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) that maintains statistics on the number of migrant workers who secured approval from the Ministry before their departure to the Gulf countries. The data from MoLSA is found to be important to understand trends about documented labour migration from Ethiopia. In addition, we used the quantitative data that is publically available by the United Nations Higher Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) regarding the number of Ethiopian arrivals in Yemen. This data gives a glimpse about the intensity of illegal/undocumented migration that uses Yemen as a transit corridor. In addition to primary sources of information, we used secondary sources, published and unpublished works in the area of labour migration.

2 International Migration, Trafficking, Smuggling and Mixed Migration

Migration could be simply be defined as the movement of people, within as well as out of their countries of origin, pushed by socio-economic, political, religious or cultural issues at areas of departure and pulled by more favourable factors at destination areas (Datta, 2004:1). It is an age-old phenomenon, although reasons for migration, means of migration, and major origins and destinations of migration may change from time to time. At the beginning of the 20th century, for example, Europeans emigrated massively to the Americas, Asia, Africa and Oceania, but currently the trend is reversed (Geyer and Bright 1995). Estimates show more people emigrate from developing countries to other developing countries or high-income non-OECD countries than the developed world (Ratha and Shaw 2007; World Bank 2011a). It is, therefore, possible to state that South-South migration is much higher than South-North migration (World Bank, 2011a).

Migration is a reaction to political, economic, social and ecological challenges. It has two major dimensions – voluntary and forced. Voluntary migration refers to the free and wilful decisions of individuals to migrate, while forced migration refers to people who were forced to leave their countries of origin for various compelling reasons such as war and political upheavals. The distinction between voluntary and forced migration is not, however, that simple. Economic migrants who are not usually given protection by international refugee laws could be considered as forced migrants – as their decision to vacate their countries of origin could be motivated by the desire to escape degrading poverty. In line with this, N. van Hear problematized the dichotomy between forced and voluntary migration. He said voluntary migrants are those who are *proactive* and have choices about where and, when to move, whereas forced migrants are *reactive* and their movements are dictated by events such as war, political turmoil, degrading destitution, drought and famine (Hear, 1998: 44). Beyond the forced and voluntary dichotomy, international migrants are differentiated on the basis of legal, political and socio-economic factors. Accordingly, there are three major groups of migrants – economic (labour) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and environmental refugees (Marfleet, 1998).

International labour migrations is one of the major types of migrations in which people as a group or individually migrate outside of their countries of origin or residence for employment (IOM, 2011: 58). The United Nations (UN) International

Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990) defined labour migrant as "a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national" (UN, 1990).

Thus, one of the major distinguishing features of labour migration from other forms of migration is the fact that it is primarily motivated by economic reasons. However, it takes place both in legal and illegal ways. It is legal when the labour migrants fulfil statutory requirements of both the country of origin and the receiving country. While illegal labour migration is the movement of people from their original place without undertaking the necessary legal procedures within their country of origin and destination. Illegal labour migrants are also referred as irregular migrants.

International labour migration has seen unprecedented growth in the past few decades and it is one of the topical, if not controversial, issues in national and international politics (Hamann, 2007). According to the estimates of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 2010, there were 106 million migrant workers (ILO, 2013). In spite of the growing significance of labour migration, there is no conceptual clarity about who constitutes the *foreign worker*. The difficulty emanates from the variations that prevail in the way receiving countries and societies categorize *foreign workers*; and the impact of these categories on the social and economic standing of the migrant workers. In this respect, Bartam (2005: 32-35) argues that as the concept of *foreign/migrant* that uses citizenship as a significant marker glosses over many other crucial differences and put all migrant workers in one category. If one follows such a distinction, legal (documented), irregular (undocumented), professionals working in high skilled jobs (international corporations and banks), and domestic workers will be lumped together and, as a result, the concept loses its analytical power. After saying this, he suggests the use of the term foreign worker for those groups of workers like temporary contract workers, undocumented workers and domestic workers whose non-citizenship in the receiving country works against their interest.

Migration within and from the Horn of Africa, in which Ethiopia plays a significant role, is complex and defies simple categorization. There are refugees who flee from conflicts and political persecution. At the same time, there are economic refugees and labour migrants (ICMPD, 2008:28). That is why the concept *mixed migration* could be more appropriate to explain migration within and from the Horn of Africa in general and from Ethiopia in particular. For instance, the large majority of Ethiopian migrants to the South Africa and those who travel to Yemen and Saudi

Arabia bypassing the *legal* channels could be considered as irregular (labour) migrants. Ethiopian irregular migrants to South Africa claim asylum. But once they get a temporary residence permit, they would start working and often do not seek economic support from the UNCHR, the South Africa government or any other agency. The same is true for Ethiopian migrants to Yemen who by and large use the country as a transit to Saudi Arabia. When they stay in Yemen, some may claim a refugee status but many who do not claim a refugee status or whose applications denied by the UNCHR and the local authorities work to support themselves. The issue of legality and illegality for Ethiopian migrants in the Gulf countries is also fluid. On the one hand, domestic workers who went to the Gulf countries fulfilling all the requirements could become easily illegal, if they leave their employers and become freelance workers. On the other hand, even if migrant workers from Ethiopia usually go to the Gulf at their freewill, their condition of work and particularly the sponsorship regime under which they work, one could say, bear elements of human trafficking (Haroff-Tavel, 2013).

Trafficking and smuggling have been criminalized by both international and domestic instruments. The Palermo Convention defines human trafficking by saying (Cited in ILO 2011:2):

> the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

In the Ethiopian case, the 1995 Ethiopian constitution criminalizes slavery, servitude and trafficking in human beings. The 2005 Criminal Code also clearly considers trafficking and smuggling as criminal offenses (See art. 243). Both the 1998 and 2009 Private Employment Agencies (PEA) proclamations also criminalize trafficking. Moreover, Ethiopia has ratified relevant international instruments, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in July 2007 and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea in 2012, that criminalize trafficking and smuggling.

However, it is debatable to what extent trafficking explains migration from Ethiopia. It is possible to say that the large majority of Ethiopian migrants were neither forced nor deceived. In the first place, by and large Ethiopian migrants travel to the destination countries wilfully without being forced. Although

deception by the brokers cannot be ruled out, it is difficult to argue that traffickers deceived the majority of migrants. Because of concerted media campaigns by the government and harrowing experiences of earlier migrants, there is a good level of understanding about the risks associated with both legal and illegal migration among the public. Many young people decide to migrate, in spite of the potentials for adversities. They simply try their luck and bear whatever consequences might come out of their experience. As our informants told us, some migrants who were caught at the borders of the receiving countries like South Africa or deported from the Gulf would try their luck again and again. Hence, the concept or idea of smuggling – illegal crossing of the boundaries of other countries appears more relevant regarding irregular labour migration from Ethiopia. Researches also indicate that there is no evidence that show "Ethiopian men were deceived, forced, or otherwise coerced into travelling to South Africa as victims of trafficking" (IOM, 2011: 44-45". Elements of trafficking (servitude) are more relevant when we consider the work conditions in which many Ethiopian domestic workers find themselves – unpaid wages, confiscation (detention) of passports, violence, and confinement. In particular, the sponsorship, *kafala* regime that the Gulf countries use to monitor 'migrant workers, has some elements of trafficking.

The *kafala* regime basically ties the foreign worker to the employer. The employee's visa and residence permit (*iqama*) are sponsored by the employer. If the employer withdraws the sponsorship, the foreign worker loses his/her legal status. The *kafala* system provides immense power to the employer and, in fact, it perfectly fits with Kevin Bale's description of modern day slavery in which the *slaveholder* would have power to control his/her subject (Bales, 2012). In accordance with this arrangement, an employee cannot change jobs without the consent of his/her employer. If the domestic worker leaves the household, which brought her/him to the country, she/he will be considered as *runaway*. Runaway migrant workers lack legal protection and hence become more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The sponsorship system is reinforced by putting requirements to secure exit visa for migrant workers. For the issuance of an exit visa, the permission of the employer is required. Domestic workers who left their original employers and become freelance workers or those who were living and working in the Gulf countries are required to pay a hefty fine to get exit visa (HRW, 2008). As the fine is usually exorbitant, many migrant workers who have lost their legal status will remain in a difficult situation.

The *kafala* system has a political dimension as well. It helps the Gulf countries (particularly Gulf monarchies) to contain political dissent. Workers under the sponsorship system cannot threaten the political establishment (Fernandez, 2011:

449). As has been showed in several occasions, foreign workers (both legal and illegal) are considered as disposable items. At any time, the governments of the receiving countries can order them to leave their territories. The other political and economic dimension of the system is the issuance of work permits to limited number of well-connected political elites (Fernandez, 2011). Because of the *kafala* system, those who hire foreign workers will have a guaranteed supply of cheap labour. Moreover, the system is massively abused, in some estimates close to seventy percent of the visas issued by the government are sold in black markets (Fernandez, 2011). Those who do not have the 'right' connection to receive work visas from the government either buy visas from the black market or tap the labour available from the illegal market. Both of these practices help to push labour expenses low and create a very conducive environment for illegal (irregular) migration.

The *kafala* regime in which the residence and work permits of Ethiopian women are tied to a specific individual increases their vulnerability not only to violations of their economic and human rights but also increases their chance to become 'illegal'. Under this arrangement, the employer detains the passport of the domestic worker. The employee is required to work for two years. It is very difficult for the employee to terminate the contract, even if it is stated in the work contract that it will be terminated by either of the two parties. The only choice for a domestic worker who cannot really get along with her employer is to escape from the house and became a *runaway* and work as a freelance. But *runaways* lead a precarious life. At any point, they can be detained by the police and deported back to their countries without having any chance to bring their money and properties with them.

Unlike those Ethiopians migrating to the North America and Europe, many Ethiopian migrants to South Africa return home for good after spending some years in that country. The major factor for them to return back home is imbedded in their initial motive to migrate to the country. Just like the labour migrants to the Gulf, most of the migrants to South Africa travel to the country with the intention of improving their economic status or building asset so that they could have a good life at home. Returnees indicated that only few travel with the intention of settling in South Africa permanently. Thus, their ultimate objective is to work hard and save as much money as possible that can change their future lives here in Ethiopia.

Moreover, the harsh working environment, the constant fear and insecurity associated with being illegal migrants, and perceived or actual xenophobia and police brutality often strengthen their initial intention of being temporary migrants

with certain economic objectives. This does not, however, mean that there are few ‘successful’ migrants who expanded their business and found it difficult to return back home. Such migrants, our informants noted, look for alternative solutions to legalize their status within the country – securing business licenses and residence permits by creating ties with local people and authorities. On the other hand, there are some ‘unsuccessful’ migrants who return home either before they reach South Africa or after arriving to their destination.

3 Ethiopian Labour Migration to the Gulf

Labour migration from Ethiopia to the Gulf passed through three major phases. The first phase spans the period from the 1980s till the downfall of the *Derg* in May 1991. The majority of migrant workers in this period went to Saudi Arabia in the pretext of the Muslim religious pilgrimage (*Hajj* and *Umrah*).

The second phase covers the period from 1991 till 1998. In this period, the majority of the migrant domestic workers went to Lebanon (Emebet, 2002). There is no accurate data about the actual size of Ethiopian domestic workers in Lebanon during this period. According to some estimates, the number of women travelling to Beirut steadily grew and the average number of women travelling to Beirut per month increased from 23 in 1996 to 413 in 1999 (Yoseph *et al*, 2007). By the beginning of 2000s, according to some estimates, there were thousands of Ethiopian domestic workers in Lebanon.[5] Labour migration in this period was characterized by legal and institutional lacuna. There were no registered employment agencies. Recruitment of prospective migrant workers was made informally by earlier migrants, travel agencies and import and export businesses having some links with Lebanon and the Gulf countries (Regt, 2012). Many of the workers who travelled during this period were from the cities with high school education.

The third phase of labour migration spans from 1998 to 2014. This phase has many interrelated features. First, the dominance of Lebanon was taken away by Saudi Arabia; and Saudi's receipt of Ethiopian domestic workers reached its peak in 2013. In 2012, the Ethiopian government with little preparation decided to fill the vacuum created by what commentators called *the Asian Backlash* in providing domestic workers to Saudi Arabia (Davison and Clark, 2013). The traditional large suppliers of domestic workers to the Saudi market put moratorium on the employment of their citizens in Saudi Arabia for different reasons. Accordingly, Indonesia decided to curtail the sending of its citizens after the beheading of a maid from that country who was convicted of killing her employer in June 2011. Similarly, the Philippine government decided to ban the employment of its citizens in the Kingdom due to low salaries and a catalogue of abuses (Davison and Clark, 2013). In order to fill the vacuum created by the sanction of the two major

[5] Al Hayat newspaper puts the number of female migrants in Lebanon of Ethiopian origin at 17,000 with about a thousand arriving every month and an Ethiopian researcher putting the numbers between 25 and 35 thousand in 2002 (Yoseph *et al*. 2007).

suppliers, the Saudis approached the Ethiopian government. The Ethiopian government without properly considering the reasons why the traditional suppliers at least temporarily banned the sending of their citizens gave a nod to the Saudi request. In spite of the expressed desire of the Ethiopian government to regularize the sending of its citizens for employment abroad by entering bilateral agreements,[6] the decision to send domestic workers in mass to Saudi Arabia was made without the signing of a bilateral labour exchange agreement between the two countries. The task of managing the massive migration of domestic workers from Ethiopia was left to the private employment agencies' associations of the two countries. MoLSA, which did not have the capacity to effectively regulate the sending of domestic workers even before the *Saudi big bang*, was saddled with enormous responsibility of regulating the massive sending of domestic workers to Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, the news of employment opportunity in Saudi Arabia spread quickly throughout the country and tens of thousands of women began to line up at the different branches of the Immigration Department to secure their passports. The employment agencies, which were scrambling to have a good share from the massive number of women to travel to Saudi Arabia, sent their brokers to the villages in the countryside. These brokers and dealers gave an alluring picture about the prospect of making wealth to subsistent farmer households. The misleading promotion work of the dealers was reinforced by the material and monetary gains of some of the earlier migrants. A combination of all these factors massively popularize overseas domestic work throughout the country, as can be seen in the regional distribution of domestic workers that travelled to the Gulf (see table 2 below).

The brief Saudi experience has given a good lesson to the government about the need to provide training to prospective migrant workers. As discussed in section 6 of this work, MoLSA began to cooperate with the Ministry of Education and regional education bureaus to facilitate the provision of training.

[6] Interview with MoLSA official, Addis Ababa, (May 20, 2013)

Box 1: Surge of labour migration from South Wollo[7]

> South Wollo is one of the areas, which are vulnerable to illegal labour migration. There is a long tradition of people travelling to Saudi Arabia from such localities as Qalu, Werebeabo, Western Legambo, Tenta, Wogdei and Borena Saient for religious (*hajj* and *oumra*). This tradition in some ways paved the way for labour migration from these areas to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. Areas like Dessie Zuria (localities surrounding the Dessie town) are also affected. Married women have started going to the Arab countries for work leaving their children behind. Even if the negative sides of illegal migration are these days well known, people are going in thousands. Initially, the majority of the people who were going to the Arab countries were Muslims. Now almost everyone goes. The Christians take a Muslim name and travel for work.

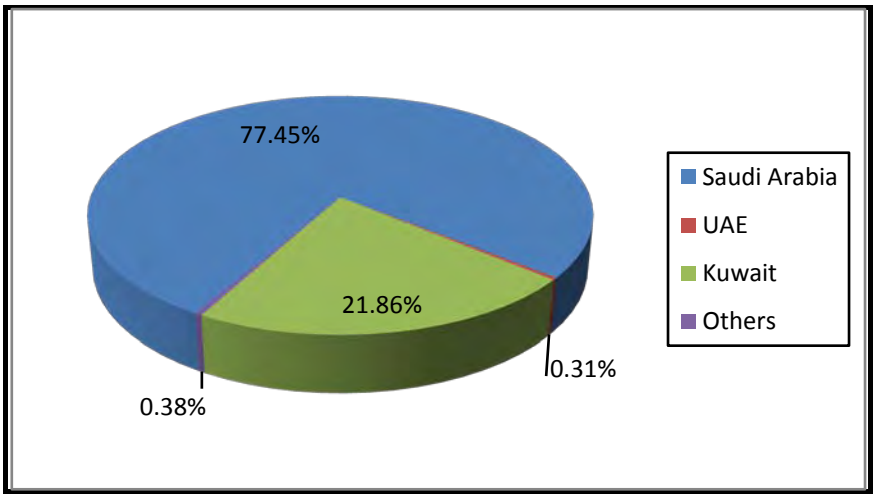
The statistical data on documented labour migration from MoLSA for the past five years gives interesting insights about trends of labour migration to the Gulf. First, in the last five years 387,061 Ethiopians got permit from MoLSA to work abroad. The size of these migrants makes about 0.449% of the estimated total population of the country 2012/13. This is a high figure. If we consider those who migrate through irregular channels without being registered by MoLSA, the rate of migration from the country would be even higher. For instance, the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report of the US State Department (2012) estimates that 60-70% of labour migrants in 2011 from Ethiopia left the country through irregular channels. This could be in the high end of the estimation. But it gives some indication about the magnitude of the problem. If we take this estimation into account, close to one percent of Ethiopians underwent international migration (to mainly the Gulf, Table 4) since 2008/9. If we follow the same reasoning and assume that all migrants are within, and including the age group between 18 and 35, the percentage of migrants increases to more than 6% of the Ethiopian population in that range from less than 3% (see Table 4).

The most favourable destination of documented migrants in the past five years has been Saudi Arabia, with more than three quarters (299,760 of the 387,061) going to that country. The second top destination is Kuwait, with more than a fifth of the migrant destine there (see Figure 1). Migration to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) seemed to have picked steam in 2003, showing a near fourfold increase compared to the 2002 size, but due to a ban by the Ethiopian government, documented migration to that country was ceased in 2005 (see Table 1). Table 1 also depicts

[7] Interview with official of the South Wollo Zone, Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie, (June 5, 2013)

that most migrants are women, with the proportion of women among the migrants increasing over the last five years. Similarly, legal migration to Beirut (Lebanon) was stopped due to the inhumane treatment of Ethiopian domestic workers in that country.

Figure 1: Destination countries of registered Ethiopian labour migrants by percentile



Source: MoLSA, 2013

In terms of regional distribution, as can be seen on Table 2 below, Oromia and Amhara regional states contribute the largest number of documented labour migrants to Gulf with 125,534 and 120,487 between 2008/9 to 2012/13 respectively. With a total of 70,043 migrants originating from it, Addis Ababa is the third largest region; while SNNP appeared to be the fourth largest source with 47,365 migrants originating from it in the five years period. The size of total documented migrants significantly increased from year to year, with the exception of 2002. This aberration was caused by the freezing/slowing down of the pace of issuing permits by the MoLSA in that year, as it was preparing new guidelines about the operation of private employment agencies (PEAs). The highest increase, of about five fold was seen from 2011/12 to 2013. This increase was caused by the increase in demand for Ethiopian domestic workers, following the Indonesian/Philippine ban against the hiring of their citizens in Saudi Arabia. Table 3 depicts that most of the increase in the size of Ethiopian labour migration to the Gulf is brought about by increasing proportion of women, which is true across all regional states and city administrations.

The high increase in labour migrants was accompanied by a huge increase in the number of PEAs. In 2011, there were only 64 licensed Agencies (USDOS 2012). But it increased to 150 a year later, and by the time of data collection for this study (March 2013) an additional 202 Agencies were licensed by the MoLSA, bringing the number of functioning Agencies to 352. The increase further becomes astonishing considering that there were only 25 Agencies in 2005.

Table 1: Migrants per destination country and per year

Year (E.C)	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005*		5 Year total	
Country	Migrant (no.)	Female (%)	Migrant (no.)	Female (%)	Migrant (no.)	Female (%)	Migrant (no.)	Female (%)	Migrant (no.)	Female (%)	Migrant (no.)	Female (%)
Saudi Arabia	13,148	71.49	3,477	68.88	15,476	86.88	169,300	93.89	98,359	94.24	**299,760**	**92.37**
Kuwait	7,079	98.54	11,158	97.12	26,120	97.46	28,746	99.06	11,519	99.31	**84,622**	**98.30**
UAE (Dubai)	122	92.62	143	99.30	510	100	430	74.65	0	-	**1,205**	**90.12**
Others	919	98.48	167	11.38	127	90.55	191	91.62	70	84.29	**1,474**	**86.36**
Total	**21,268**	**81.78**	**14,945**	**89.62**	**42,233**	**93.60**	**198,667**	**94.60**	**10,9948**	**94.76**	**387,061**	**93.64**

Source: Statistics on legal migrants is from MoLSA

* The data for 2005 covers 8 months from July 2012 to 19 February 2013 (Hamle 2004 to Yekatit 12, 2005 EC).

Table 2: Migrants per source administrative region and fiscal year

Year (EC)	2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		Total	
Region	**Total**	**Female**	**Total**	**Female**	**Total**	**Female**	**Total**	**Female**	**Total**	**Female**	**Total**	**Female**
Tigray	1,412	949	704	573	1,866	1,582	9,869	8,592	5,624	4,966	**19,475**	**16,662**
Afar	183	35	84	31	165	139	919	611	436	375	**1,787**	**1,191**
Amhara	4,530	3,551	2,213	1952	11,311	10,769	66,298	62,836	36,135	33,831	**120,487**	**112,939**
Oromia	4,244	3,600	2,982	2,757	10,852	10,430	66,851	64,431	40,605	39,185	**125,534**	**120,403**
SNNP	2,498	1,981	1,417	1,300	4,990	4547	24,319	23,392	14,141	13,813	**47,365**	**45,033**
Addis Ababa	8,370	7,251	7,480	6,860	12,782	11,813	29,009	26,774	12,402	11,472	**70,043**	**64,170**
Gambella	0	0	0	0	14	12	52	50	20	17	**86**	**79**
Dire Dawa	10	8	38	34	171	162	825	764	276	272	**1,320**	**1,240**
Harari	16	15	15	12	17	15	121	111	66	64	**235**	**217**
Somali	5	5	12	10	18	16	48	41	27	27	**110**	**99**
Benishangl Gumuz	0	-	1	-	47	45	356	338	215	194	**619**	**577**
National	**21,268**	**17,395**	**14,946**	**13,529**	**42,233**	**39,530**	**198,667**	**187,940**	**109,947**	**104,216**	**387,061**	**362,610**

Source: Statistics on legal migrants is from MoLSA

Table 3: Percentage of women migrants per region per year

Region /Year	Tigray	Afar	Amhara	Oromia	SNNP	Addis Ababa	Gambella	Dire Dawa	Harari	Somali	B-G	National
2001	67.21	19.13	78.39	84.83	79.30	86.63	-	80.00	93.75	100.00	-	**81.79**
2002	81.39	36.90	88.21	92.45	91.74	91.71	-	89.47	80.00	83.33	0.00	**90.52**
2003	84.78	84.24	95.21	96.11	91.12	92.42	85.71	94.74	88.24	88.89	95.74	**93.60**
2004	87.06	66.49	94.78	96.38	96.19	92.30	96.15	92.61	91.74	85.42	94.94	**94.60**
2005	88.30	86.01	93.62	96.50	97.68	92.50	85.00	98.55	96.97	100.00	90.23	**94.79**
Total	**85.56**	**66.65**	**93.74**	**95.91**	**95.08**	**91.62**	**91.86**	**93.94**	**92.34**	**90.00**	**93.21**	**93.68**

Source: Statistics on legal migrants is from MoLSA

Table 4: Total migrants (2001-2005 EC) per region as percent of the total regional population and the regional population

Region/year	Tigray	Afar	Amhara	Oromia	SNNP	A.A	Gambella	Dire Dawa	Harari	Somali	B-G	National
Total Migrant in 2001	**1,412**	**183**	**4,530**	**4244**	**2498**	**8,370**	**0**	**10**	**16**	**5**	**0**	**21,268**
% of the total pop. in 2001	0.031	0.012	0.025	0.015	0.016	0.290	0.000	0.003	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.027
% of the [18-35] pop. in 2001	0.215	0.085	0.161	0.097	0.097	1.158	0.000	0.013	0.042	0.001	0.000	0.173
Total Migrant in 2002	**704**	**84**	**2,213**	**2982**	**1417**	**7,480**	**0**	**38**	**15**	**12**	**1**	**14,946**
% of the total pop. in 2002	0.015	0.006	0.012	0.010	0.009	0.253	0.000	0.010	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.019
% of the [18-35] pop. in 2002	0.105	0.038	0.077	0.066	0.054	1.008	0.000	0.050	0.038	0.002	0.001	0.118
Total Migrant in 2003	**1,866**	**165**	**11,311**	**10852**	**4990**	**12,782**	**14**	**171**	**17**	**18**	**47**	**42,233**
% of the total pop. in 2003	0.039	0.011	0.059	0.036	0.030	0.421	0.004	0.045	0.008	0.000	0.006	0.052
% of the [18-35] pop. in 2003	0.270	0.072	0.383	0.234	0.185	1.679	0.022	0.218	0.042	0.003	0.037	0.326
Total Migrant in 2004	**9,869**	**919**	**66,298**	**66851**	**24319**	**29,009**	**52**	**825**	**121**	**48**	**356**	**198,667**
% of the total pop. in 2004	0.201	0.057	0.339	0.217	0.142	0.932	0.015	0.212	0.058	0.001	0.047	0.237
% of the [18-35] pop. in 2004	1.393	0.394	2.186	1.408	0.878	3.715	0.078	1.024	0.292	0.007	0.271	1.493
Total Migrant in 2005	**5624**	**436**	**36,135**	**40605**	**14141**	**12,402**	**20**	**276**	**66**	**27**	**215**	**109,947**
% of the total pop. in 2005	0.112	0.026	0.180	0.128	0.081	0.388	0.006	0.069	0.031	0.001	0.027	0.128
% of the [18-35] pop. in 2005	0.774	0.182	1.161	0.833	0.498	1.548	0.029	0.334	0.155	0.004	0.160	0.805
Total Migrant from 2001-2005	**19,475**	**1787**	**120,487**	**125534**	**47365**	**70,043**	**86**	**1320**	**235**	**110**	**619**	**387,061**
Total migrant as % of the 2005 pop.	0.387	0.109	0.600	0.396	0.270	2.193	0.024	0.330	0.110	0.002	0.079	0.449
Migrant as % of the 2005 [18-35] pop.	2.680	0.746	3.872	2.576	1.668	8.742	0.126	1.597	0.553	0.015	0.459	2.834

Source: Statistics on legal migrants is from MoLSA; the total regional population and regional population between, and including, 18 and 35 years is from the 2007 census (CSA, 2008)

* The author's did not include individuals from Special Enumeration Areas in calculating total population in the different years, and a population growth rate of 2.6% was used to estimate the population based on the result of the 2007 population and housing census.

Table 5: Women migrants per region as percent of the total female population of the respective region, and the women within, and including, the 18-35 age group

Region/year	Tigray	Afar	Amhara	Oromia	SNNP	Addis Ababa	Gam bella	Dire Dawa	Harari	Somali	B-G	National
Female labour migrants (FLM) in 2001	**949**	**35**	**3,551**	**3,600**	**1,981**	**7,251**	**-**	**8**	**15**	**5**	**-**	**17,395**
FLM as % of total female pop. in 2001	0.041	0.005	0.039	0.025	0.025	0.480	0.000	0.004	0.016	0.000	0.000	0.045
FLM as % of female pop. aged between 18 and 35 in 2001	0.260	0.030	0.238	0.158	0.145	2.036	0.000	0.021	0.080	0.001	0.000	0.268
FLM in 2002	**573**	**31**	**1,952**	**2,757**	**1,300**	**6,860**	**-**	**34**	**12**	**10**	**-**	**13,529**
FLM as % of total female pop. in 2002	0.024	0.005	0.021	0.019	0.016	0.443	0.000	0.018	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.034
FLM as % of female pop. aged between 18 and 35 in 2002	0.153	0.026	0.128	0.118	0.093	1.878	0.000	0.088	0.062	0.003	0.000	0.204
FLM in 2003	**1,582**	**139**	**10,769**	**10,430**	**4,547**	**11,813**	**12**	**162**	**15**	**16**	**45**	**39,530**
FLM as % of total female pop. in 2003	0.065	0.020	0.113	0.070	0.054	0.743	0.007	0.086	0.015	0.001	0.012	0.098
FLM as % of female pop. aged between 18 and 35 in 2003	0.411	0.115	0.687	0.434	0.317	3.151	0.035	0.409	0.076	0.004	0.068	0.580
FLM in 2004	**8,592**	**611**	**62,836**	**64,431**	**23,392**	**26,774**	**50**	**764**	**111**	**41**	**338**	**187,940**
FLM as % of total female pop. in 2004	0.345	0.086	0.645	0.421	0.272	1.641	0.030	0.394	0.107	0.002	0.090	0.452
FLM as % of female pop. aged between 18 and 35	2.176	0.491	3.906	2.614	1.590	6.961	0.144	1.878	0.547	0.011	0.501	2.686

in 2004												
FLM in 2005	**4,966**	**375**	**33,831**	**39,185**	**13,813**	**11,472**	**17**	**272**	**64**	**27**	**194**	**104,216**
FLM as % of total female pop. in 2005	0.194	0.051	0.338	0.249	0.157	0.685	0.010	0.137	0.060	0.001	0.050	0.244
FLM as % of female pop. aged between 18 and 35 in 2005	1.226	0.294	2.050	1.549	0.915	2.907	0.048	0.652	0.307	0.007	0.280	1.451
Total FLM since 2001	**16,662**	**1191**	**11,2939**	**12,0403**	**45,033**	**64,170**	**79**	**1,240**	**217**	**99**	**577**	**362,610**
Total FLM as % of total female pop. in 2005	0.652	0.163	1.129	0.766	0.510	3.834	0.046	0.623	0.204	0.004	0.150	0.851
Total FLM as % of female pop. aged between 18 and 35 in 2005	4.114	0.933	6.843	4.760	2.984	16.262	0.222	2.971	1.042	0.025	0.834	5.050

Source: Statistics on legal migrants is from MoLSA; the total regional population and regional population between, and including, 18 and 35 years is from the 2007 census (CSA, 2008)

* The author's did not include individuals from Special Enumeration Areas in calculating total population in the different years, and a population growth rate of 2.6% was used to estimate the population based on the result of the 2007 population and housing census

Table 4 presents a summary of documented labour migration from the nine regional states and the two city administrations as percentage of the total population as well as the population between, and including, ages of 18 and 35. Although the largest number of the labour migrants hail from Oromia and Amhara regions compared to the regional population the largest proportion labour outmigration is from the Addis Ababa City Administration. For example, the total labour migration since 2007/8 from the fourth largest source areas (Oromia, Amhara, Addis Ababa and SNNP) reached 125,534, 120,487, 70,043 and 47,365, respectively. In terms of percentage of the total regional population in the given year, the largest proportion was for Addis Ababa (2.193%), and with 0.6% Amhara regional state comes second. Oromia and Tigray come third and fourth with almost comparable proportion of their population migrating to work oversees (0.396 and 0.387% of their population migrating in the past five years).

Assuming that the majority of the migrants are young, we further narrowed the age group for calculating the proportion of the youth (within the 18 to 35 age group) involved in labour migration. Again, it is from Addis Ababa that the largest proportion of the youth is migrating from (8.742%), while Amhara (3.872%), Tigray (2.68%) and Oromia (2.576%) follow. It is only Addis Ababa and Amhara which lose a significantly higher proportion of their youth compared to the national average (2.834%). Although a large number of migrants do not originate from Dire Dawa, given the small population size of the city administration, the proportion of migrants from the total population is comparable to that of the SNNP (while 0.33% and 0.27% of the Dire Dawa and SNNP population migrated since 2001 respectively, about 1.597% and 1.668% of the young from Dire Dawa and SNNP migrated in the same time period). What can be discerned from this is that, urban centres on the basis of per capita are the main sources of international migration. The high percentage for Addis Ababa could also be explained by the tendency that the city serves as a transit passage for female migrants from rural areas, who spend the interval required to process the procedures of their labour migration by working as housemaids in Addis Ababa. Table 4 also shows that the peripheral regions (Afar, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella) sending the lowest proportion of their youth to work as domestic workers in the Gulf

Given the fact that the majority of the migrants are female (Table 3), we also made the calculations to compare the proportion of female migrants to the total or young regional population across the different regional states (see Table 5). In absolute numbers, Oromia and Amhara regional states, which happen to be the ones with the largest population too, made the largest contribution of female migrants in the past five years, followed by Addis Ababa and SNNP, respectively. In terms of the

female labour migrants as percentage of the total of young population (between and including the 18-35 age group), however Addis Ababa takes the lead as 3.834 and 16.262 percent of its total female population and young female population that engaged in labour migration in the past five years respectively. Furthermore, notwithstanding the huge number of female migrants from Oromia, it comes at the third place with 0.766% and 4.76% of the region's female population and region's young females engaging in labour migration (these percentages are lower than the national average). The Amhara region comes at second place, with 1.129% and 6.843% of the region's female population and region's young females engaging in labour migration. Tigray regional state also seems to be losing a significant percentage of its female young population to labour migration, at the fourth largest rate (4.114%). Again, the four peripheral regional states are not losing their female population in high proportions. The proportion of female migrants from Dire Dawa is comparable to that from SNNP.

Although SNNP is the third largest populous regional state in Ethiopia, it does not seem to be a major source area. This is reflected in the absolute number of labour migrants as well as the percentage of the total or youth regional population partaking in labour migration. This should however not be construed to mean that the SNNP population does not at all get engage in labour migration. The illegal migration to South Africa is so high from some *zones* of the SNNP, and, we believe that, if this is considered in the labour migration figures the region will hold a position which commensurate its total population size.

3.1 Pull and Push Factors

Like migration of people anywhere else in the world, the proverbial push and pull factors help to explain the growing significance of labour migration from the country. The push factors are tied to the country's social, economic and political conditions. The primary push factor for migrants of the 1970s and 80s was political and the intention to escape the various consequences of the raging violent conflict in the country. But since the beginning of the 1990s, the dominant cause for migration is the desire to have better economic opportunities abroad (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009). The country has a high annual rate of population growth, 2.9% .The population structure of the country is dominated by the youth. According to the 2007 census result, the proportion of population under age 15 is estimated 45.0 percent, while the proportion of the population in the working age group, 15-64 ages constituted 31.9 percent. The country suffers from high rates of youth unemployment both in the urban and rural areas. The overall unemployment rate stood at 25 percent (IMF 2013).

Box 2: Graduate unemployment and labour migration[8]

> One important factor that motivates people to undertake labor migration is the feeling that the people who have completed their education were not that much changed. Due to the rise in graduate unemployment, the long feeling in rural Ethiopia that education changes one's life expectations (or opens opportunities) is being eroded or lost.

Figure 2: Long queues in front of Immigration Offices in Addis Ababa and Dessie respectively

(Photo:- By the researchers)

In rural areas, there is a serious problem of youth landlessness and insignificant rural job creation. As a result, rural-urban migration is one of the important means of ensuring livelihood (Broussar and Tsegay, 2012). In recent years, the Ethiopian government has greatly expanded small and micro enterprises (SME) in the urban areas as way of countering the rampant unemployment. But the majority of people migrating to the Gulf and South Africa are from rural areas and are not embraced by such programmes. Even in the urban areas, only a portion of the unemployed is included in these programmes. Moreover, income from many SMEs is found to be seasonal and not sustainable (Broussar and Tsegay, 2012). As a result, international migration has emerged as one form of ensuring the livelihoods of households both in the urban and rural areas.

The high unemployment rate, especially of women, makes migration for domestic work attractive.[9] This attractiveness of migration, especially to the Gulf, has

[8] Interview with two experts, Kombolcha town, Labour and Social Affairs Office, South Wollo Zone (06/06/2013).

[9] The formal labour sector is very small in Ethiopia. MoLSA (2010: 15) estimates that of the economically active population group (84.5% of the population) only 8.8% is engaged in paid labour.

remained unaffected by news of harsh working and living conditions, physical and sexual abuse, and even organ theft and killing. A good manifestation of this would be the fact that Ethiopians, together with Somalis, make up the majority of the domestic servants in the poorest nation of the region, Yemen (Regt, 2012).

Earlier studies on female labour migration from Ethiopia (Emebet, 2002; Fernandez 2010) considered lack of higher educational opportunities for women and sexual violence as some of the important push factors. But in recent years, with the soaring of living expenses and the decline in real incomes for many households, migration to the Gulf is being entertained as means of economic betterment by even employed women. Some even leave their government jobs (teachers, health and agricultural extension workers) and migrate to the Gulf to work as domestic workers. According to one informant in South Wollo, in Wogide *woreda*, 'about 100 people left their government jobs and went to the Gulf just in one year'.[10] Hence, one of the factors that explains the popularity of labour migration is wage differential. The payment that is offered by the overseas employers, in the case of Saudi Arabia is 200/month USD is much higher than the salaries of many mid-level civil servants. In this respect, informants in the Kombolcha town Social and Labour Affairs office said, 'even those who work are not in a position to feed themselves and their families properly, let alone the unemployed. Economic problems drive labour migration; people know the risks associated with that'.[11] According to our informants in the South Wollo Education Bureau, in 2011, from 17,000 teachers some 800 have left their jobs. One of the reasons for their resignation is labour migration to the Gulf countries.[12]

Box 3: Reasons for labour migration[13]

> People are agitated about the advantages of migration and the young people are on the move. The motivating factor is what is described as the quest to change one's life style – emerge out of poverty. Of course, some people who have gone to the Arab countries managed to build asset, which in the local context, could be considered as something worthy. But the majority of the migrant workers find themselves in worse situation. Many people cannot bear the brunt of the climate

The remaining population either engages in unpaid family labour (50.3%) or is self-employed (40.9%).

[10] Interview with two experts, Kombolcha town, Labour and Social Affairs Office, South Wollo Zone (06/06/2013).

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Interview with official of the South Wollo Zone Education Bureau, Dessie (June 13, 2013)

[13] Interview with official of the South Wollo Zone, Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie, (June 5, 2013)

and the household situation and return back. As they are indebted to process their travel, their return to the country without staying for the designated time brings financial ruins to the family. Some return back with ailments, others with psychological problems. Those who come with health problems become burdens to their families and the society at large.

In addition to economic gains, there is a growing social pressure on women, both married and unmarried, to travel to the Gulf countries and make some money to send to their husbands or parents. Similarly, the presence of 'successful' migrants and the emergence of smuggling networks contribute to the unprecedented increase in international migration from Ethiopia.

Box 4: Aspiration of a prospective migrant

"In one month time, *Insha'Allah* [with the will of God], I will be in Saudi Arabia. Many of my friends have managed to turn around their family's fortune by working there, in addition to assisting them in covering various expenses. I want to give my family something lasting. I want to build them a house. I want to make them proud of me" (Binyam Tamene. 2012).

In some of the areas where there has been migration of both young women and men to the Gulf, a 'culture of migration', which ties personal, social and material success with cross-border migration, is emerging. In this context, the number of people a given household sent abroad is being seen as a status symbol/marker (Binyam, 2012). In a situation where the youth consider cross border migration as the only way that will take them out of poverty, their enthusiasm for education and to use the possibilities that prevail at home will be limited (ILO, 2011: 23).

While economic factors are important, it is difficult to establish a direct correlation between poverty and international migration. According to a research conducted by the IOM in 2008, there is a strong correlation between the aspiration for irregular migration and the presence of brokers and smugglers. Indeed, in localities where 'the community had no contact with brokers offering to take them abroad, local people had little aspiration to migrate and hardly knew where places like Yemen were (DRC and RMMS, 2012: 12).

On the other hand, the pull factors to migrate to the Gulf are tied to the political, economic and social conditions of these countries. As lucidly pointed by Fernadez, the massive and conspicuous consumption of domestic labour in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries is a result of a 'social compact' between the Gulf monarchies and their subject populations. In this bargain, the monarchies subsidize the *living*

expenses of their populations by even allowing them to have the luxury of hiring maids in their households, the population in its part, 'acquiesces in regime legitimacy' (Fernandez, 2010: 251). In this perverted atmosphere, the presence of a foreign domestic worker/s in the households of the Gulf countries (particularly oil rich Gulf countries) is considered as a status symbol. Hence, a racialized hierarchy of domestic workers with 'Filipina women at the top signalling the highest status and commanding the highest salaries, followed by Indonesian and Sri Lankan, and African women at the bottom' has emerged (Fernandez, 2010). This hierarchy is evident in the amount of salaries that are paid to Filipino and Ethiopian domestic workers. The Philippine government Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) since 2011 insisted that the minimum salary for Filipino domestic worker should be 400 USD, while wages of Ethiopian domestic workers to Saudi Arabia stood at 200 USD.

The Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia, provides a large market for domestic labour. In Saudi alone, there are close to one million domestic workers. This market is a strong pulling factor for prospective migrant workers. The other often little noticed factor that attracts migrant workers to the Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia is the tendency to neglect irregular labour migration, weaknesses in border control and the possibility to bribe border officials and enter into the countries.

3.2 Routes to labour migration to the Gulf

Basically, there are two types of routes to migrate to the Gulf countries, legal and illegal. The legal route in turn has two elements. In the legal route, first, prospective migrant workers who found employment possibilities by themselves without the involvement of employment agencies directly apply to MoLSA. MoLSA gives approval to the employment contract, if minimum conditions are fulfilled. But there were complaints from PEAs that individuals who secured employment or work contract from illegal operators apply to MoLSA pretending that they managed to get the employment by themselves (Emebet, 2002). Second, the majority of the registered (legal) migrant workers find employment through the intermediary of PEAs. The role of MoLSA in such recruitments is approval of the work contract and registering the migrant worker.

The majority of the illegal (undocumented) workers travel over land and sea. But in some cases, migrant workers destined to countries banned by the Ethiopian government transit through the Bole International Airport. In this case, the migrant worker will first go to transit countries in the name of visitations and then proceed to the destinations countries. Kenya which does not require Ethiopians entry visa

has in recent years emerged as an important transit for illegal migrants. It is, for example, a favoured transit for those who travel to Lebanon after the Ethiopian government put a moratorium on the sending of domestic workers to that country in 2008.

Box 5: Lack of the distinction between legal and illegal migration[14]

> It is really very difficult to identify the difference between legal and illegal migration. In simple terms, what distinguishes legal migration is the trip is made by plane. Some say, whether we travel by plane or not, it would not make a difference. The government does not provide us protection in the host countries. The illegal route is fast as compared to the legal travel. There are also opportunities to change employers. Legal employment is fixed, that means, tied with one employer with the infamous sponsorship (*kafala*) arrangement. If there is disagreement with the employer, the employee will be sent back.

For those who travel over the sea, the transit points change from time to time. In recent years, Djibouti, Bossaso and Puntland have been important transit corridors. The prospective migrants will first travel to the transit coastal points by vehicles and on foot. After arriving at the coast, they will travel by smaller boats to Yemen. The boats are usually overcrowded and not well equipped. The migrants also face countless abuses by smugglers throughout their dangerous journey to Yemen. In some cases, smuggles forcefully disembark the migrants from their boats drowning them into the sea. In other cases, the overcrowded boats could capsize causing the drowning of the travellers. Unfortunately, stories of such calamites which are well publicised, do not deter prospective migrants from trying out the dangerous route.

Box 6: Illegal migrants killed on Red Sea

> At least 70 Ethiopians were killed when a boat capsized off Yemen's western coast due to strong winds and rough seas, officials said Sunday, according to The Associated Press. The sinking, which reportedly occurred on Saturday [December 8, 2014], happened off the Red Sea port city of al-Makha. The boat was bound for Yemen, which typically acts as an entry point to wealthier countries in the Middle East like Saudi Arabia and Oman for poor East African migrants. Human traffickers are known to overload rickety boats making for a risky crossing over the Red Sea, Reuters reported. According to an October report by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), more than 200 people have died at sea in 2014 alone while trying to reach Yemen, which currently hosts 246,000 refugees from several countries (International Business Tribunal, 2014).

[14] Interview with a returnee domestic worker, Dessie (June 7, 2013)

The other unique feature of this route is its dominance by men. According to one study, the majority of the migrants on the eastern sea route are men in their 20s (RMMS, 2013: 34).

Figure 3: Billboards of private employment agencies competing for possible labour migrants in front the Immigration branch office in Dessie

(Photo:- By the researchers)

Table 6: New Ethiopian Arrivals in Yemen, 2010-2014

Year	Country of Origin			Total	Dead or Missing
	Ethiopia	Somalia	Others		
2010	34,422	18,855	105	53,382	15
2011	75,651	27,350	153	103,154	131
2012	84,376	23,086	70	107,532	43
2013	54,213	11,045	61	65,319	5
2014	71,907	19,640	45	91,592	246

Source: UNCHR, 2013 and 2015

As the table above shows, the number of Ethiopian migrants travelling to Yemen by sea has increased from year to year. The number of illegal Ethiopian migrants arriving in Yemen has reached its pick in 2012. The current political turmoil and civil war in Yemen has not deterred Ethiopian migrants from using the country as a

transit to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries as seen in 2014 (see table 6). After arriving in Yemen, the majority of the migrants continue their journey to Saudi Arabia as Yemen is more of a transit than a destination. Again, in Yemen the migrants are vulnerable to abuses by smugglers and criminal gangs. Though there is no a reliable data about the number of undocumented migrants who arrive to Saudi Arabia by transiting through Yemen, a large number of migrants succeed in passing the Saudi-Yemen border. Our informants who went to Saudi Arabia through the sea route informed us that the majority of male migrants who are engaged in the construction and agricultural sectors (like camel and sheepherding) went to Saudi Arabia by using Yemen as a transit.[15]

In a bid to limit illegal crossing of its boundary by Yemenis and other migrants (like Ethiopian), Saudi Arabia has planned to build a fence that eventually covers the entire 1, 800 KM bordering it with Yemen. In September 2013, it was reported that the Saudi's fenced the popular path that Ethiopians use to enter into the country (Arnold 2013). There is, however, doubt that the planned fencing of the entire Saudi-Yemen border is going to cease the illegal crossing of the Saudi border. Already, there are reports that indicate that migrants bribe border officials and are able to bypass the fences to cross the borders in different ways (BBC, 2013).

3.3 Working conditions and problems of protection

> For every shining skyscraper, every oil sheikh's villa, every five star pool paradise, there is misery, danger and depression for millions of migrants. It is well-known that in the Gulf, infringements of political rights, freedom of speech and gender equality are serious problems, but it is the treatment of migrant workers that is the greatest scandal of all. And these migrant workers are increasingly coming from Africa (Sloan, 2014)

International migration brings several opportunities and challenges for the migrant workers themselves, the sending and receiving countries. But significant portions of migrant workers suffer from 'poor working and living conditions, low wages, unsafe working environments, a virtual absence of social protection, denial of freedom of association and workers' rights, discrimination and xenophobia' (ILO, 2010). As stated in this study, because of barriers, a significant number of migrants arrive in Gulf countries through irregular channels which are by and large operated by smugglers and traffickers (*Ibid*.: 2).

[15] Interview with the father of a labour migrant who went on the sea and was working in Saudi Arabia during the interview, (June 8, 2013).

There are several international instruments, which are meant for the protection of the rights of migrant workers and for the prevention of human trafficking and smuggling. International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions on the protection of migrant workers evolved on par with the evolution of international labour migration. First, following the inflow of large number of 'guest' workers to Western Europe for post-war reconstruction after the Second World War, the ILO convention on 'Migration for Employment' adopted in 1949 and entered into force in 1952 (*Ibid*.:2). Second, in 1975 the 'Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention' was adopted in order to provide a legal regime for the 'rising irregular migration movements'. However, the 1949 and 1975 conventions were drafted in light of state-organized migrations (*Ibid*: 3).

In 1990, the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ICRMW) was adopted and entered into force in July 2003. Again, this convention was informed by new developments such as the rise in irregular migration and the unprecedented level of labour migration mediated by private employment agencies. The convention for the first time provided a universal code for the rights of migrant workers and their families; and it broadened the term migrant worker in order to provide protection to several categories of irregular migrants (Blanpain *et al* , 1998). The convention has been ratified by the major labour sending countries such as the Philippines, Mexico and Indonesia, while major labour receiving countries such as the US, members of the EU and the Gulf countries have not yet ratified it.

In 2011, the Domestic Workers Convention was adopted. This was quite a ground-breaking treaty which gives the same rights to domestic workers like other workers. The convention has been so far ratified by only eleven countries including: Bolivia, Ecuador, Germany, Guyana, Italy, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa and Uruguay. The Gulf countries, which are the largest recipients of domestic workers, have not yet ratified the convention. But because of international pressure there are recently some moves to change their legal regimes – to provide protection by domestic laws for domestic workers (HRW, 2013).

The UN Palermo convention and the two protocols that aim at the prevention of trafficking, servitude and smuggling (discussed in section 2) have been adopted the majority of the labour sending and receiving countries, including Ethiopia and the Gulf countries.

In spite of the presence of international regimes for the protection of migrant workers, they suffer systematic abuses particularly in the Gulf countries. Many of the Gulf countries neither ratified nor incorporated provisions that provide protection to migrant workers in their domestic laws (HRW 2008). The *kafala* sponsorship regime, which is widely practiced, puts migrant workers vulnerable to abuse.

As compared to other migrant workers, domestic workers are more susceptible to abuses and violations of their rights. Indeed, as reported by the Human Rights Watch, even if 'domestic workers comprise less than a quarter of the eight million foreign workers in Saudi Arabia, but embassies from the labour sending countries report that abuses against domestic workers account for the vast majority of the complaints they receive' (HRW, 2008: 2). The plight of domestic workers in the Gulf countries is made complicated by a host of different factors.

Second, the private homes in which domestic workers work are not regulated. Even if there will be the willingness from the authorities to regulate the work environment; it would be difficult because of privacy norms. In this respect, even in western countries, where there is the political and legal commitment to stamp out abuses of domestic workers, there are stories that show the difficulty of regulating the 'home' environment (Bales, 2012).

Third, in many of the Gulf countries, there is a racialized hierarchy of domestic workers (Fernadez, 2011: 211). In this context, migrants from developing world are treated as slaves, deserving little respect or protection. They are called as *abid*, an Arabic word for a totally subordinate slave or servant (Jureidini, 2003:11). The other important factors that need to be highlighted when one considers the plight of domestic workers in the Gulf countries are cultural and religious practices that put several barriers for women (let alone migrant domestic worker) to get redress through the criminal justice system (HRW, 2008:22). In this context, Ethiopian women migrants working as domestics in the Gulf often work under slave-like conditions and get sexually and physically abused (Allais, 2006).

3.4 The 2013 Saudi Shock

In the situation where 'legally' employed domestic workers face abuses of their rights without chances of redress, the condition for the so-called illegal migrants would be undoubtedly very difficult. As noted above, the majority of men migrant workers go to Saudi Arabia through irregular channels and work in that country without having protection. The Saudi government, on its part, accused illegal

migrants for various socio-economic problems of the country and, in order to address the problem, ordered all migrant workers without proper papers either to 'regularize' their status or leave the country until November, 2013.

The manner in which Ethiopian undocumented migrant workers treated after the Saudi deadline for those without the right papers showed the scant regard that Saudi Arabia gives to the rights of migrant workers. Governments of other large labour sending countries to Saudi Arabia, after realising the seriousness of the threat negotiated with the Saudi's and facilitated the repatriation of their citizens. Accordingly, before the expiry of the deadline nearly a million migrant workers from Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Pakistan and Yemen left the country. However, the majority of Ethiopian undocumented workers, however, decided to leave their future to fate and stayed in the country. As similar Saudi threats in the past were not heeded, they thought the Saudi government would not seriously enforce its threats and life would continue as usual. Meanwhile, just like the migrants, the response of the Ethiopian government proved to be slow and reactive.

Soon after the expiry of the November, 2013 deadline, the Saudi government launched a brutal crackdown against the undocumented migrants. The action was highly orchestrated and had many dimensions. In the first place, the Saudi authorities and their media built a caricature for migrant workers in general and the undocumented ones in particular that puts them in a negative light. Migrants were made scapegoats for almost all ills of Saudi society ranging from criminality to unemployment. Hence, when the Saudi authorities unleashed their brutal crackdown on Ethiopian undocumented migrant workers in such destitute quarters of Riyadh like Manfuhah where the Ethiopians coalesce for cheap accommodation and to support each other, they were joined by lawless vigilantes (Peebles, 2013). The crackdown came violent and several lives were lost. The rounded up Ethiopian migrants were detained in camps, which lacked basic facilities for several days before their repatriation to Ethiopia (*Ibid.*).

Box 7: Viewpoint of an Ethiopian elder about migration and maltreatment of migrants[16]

> Migration is good and it is natural. When people do not have opportunities in their birthplaces, they should go elsewhere. That is only natural. It is not something new to Ethiopia, the problem that I do not understand is why the Saudis savagely treat our compatriots. The Ethiopians went there to sell their labour (*shiqella)* and earn some money and support their families. I do not see the crime that they

[16] Interview with an elder in Robit, Ambassel, South Wollo, (June 10, 2013).

committed to deserve such cruel treatment. Why defenceless people who are there to work should be mistreated and attacked. This is incomprehensible to me. I am Muslim and Islam does not allow that. What the Saudis are doing is a dishonour to Islam. Our government should work hard to provide protection for our people working in the Arab world.

The Ethiopian government, which was caught by surprise, was slow to act. In the first place, unlike other countries mentioned above, it did not take the ultimatum of the Saudi government seriously and take the necessary measures. Secondly, once the crackdown had begun, it failed to realize the magnitude of the problem and its consequences. This was clearly illustrated by the opinion of one government official who estimated the undocumented Ethiopian migrants that were expected to be affected by the crackdown were to be about 30,000. This was far smaller than the 160,000 migrants that were eventually brought back by IMO by February, 2014 (IOM, 2014). Even by normal diplomatic norms, Ethiopia's reaction to the excesses of the crackdown was muted. It only summoned the Saudi Arabia Ambassador to Addis Ababa to the foreign ministry. No official protest was issued (Alemayehu, 2014).

It seems that the Ethiopian government never wanted to harm its relations with the Saudi government. The government's resolve not to anger the Saudi government was such that it disallowed peaceful demonstration that was called by an opposition party in Addis Ababa to denounce abuses of Ethiopians in that country. Ethiopians in the diaspora, particularly in Western Europe and North America, not only demonstrated against the Saudi action but also provided modest financial support to the IOM. After this debacle, the Ethiopian government suspended the sending of domestic workers to the Gulf countries (IOM, 2014).

As stated above, more than 160, 000 undocumented migrant workers were repatriated with the help of the IOM. But for the majority of the deportees, while they could be relieved of the intimidation and the inhuman treatment that they faced in Saudi detention centres, their arrival in Ethiopia unfortunately marked the beginning of a new problem that does not have a quick fix. As Sarah Hamo, protection officer of the IOM in Addis Ababa said:

> It's not just the return; it's also the effect of what happens after. They are coming back empty-handed. They used to supply money and now they are a burden on the families they used to provide for. So the return is just the beginning (Murray 2014).

It remains to be seen, how the return migrants are going to be reintegrated to the society and the economy in the long run. In the same vein, it is very difficult to predict whether the Saudi deportation is going to reduce the incentive for those who are planning to take the illegal routes and go to that country.

3.5 Management of Labour Migration from Ethiopia

The main responsibility of managing labour migration has been entrusted with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA). As candidly stated by an official of MoLSA that we interviewed, MoLSA does not have the capacity to undertake the huge task of managing labour migration. The informant said:[17]

> Starting from the Imperial period, MoLSA has not been a ministry with prestige; and politicians with bigger clout are not usually assigned to look after 'mundane' labour and social issues. Our working spaces – derelict and not adequate – tell how issues of social and labour are taken by inner circle of the government. We have huge responsibilities but we do not have the necessary human resource and infrastructure. We are responsible for labour affairs, social problems – problems of the elderly, the disabled and others. On the top of these, we are saddled with the management of labour migration. We are really stretched beyond our limit. Regarding migration, what we are now doing is just registering those who are travelling. We do not have the capacity to provide training, nor are we in a position to monitor and control the works of the employment agencies. We do not also have the capacity to provide support to immigrant workers in the countries of their destinations. The whole thing is messed up.

A somewhat similar sentiment is shared by an official of the Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Department in South Wollo. He said[18],

> Labour migration is a major problem in our zone. But, there is no a serious institution that owns the problem. It is simply pushed to the Regional Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs. The zonal office is not well prepared to control and work on the issue of labour migration. In this zone [South Wollo], there are 23 *woreda*. Three of them are urban *woreda* and the rest are rural. The Labour and Social Affairs Office has only a branch office in Kombolcha *woreda*. We do not have the necessary structures to deal with the problem.

[17] Interview with official of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Addis Ababa, (May 20, 2013).

[18] Interview with official of the South Wollo Zone, Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie, (June 5, 2013).

According to proclamations 104/1998 and 632/2009, MoLSA, among other things, is responsible for the approval of employment contracts of migrant workers and the licensing and monitoring of the activities of Private Employment Agencies (PEA). Both proclamations prohibit the collection of fees by employment agencies. According to article 15 of proclamation 632/2009, the employer will through the private employment agency be responsible to cover expenses relating to issuance of visa; round trip ticket; residence and work permit; embarkation fee and insurance coverage.

The prospective employee will be responsible for the payment of fees for the issuance of passport; authentication of documents within Ethiopia; medical examination; vaccination; birth certificate; skill testing and certificate for non-criminal records. There are penalties on those who engage in the sending of workers violating the requirements provided in the proclamations. Before the introduction of the regulatory framework of labour migration, prospective migrant workers were required to pay fees for the (informal) employment agencies ranging between 7,000 ETB to 10,000 ETB (Emebet, 2002). There are still some illegal operators who collect fees. But the prohibition of the collection of fees by the employment agencies is an important measure that prevented the families of migrant workers from incurring huge loans. The shifting of the cost of travelling to the receiving countries has, however, inadvertent effects. The receiving households who invested money on the prospective employee, which could be in the tune of 1,300 to 2,340 USD, feel that they should prevent the domestic workers from 'running away' and hence resort to withholding the passports and salaries of the domestic workers. In some cases, they may confine the workers to their workplace as their movement is restricted (HRW, 2008:29).

The 1998 proclamation was issued in order to regulate the activities of 'illegal' employment agencies that were sending large number of domestic workers to Lebanon; while the 2009 proclamation was intended to increase the accountability of PEA. Both the 1998 and 2009 proclamations gave the task of not only brokering jobs but also protecting domestic workers abroad to the private employment agencies. The employment agencies were also required by the 2009 proclamation to ensure that the prospective migrant workers have the required skill and training for the job before they travel. Both proclamations contained the amount of bond deposit that PEAs are required to operate in the business. Accordingly, those agencies which send up to 500 workers are required are required to deposit 30, 000 USD or its equivalent; those who send workers from 501 to 1,000 are required to make a deposit of 40,000 USD and those who send workers above 1,001 are required to make a deposit of 50,000 USD.

Box 8: Awqurra Employment Agency[19]

> Our Agency was in business for about four years we were sending employees to Kuwait alone. Starting from the last year and half (since beginning of 2012), we have started sending workers to Saudi Arabia. The basic criterion that we use when we recruit workers is basic numeracy and literacy skills. The other things that they need to complete are health checks and certificates from the police about non-criminal record. Heath check-up is done by what is called Gulf Approved Medical Clinics' Association (GAMCA) in Addis Ababa. For processing employment travel to Saudi Arabia, the prospective employees spend 2,975 Birr. For Kuwait, they do not pay any money upfront. The Kuwaiti officials process the documents and give clearance for visa from Kuwait, while the Saudi clearance and visa is issued here in Ethiopia. Prospective workers usually come to us. We have branches in Adama, Harar, Dire Dawa, Jimma, Bahir Dar and Bekoji. We give them written tests in our regional branches.

By 2013, there were around 352 employment agencies registered by MoLSA, the majority of which were located in Addis Ababa. After the beginning of the massive sending of domestic workers to Saudi Arabia in 2012, many of the agencies established branch offices in regional cities and towns. The employment agencies are widely accused of mixing legal and illegal practices. In this respect, a former official of the South Wollo zone of Labour and Social Affairs said:[20]

> The Agencies do not supply adequate information. They work in parallel track. Some tend to use their license as a cover. Usually, the agencies are opaque organizations. Brothers and sisters – close members of a single family staff them, very difficult to get information, how they actually conduct their business.

This means while they send some of the employees through the official line, they send others bypassing the requirements put in place by MoLSA. Many of the owners of the PEA are people with connection to the Gulf countries that have either trading partners or themselves lived and worked in the Gulf.

[19] Interview with manager of Awqurra Employment Agency, Addis Ababa (May 13, 2013).

[20] Interview former official of the South Wollo Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie (June 5, 2013).

Figure 4: Examples of highly promising billboards of competing PEAs in regions (Dessie)

(Photo: - the researchers)

Box 9: Mixing of legal and illegal practices by Employment of Agencies[21]

> The recruiters are now everywhere – they are engaged in propaganda. The Employment Agencies use their legal certificates and licenses to engage in illegal trafficking. Probably they send more people through the illegal channel. They have recruiters in the localities. Local households take expensive loans from private lenders to send women (daughters or spouses). As a result, the women are heavily indebted even before they travel to the Gulf; hence, it is very difficult to stop the process, once it is started.

The main activity of MoLSA with regard to legal migration has been the verification of employment contracts and registration of legal migrants. According to our review, an employment contract whose terms and conditions approved by MoLSA contains: the amount of the monthly wage for the domestic worker; the responsibility of the employer to provide housing, food, and medical expenses to the domestic worker; one month paid vacation every two years or monetary compensation for the vacation. The contract does not contain provisions about the maximum daily working hour. It also states that any of the contractual party is entitled to terminate contract without any notice, if there are serious breaches. The employee, for instance, can terminate the contract when she/he faces inhuman and unbearable treatment or serious insults by the employer.

[21] Interview with official of the Immigration Branch Office, Dessie (June 16, 2013).

The major problem regarding this employment contract, according to returned migrant workers, is the difficulty or impossibility of enforcing it. The working condition of the migrant women to a large measure depends on the behaviour (kindness or wickedness) of their employers. The provision regarding one-month paid vacation for every two years of service, according to many of our informants, is not widely enforced. Our informants indicated, let alone to provide a vacation or monetary compensation, many domestic workers do not regularly receive their wages.[22]In some cases, they are lent to their employees' relatives as any other household good.[23]

Box 10: Ineffectiveness of employment contracts[24]

> Before the migrants' departure from Ethiopia, they sign contracts through the Agencies. The contract does contain some provisions that are intended to protect the rights of the migrant workers. But it is not really enforced in the recipient countries. Formally, the workers would have life insurance. But in practice, when the migrant workers lose their lives, the employers and the local officials of the receiving countries give a lot of excuses. They usually say that the employee killed herself. One of their favorite causes of death is 'with the intention of committing suicide, she jumped from a tall building'. Because of all these, life insurance payment is not usually effected to the parents of the diseased.

MoLSA also works for the protection of domestic workers. It receives complaints and grievances from parents and/or family members of the migrants. The numbers of complaints reaching MoLSA increased from 888 in 2011 to 2,788 in 2012/13. Upon receiving complaints, MoLSA works or arbitrates with PEAs that arranged the employment of the employee. According to officials of MoLSA, the success rate of resolving such cases was 73% in 2011/12 and improved to 84% in 2010/11. However, there is a major problem of accessibility because it is difficult for the majority of the domestic workers to contact MoLSA by making telephone calls or by sending their relatives in person. In this regard, the experiences of other labour sending countries like the Philippines is quite instructive they assign dedicated personnel in their foreign missions and consulates to look after issues of migrant workers.

[22]Interview former official of the South Wollo Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie (June 5, 2013).

[23] Interview with a group of returnee migrants in Kofele Town South Arsi Zone (April 9, 2013).

[24] Interview former official of the South Wollo Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie (June 5, 2013).

Another government department which is involved in labour migration is the Immigration Department, which is responsible for the issuance of passports. The main requirement to obtain a passport is to present valid *kebele* residential Identification Card (ID). However, as the country has not yet put in place a standardized national identification card system, the use of a *kebele* identity card to issue a passport is found to be fraught with profound problems. There are problems of forgery. Because of the diversity of the different types of ID cards that are issued by thousands of *kebele* within the country, it is very difficult for the Immigration Department to check the veracity of these documents. This opens the door for the business of forging ID cards which is, unfortunately, rife in the country. In addition to problems of forgery, many *kebele* officials either because of financial favours and their acquaintance with the applicants provide identity cards for underage teenagers and children testifying that they are above 18 years old. Again, as there is no a universal/national birth day certification system in the country, it is very difficult for the Immigration Department to verify age claims of passport applicants. Although the 2009 Employment Exchange Services Proclamation prescribes that the minimum age for individuals to be considered for foreign work is 18, this is widely violated. As a result, many teenagers who have not reached the age of 18 are recruited and sent to the Gulf countries as domestic workers.

There is also little cooperation between MoLSA and the Immigration Department. Previously, the two institutions used to cooperate in enforcing the requirement that migrant workers should fulfil MoLSA's requirements before their embarkation. This was done by checking whether the migrant workers have secured the approval of MoLSA when they pass through the Immigration Desk of the Bole International Airport to board their flight. But the legality of this practice was questioned. In line with the 1995 constitution that respects citizens' right of freedom of movement, Ethiopia has lifted exit visa requirement in 2005. Thus, denial of those who have valid passports, entry visas to a foreign country and air tickets to board onto their flight because of absence of approval from MoLSA was deemed to contravene this basic right and abrogated. But after the withdrawal of this practice, there is no way for the authorities to control illegal labour migrants that pass through the Bole International Airport.

Illegal migrants also use other mechanisms to travel to Gulf countries without fulfilling the requirements of MoLSA. For instance, as stated above, after the Ethiopian government banned employment in Lebanon in 2009, prospective migrant workers instead of flying to Lebanon directly, alternatively, they travel to transit countries such as Kenya, Egypt and others with various pretexts, such as visiting family members and friends and then proceed to Lebanon.

Ethiopian reaction to the problems of illegal migration, more correctly, smuggling has so far remained episodic and driven by headline grabbing human tragedies and crisis. In the absence of a comprehensive policy on labour migration, whenever there are major episodes that involve Ethiopian migrants, both the government and the public give some attention to the problem. There is lack of continuity and as the memory of the most recent tragedies fade away, government efforts aimed at preventing trafficking through public/media education also fades away. The 1998 Private Employment Agency proclamation was partly a reaction to media outcries about the treatment of Ethiopian domestic workers in Lebanon. Following accusations of being indifferent to the plight of Ethiopian domestic workers in Lebanon, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for the first time instituted a National Committee to look into the problem of trafficking in 1999 (ICMPD, 2008: 38). In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee, the government also established a consulate office in Beirut to look after Ethiopian domestic workers.

The first major institutional response to the problem of smuggling came in 2007, yet after a major crisis that made it to the headlines. A group of 33 Ethiopian migrants died after smugglers forced them to disembark from their boat on the sea in April, 2007 (IRIN, 2007). In June of the same year, the government established an Inter-ministerial Taskforce to combat trafficking. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and MoLSA were made chair and secretariat of the taskforce respectively. The Taskforce remained idle for nearly two years and met for the first time in 2009. In 2012, two major disasters struck Ethiopian prospective migrants to South Africa. First on June 21, 2012, some 42 Ethiopian migrant who were in route to South Africa died of suffocation in a container truck by which they were being smuggled into Tanzania. Second, few days later on June 27, 2012 yet another disaster hit Ethiopian migrants again en route to South Africa on the Malawian Lake. When the boat in which the migrants were travelling capsized, 47 Ethiopians lost their lives. The two disasters served like wakeup calls for Ethiopian authorities to bring the problem of illegal migration and smuggling to the national agenda.

The Taskforce was revamped and expanded to all levels of government including the *woreda* in 2012. At the national level, it is composed of ministers and representatives of relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations. As the issue is now given high profile, the Taskforce is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. Regional taskforces are chaired by regional presidents. In the same year, a vigorous media campaign against trafficking and smuggling involving widely publicized meetings was conducted. The main themes of the media campaign were two. First, ‘teaching’ the public about the adverse impacts of trafficking and

smuggling by narrating the experiences of victims of illegal migration/smuggling. But adverse stories do not necessarily dissuade prospective migrants. For instance, a prospective migrant interviewed by a journalist said even if her two brothers have been stuck in Yemen for years without realizing their dream of crossing the border to Saudi Arabia and her sister who was working in Saudi has been missing for about a year, she is still determined to go to Saudi Arabia. She said, instead of 'sitting here, I would take my chances' (Binyam, 2012).

Box 11: Bad stories do not necessarily prevent migration[25]

> People are animated about the advantages of migration – they just want to go – Unfortunately, as they have decided to go and try their luck, the plight of those who suffered in the Arab countries at the hands of their employers does not dissuade them. They only see the few people who are considered 'successful' at the local level.

The second theme of the media campaign was focusing on showing the opportunities created at home. In this regard, the government repeatedly emphasized that the youth instead of looking outside should strive to use self-employment possibilities that were created within the country. The later approach is problematic as one of the chief factors that motivate people to leave the country is wage differential. As revealed by the fieldwork, people with government employment (teachers, agriculture and health extension workers) leave their jobs and legally or illegally migrate for employment in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia.

In addition to public education, the Taskforce has aimed at reducing and preventing smuggling by increasing the cooperation of law enforcement officials and regional and local governments. According to a February 2013 report the regional branches of the taskforce managed to stop the smuggling of 12, 735 individuals while trying to cross the border through the Amhara Region, 785 through Afar, and 7,579 through Somali in the east, as well as 400 through Benishangul Gumuz Region in the west (Tesfaye, 2013). But, the task of controlling smuggling for the police happens to be difficult. According to a senior police officer in South Wollo, 'when victims of smuggling are intercepted, they complain that they are travelling within the country and they have the right to do so.'[26] They do not also usually cooperate with the police to provide evidence against dealers and smugglers. Moreover, the

[25]Interview former official of the South Wollo Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie (June 5, 2013)

[26] Interview with Senior Police Official, South Wollo Zone, Dessie (June 17, 2013).

borders are porous and some border officials may collect bribes and allow the smugglers to cross the border.

3.6 Socio-Economic Impacts of Labour Migration

Migration has both negative and positive social and economic impacts. Ethiopia, just like other developing countries, has failed to create favourable conditions to arrest the high emigration of skilled labour suffer from brain drain. According to the World Bank, there is a very high emigration rate of skilled labour from the country. For instance, an estimated quarter of physicians (25.6%) trained in the country work elsewhere (Docquier and Bhargava, 2006 cited in Fransen, and Kuschminder, 2009). Another study shows that about 23% of Ethiopian born residents in the US had more than four years of tertiary education (Black *et al*, 2006). The extent of brain drain is further exemplified by the fact that between a quarter and three quarters of Ethiopians studying abroad do not return back to their country (Black *et al*, 2006: 159). However, the majority of the labour migrants who travel to the Gulf countries are of low skilled and increasingly from the countryside which is affected by high population pressure and landlessness.

Although the negative consequences of labour migration from developing countries tend to dominate debates and media reporting about the subject, labour migration has positive economic and social impacts. In this respect, remittances and skills obtained abroad will positively augment development (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009).

According to the World Bank, the recorded remittance flows to the developing world in 2012 was estimated at a staggering amount of $401 billion outstripping official development assistance (World Bank, 2013). Although the share of Sub-Sahara African in this flow is smaller, it is steadily increasing. In 2010, remittances to Africa reached $40 billion, or 2.6 percent of Africa's GDP in 2009 (Ratha, *et* al, 2011).

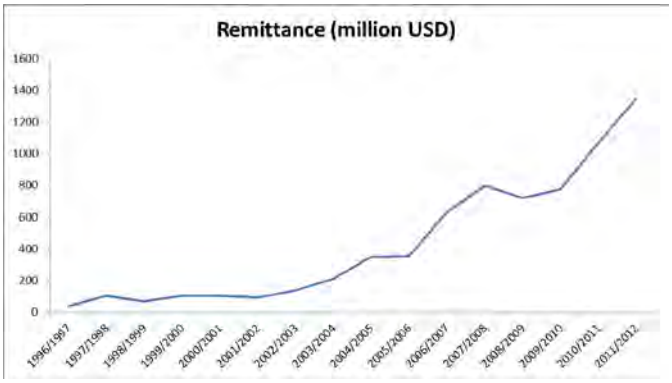
In Ethiopia, too, remittance is emerging as an important source of income for household consumption and also for foreign exchange. It constituted a large proportion of foreign capital inflows to the country (Reinert, 2006; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009). For example, in the 2007/2008 fiscal year, Ethiopia received remittances worth $1 billion. The remittance Ethiopia receives on a per capita basis ($4 per person) is, however, very small compared to the Sub-Saharan average of $26 per person (UNDP, 2009; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009). One should also remember that informal remittances make about 45-60 percent of total remittances

in Sub-Saharan Africa (Freund and Spatafora, 2005 as cited in Fransen and Kuschminder, 2009).

The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) does not have a disaggregated data on the origin (countries) of remittance that flows into the country. A 2009 figure from the UNDP gives an indication that the largest sum of remittance to Ethiopia comes from North America, even if more Ethiopian migrants (37.5%) are destined to Asia (Gulf countries), while migrants to North America account to 24.1% (UNDP, 2009).

However, as is shown by Table 6, the data show that labour migration does not strongly affect the size of remittance flows to Ethiopia. It will be interesting to see how the 2013/14 deportation of more than 160, 000 undocumented workers and the 2013 moratorium on the sending of domestic workers to Saudi Arabia are going to affect the size of remittances to Ethiopia.

Figure 5: Total annual remittance to Ethiopia



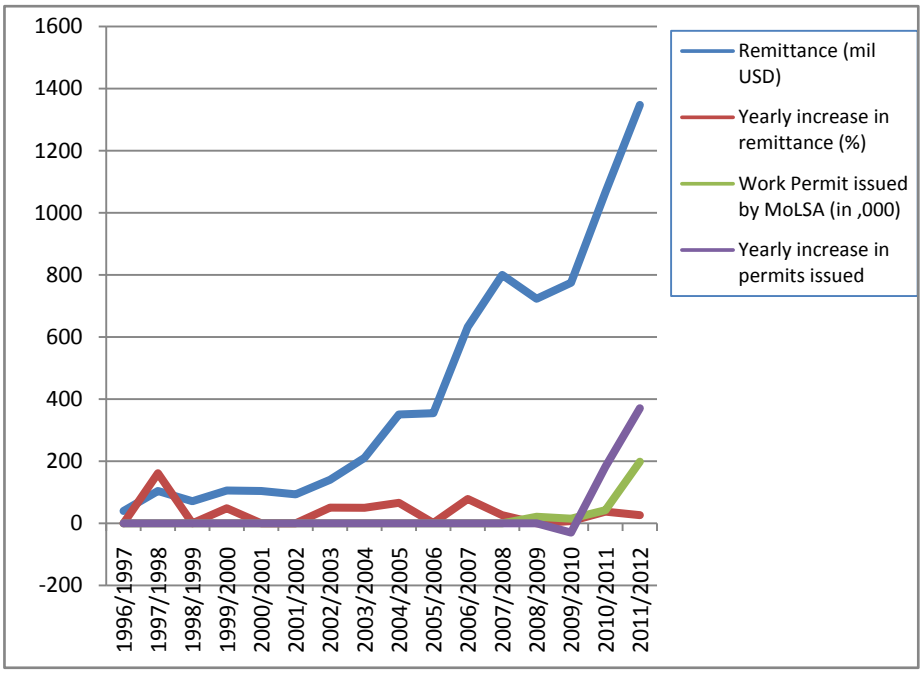
Source: National Bank of Ethiopia[27]

At the household level, remittances have more significant impacts on welfare of migrant households (Andersson, 2012: 3). First, at the minimal level, for many migrant households' remittances cover basic expenses such as food, schooling and medical care. Second, remittances could contribute to the building of assets. The nature and size of the assets that are procured by remittance inflows widely varies depending on the social and economic standing of the household and the amount of income that the migrant worker produces. As we observed in our fieldwork, it is evident that many households use remittances to expand their assets. The assets

[27] Data available only for the first two quarters of 2009/10, thus this figure is doubled with the assumption that remittance figures do not show a significant seasonal change.

could be productive which contribute to income generation like rental houses, small businesses, farm equipments, cattle and draft animals.

Table 7: Yearly changes in labour migration and remittance



Source: National Bank of Ethiopia and MoLSA

In other cases, the assets that households procure using remittance money are meant to increase their standard of lives such as building or purchasing residential houses or household goods. Such assets could be mortgaged or sold to withstand shocks that families face. In both Itteya (Arsi Zone) and in Robit (South Wollo Zone), the houses that were built by remittance flows are distinct from the local houses. They are bigger and covered by corrugated iron sheet. In Itteya, the quarter of the town where houses were built by remittance money is named as '*Dubai sefer*', means *Dubai neighbourhood*, implying that the houses are built by migrants and/or their families using the money that came from aboard. In communities where people live modest standard of lives, such houses built by remittance money could be considered as social status marker as well. They are used as visible and noticeable symbols about one's success in the labour migration enterprise.

Box 12: Asset building by remittance money in Robit, Ambassel *woreda*[28]

> I sent my wife to Saudi Arabia when she was a ninth grader. She stayed for nine months and returned back. She was not that successful in the first trip. She went back again. I am not really happy because of the fact that we are living apart. But the money that she was making there is changing our lives. It is huge money and If we were to toil hard here for 10-15 years, we could not have made the money that she has been sending me from Saudi Arabia within one year. We are now building our asset. In two years' time, we have built our house that has two bedrooms and a living room with kitchen and pit toilet and covered by corrugated iron sheet. We have bought household utensils as well. I went to Dessie and got training for tailoring. We have bought a sewing machine and my tailor shop is well stocked. We have also a good working capital. We are now getting customers and in a position to stand on our feet. When she finishes and comes back, she will not go back. She would start her own small business here and we will raise children.

Box 13: A father who came out of destitution by sending his daughters for overseas work [29]

> I was married in 1979. I have four children – three girls and a boy. I was struggling to raise them. I was working hard on the small plot of land I had. I was also working for small payments for other farmers. I did not have my own oxen. When the farming season comes, I had to rent oxen from other farmers. I had to borrow from private lenders at hefty interest to buy seeds. I was living a life of destitution for many years. This is now changed, thanks to my daughters. I first sent my elder daughter called Birhan, she was eighth grader by the time she went to Saudi Arabia. She helped the employment of her younger sisters – Nigist and Jemila subsequently. She also took her niece, Bekelech, recently. Because of the overseas employment of my children, my life has been changed. I have now some asset. I have four oxen. I now farm my land by my own oxen. I no longer seek loans to buy seeds and farm inputs. I have also built a good house. I came out of destitution because of my children and opportunities to work abroad.

Such infusion of money impels competitions among households and thereby puts social and family pressure on young girls and married women to migrate to the

[28] Interview with a husband who sent his wife to Saudi Arabia, Robit peasant association, Ambassel *Woreda*, South Wollo, (June 10, 2013).

[29] Interview with a father, who sent three of his daughters for overseas domestic work, Robit peasant association, Ambassel *Woreda*, South Wollo, (June 10, 2013).

Gulf and help their families. This of course would have negative impacts on families. In this respect, one informant noted that:[30]

> The social dislocation that is being caused by labour migration in South Wollo is very serious – there is now a new trend. Husbands are forcing their wives to go to Saudi Arabia. If the women refuse, they nag them, day and night. There is also a competition at the local level among the women – going overseas for work is being seen as one symbol of social status.

When wives and mothers depart for overseas work, housekeeping becomes the responsibility of husbands and young girls. In Robit (Ambassel *woreda*), we were informed that, men who have sent their wives have become responsible for taking care of children and household choirs to the extent of preparation of food and baking of *Injera* which is laborious and traditionally preserved for women.[31] This could be lauded as a major change of gender functions in an otherwise highly patriarchal and male dominated Amhara society. However, the brunt of household choirs after the departure of mothers falls on young girls who will become responsible for taking care of their younger siblings and preparation of food. As we were informed by the South Wollo Education Bureau, in localities where there is a strong tradition of labour migration to the Gulf, there is a high drop out of young girls from school. The pressure for girls to leave school comes from two directions. First, they leave school to travel to the Gulf countries for domestic work. In this case, many girls drop out of school after completion of their elementary (8 years) education. Second, those young girls, who could be as young as ten years and whose mothers left for overseas work will be forced to drop out of school and help in household choirs.

Third, remittances contribute to the subjective wellbeing of migrant households. This refers to the positive perception of households of migrants whose remittances helped them to meet their everyday basic needs and their self-assessed relative position as compared to other average households. A study by Anderson showed that remittances sent by migrants have strong positive correlation with subjective well-being in rural households (Andersson 2012: 20). The subjective wellbeing phenomenon is not something limited to the household of migrants. Members of the local community also feel that families who have migrant workers in the Gulf are better positioned than those families without a migrant worker.

[30] Interview former official of the South Wollo Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie (June 5, 2013).

[31] Focus Group Discussion, Robit Peasant Association, Ambassel *Woreda* (June 10, 2013).

Migration can have impacts on gender relations at home too. When women migrate, 'traditional' gender roles in relation to child and elderly care will be changed (ILO, 2011: 8). This has been observed in our fieldwork in North and South Wollo as well as Arsi and South Arsi zones, where a large number of women including housewives left to work in the Gulf. Husbands who traditionally have little role in housekeeping and undertaking household choirs became responsible for the children. But the migration of women put heavy burden on young girls at home as they will be forced to take the functions of their mothers. Mesfin, who studied the situation of migrant workers in Girana town, North Wollo, suggested that one of the positive outcomes of labour migration for women is empowerment in terms of household decision-making power and resource control (Mesfin, 2011: 95). Nevertheless, in some cases, the migrant women may not have the power to decide on the way the money made is spent and when they return from their exile, they may found out that all the money is spent. In this connection, a former official of South Wollo zone of Labour and Social Affairs said:[32]

> When I see the situation, whatever good things come from labour migration goes to the families. The women who went to work as domestic workers abroad are usually the losers. They work hard in the destination countries and send much of the money home. Their husbands or parents spend the money here the way they like. Some of the women, when they return back, they do not get a dime from their parents or husbands. The initial idea (plan) of migration might be to make some money and build asset and start a small business which the women may run after their return back home. But the money is most of the time rightly or wrongly spent by the time the migrant worker comes home; she will be forced to go back. Many migrant workers come with serious ailments, including psychological trauma, physical injuries either because of workload or beatings. Such migrant workers will be improvised and become dependent on their families and the society.

Box 14: Impacts of migration on young girls in South Wollo Zone[33]

Labour migration is having strong repercussion on the lives of people in the zone. Families and marriages are broken apart. Thousands of children are now being raised without the presence of their mothers. This has many impacts – social and nutritional. Young girls are taking the brunt of housekeeping – they do household choirs, though they have not the physical capacity. They as a result do not

[32] Interview former official of the South Wollo Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Office, Dessie (June 5, 2013).

[33] *Ibid.*

perform well in schools. Sadly, as many young girls are replacing the roles of their mothers, they are leaving school.

While the focus of the media, and much of academic writings, for that matter, focus on the impacts of labour migration and on the problems that the migrants face in the receiving countries, migration is equally having adverse impacts on the families of migrant workers. One aspect of this problem is the improper use of remittance money. Indeed, the injection of cash in locally depressed economies, unless wisely managed, often would have its own adverse consequences. An informant in Robit, in this respect, noted that 'many young husbands, who have sent their wives, spend the money that is sent to them on alcohol, *khat* and *shisha.* In the past, the main pastime for local people was going to houses which sell traditional beer (*tella*) and liquor (*areke*). Now that is changed, people tend to consume the more expensive beer and liquors in bars.'[34]

Box 15: Unwise use of remittance money by husbands[35]

The women send money to their husbands thinking that he is responsible and use the money to improve their mutual life. The men have become what we call here – the Christmas Oxen – which is freed from farming and carefully fed so that it will be in a good shape for the Christmas market. The men have become like that. They carry their walking stick and just walk around from one place to another. They spend the money by going from one liquor shop to the other. They indulge themselves in the consumption of *khat* and *shisha*, which is something new to our locality. When the women come and finds out this, she will be distressed and a dispute will arise.

The other adverse social impact of the money that is sent from the Gulf countries by migrant workers is the discord and conflicts it creates within families. Many disputes, and in some cases crimes, had happened over disagreements over the control of money sent by migrant workers. If the wife only sends money to her husband, the parents will be angry. If she sends money to the family, the husband will be angry with her. In one case, in South Wollo, it is reported that a disgruntled husband who felt that the parents put pressure on his wife not to send money to him killed his mother in-law in public.

In sum, in traditional and patriarchal communities, where women are rarely allowed to travel far without being accompanied by their husbands and relatives,

[34]Interview with a return migrant domestic worker, Kombolcha Town (June 6, 2013).

[35]Interview with an elder in Kombolcha, South Wollo Zone (June 6, 2013).

the idea of overseas migration appears to change the situation and gives them some autonomy, a new life and world experience. Other than this, labour migration contributes little to women empowerment. In the first place, the women have limited voice in the decision of their migration. In many cases, due to family and peer pressure, nursing mothers are forced to leave behind their infants and go as migrant workers. The other fact which also confirms the continuance of the domination of women is their little authority on the expenditure of the remittance. The men, typically – the husband if she is married or the father, if she is single would decide how the money is spent.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that women are sent to the Gulf countries and are sending back money to home is helping to change the attitude of the communities about women. In the past, families would be overjoyed when a baby boy is born. Now, some say, families are as much rejoicing when female babies are born.

4 Ethiopian Irregular Migration to South Africa

As noted in chapter 1, large-scale migration to South Africa from Ethiopia (and and other East and Horn of Africa) is a relatively recent phenomenon (Horwood, 2009). In fact, migration of Ethiopians to South Africa could be seen as part of the massive influx of economic migrants from different parts of the world to that country after the end of the apartheid era.

Migration of Ethiopians that started in early 1990s got momentum by the 2000s and large number of Ethiopians, along with others from the Horn of Africa region (mainly Somali and Eritreans), began to migrate to South Africa using various means. In spite of the general understanding that Ethiopian migration to South Africa began at the beginnings of the 1990s, there is no literature that details how the migration started and who was instrumental in it. There is a widely held assumption that members Hadiya and Kembata ethnic groups from southern Ethiopia were dominantly involved during the early days of the migration to South Africa. There is also speculation that there could have been involvement of officials from these ethnic groups in the Ethiopian diplomatic mission in South Africa that encouraged the migration. Another plausible assumption about the beginning of large scale migration to South Africa is related to the flight of large number of Ethiopians, mainly soldiers, to Kenya as refuges following the defeat of the *Derg* in May 1991. Some of those who fled to Kenya[36]were believed to have made their journey to other countries including South Africa.

At present, various works (Liqu, 2007; Amel, 2012; Horwood, 2009) and the interviews and focus group discussions conducted with returnees indicate that migrants from all regions and ethnic groups of the country are found in South Africa.

4.1 Push and Pull factors of migration to South Africa

There are certain 'push' and 'pull' factors for migration of undocumented Ethiopian to the South Africa. When we scrutinize these factors in detail, they are solely economic in nature. The major push and pull factors are the following:

[36] UHNCR estimates that "some 80,000 Ethiopian refugees fled to Kenya during 1991-1992 to escape ethnic conflict in their own country. Smaller number arrived in Kenya since that time. The majority of the Ethiopian refugees in Kenya returned to Ethiopia in the mid-1990s" (Veney, 2007).

4.1.1 Push factors

There are several and interrelated push factors that instigate young people to migrate to the South Africa. Firstly, unemployment is one of the major factors that push young people to migrate to South Africa. Although the government has taken various policy measures and actions, both rural and urban unemployment (particularly youth unemployment) have remained to be one of the major social problems in the country (Broussara and Tsegay, 2012; Martha, 2012;). High population pressure and the resulting shortage of arable land in rural areas, limited development of the industrial and service giving sectors in urban areas, mismatch between education and training skills and the requirements of the labour market are some of the factors given for the high level of youth country. The problem is more pronounced among the youth who have limited work experience and capital (Broussara and Tsegay, 2012; Martha, 2012). For example, an assessment conducted in 2010/11 in selected zones and districts of SNNPR by the Regional Labour and Social Affairs Bureau shows high rate of youth unemployment in the region in which about 53.2% of the unemployed people are between the ages of 19 and 24 (SNNPR BLaSA, 2011). Thus, migration in general is taken as one of the options to secure livelihoods for unemployed youth. Likewise, migration to South Africa is one of the responses to unemployment (Teshome *et al*, 2013; Horwood, 2009; Amel, 2012).

Box 16: Case of migration to South Africa motivated by unemployment[37]

> I have six children; four boys and two girls. I tried to send all to school as they do not have any other hope for the future. The farmland I have is too small for the family, let alone to give part of it to the boys. I also do not want them to be farmers like me. I wish them better life and so they help me and their mother when we get too old. However, the first son had completed grade 10 but could not get a result required to continue his studies at a preparatory school which gives lessons for two years before students join government universities. With the hope that it will help him to get a job, I sent him to a private college paying a lot of money. Even after he graduated with a college diploma in accounting, he is unable to get job for two years. As I took loans to cover his college expenses, I am indebted. After losing hope that he will get a gainful employment in the country, then we [the family] decided to send him to South Africa illegally. We managed to raise sufficient money from our relatives and by selling some valuables and properties we had. We also asked his cousin who travelled to South Africa some years ago to receive him. With some ups and down, thanks to God, he managed to arrive in

[37] Interview with an elder who sent his son to South Africa due to lack of job opportunity here. Durame town, (Kembata Tembaro Zone), (December 20, 2012).

South Africa. He was lucky as he had little trouble on the way. Now, he not only paid back the money we borrowed for his travel and education, but also occasionally sends money to support the family. He usually sends money for holidays, particularly for Meskel and Easter. In fact, we regret of the money we paid for the private education which hardly helped him to change his future. We knew the problem and hardship of travelling to South Africa. We also know the trouble of living in a foreign country. But, unless one tries, nobody knows where his 'bread' could be found. (ካልሞከረና ካልተንቀሳቀሰ እንጀራው የት እንደሆነ ማንም ሠው አያውቅም።)

Secondly, poverty is another major push factor for people to migrate to South Africa. Several informants that we approached in the field indicated that there is a growing conviction in those localities from where a large number of young people migrate to South Africa, migration is an important means to escape poverty, develop assets and ultimately to live a decent life. As one returnee put it in Amharic, "እዚህ እያለሁ ጠንክሬ እሠራ ነበር። ነገር ግን ስራዬ ሁሉ ከእጅ ወደ አፍ ሆነ። ብለፋ ብለፋ ለውጥ ማምጣት አልቻልኩም፡ ስለዚህ ድህነትን ለመሸሽ ወደደቡብ አፍሪካ ሄድኩኝ!"[38] One important factor that explains the poverty that prevails in the localities greatly affected by migration to South Africa is high population pressure and resulting shortage of farmland. Although these problems are common in almost all parts of the country, the Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya Zones of SNNPR State have the highest population density in the Region[39]. Moreover, as the majority of the population are living in rural areas[40] and depend on agriculture for their livelihood, scarcity of farmland is acute in all *woreda* of the Zones. Thus, shortage of farmland and lack of alternative livelihoods in rural areas often push young people in search of other options in other areas. Thus, because of this long-standing problem, the opportunity to migrate to South Africa seems to be instantly captured.

However, migrants who are said to be forced to migrate because of poverty pay substantial amounts of money for brokers/smugglers for the journey that could have been used to establish one's own business in Ethiopia. The explanation returnees give to this question is that usually the money used for migration is raised

[38] "I was working hard before. However, it was hand to mouth. I could not save anything. Thus, I migrated to South Africa escape poverty" Interview with Beshir Ababe, Halaba Special *Woreda* (SNNPR) (December 19, 2012).

[39]The population density of Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya zones are 504 per s/sq km and 366 pers./sq km respectively. For comparison, the national average population and that of SNNP Regional State are 82.6 and 141 person/km2 respectively (SNNPR State)Investment Opportunities in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State).

[40] According to the 2007 National Population and Housing Census 85.6% and 89.1% of the Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya Zone the total population reside in rural areas respectively (CSA, 2007).

from different sources in various forms (loan, support, selling assets and contribution from families and friends) and 'poor' migrants often contribute little from their pockets. Relatives and friends are willing to provide support for migration to South Africa with the hope that the loan or support would be paid back directly or indirectly; and they are often reluctant to give similar support to start businesses at home.

Thirdly, family, friends and peer pressure is another major push factor that motivates people to migrate to South Africa. There is an intense pressure on young people to migrate to South Africa and change their and their families' living conditions. According to returnees and families of migrants that we interviewed in Hadiya and Kembata-Temabro Zones, the pressure on the unemployed youth is severe. They are often told to try their luck in South Africa instead of sitting idle after completing their studies. In addition to members of the nuclear family, members of the extended families, neighbours and elders put strong pressure on the unemployed youth to migrate and change themselves.

Box 17: Family and peer pressure on young people to migrate to South Africa[41]

> Families put considerable pressure on sons to migrate. They consider a son who completed his high school education and keeps living with them idly as a burden. They often ask him '*why don't you go to South Africa like your friends! Even if you cannot help us, at least you can be for yourself*'. They put pressure on him to migrate by insulting him saying '*a corpse [of a migrant] is better than you alive. It brings at least a mobile phone to the family*'. The comparison with mobile phone came from the fact that when migrants passed away in South Africa due to different causes, the community developed a tradition to contribute money and send the body back home to the family. They also put some valuable personal belonging of the deceased person, such as mobile phone and jewellery in the coffin along with the body. In another similar focus group discussion in Hosaina town a participant explained that when a young person decides to go to South Africa, he will go to his parish protestant Church and receives prayers and blessings from the church leaders, elders and parishioners at large

Fourthly, the history of labour migration from Hadiya and Kembata-Tembaro zones to the sugar estates within Ethiopia that started in the 1960s made migration of the youth to South Africa socially acceptable and hence contributed to its expansion.

[41] Focus group discussion with returnees in Durame *woreda*, Kembata-Tembaro zone, (December 21, 2012).

Fifthly, impact of relatively 'successful' returnees and the search for a 'short-cut' to prosperity are another important push factors to migrate to South Africa. For many young people, travelling to South Africa is considered as an important means to get quickly rich. One informant in Halaba town indicated that 'some young people fall under the unhealthy influence of some 'successful' returnees who accumulated assets, such as houses, cars, business investments and lose their 'appetite' to work and succeed locally'.[42] In this regard the perception of people, particularly the youth, about South Africa is highly exaggerated.

Sixthly, impact of illegal brokers and traffickers is an important push factor for migration to South Africa., As explained earlier, illegal brokers and traffickers put significant influence on young people by disseminating false or highly exaggerated information about the 'green pasture' in South Africa. They incite young people to illegal migration by citing the improved lives of families and some 'successful' returnees and migrant families as example. As a result, people, even with decent job or private businesses, are deceived by the propaganda of the brokers and decide to migrate to South Africa.

4.1.2 Pull factors

Besides the push factors discussed above, there are certain factors that attract potential migrants to South Africa. Firstly, the better economic opportunities in South Africa are the primary pulling factors for many young people to migrate to that country. In spite of the hardship and danger they face on their way, once migrants reach South Africa they have a fairly good opportunity to engage in different economic activities (Liqu, 2007; Amel, 2012). Returnees also indicated that despite the hardship and daily uncertainties as illegal migrants, they generally earn decent income in their activities compared to their previous income at home. Secondly, the strong social cohesion and support system that exist in South Africa among Ethiopian migrants in general, and the Hadiya and Kembata-Tembaro groups in particular, is a strong pool factor. Earlier migrants provide the newly arriving migrants financial support, adequate information and help them to settle and start working.

Thirdly, the refugee and migration policy of South Africa have also attracted many economic migrants to the country. South Africa is said to be one of the countries of the world that have migrant-friendly policies. In line with its international obligations, migrants, once they arrive in the country, are allowed to apply for

[42] Interview with Ato Eyob Lefebo, Halaba Special *woreda* (SNNPR) on (December 19, 2012).

asylum and live in the country until a decision is given on their application (Horwood, 2009). This fact, along with the absence of outright deportation, encourages illegal migrants to flock to the country.

4.2 Routes of migration

For almost all migrants the journey to South Africa starts with securing passport legally either from Addis Ababa or from one of the regional branch offices of Immigration and Nationality Affairs Office. Once they secure their passport, they decide what routes and mode of transportation they use. There are different routes, modes of travel and means of transportation depending on the financial capacity of the migrants and the 'services' the brokers/smugglers provide at a given time. Generally, the modes of transportation for undocumented Ethiopian migrants to South Africa are two types --- by air and inland journey. The travel by air is the most expensive and 'luxurious' in which migrants fly either directly to South Africa or indirectly transiting through one of its neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique or Namibia. Migrants secure visas using different pretexts such as business, medication, education and visitation (Teshome *et.al*, 2013:). After arriving in the neighbouring country, the migrants would be smuggled to South Africa inland. Their last leg of the journey could be made by both trucks and on foot. In this regard, the returnees whom we have interviewed indicated that Mozambique is the most favourite transit country for traffickers to smuggle people into South Africa. There are strong allegations of complicity between some consular officials of the neighbouring countries of South Africa here in Addis Ababa and immigration officials who work in the airports of these countries and brokers who arrange entry of illegal migration into South Africa (Horwood, 2009)[43].

Box 18: A story of an immigrant who travelled to South Africa by air

> I have travelled to South Africa in 1996 using a combination of air transport, a truck and walking on foot. I obtained my passport easily from Immigration Office in Addis Ababa. Then found a 'reliable' broker in Addis Ababa through my close relative who lives in the same city. My relative negotiated the fee on my behalf. I also asked one of my cousins who went to South Africa some years ago to arrange my journey. He said as he has commitments to take his brothers, he was unable to support me financially, but would look after me once I arrived there.

[43] In this regard, we have shown a forged visa obtained through illegal brokers in Addis Ababa in the field.

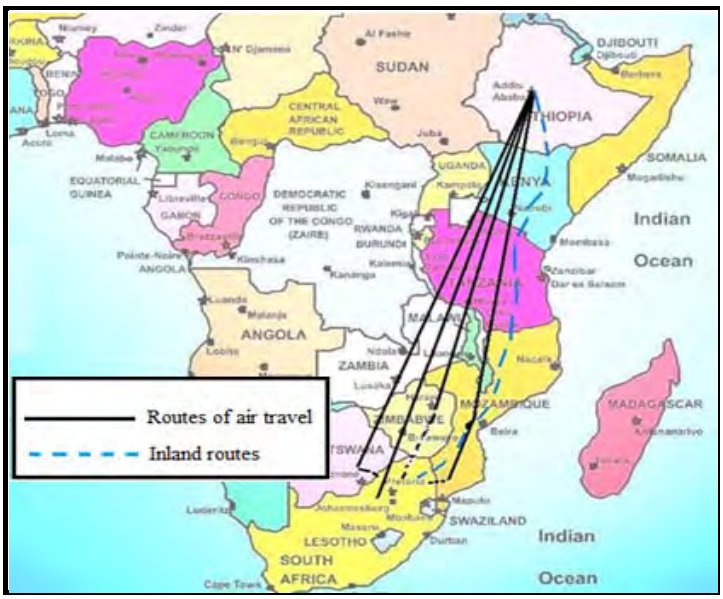
I raised half of the money from my saving and selling some properties. The remaining half was collected from my close relatives. After getting sufficient money, I gave the passport and the money to my relative to hand over to the broker. In fact, I neither met the broker in person, nor knew his name and address. I had expected to complete the process in a few days and fly directly to South Africa. However, I was told to be patient as the 'route' was closed for the time being. I was confused and asked myself how a 'route' for the plane to fly in the sky would be closed! After three-months patience, I was finally informed that the visa was secured. I knew little about the process, but was expecting to fly from Addis Ababa directly to South Africa. However, I was informed that I would fly first to Nairobi, then proceed to Harare and then to South Africa. I was terrified with the complex arrangement and the prospect that things might go wrong at one point. As I did not have much choice, I flew to Nairobi without difficulty with two other young men who had similar arrangement. We were told that there would be someone at Nairobi airport to meet us and look after us until we continue the next journey. We met the guy holding a board with our name on it. He took us to a house somewhere in Nairobi and locked us for two weeks. During this period, we were never allowed to go out of the house. Finally, one morning he came to the house and told us everything was arranged for us to fly to Harare, Zimbabwe. We were strictly instructed to go to some particular checking points both at Nairobi and Harare airports. We did so and passed the checking process both at Nairobi and Harare airports without any problem. Again someone was waiting for us at Harare airport. He took us to a house somewhere in the city where there were about 15 other people. In the evening the person, with other local people, brought a mini-bus and drove us to a border town. After some hours drive, we got off from the mini-bus and continued the journey on foot. After about two hours walk we crossed the border and entered South Africa. The smugglers left us once we crossed the border and after some travelling we arrived at a small town at dawn. After arriving in the small town, I phoned the person my sponsor arranged. I met with this Ethiopian guy who lives near the town and he bought me a bus ticket and boarded me on the bus. I then travelled to the town where my sponsor lives.

The second and most notorious route to South Africa is the inland route, which involves travelling by vehicle, in some cases boat and hiking long distances. Travelling on this route is very dangerous as the migrants are exposed to different kinds of physical hardship, maltreatments and psychological trauma. The inland journey like the air one takes place under the control of strong networkers of traffickers residing in the different countries that the migrants pass through. The traffickers have rendezvous at different strategic points in each country where they keep the migrants to arrange the next move.

In many cases, the town of Moyale in southern Ethiopia bordering Kenya is the first starting point of the long journey. Traffickers assemble the migrants at this

town until they reach manageable size and get the 'right' time to cross the Ethio-Kenya borderline. Then they form groups of 8-20 people and, as the situation permits, cross the Ethio-Kenya border and hand over the migrants to their Kenyan counterparts in Kenya Moyale. Afterwards, migrants would be driven often to Nairobi or nearby towns hidden in trucks disguised in different forms. Then the traffickers keep them in Kenya until the situation permits to pass them to the next country, often to Tanzania, either inland or by boat on the Indian Ocean. Then after, they reach a neighbouring country and cross the South Africa border with the help of smugglers and are often received by the people who arranged the migration from the South Africa side.

Figure 6: Routes of migration from Ethiopia to South Africa



In this long course of journey, migrants face immense hardships and even loss of life. The hardships that the migrants face in this route come from three directions – the nature of their journey, the traffickers/smugglers and the authorities of the countries they pass through.

As the inland journey involves crossing many international boundaries and requires various means of transportation including travel on foot, for many weeks, the travelling itself causes exhaustion and physical pressure on the migrants.

Moreover, as traffickers transport their 'merchandise' in crammed unsafe vans, trucks and boats driven/sailed in unsafe roads/waters often at nights to avoid being spotted by authorities significantly, there is danger to the lives of the migrants.

Box 19: Stories of accidents of migrates en route to South Africa in international media

> Some 42 migrants have been found dead in the back of a truck in Tanzania. Tanzania's Deputy Interior Minister Pereira Silima said they had come from Ethiopia and died from asphyxiation. Local officials said more than 120 people had been packed into the truck, which was headed for Malawi. Tanzania and Malawi have become key staging posts for people fleeing drought and conflict in Somalia and Ethiopia, and trying to reach South Africa" (BBC, 2012)
>
> "Dozens of men, women and children from Ethiopia died in the cold waters of Lake Malawi on Monday night. They were on an overcrowded boat that sank with 60 passengers onboard. All are feared dead, and 47 bodies have been found so far. The dead are presumed to have been illegal immigrants from Ethiopia, and were most likely en route to South Africa." (International Business Times, 2012)

The places the smugglers/traffickers keep the migrants at various rendezvous are often crowded, unhygienic and lack basic utilities, such as bathrooms. Returnees indicate that starvation and illness are a day-to-day experience in these places.

The second source of adversity that the migrants face comes from the traffickers/smugglers themselves. In fact, the traffickers/smugglers are knitted in a loose network and they both cooperate and compete. They often try to get the maximum out of the migrants. Once migrants are out of their country of origin, they would be asked to make additional payments. The traffickers often take their belongings too. Besides the physical abuse and threat, it is common that traffickers/smugglers abandon migrants in the middle of nowhere in a situation where they feel that they do not get enough from the migrants or when they consider that they are in danger of being apprehended by the authorities.

The third source of danger for the migrants comes from the authorities of the countries they cross. As their journey is illegal from the outset, migrants are in state of constant fear, uncertainty and anxiety of being caught. Returnees indicate that the anxiety they feel of being apprehended is as bad as the physical pain of the journey and the abuse they receive from their traffickers/smugglers. This is mainly because of the fear of being apprehended and the possibility of prison sentences in a foreign country for illegal entry and ultimately deportation after spending their lifesavings for the travel. There are reports that migrants are expected to 'wax' the palms of border police and security officials of different countries 'to get their blind eyes' to pass. Nonetheless, arrest, conviction and deportation are daily experiences of Ethiopian migrants to South Africa.

Box 20: News of Ethiopian illegal migrants apprehended in foreign countries in media

> "Police officials in Samburu county, northern Kenya, have taken 53 undocumented immigrants and 2 traffickers from Ethiopia into custody. ... the group were on their way to Nairobi ... their origin is not in question although they had no Ethiopian identity cards because they speak fluent Amharic." (Africa NewsHub, 2013).
>
> Police have arrested 39 undocumented immigrants and two human traffickers from Ethiopia near the frontier town of Merille in Kenya's Samburu County. ... The Ethiopians, who are all believed to be in their 20s, were on their way to Nairobi when police intercepted them. .... Most of them are believed to be immigrants seeking employment in Nairobi or in South Africa. (World Bulletin, 2014).

4.3 Brokers and Traffickers/Smugglers

Illegal brokers and smugglers play a huge role in expanding migration to South Africa. Although they might not be the root causes of illegal migration and human trafficking, they play crucial roles in instigating young people to migrate by providing false or exaggerated information about the 'green pasture' in South Africa, arranging journeys and rendezvous, and linking with other smugglers/traffickers in countries the migrants pass through.

Brokers and traffickers/smugglers are not homogenous. Based on their role and place of residence one can loosely categorize them into three major categories. The first groups of illegal brokers are, what we can call them 'grassroots brokers', who reside in different parts of the country/region and recruit potential migrants from villages and neighbourhoods. These types of brokers often have their own occupations or business for their livelihoods and do the brokering as additional business. They have strong links with the second groups of brokers/smugglers who practically arrange the journey. The grassroots brokers often start the business by knowing and creating close relations with the actual brokers by various incidences. Besides recruiting clients for the actual brokers, they have the responsibility of indentifying genuine ones so as not endanger the safety of the traffickers from authorities. Sometimes they negotiate on behalf of the migrants without revealing the identity of the actual trafficker/smuggler. They are sought after as people believe them to have good knowledge of the trustworthiness and resourcefulness of the actual brokers/smugglers.

The second types of smugglers/brokers are those residing in big towns and cities, such as Addis Ababa, Hawassa, Hosaina and Moyale, and receive recruited

migrants from the grassroots recruiters for migration. Although these people too have other businesses, they take trafficking/smuggling migrants as their major occupation and fulltime activity. They have established networks within the country as well as neighbouring countries. As they are very much aware of the illegality of their activity, they take maximum care not to reveal their identities to their 'clients' at first instance. They often take 'clients' who passed the quality-check by the grassroots recruiters. It is these people who arrange different false documents, prepare plans and bribe officials as necessary.

The last group of traffickers/smugglers are those residing in other countries and conduct the actual smuggling of the migrants. These are professional smugglers with strong networks within and outside the country[44] (Teshome *et.al*, 2013:21). Returnees and other sources indicated that there are some Ethiopians who reside in the different transit countries in route to South Africa and who work with the local smugglers[45].

Box 21: A case of broker arrangement from a returnee migrant[46]

> My name is Mathios [not real name] and I am a returnee from South Africa. I went to South Africa to improve my life. My income was hand to mouth and increasingly unable to meet my needs. Then I decided to migrate. The first thing I did was looking for capable and honest *delala* [broker]. As everybody was claiming nowadays to be *delala*, getting the right *delala* with a right connection was found to be important. Likewise, honesty is also important in the business as many people lost their money to deceitful people. I did a good enquiry and came up with a list of many names. But the name of one female *delala* came again and again as effective. I began to search how I could approach her. Then I began to look for another *delala* who will take me to her. Finally I got someone who will take me to her father who I suspected was working with her. Initially he refused to take our request. He pretended to be angry saying '*who is saying that she is doing such a thing?*". After few words he promised to talk to his daughter. Finally, he told us that she would 'help' me. There was some accepted arrangement for the payment. I was asked to pay half price now, and the remaining half would be kept in a third person and would be released after I reached South Africa. Luckily, my journey to South Africa was not as bad as others. I reached my destination in three months. I stayed for four years and made some money and came back. The major reason

[44] In the list of migrants compiled by the *woreda* committee in Hadiya Zone, names of certain smugglers often mentioned.

[45] For example, the news from Africa NewsHub indicated in Box 20 above pointed out that the two traffickers who were trying to smuggle the undocumented migrants were Ethiopians.

[46] Interview with Marcos Larebo, a returnee from South Africa, in Hosaina town (December 25, 2012).

for returning home is my promise to my father that I would come back and establish my own family. Moreover, I was not happy with the type of work I was working. It was very tiresome and insecure. I constructed a house for myself and bought Isuzu (lorry). Now I am living a happy life. Although the four years I spent in South Africa were difficult, they helped me to live the life I am living now.

The payment to dealers varies considerably depending on the means of transportation, the risk associated in particular time, the intensity of control in the countries the migrants pass through, and the demand and supply of the 'service' of the traffickers. In fact, there are two type of costs migrates make. The first one is the official payment they make to their traffickers/smugglers; while the second one relates to the various expenses they cover in the course of their journey including bribes to border officials at various points.

In the early years of migration (in 2001-02), payment to brokers/smugglers to travel in land was said to be between 4,000–5,000 Birr only, while the travel by air was costing about 12,000 – 15,000 Birr. As the number of migrants increased and the demand for the 'service' grew, the price for arranging the travel both inland and by air dramatically increased. In 2013 the payment for dealers/smugglers was said to have reached around 35,000 *birr* and 140,000 *birr* for inland and air travel respectively.

Migrants and their families make different payment arrangements to the dealers/smugglers to ensure the safe passage of the migrants to South Africa. The common arrangement is to pay half of the price at the beginning and deposit the remaining half in the hands of a mutually agreed third person until the migrant reaches his or her destination. Once the migrant informed the family that he or she has reached South Africa, they would authorize the release of the payment in custody. However, returnees and families indicated that migrants who are still on their way are often subjected to different types of extortions by their traffickers, including physical abuse and denial of basic needs such as food, to inform their families to release the payment saying that they have safely reached their destination. Moreover, it is not uncommon for families of the migrants being asked to make additional payments to the traffickers.

4.4 Gender and Age Aspects of Migration

Contrary to the increasingly feminization of migration in the Horn and East Africa in general and the trend in Ethiopian labour migration to the Gulf in particular, migration to South Africa is by and large dominated by male migrants. Women

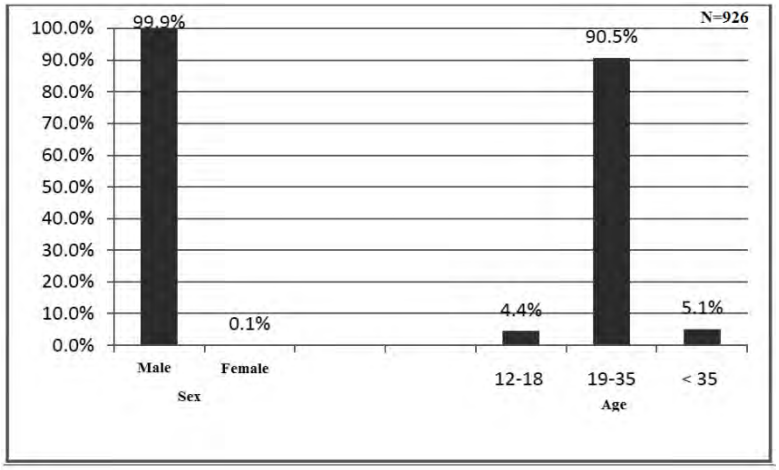
rarely migrate to South Africa using the conventional illegal ways discussed above. For instance, the data compiled by Gibe *woreda* (Hadiya Zone, SNNPR State) shows that out of the total 926 migrants listed, just one of them was female. Likewise, using statistical analysis, a study by Teshome *et al* (2013: 16) indicated that the risk or possibility for female migration is 0.332 times lower than that of males.

Two major factors contributed to the low-level women migration to South Africa. The first discouraging factor is *the high risk associated with illegal migration*. The migrants travel dangerous journeys crossing international boundaries and are often exposed to various natural and physical hardships. It also involves walking long distances at different time of a day, including the night, so as not to be detected by authorities. Most of the migrants and their families are aware of the high risks associated with the journey and the possibility of maltreatment in the hands of the smugglers in different countries. Male would-be migrants are prepared for the problem and hardship and are willing to take the risk. Women have the possibility of being raped on route as well. As a result, families are highly reluctant to allow their girls to migrate inland crossing international boundaries 'illegally'.

The second major deterrent factor for women not to migrate to South Africa illegally is *the types of jobs Ethiopian migrants engage in South Africa*. Most of the migrants are engaged in laborious petty trade in South Africa that involves movement in rural neighbourhoods. The door-to-door trading is physically demanding. As a result, the job is less suited to women and even considered as highly risky considering the security condition and increasing xenophobic attitude towards migrants in South Africa. As migration is often arranged using networks, those migrants do not allow their female family members, relatives and kin to be involved in the migration.

However, informants indicate that there is a new development in past years that allow women to migrate to South Africa "legally" through arranged marriage. Young, single and relatively 'successful' male migrants who want to establish a family in South Africa may be interested in marrying young Ethiopian female often look back home for possible wife. The family often select a girl and arrange the marriage. The bride travel 'legally' using different pretexts, mostly formal visits, arranged by the new husband. These young people who bring wives to South Africa are relatively successful and have better financial and social positions in the host country. They often use the help of South African citizens to bring their would-be wives 'legally'. Similarly, some young married migrants, often without children, take their wives to South Africa in the same way.

Figure 7: Composition of sex and age of migrants from Gibe *woreda* of Hadiya Zone, SNNPR



Source: Gibe *woreda* (Hadiya zone, SNNPR) Police Department.

Age wise, the large majority of migrants to the South Africa are young people. The indicative data found from Gibe *woreda* confirm this fact as the age of the migrants from the *woreda* ranges between 12 to 50 years. However, the majority of the migrants (90.5%) are young people between the ages of 18–35.

Although migration is generally common among young people, three major factors contributed to the dominance of youngsters in the migration to South Africa. Firstly, as unemployment, which is the major push factor, is more prevalent among the youth who lack resources, capital, and experience than adults. Rural landlessness is more rampant among youngsters than adults. Similarly, youngsters who completed their education are more exposed to the problem of finding jobs than adults. Secondly, the harsh travel condition and uncertainty is often found to be difficult for children and old people to face. As explained earlier, the inland journey in particular requires the would-be migrant to withstand various challenges and physical hardships that are difficult for children and the elderly; and thirdly, young people have less social and economic responsibilities that keep them from taking decisions to migrate outside of the country. Moreover, the elderly and young people are unable to undertake the laborious jobs, which migrants in South Africa do. These factors often discourage the elderly from migrating to South Africa.

4.5 How many Ethiopian migrants in South Africa?

There is no clear-cut data and information on the number of Ethiopian migrants in South Africa as the majority of them are undocumented and live in the country

illegally. However, the number of Ethiopian migrants in South Africa is estimated to be between 65,000 to 70,000 in 2008 (Teshome, *et. al*, 2013). With the high influx of migrants particularly in the closing years of 2000s and early 2010s, this number is expected to be significantly higher by now.

Although migration to South Africa started in the early 1990s, the number of people migrating to the country was limited and the migrants largely came from specific areas, mainly Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya Zones of the SNNPR. This was mainly due to lack/shortage of information and uncertainties about the opportunities in South Africa. However, although there is no tangible statistical data to back it up, the number of Ethiopian migrants travelling to South Africa in both air and inland has dramatically increased since the early 2000s. They also come from almost all of the regions of the country. Returnees and migrants' families attribute the dramatic increase in the number of migrants to the spread of information about the 'new golden opportunity' in South Africa and the impacts of the early migrants.

The perceived 'successes' of early migrants significantly contributed to the increasing rate of migration to South Africa in two ways. Firstly, earlier migrants after they settled in the country, not only encouraged the migration of other family members and friends, but also helped to meet the required expenses and provide all round support. In this respect, they helped to cover the cost of migration, arranged contacts with smugglers, received them in South Africa and familiarized them to the host country and helped them to start working. Secondly, the 'successes' of the earlier migrants are wildly propagated in many rural villages. Highly exaggerated news of the money they send to their families for holydays, the investments they make in their home towns and big cities, the saving they accumulated in banks, the houses they constructed in cities spread like wildfire and got the attention of even those who were reluctant to go to South Africa before and their families. This significantly increased the number of people willing to take the physical and financial risks to migrate to South Africa and try their 'luck'.

Meanwhile, as explained earlier, as the number of people who want to migrate to South Africa increases, the network of illegal dealers and traffickers becomes more sophisticated. Illegal dealers, claiming a capacity of sending people to South Africa in 'short and safe ways' mushroomed even in remote villages. Similarly, the network of the dealers and traffickers of different nationalities in different transit countries became more elaborated. Some Ethiopians living in the transit countries, such as Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe, partake in the trafficking/smuggling businesses. Lack of timely and appropriate measure by the government also

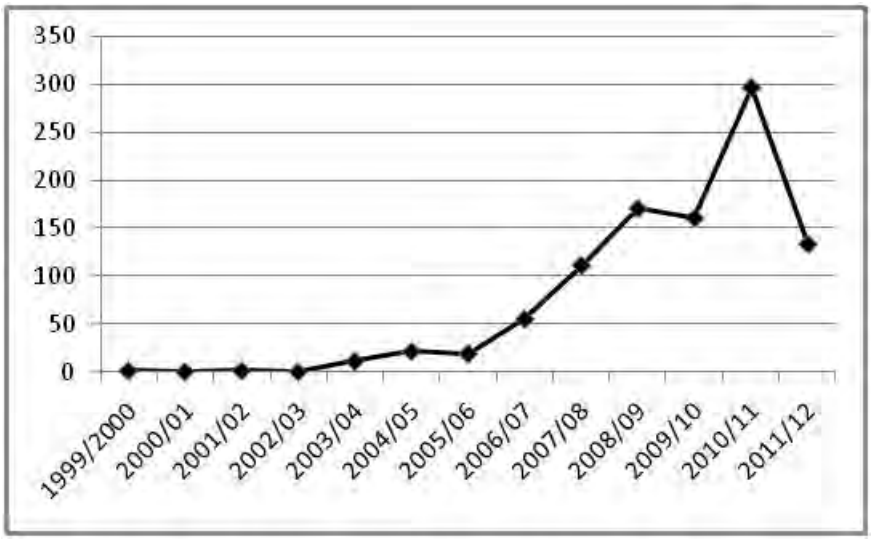
contributed to the flourishing of the network of dealers and smugglers. In fact, the wave of migration to South Africa in the early years was not given proper attention both by the federal government and the regional states like the SNNP where the problem was vividly witnessed.

As a result, in spite of the somewhat fairly regular distressful news that comes to the national media regarding the severe maltreatment of the migrants by brokers and traffickers, loss of life due to severe accidents, the number of people migrating to South Africa has increase the years passed.

Again, although there is no reliable statistical data showing the number of people migrating to South Africa yearly, there is indicative information that shows the intensity of the problem and how it has been increasing each year. For instance, this fact is vividly indicated by the crude data compiled by the administrations of various *woreda* of Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya Zones, SNNP Region. As part of the attempt to combat illegal migration, the Regional Administration ordered the *woreda* administrations that experience high rate of migration to compile the list of people who migrated to different destinations in recent years. Accordingly, almost all *woreda* of Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya zones compiled a list of migrants in each of their *kebele*. This data, even if it has some limitations, shows the trend in illegal migration from the two zones. For instance, in the Gibe *Woreda* of the, Hadiya Zone, the number of illegal migrants has increased from just one in 1999 to 296 in 2010/11. The following table shows the number of illegal migrants from 1999/2000 to 2011/12 from Gibe *woreda*, Hadiya Zone.[47]

[47] The lists that were compiled by the *woreda* during our field visit in SNNP Regional State were not aggregated at the zonal level. In spite of several efforts, we could not access the data that was collected from the other *woreda* of the two zones excepting the Gibe *Woreda.*

Fig 1: Number of migrants to South Africa from Gibe *woreda* of Hadiya Zone, SNNPR



Source: Gibe *woreda* (Hadiya zone, SNNPR) Police Department

As the figure above shows, the number of migrants from the *woreda* was limited until 2004/5, although this might be doubted due to informants' recollection of information about the 'long' past. The number of migrants has dramatically increased since 2005/6 reaching its peak in 2010/11. The slight decrease shown in 2011/12 was due to the intensified attention given to the problem and the measures taken by the government to combat illegal migration following the tragic accidents that took headlines in international media in 2012 as indicated in Box 19 above.

The eagerness of many young people, particularly from SNNPR, was exhibited in the attempts made by many people to travel to South Africa as football fans for the 2010 FIFA World Cup hosted by that country.[48] The rather fraudulent claim of a local company named Askalukan PLC to have had the exclusive right in Ethiopia to arrange travel packages for Ethiopian football fans to attend the South Africa World Cup incited hundreds of people to seize the opportunity to travel to the country in the guise of watching football. Following aggressive advertisements in

[48]It is reported that illegal brokers and traffickers also spread propaganda that there would be plenty of job opportunities in South Africa than ever because of the construction boom for the World Cup. It is believed that the news lured many youngsters who were already incited to migrate to the country in whatever way. However, reports indicate that Ethiopians, along with Somali, hardly involved in manual/casual works in general and in world cup 2010 related constructions. As the recruitment of the casual workers was rigorous and no irregular migrants had the opportunity to be hired (Horwood, 2009).

various national media, many people, most of them were said to be hardly football fans, rushed to the company with the hope of taking part in the World Cup package tours that the company claimed to organize. As noted in media reports, more than 1,200 people fell prey to this scam (WIC, 2011). Many of the victims reportedly paid more than 37,000 Birr by selling their lifelong savings, selling properties and cattle. "After the collapse of the scheme many were stranded in Addis not even affording to go back to where they came from" (*Ibid*.).

On the other hand, although the majority of Ethiopian migrants enter South Africa illegally and live without proper documentation, they try various ways and means to make their status 'legal'. The most common method is to apply to the Home Office for asylum as political refugees. Returnees indicate that new arrivals learn the necessary 'skill' to make their applications look like genuine from early migrants. They study how to answer the probing of the authorities about the cause of their flight from home. They effectively exploit the system of refugee application in South Africa and often obtain a paper from the authorities identifying them as asylum seekers. This provides them a provisional 'legal' status in the country with a right, including at least in theory, to work and study until decisions on their applications are made (Horwood, 2009).

A data compiled in 2009 shows that Ethiopians are the third largest group of asylum applicants in South Africa next to Zimbabweans and Malawians (table 8). Considering the fact that Zimbabwe and Malawi are neighbouring countries to South Africa and these countries have longer h istorical ties with the latter, Ethiopian migration to South Africa is substantial in size (Crush, 2011:18). What is more surprising in this data is the success rate of Ethiopians in refugee application compared to others in that particular year. As the table below shows, out of the total 10,715 Ethiopians applications, 3,130 of them were accepted by the South Africa government. That put them at the top of the ladder in terms of success rate with an average success rate of 28.9% (Crush, 2011:18)[49].

[49] The success rate of the refugee applications of the Zimbabwe and Malawi refugees (the two top application) in that particular year is found to be 4.4% and 0% respectively (Crush, 2011:18).

Table 8: Number of refugee application in South Africa and decisions in 2009

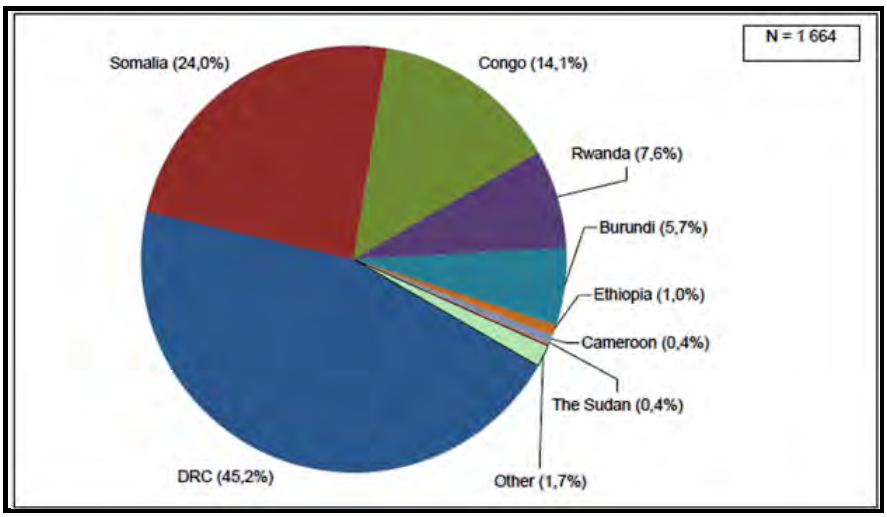
No.	Country of Origin	No. of Refugee applicants	Application accepted	Application refused	% of applicants from total applicants	% of Accepted applications
1	Zimbabwe	149,453	200	15,370	67.92%	0.13%
2	Malawi	15,697	-	7,749	7.13%	0.00%
3	**Ethiopia**	**10,715**	**1,307**	**3,130**	**4.87%**	**12.20%**
4	DRC	6,226	779	1,706	2.83%	12.51%
5	Bangladesh	4,923	31	3,310	2.24%	0.63%
6	India	3,632	-	1,045	1.65%	0.00%
7	Somalia	3,580	1,213	638	1.63%	33.88%
8	China	3,327	-	1,634	1.51%	0.00%
9	Congo	3,223	613	1,391	1.46%	19.02%
10	Pakistan	3,196	-	1,770	1.45%	0.00%
11	Nigeria	3,023	-	2,046	1.37%	0.00%
12	Mozambique	2,559	-	882	1.16%	0.00%
13	Tanzania	1,739	-	602	0.79%	0.00%
14	Niger	1,445	-	1,071	0.66%	0.00%
15	Uganda	1,425	20	759	0.65%	1.40%
16	Burundi	1,208	133	367	0.55%	11.01%
17	Zambia	1,000	-	266	0.45%	0.00%
18	Ghana	942	-	648	0.43%	0.00%
19	Cameroon	667	9	429	0.30%	1.35%
20	Kenya	624	-	276	0.28%	0.00%
21	Angola	335	7	132	0.15%	2.09%
22	Rwanda	275	17	68	0.12%	6.18%
23	Lesotho	258	-	54	0.12%	0.00%
24	Eritrea	219	202	71	0.10%	92.24%
25	Senegal	204	-	74	0.09%	0.00%
26	Algeria	133		50	0.06%	0.00%
	Total	**220,028**	**4,531**	**45,538**	**-**	**2.06%**

Source: Crush, 2009:18

Considering the presence of relative political stability in Ethiopia, and the fact that the majority of Ethiopian migrants to South Africa are economic migrants, the somewhat higher rate of asylum protection to Ethiopian applicants is surprising.

One possible explanation given by our returnee informants is the apparent good knowledge of Ethiopian migrants about how the system of application and its administration work because of the presence of strong networks that links old (settled) and new migrants. Moreover, Ethiopian applicants; use 'expert' knowledge, such as getting advanced information on what works and what does not work, to strengthen their case. Some may also resort to bribing officials. However, the 2011 data show a different picture. As the figure below indicates, out of the total of 1,664 migrants who obtained refugee permits in 2011, the share of Ethiopians is reported to be just 1% (16). The reason for this changed phenomenon is not clear.

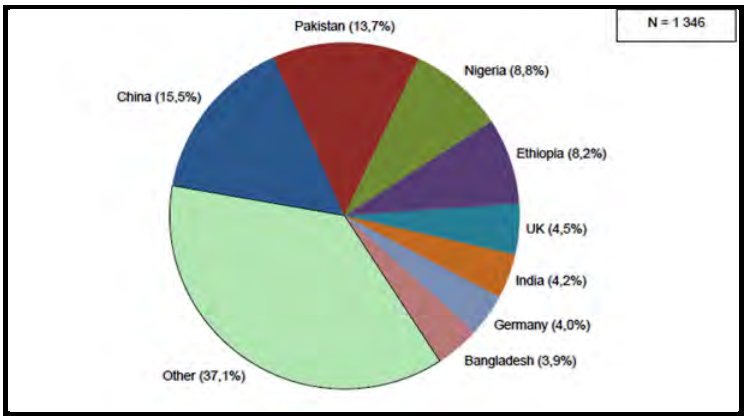
Figure 8: Percentage distribution of recipients of refugee permits, 2011



Source: Documented Immigrants in South Africa, 2011: 42

The other strategy of securing legal status in South Africa by the migrants is through business permits. Returnees indicated that this strategy is often used by economically better off migrants who accumulated sufficient capital to start their own business often using the privilege they secured as asylum seeker. Again, compared to migrants from other countries, the number of Ethiopian migrants securing business and work permits is relatively high. The 2011 data discussed above shows that out of the total 731 people who obtained business permits in 2011, 110 of them (8.2%) were Ethiopians. That made them the 4th highest next to Chinese, Pakistanis and Nigerians in terms of obtaining business permits in the host country. That means Ethiopians along with the Nigerians were the only applicants from African countries in the top eight countries with business permits in South Africa in the stated year (Documented Immigrants in South Africa, 2011).

Fig 1: Percentage distribution of recipients of business permits, 2011



Source:- Documented Immigrants in South Africa, 2011: 31)

4.6 Life in South Africa as Illegal Migrant

In spite of the increasing attention given to the problem, the number of illegal migrants and the problem caused by illegal migration and human trafficking in Ethiopia in general, and to South Africa, in particular are still unabated.[50] Likewise, detention and arrest of Ethiopian illegal migrants in different migration routes is a daily experience. News of ordeals of unsuccessful migrants and the horror stories in international and local media do not appear to slow down the number of people who want to migrate to their 'dreamland' in whatever means available. Even in the field interviews in Hadiya and Kembata-Tembaro Zones right after the two major horror incidents of 2009 that captured the attention of the international media and shocked the local population, many young people said that they were still eager to try their luck in South Africa in spite of the dangers they may face on the way to that country.

Detention of Ethiopian illegal migrants en route to South Africa is quite common. For instance, on June 24, 2014, a Zimbabwean newspaper, *Daily Nation*, reported that police have detained 37 Ethiopians who were on their way to neighbouring South Africa along the crocodile infested Limpopo River. Similarly, on September 30, 2014 a Zambian News paper, *Daily Mail*, came up with a story stating that the Zambian police arrested 26 Ethiopians who were believed to be in transit to South

[50] For instance, the Dire Dawa City Administration indicated that in six months time (September 2011 to June 2012) about 20,000 people had illegally migrated using the city and Djibouti as transit points to the Gulf (most probably to Yemen). Similar trends have been also observed in other regions (Reporter Amharic, Tir 12, 2006).

Africa for alleged unlawful entry into Zambia. The paper also indicated that the arrest brought the number of Ethiopians intercepted by police in that country to 141 in just less than a fortnight for alleged illegal entry to the country (Zambian Daily Mail, 2014). A Malawi online news source, *Nyasa times*, also declared the arrest of 100 Ethiopian migrants and five Malawian traffickers on November 18, 2014 on the border with Tanzania (Nyasatimes, 2014).

Studies on Ethiopian migrants in South Africa indicate that Ethiopian migrants are engaged in different types of jobs ranging from "small scale sales of various items to the importing of merchandise from China and its redistribution in bulk amongst other Ethiopian vendors" (Amel, 2012:37; Liqu, 2007;). However, street vending, locally known as "*hoza-hoza*" is the most common type of job in which Ethiopian migrants are engaged particularly in their early years of life as migrants (Liqu; 2007; Amel, 2012).

Small cities, urban and suburban areas are the major targets for *Hoza-Hoza* trader. They sell such merchandize as bed sheets, bed covers and household appliances moving around villages and knocking on every door in search of buyers either in cash or credit. Although the margin of profit of their business is said to be attractive, it has a high risk with possibilities of denial of payment for goods sold on credit. Moreover, there are also chances of being robbed or even killed by robbers and vigilantes as they wander from village to village in search of buyers.

It is reported that with the increasing knowledge of their environs and accumulating sufficient capital, migrants gradually change their jobs from *hoza-hoza* to better-income and better-secured jobs, such as setting up small stores, engaging in transport service and opening restaurants (Horwood 2009; Liqu, 2007). Few successful migrants even engage in small scale importing – importing merchandize from China and distributing same to the retailers. However, Ethiopian migrants (along with Somali migrants) hardly engaged in the manual work or construction work (Horwood, 2009). Generally, whatever job they do and at whatever level they work, compared to their previous status in Ethiopia most of the migrants are said to be economically better-off in South Africa.

It is often claimed that Ethiopian migrants are treated relatively fairly compared to migrants from other African countries. Unlike migrants from some other countries, Ethiopian migrants are not noted for their involvement in crimes and other illegal activities in South Africa (Horwood, 2009). This, in fact, among other things, is said to be one of the factors for relative tolerance of the local people towards Ethiopian migrants.

4.7 Xenophobia and attack on migrants in South Africa

Labour migration to South Africa, which was tolerated as a source of cheap source of labour for businesses largely owned by whites in the past, is now facing increasingly hostile attitude from the local population in the post-apartheid period. Competition for job opportunities is said to be at the centre of the xenophobic feelings towards migrants in South Africa. Migrants are also blamed for social problems such as crime and sexual violence.

The large influx of migrants to South Africa in recent decades coincided with high rate of unemployment, economic hardship and social problems particularly for the historically marginalized black population. Because of their increasing engagement in different economic activities, migrants from Africa became easy scapegoats for problems of unemployment and crimes (Posel, 2003: 6). The ill-feeling harboured among sections of the local (black) population towards migrants developed into an open xenophobia in post-apartheid period. This feeling is somehow fuelled by labour unions who "fear that immigrants will compete with black South Africans for jobs, housing, and resources" (Kevin, 1995:256).

Although xenophobic feelings towards migrants in South Africa were witnessed even in the apartheid times (Mazars *et. al*, 2013; Crush, 2008), it was, however, in the post-apartheid period that intense xenophobia and wider indiscriminate attacks by gangs of criminals and vigilantes are observed. For instance, in December 1994 and January 1995, in a wave of armed attacks, youth groups destroyed the homes and properties of undocumented migrants in Alexandra Township, outside of Johannesburg. Similarly, in 2000 seven xenophobic killings were reported in Cape Flat districts of Cape Town alone. Similarly, In January 2015 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that violence against foreign nationals and their businesses in several Johannesburg townships was increasing and there were "more than 700 documented cases of looting of shops owned by migrants from Somalia, Ethiopia and Bangladesh" (IOM, 2015).

The xenophobic sentiments have intensified in later years and reached its climax in 2008 in which attacks against migrants was sparked in the same Johannesburg Township of Alexandra and quickly spread to other townships. In this wave of violence, about 56 people (most of whom migrants) were killed, while hundreds of shops were looted and burnt in different towns. In the same way, a similar wave of xenophobic attack that captured international attention engulfed South Africa in early in 2015 after the killing of a local boy by a Somali migrant shop owner in an alleged attempted robbery in Soweto province. The xenophobic violence spread

like wildfire to other provinces and townships and caused severe human and property damage (International Business Times, 2015).

Ethiopians, like other migrants, were victims of these attacks. Among cases of attacks against Ethiopian migrants, on April 10, 2015, two Ethiopian brothers were critically injured when their shop, in a shipping container, was set on fire while they were trapped inside. One of the men died in hospital, while the other was taken to hospital fighting for his life. Likewise, in April, 2015 a similar attack took place in Durban in which shops of Ethiopian migrants were attacked, looted and destroyed. In the incident, one migrant was seriously wounded when the shop he was looking after was set on fire by petrol bomb (SABC News, 2015).

The South Africa government has taken various measures to deter illegal migration to the country, including establishing physical barriers (barbed wire fences and electrified fences which was later turned off) in the borders in which undocumented migrants sneak in and deportation. All the measures "to prevent or turn back cross-border undocumented flows of poor and less-skilled would-be labour migrants who have been described as border-jumpers" proved to be less successful (Cross *et al*, 2009: 10-11). The deportation of undocumented illegal migrants is equally unsuccessful as the effort has raised human rights questions. In addition, it does not discourage illegal migrants as "deported migrants often return within a few days of being sent out of the country"[51] (Cross *et.al*, 2009: 10-11).

4.8 Impact of migration to South Africa

Labour migration to South Africa has brought many impacts on the lives of the migrants, their families and communities. One of the major areas where impact is witnessed is in the area of economics. Remittances/economic benefits coming from South Africa are described as some of the major factors that incite families to push their children to migrate to that country.

Accordingly, it is reported that many Ethiopian migrants in South Africa send money back home. Remittances that come from South Africa could be divided into two broad kinds. The first kind is remittances that are usually used for family consumption. It is sent either regularly or on certain occasions. Occasional remittance is quite common during major holidays such as *Meskel*, Christmas,

[51] Deportation is the aggressively perused measure to combat illegal migration in South Africa. It is reported that in 1993 alone the country has reported to expel around 96,000 undocumented migrants to 39 countries of origins. Since 1994, South Africa has deported 1.7 million undocumented migrants to neighbouring states like Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho. In 2006 alone, 260,000 migrants were arrested and deported (Crush, 2008).

Ester, and New Year. The second type of remittance sent back home is the saving of the migrant themselves. It is money sent to trusted family members or close friends to keep it either in cash, often deposited in banks or in kind by purchasing assets, such as houses and farmlands.

Returnee informants indicated that migrants prefer to save their money back home due to the fact that they are unable to use formal bank services in South Africa because of their illegal status and insecurity. They also send money home using some unconventional methods. Again their illegal migrant status in South Africa deters them from using banks and money transfer companies to send money back home directly. As a result, there are some money transfer 'agents' who 'help' migrants to send money in thrust-based systems. These 'agents' are Ethiopians residing in South Africa with legal status to use banks and international money transfer companies. The migrants give the money and full address of the recipient to the Ethiopian 'agent' in South Africa in local currency who in return provides a secret code number to the sender. The 'agent' transfers the money to his/her partner in Ethiopia with the full address of the recipient and the secret code number. Meanwhile, the sender calls the recipient and informs the amount of money, the secret code number and the full address of the representative of the 'agent'. The 'agent' in Ethiopia once makes sure the identity of the recipient, that name of the sender, the code and amount of money are in order effect the payment in cheque (Getinesh, 2012). The agents charge for service often from the sender.

Another area where migration to South Africa has significant impact is on boys' education and aspiration to work in the country. Returnees, community members and teachers in Kembata-Tembaro and Hadiya Zones indicated that the expansion of the 'culture' of migration to South Africa has significant impact on the education of boys in areas. Although it is difficult to support it with statistical data, teachers claim that migration has increased school drop-outs, and lowered students' interest in education as means for their future lives. One high school teacher insisted that "some boys come to school just to pass time until they migrate to South Africa in one way or another. Thus, they leave school with little pretext. They do not take education seriously as a means for their future living. They aspire not to go to university, but to reach a certain age and migrate to South Africa". Although this is not true for all students in the areas, there are certainly some boys who dream day and night to migrate to South Africa.[52] In fact, migration to South

[52] In the course of the fieldwork in Kembata zone, we came across a young man, 23, who serves as police officer. He said that he had completed grade 10 and unable to pass the national exam to go to preparatory level. Thus, instead of going to private college, he joined the police force to buy time till

Africa is in the hearts and minds of many young people in the South. A Zonal police commander in SNNP Regional State commented that currently "South Africa has become the 'dreamland' of many young people aspiring to reach at any cost"[53]. This includes young people with secured jobs as well as fresh university graduates who do not yet get permanent jobs.

his brother, who promised to finance his journey, takes him to South Africa. We asked him if he would leave his job as police officer to migrate to South Africa illegally. "*Definitely!*" he replied.

[53] Interview with Erdeno Aweno, Deputy Commander of Haddiya Zonal Police (December 22, 2012).

5 Conclusion and ways forward

5.1 Concluding Remarks

Historically, the rate of international migration from Ethiopia has been low. But, as recent trends show, international migration is going to emerge as an important factor producing economic, social and political impacts. Some of the major conclusions that could be derived from this study include the following:

First, as the Ethiopian population is dominated by young people and there is a high degree of youth unemployment both in the rural and urban areas, international migration could be considered as a safety valve and would tend to continue in the coming years. The rate of international migration may even accelerate from the existing comparatively lower rate. As a result, the government should develop adequate policies and institutions which would minimize the adverse impacts of international migration and strengthen its positive impacts. In this respect, the experience of countries, like the Philippines, could give good lessons.

Second, Ethiopia's policy towards international migration has been largely episodic and reactive to major problems. There is lack of adequate institutional and policy frameworks in the management of labour migration. MoLSA, which is responsible for managing the issue, is ill equipped and too stretched to handle the issue.

Third, media reports and government pronouncements usually give more emphasis to the adverse impacts of migration, but it will be important to have a balanced and dispassionate view of the problem. Having a clear understanding of the problem – both the bane and the boon – would lead to the adoption of better and well informed policies.

Third, migration from Ethiopia is characterized by irregularity, mixing legal and illegal migrants as well as those who request political asylum in the receiving countries. The so-called 'illegal migrants' usually cross the boundary by their own free will and hence cannot be considered as victims of trafficking. The most prevalent problem requiring the attentions of law enforcement officials is, therefore, smuggling, not trafficking. However, the conditions in which domestic workers in the Gulf countries work under the *kafala* system have elements of trafficking.

Fourth, international migration cannot be stopped. Even if receiving and sending countries put barriers, people will find different ways to pass the barrier and cross

the borders. Thus, it is important to understand that banning of international labour migration and enforcement of strict regulatory regimes would force prospective migrants to the underground and make them vulnerable to smugglers.

Fifth, as far as the experience of Ethiopian migrant workers in the Gulf is concerned, there is not much distinction between legal and illegal workers. The terms of employment contracts were not enforced. There is a severe shortfall in the provision of protection services on the part of the Ethiopian government. If legal labour migration is going to be expanded, the legal options should be more attractive both in terms of payment and protection. Otherwise, there will be little incentive for prospective domestic workers to go through the legal channel.

Sixth, migrant workers from Ethiopia are neither prepared well, nor trained for the task and their lack of skills brings them problems and reduces their income. There is also little support within the country on the use of remittance money and the reintegration of return migrants.

Seven, concerning the undocumented migrants to South Africa, there is little room to make their migration legal as the process from the very outset is illegal. Unlike migration to the Gulf, there is hardly any demand for Ethiopian labour migrants in the host country.

5.2 The need for a comprehensive labour migration policy

> To minimize illegal migration, it is a must to lower the cost of legal migration and also increase its advantages both in terms of protection and the amount of wages. The workers should be given training and must have good skills. It is only in this way that the government could make legal migration more attractive.[54]

In recent years, Ethiopia has put in place a policy that aims at enhancing the role of the growing Diaspora community mainly in Western Europe and North America in the economic development of the country. The country has not, however, yet developed a comprehensive labour migration policy. There is a clear policy lacuna regarding the training, certification, protection, return and reintegration of migrant workers.

Regarding training, the 2009 labour exchange proclamation gives the task of ascertaining skill preparation of the migrant workers to the PEAs. In reality, the

[54]Interview with two experts, Kombolcha town, Labour and Social Affairs Office, South Wollo Zone (June 6, 2013).

PEAs provide orientation for half a day. Literally, those who go as domestic workers come from the countryside and hardly know what the households in their receiving countries look like. Partly, the problem between the employers and the employees emerge because of lack of knowledge and skill. In the first place, the private employment agencies are mainly interested in generating profit and, hence, are less inclined to ensure the skill preparation of the workers which they send abroad.

Second, the PEAs lack the capacity to undertake both tasks. The vast majority of the prospective migrant workers were recruited from the countryside and did not have some basic knowhow about the tasks that they will be expected to undertake in the receiving countries. This brings several adverse effects.

Box 22: Lack of preparation for domestic workers[55]

> The majority of the women who go for work in the Arab countries are from the countryside, they do not know the culture of the receiving country. They did not have any experience of using modern household facilities. When they arrive in the receiving country, they face multiple shocks – climate, culture and language, and also household facilities. The misunderstanding that will be created between the employees and the employers would lead to conflicts and violence. The problem is we send them without giving them at least some basic knowledge about what awaits them in the receiving countries.

One returnee migrant worker, in this respect, said that (Binyam, 2012):

> There is a big gap in lifestyle in Ethiopia and the Arab world. Many employers do not want to put up with this kind of situation and start to harass us, instead. It is very important for women, particularly those from rural areas, to become better acquainted with home appliances, so they are less likely to stumble when dealing with demanding employers.

In addition, poor preparation of migrant workers contributes to the low income they receive in the Gulf countries. The government came to realize the adequacy of leaving the issue of training or orientation to the employment agencies after the *Saudi big bang*. As a result, MoLSA began to cooperate with the Ministry of Education and regional education bureaus in order to provide training to the migrant workers. A curriculum was prepared by bringing expertise from the

[55] Interview with official of the South Wollo Zone Education Bureau, Dessie (June 13, 2013).

Philippines. Accordingly, two training modules, *care giving* and *household service* were developed. There is also a plan to provide certification for those who have completed the training offered by the Occupational Competency Assessment and Certification Centre (OCACC).[56]

Selected Technical and Vocational Colleges in different parts of the country were given the task of providing training to the prospective workers. There is no, however, clarity about the amount of time needed for the trainees to complete the course. Our informant in MoLSA said that the training is supposed to take one to three months,[57] while the head of the Woldia Polytechnic College, one of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training centres (TVETs) said, the training is designed for 788 hours. If training is provided 5 hours daily, trainees need 6.5 months to complete the course.[58] The minimum requirement for participation for the training, according to the head of the Woizero Sehin TVET College, for enrolment is set at 10th grade.

According to our informants in the TVET colleges, even if they made training in the two modules available for free for prospective migrants in 2012, the number of applicants was very low as compared to those who were seeking employment in the Gulf. For instance, in the Woldia Polytechnic College, only 40 trainees were enrolled. But the majority of the trainees left the course before completing the allotted time. By the time we visited the college in November 2012, there were only 12 trainees. According to our informants at the College, the lack of interest in the training could be explained by a number of interrelated factors. First, for those trainees who come outside of the Woldia area, the cost of supporting themselves while following the training in the towns is found to be beyond their means. Second, there was not that much incentive for the prospective migrants to finish the training programs. After all, those who did not participate in the training were able to find employment and travel to the Gulf countries.

Likewise, a training programme was launched by TVET Scholl in Iteyya town, Arsi Zone, in collaboration with the Zonal Labour and Social Affairs Department. However, the trainees explained that although they were eager to have the training and avoid the challenges others faced, they were not sure how much it would help them in finding better job aboard. They argued that unless there is a system put in

[56] Interview with an official of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Addis Ababa (May 20, 2013).

[57] *Ibid*.

[58] Interview with Head of the Woldia Polytechnic College, Woldia (June 19, 2013).

place to control that all prospective labour migrants take the training, their training would be simply a waste of time and money.[59]

Third, as lucidly pointed out by one of our informants in Woldia, what the prospective migrant workers wanted was not only the government to provide them training, but also to certify their abilities and help them in job placement and in the receiving countries. When the trainees were told that the TVET colleges will only provide training, but not be involved in job placement, the majority of the trainees left the programme. The experience with respect to training so far reveals the need not only to have training modules, but also certification and making certification one of the criteria for overseas employment.

The *Saudi big bang* and the 2013 deportations from that country have also clearly revealed how the Ethiopian government is ill prepared regarding the protection of documented and undocumented migrant workers in the Gulf. As has been repeatedly pointed out in this paper, the government on the main gave the task of protection of the migrant workers to PEAs. But the Agencies, as business enterprises, are neither expected to be seriously concerned about protection, nor do have the capacity to do so. They cannot also be held responsible for tens of thousands of undocumented and 'illegal' migrant workers. The Ethiopian government should adopt relevant policy and institutions that will help provide protection for migrant workers. In this respect, it will be worthwhile to learn from the experiences of traditional labour sending countries, like the Philippines, which have dedicated staff, for example in the form of labour attaché, in their diplomatic missions/consulates to follow up on the situation of migrant workers and provide shelter and repatriation services for distressed migrant workers.

It will be also important to devise policies that encourage the use of remittance transfers for productive purposes by migrant households. While it is difficult for the government to tell that families should spend remittance money on this or that activity, it would be possible to provide incentives for those who spend the money in asset building and economic empowerment by way of establishing cooperatives, and providing skills training and advice and loans. This would greatly contribute to the smooth return and reintegration of migrant workers.

In order to achieve the issues mentioned above, the country needs to develop a comprehensive labour migration policy. Such a policy should help to harmonize labour migration with education, youth and other policies. It should at least focus

[59]Focus group discussion with trainees in Eteyya town, TVET School, (April 8, 2013).

on training, protection of migrant workers, better ways of using remittances, and return and reintegration of migrant workers. The training component of the policy should have short term, medium and long term objectives. While it is important to provide training for prospective domestic workers in housekeeping and care-giving in the short term, it will be also very important for the country which has a large young and productive population to provide quality training which meets international standards in carefully selected fields that will have medium/high end market such as nursing, construction, information technology and others.

In this regard, Ethiopia can draw a constructive lesson from the Philippines, which is one of the largest sources of migrant workers in the world. In the period from 2008 to 2012, the employment contracts of more than two million migrant workers were processed (POEA ND). The migrant workers are broadly divided into two categories – those who work on the sea (seafarers) and those who work on the land. Philippine workers are deployed in more than ten countries. But the largest majority of the migrant workers went to Saudi Arabia as domestic workers.

Labour migration in the Philippines is an important sector of the economy. In 2013, the country received 26 Billion USD as remittance[60]. The country has integrated labour migration into its development strategies and plans. It has also well-developed policy and institutional frameworks in the management and regulation of labour migration. Different institutional and policy arrangements relating to labour migration evolved since the 1974 Labour Code, which for the first time incorporated policies on migrant workers. At present, the country has institutions that are responsible for the regulation, employment facilitation, workers' protection and reintegration of returning migrant workers (Orbeta, *et al*, 2009).

The Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA), which is responsible for the regulation of the industry, has two major functions - promotion of overseas employment and protection of migrant worker's rights and equitable labour practices. The agency is only responsible for Filipino overseas workers who leave the country for temporary employment (Orbeta, *et al*, 2009). In order to protect the rights of overseas workers, due emphasis has been placed on the role of private recruitment and manning agencies. POEA is the responsible government organ to provide license for private employment agencies. According to the rules, employment agencies should be at least 75 percent controlled and owned by Filipino nationals. As recruitment and manning agencies will be responsible for 'claims and liabilities' arising from the use of their licenses, they are required to

[60] World Bank, (2013) 'Developing Countries to Receive Over $410 Billion in Remittances in 2013'.

deposit a specific sum of money in a bank account. In 2003, recruitment and manning agencies were required to deposit 11,244 USD. POEA is also responsible for certifying the principal foreign agencies which work in collaboration with the domestic employment/recruitment or employment agencies. Accordingly, foreign agents will submit required documents and the Philippine Overseas Labour Office (POLO), which has branches in the main destination countries, ensures that the minimum requirements are fulfilled by the applications. In cases, where there are no POLO offices, POEA will undertake the certification of the foreign agent (Orbeta, *et a*l, 2009).

POEA rightly considers that one of the important ways of protecting overseas workers is to send workers who are qualified for their job and have a good understanding about the cultures and conditions of the countries in which they will be working. Accordingly, starting from 2006, any prospective migrant worker undergoes skills assessment by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The certificate by TESDA is a requirement for the processing of foreign employment. Workers who had prior proven experience of overseas employment will directly go through the TESDA skills assessment. The agency has also approved a minimum monthly wage of US$400 (POEA 2007). In recent years, the task of POEA was expanded from regulation to market development efforts. It is hence involved in market research and promoting employment opportunities. In the words of Rodriguez, this effectively rendered the Philippine state a ‘labour brokerage’ state (Fernadez, 2010:259).

While the workers are abroad, the Overseas Workers Welfare Agency (OWWA) is responsible for the protection of their rights. The Agency has two major mandates. ‘Firstly, the delivery of welfare services and benefits to temporary migrant workers, and, secondly, ensuring sustainability and fund viability for the continuous protection of Filipino migrant workers’ (Orbeta, *et al*, 2009:11). One of the most important functions of OWWA is repatriation of overseas workers in situations of distress and calamities. In cases where it is impossible to identify the recruitment and manning agency, OWWA bears the cost of repatriating stranded migrant worker. It also provides reintegration services for returning migrant workers. The finance for OWWA’s activities is raised by ‘US$25 contribution mandated to be paid by the hiring foreign principal or employer for each departing documented contract worker, which OWWA pools and invests on high yielding financial instruments’(Thomas, 2009 cited in Orbeta, *et al*, 2009:11).

Third, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is mandated to provide policy advice to the government. It also provides liaison services to Filipinos Overseas with appropriate government agencies.

Fourth, the newest addition to the institutional arrangement in the management and regulation of overseas employment in the Philippines includes the National Reintegration Centre for Overseas Filipino Workers. As the name indicates, this agency is responsible for reintegration of returning migrant workers into the society. In this respect, it provides multifaceted services for returning migrant workers including counselling about job creation and skills training (Orbeta, *et al*, 2009:11).

5.3 Policy recommendations

Ethiopian international labour migration is at a crossroads after the *Saudi big bang* and backlash in 2013. The government has temporarily banned the sending of migrant workers abroad in October 2013. This could give an important window for the government to consider policy and institutional options in order to better regulate and manage labour migration. If the right institutional frameworks are not quickly put in place and the moratorium is going to stay indefinitely, it will embolden illegal smugglers.

International migration cannot be just stopped. As far as there is the market in the host countries, there will be the supply from countries like Ethiopia either through the regular or irregular channels. Hence, it will be important to device better policies, institutions and practices that will help the management of labour migration. In this respect, on the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- **Comprehensive labour migration policy**

Ethiopia should adopt a comprehensive labour migration policy. This policy should be harmonized with youth, women and educational and training policies. Such a policy would help to develop short, medium and long-range strategies to be proactive.

- **Institutional set up in the governance of labour migration**

As has been clearly stated in this study, MoLSA is over stretched and ill equipped in the management of labour migration. It has also other key issues to address – labour and social affairs. Hence, considering the experience of the Philippines, it

will be important to devise institution/s that will autonomously regulate labour migration. The new institutions should be mandated for job promotion, regulation of private employment agencies, protection, and reintegration of return migrants. For the provision of protection services, the new institution should have branch offices in the major labour receiving countries and provide shelter and emergency repatriation programmes.

- **Training and labour promotion**

So far, the majority of Ethiopian migrant workers were sent with little or no preparation about the type of job, culture and climate that await them in the receiving countries. Training should be an important criterion for overseas employment. It will be also important to support those who were trained in job placement. In the short term, if there is the possibility to travel without training, prospective migrants may consider it as waste of time. But if the government makes sure that those who are better trained are going to have better payments and protection, in the long term, the majority of the prospective employees will be interested to take the required training.

It will also be important for the government agency/department responsible for labour migration to work on market research and promotion of labour. Fields of areas in which workers are needed overseas should be selected and training should be facilitated. By doing this it could be possible not only to make Ethiopian human resources marketable but also increase the amount of money that the country earns from remittance income.

- **Creation of a data base and procedures of distress management**

One of the few positive lessons that Ethiopia can learn from the 2013 Saudi backlash is the need to have more accurate data about regular and irregular Ethiopian migrant workers who work in the Gulf countries, where unfortunately, massive deportations without due process is possible. Better response to such crisis requires the availability of information about the whereabouts of Ethiopian migrants and their actual number. This could be achieved by the use of diplomatic missions or innovative Information Technology mediums like Facebook and others. The other crucial lesson was the need to develop protocols and procedures on how such crisis is going to be managed at federal and regional levels.

- **Better coordination among labour sending countries and international institutions**

One of the chief instruments for the protection of migrant workers is the signing of a bilateral labour agreement between labour sending and receiving countries. But the receiving countries usually play supplier countries against each other. In 2012, Ethiopia agreed to supply the Saudis, when the other traditional supplier countries refused to send their workers. But after Ethiopia put a ban, the Saudis agreed with the Philippines to sign a bilateral agreement and also raise the salaries of domestic workers. The important lesson that this provides is the need by the labour sending countries to learn from each other and also to develop a common (multilateral) framework with the intension of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of domestic workers in the labour receiving countries, instead of engaging in mutually damaging competition.

- **Enhancing the role of civil society**

Ethiopian civil societies, in particular, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), were instrumental in advocating the rights of migrant domestic workers starting from the end of the 1990s. But EWLA and other CSOs that advocate the rights of women were severely undermined by the 2009 charities and societies proclamation, which prevents CSOs that receive more than 10 percent of their income from foreign donors from engaging in advocacy work. It will be important to relax the law to allow CSOs that work on the advocacy of women, particularly migrant domestic workers so that their concerns could be aired both within the country and abroad through CSOs. Ethiopian CSOs should be encouraged to team up with their counterparts in the receiving countries so voices are made regarding the violations of migrant workers. CSOs should be also allowed to work on the fighting of smugglers and swindlers, who prey on women who seek overseas employment opportunities.

- **Prevention of Illegal migration to South Africa**

As it is hardly possible to legalize the current migration to South Africa, there is a strong need to enhance cooperation between law enforcement agencies in Ethiopia, South Africa and the transit countries in order to crack down the illegal brokers and smugglers networks. Moreover, there is a need to current efforts to educate the public about the adverse impacts of illegal migration to South Africa.

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