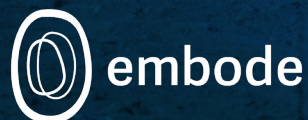# THEY SNATCHED FROM ME MY OWN CRY

The interplay of social norms and stigma in relation to human trafficking in Ethiopia.
Case Study: Jimma and Arsi Zones

IOM UN MIGRATION

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from the British people

Cover photos: A group of migrants from Ethiopia in Djibouti. They are planning to transit to Yemen before hoping to eventually make it to Saudi Arabia. © IOM 2018, Olivia HEADON.

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# THEY SNATCHED FROM ME MY OWN CRY

The interplay of social norms and stigma in relation to human trafficking in Ethiopia.
Case Study: Jimma and Arsi Zones

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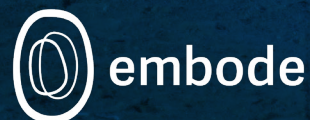
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# | GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS |

| | |
|---|---|
| BLA | Bilateral Labour Migration Agreement |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| ETB | Ethiopian Birr |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| JU | Jimma University |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| MoLSA | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ethiopia |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MOWCYA | Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Ethiopia |
| NPC | National Partnership Coalition |
| NRM | National Referral Mechanism |
| NATTF | National Anti-Trafficking Task Force |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PTSD | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| SoM | Smuggling of Migrants |
| SNNPR | Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region |
| TiP | Trafficking in Persons |

# | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY |

This report explores how social norms and stigma can be drivers of vulnerability to trafficking and barriers to effective reintegration of survivors in Ethiopia. It explores the ways in which social norms and expectations can heighten the risk of trafficking and exploitation of individuals, as well as in specific target communities. It also builds understanding on how post-trafficking, stigma and related social norms can contribute to maltreatment and isolation for victims within their home communities, as well as have an impact on access to and quality of care from service providers in Ethiopia. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the key findings from the research.

## The opportunities and risks for migrants are impacted by gender norms

*How family roles and responsibilities play out along gender lines*
Gender norms relating to familial obligations and who is considered responsible for supporting the family influence migration choices. In Jimma Zone, the research found that this duty was placed on women, resulting in many females from the area migrating. However, the sociocultural norms and patriarchal traditions in Arsi Zone meant that females are expected to stay at home, and males are considered more responsible for financially supporting the family. As such there appeared to be a significantly higher rate of men migrating than women from Arsi.

*Modes of transit and associated risks often differ for males and females*
Whether migrating regularly or irregularly, most female migrants are flying to countries in the Middle East.[1] Families are generally aware of the risk of sexual violence against females migrating overland, and therefore prefer their daughters to travel by plane where they are seldom exposed to abuse or trafficking during transit.[2] In contrast, aspiring male migrants usually travel irregularly by foot. They undertake perilous journeys, and what starts out as a voluntary and independent journey, quickly turns into a situation of trafficking. Male returnees interviewed described being physically tortured by brokers to extract large sums of money, pushing them into further poverty.

*Employment opportunities and related risks are highly gendered*
The experiences and types of risks vary between male and female migrants due to the highly gender-segregated labour market. For female migrants, most are employed as domestic workers in the Middle East. Many female returnees reported abuses by their employers. However, seeking assistance was difficult due to being confined inside by their employers' homes. Male migrants generally found it more difficult to find employment than females but those who did usually worked as daily labourers on farms, shepherding or on construction sites. The work was irregular and low-paying, and many males also experienced exploitation by employers. Working informally without work permits in public outdoor areas also meant that males are more readily identified by authorities and thereby more vulnerable to arrest, imprisonment and deportation than their female counterparts who work in private homes.[3]

[1] Bilgili, Ö., Kuschminder, K. and Siegel, M., 2018. Return migrants' perceptions of living conditions in Ethiopia: A gendered analysis. *Migration studies, 6*(3), pp. 345–366.
[2] Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E. and Tefera, B., 2014. Rethinking the 'Maid Trade': Experiences of Ethiopian adolescent domestic workers in the Middle East. London: *Overseas Development Institute*, pp. 1–7.
[3] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* Danish Institute for International Studies, pp. 1–69.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Safe migration interventions and programmes need to be gender-responsive, considering the different risks and vulnerabilities to male and female migrants.

2. Awareness-raising efforts for safe migration among communities should include addressing sociocultural norms and stereotypes related to masculinity and femininity that heighten vulnerabilities and produce negative migration outcomes.

3. Formal migration channels and processes need to be expanded to be more accessible to Ethiopian citizens seeking to migrate, particularly for males. Such expansions should be informed by data-driven assessments undertaken by the Government of Ethiopia to identify available job opportunities for both sexes in destination countries and supported through formal bilateral labour agreements.

4. Improved government oversight of regular migrants in destination countries and enhancement of destination specific support mechanisms is needed. This could be done through the already established government labour attaché system in foreign Ethiopian Missions. Examples of how this could be improved can be taken from other significant labour-sending countries such as the Philippines.[4]

5. Enhancement and further resourcing of local organizations and migrant worker networks in key destination countries that provide support to migrants and victims of trafficking.

### The desire to improve their lives outweighs the risks of trafficking for aspiring migrants

*Awareness-raising alone has limited effectiveness in preventing risky irregular migration*
In recent years, the Government of Ethiopia, NGOs and community leaders have undertaken awareness-raising about the risks of migration to try to stop unsafe irregular migration. However, returnees indicated that, in the absence of credible alternatives, awareness-raising about the dangers associated with irregular migration has often not resulted in young people changing their decision to migrate unsafely. This is also evident by the high rates of young people re-migrating, despite negative experiences during previous migration attempts. However, there did appear to be a "risk-opportunity imbalance", whereby young people, particularly first-time migrants, underrate the risks of migration and over-estimate the chance of success.[5] One contributing factor for this is the cultural and religious beliefs about "luck" and the "will of God" deciding their destiny.

*Migrants are perceived as "taking the easy way out" of poverty*
Youth in rural areas experience particularly high rates of unemployment due to lack of job opportunities and increasing landlessness, resulting in young people resorting to migration to urban areas and abroad to seek work. Most strategic stakeholders interviewed were compassionate to the experiences of victims of trafficking and exploitation, as well as understanding of the drivers that led to their decisions to migrate. However, during the research, evidence was found of victim-blaming among some stakeholders mandated to support migrants and trafficked persons.

*Decision-making and parental influence in Jimma and Arsi*
The returnees interviewed all claimed that migrating was their own decision and they were not pressured by their family. However, there was a significant difference in the decision-making and planning process between aspiring migrants in Jimma and Arsi Zones. In Jimma Zone, decisions about migration generally involved consultation with close family members. In Arsi Zone, the decision to migrate was usually made in isolation and migrants left home without discussing or informing their parents or family. In cases where migrants are extorted by traffickers, this can result in further guilt and blame of the migrant for the debt caused to their family, who were not consulted on the decision.

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[4] The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), under the Department of Labour and Employment, regulates the recruitment and overseas employment of Filipino migrant workers, while the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) administers welfare services to Filipino workers abroad.
[5] Gezie, L.D., Yalew, A.W. and Gete, Y.K., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. *BMC public health, 19*(1), pp. 1–11.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Job creation and generating income opportunities for young people in their communities is key to preventing unsafe migration. Strengthening and further resourcing of Rural Job Creation and Food Security Agency is required to help achieve it.

7. Community education needs to move beyond just awareness-raising on the dangers of migration to include risk reduction. It should include pre-departure information on what specific actions young people can take to mitigate risks if they do decide to migrate, as well as services they can reach out to for assistance if abuse or exploitation occurs. An assessment should also be undertaken to determine what are the most trusted sources of information and effective modes of transmission for the target population (whether through mass media, anti-trafficking groups in schools, or community conversations led by local leaders or other returnees).

8. Strategic stakeholders need to better recognize the positive role of parents in trying to protect and support their children. The Government of Ethiopia, NGOs and CSOs can assist parents with accurate information and encourage them to have open discussions about migration with their children. Education among young males is needed in Arsi (and potentially other regions in Ethiopia based on further study) on the importance of family discussions and agreement about migration decisions.

9. Further research is needed into other localities in Ethiopia with high rates of irregular migration, such as SNNPR, Amhara and Tigray Zones, to assess the levels of awareness of migration risks among youth, decision-making processes and parental influence.

## Recovery and reintegration of returnees is marred by blame and shame

*Victims of trafficking and exploitation are blamed for "failed" migration*
Discrimination and ostracism were experienced by a number of the returnees within communities, especially towards those that had been "unsuccessful" in their migration attempts and had not been able to send home remittances. However, this attitude appeared to be held more among the broader community than the actual families of returnees. In addition, migrants themselves carry a lot of guilt and blame for the financial loss experienced by their family who either funded their migration and/or had to pay a ransom to traffickers. As a result, returnees are often undertaking risky re-migration in order to try to repay the debt and make it up to those whom they feel they have let down.

*Negative community perceptions of returnee migrants cause further distress for those that return home*
Due to exposure to different cultures and practices in destination countries, as well as experiencing highly traumatic events, migrants frequently find it challenging to integrate back into local life when they return home. Managing feelings of frustration, anger, shame and sadness was particularly difficult for some returnees and would cumulate in behaviours that family, friends and other community members do not understand; often leading to strained or even broken relationships. Negative community perception and attitudes towards returnee migrants caused further isolation and distress and was found to impact opportunities for marriage, employment and other social positions in the community.

*Unsafe media reporting can cause returnee migrants and survivors of trafficking further harm*
As the media are responsible for providing information and stories to the public, the narratives and depictions of migrants in mass communication can either help perpetuate or eradicate negative and harmful attitudes. The media have a responsibility and duty of care to protecting returnees they interview from further harm. However, cases were found of news outlets publishing identifying information and photographs of trafficking victims.[6] Such situations have at times resulted in these victims experiencing community stigma and discrimination.[7]

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[6] This was based on a rapid review of online media articles about Ethiopian migrants and victims of trafficking.
[7] Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. *Leaving the past behind: When victims of trafficking decline assistance.* Oslo: Fafo, pp. 123–133.

*Impact of religion on reintegration experiences*

Muslim families often prefer their daughters to migrate to Arab countries due to the religious affiliation. Despite this, some Muslim migrants still experience judgement and blame within their home communities, as simply migrating abroad can be viewed as sufficiently "deviant". Christian migrants working as domestic workers in the Middle East are more likely to experience stress[8] as well as increased risk of abuse[9] due to religious bigotry in destination countries. As a result, some Christian migrants pretend to be Muslim whilst working abroad. In addition, religious discrimination and bigotry is often experienced by Christian migrants upon returning home, requiring them to go through extensive rituals to be reaccepted into their Church.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Empowerment programmes, such as microfinance, skills training and entrepreneurship development, need to be expanded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to reach returnee migrants and victims of trafficking in remote, rural communities.

11. National reform is needed to strengthen the capacity of government agencies, CSOs and NGOs working on receiving and reintegration of returnees. There is a need for a multi-stakeholder process to agree a national, timebound and funded Migrant Returnee strategy (with local implementers also involved), and a review of the operationalization of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), including identification of victims so that tailored support can be provided. The strategy should include not only an overview of how to improve support services, but also give significant cognisance to the resources of remittances, skills, knowledge and experiences that migrants bring back to Ethiopia. Such resources can be harnessed to support job and income creation, entrepreneurship, as well as bilateral relations with destination countries.

12. Communities and families need further education about the challenges migrants face and how to best support returnees and ensure they are warmly welcomed back into their home communities. This should be in partnership with and led by community elders and religious leaders whose opinions and guidance are highly respected in communities.

13. Increased focus and investment is needed by both government and NGOs/CSOs into community resources to provide emotional and psychosocial support for returnee migrants. This could include establishing support groups (which should be separate for males and females) in which returnees can share experiences and/or participate in social activities.

14. Media reporting should include information and advice on what families, friends and communities can do to support returnees and make the transition back into their home life easier. Training should be provided to journalists and editors on the issue of migration and trafficking to ensure well-informed reporting. Special attention needs to be given to the responsibility of the media to ensure the protection of victims of crime, including the importance of anonymity to prevent against social stigma.

15. The Government of Ethiopia should collaborate with NGOs and CSOs to capture and record information on trafficking in a national centralized database which can be used to support policymaking and programme decisions.

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[8] Habtamu, K., Minaye, A. and Zeleke, W., 2017. Prevalence and associated factors of common mental disorders among Ethiopian migrant returnees from the Middle East and South Africa. *BMC psychiatry, 17*(1), pp. 1–11.

[9] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

## Victims of sexual abuse experience extreme shame and stigma

*Returnee migrants are stigmatized in communities for fear of carrying diseases*
Victims of trafficking and returnee migrants who have experienced sexual violence during the migration process (usually by brokers, employers and/or authorities) often face stigmatization. Some NGO staff and government office representatives interviewed stated that some community members feared that returnees would bring back sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS which could be spread to others.

*Female victims of sexual abuse are at risk of being ostracized and outcast*
Devout religious beliefs and strong traditional values in Ethiopia mean that high importance is placed on the virginity of females.[10] Females that are not virgins are often considered "unsuitable" for marriage and "unworthy" to be mothers. When female migrants are raped during migration, knowledge of their victimization often does not mitigate the stigma and victim-blaming. In addition, given the high risk of sexual assault against female migrants, especially those who migrate informally overland, rumours about what is perceived to have happened to her, rather than what actually did happen, can lead to accusations and stigma. As a result, even females who do not experience sexual abuse during their migration can still face difficulties being accepted back into the community due to assumptions and rumours.

*Male victims of sexual abuse experience extreme shame*
Numerous interviewees, including male migrants themselves, stated that rape was one of the risks that males face during the migration process, particularly by brokers whilst en-route. However, male victims are unable to discuss the abuse or seek help due to stigmatization of homosexuality. For young men that are sexually abused, there is a perceived loss of masculinity which doesn't fit into the cultural, religious and traditional perceptions of male identity. This means that male victims of such crimes not only suffer from the psychological trauma of the actual abuse, but also from felt stigma and potential ostracism by their friends and family.[11] As a result, males are less likely to engage in counselling and other help-seeking behaviour. However, even in the rare instances they do seek support, due to the lack of recognition that males can be victims of sexual violence, services tailored to the needs of male victims do not exist in Ethiopia.

*Stigma creates barriers to help-seeking among survivors*
The stigma experienced by both male and female victims of sexual violence has major implications for both reporting cases to authorities as well as accessing support services. Victims of trafficking and sexual crimes are reluctant to report due to the social stigma attached to the experience. Moreover, the likelihood of sexual abuse victims seeking counselling or support for their traumatic experiences is notoriously difficult. Victims, and even their families, are often fearful that accessing services from anti-trafficking organizations or NGOs assisting returnee migrants can result in identifying them as sexual assault victims within their communities.[12]

[10] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des études africaines, 53*(1), pp. 27–46.
[11] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.
[12] Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. *Leaving the past behind: When victims of trafficking decline assistance.* pp. 123–133.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Further research is recommended to better understand the prevalence of sexual assault of male migrants, the barriers they face in seeking help, and how they can best be supported within their families and communities. This should be conducted in a way that allows for anonymity in participant responses.

17. The Government of Ethiopia should undertake the identification and assessment of services and resources to help victims of sexual violence, especially for males, and institutionalizing arrangements for referral. This information should then be shared with and utilized by NGOs and CSOs supporting returnee migrants and victims of trafficking who are unable to offer these services directly.

18. During vulnerability assessments of returnees, staff/professionals should provide information and advice on quality counselling and support services available to victims of sexual violence and encourage help-seeking behaviour. Wherever possible, psychologists and mental health experts should be used in the assessment and intervention stages.

19. Training for government officials, NGO/CSO staff and health workers should cover the sexual abuse of migrants, the nuances between the experiences of male and female victims, and how to sensitively support them in their recovery. This should include special considerations and approaches, such as friendly and non-judgemental language and the option of a counsellor based on their gender preference.

## Mental health problems are misunderstood, highly stigmatized and left untreated

*Beliefs that mental health problems are a result of supernatural causes*
Some victims of trafficking and migrants experience serious mental health issues due to an array of stresses and traumatic experiences during migration as well as ostracism and stigma upon their return home. However, there is a prevailing belief in some areas of Ethiopia that mental health problems are due to supernatural causes and a result of sin, rather than understanding it to be an outcome of trauma. As a result, community members often avoid and reject returnees with mental health issues, and families will usually seek out the help of religious leaders to conduct prayers, spiritual rituals or even exorcisms.

*Returnees don't speak up about their problems due to concerns about the effects on others*
Returnees often do not reveal the extent of their traumatic experiences and the suffering they have faced to their families, as they say they do not want to "burden" them with additional problems. A number of participants indicated that they did not speak with their parents or other family members about their traumatic experience because they could not understand the suffering they had gone though. All the returnees interviewed implicitly or explicitly expressed that they feared losing social acceptance from their family, friends and the community at large if they spoke about their experiences.

*Service providers need further capacity-building*
Despite the fact that mental health problems rank among the most common effects of abuse and exploitation experienced by migrants, NGO staff and health workers appear to have very limited knowledge about the often fragile mental health status of the returned migrant population.[13] The services addressing mental health concerns of returnees are sparse and difficult to access. In addition, even where mental health services are available and accessible, due to the risk of discrimination and ostracism within their communities, returnees suffering from mental health issues don't tend to seek professional help to address their psychological distress.

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[13] Zeleke, W., Minaye, A. and Kygana, G., 2015. Mental health and somatic distress among Ethiopian migrant returnees from the Middle-East. *International Journal of Mental health and Psychiatry, 1*, pp. 1–6.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

20. In order to cultivate public understanding about mental health and to break down misconceptions and stigma, public campaigns and improved media reporting are needed. These should focus on the causes of mental health issues, professional services available, how to support those experiencing mental health problems, and actions for maintaining good mental health. Testimonies from respected medical professionals as well as those who have overcome mental health problems (including returnees) would also help to show that recovery is possible and proven.

21. Community education is needed on how to better support returnees experiencing mental health issues. This should be culturally sensitive and focus on building the knowledge and capacity of community elders, spiritual leaders, traditional healers and families in a way that still respects and involves their religious beliefs.

22. Beliefs and concerns held by family members need to be taken into account when planning for interventions with returnees experiencing mental illness. Treatment plans should incorporate the impact of the illness on the family as well as individual patients.

23. Staff providing services to returnee migrants and survivors of trafficking need to be better trained and equipped in the area of mental health, both in conducting initial screening and assessments, as well as the delivery of counselling and psychosocial support.

24. Strengthening and institutionalization of cross-sector collaboration and referral linkages is needed between those receiving and supporting returnees (i.e. NGOs and CSOs) and medical institutions (i.e. hospitals and clinics).

25. Expansion and/or development of institutions and facilities that can provide mental health services and trauma counselling is needed. This should include outreach services to rural communities that are unable to easily access services in major towns and cities.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 RESEARCH RATIONALE AND FOCUS

This report explores how social norms and stigma can be drivers of vulnerability to trafficking and barriers to effective reintegration of survivors. The research was undertaken to support IOM's "Assessing Stigma for Prevention, Improved Response and Evidence Base (ASPIRE)" project in Ethiopia. It explores the ways in which social norms and expectations – related to gender, ethnicity and other aspects of social identity – can heighten the risk of trafficking and exploitation of individuals, as well as in specific target communities. The research also builds understanding on how post-trafficking, stigma and related social norms can contribute to maltreatment and isolation for victims within their home communities and impact access to and quality of care from service providers in Ethiopia.

An assessment of literature was undertaken to prepare a conceptual foundation to inform the research and identify any gaps in information and evidence.[14] The literature review revealed an ample body of research into the economic push and pull factors of migration in Ethiopia.[15] Research into the experiences and risks of trafficking and exploitation of Ethiopian migrants is also readily available and valuable, although substantially more research exists on the specific vulnerabilities and trafficking experiences of female migrants[16] compared to males. Whilst some research exists that explores gender norms in Ethiopia,[17] only a few studies have explored gender in relation to migration and trafficking in Ethiopia.[18] In addition, there is limited research into stigma towards returnee migrants and trafficking survivors. Where research has explored reintegration challenges, they have tended to focus primarily on intra-familial relationships. Literature has not focused on how stigma plays out at a broader level within community relations, and how this may drive re-migration and re-trafficking.[19] In addition, robust empirical research on assessing the dynamics between returnee migrants / trafficking survivors and local governance and service structures is also lacking. Evidence-based literature that explores stigma associated intricacies of accessing services or the impact of programmes on community integration in Ethiopia is largely absent.[20]

For these reasons, this research focuses on identifying and understanding the social pressures and expectations put on people to migrate, and what factors increase vulnerability to trafficking. In addition, it explores the social and relational challenges involved in the reintegration of returnee migrants and the roles played by family members, communities and service providers. The overarching emphasis of the report is on examining the realities on the ground with regards to migration, with a focus on Arsi and Jimma, and how social norms, structures and stigma increase vulnerabilities to trafficking and impact effective service provision. Wherever possible, the report also considers examples of positive reintegration action and how these could be scaled up throughout Ethiopia.

This report consists of five sections. The first section details the conceptual framework used in this research – including the definitions of social norms, stigma and reintegration – and an overview of how these concepts are applied to assess their impact on trafficking victims. Section two details the methodology, location sites, ethical considerations and limitations of the research. Section three provides an overview of the broader economic, political and sociocultural context in Ethiopia that drives migration, a snapshot into the trafficking situation in Ethiopia and particularly vulnerable groups, as well as national anti-trafficking legislation. Section four presents the primary research findings and analysis of the social norms and stigma. These are broken into five main focus areas that explore gender, decision-making, reintegration, sexual violence and mental health; all through the lens of social norms and stigma. Case studies are also presented to provide context to the findings. Each section concludes with policy and programming recommendations for government, CSOs, NGOs and media. Section five of the report then concludes with final remarks about the findings.

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[14] This is based on the literature review undertaken as part of this research. A list of literature reviewed is available in Annex II.
[15] Admassie, A., Nuru, S., Ferede, T., 2017. Migration and Forced Labour: An Analysis on Ethiopian Workers. International Labour Organization. pp. 1–65.
[16] See Abdi Ali, D., 2018; Eresso, M.Z., 2019; Getnet et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2014; Nisrane et al., 2020; and Reda, A.H., 2018.
[17] See Crivello, G. and van der Gaag, N., 2016; Jones et al., 2014; and Jones et al., 2017.
[18] See Bilgili, et al., 2018 and Eresso, M.Z., 2019.
[19] One exception being Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020.
[20] Research by Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. explores the influence of stigma on assistance-seeking behaviour and experiences of service delivery for trafficked persons. Whilst this research is not specific to Ethiopia, some useful parallels can be drawn.

## 1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research applies the concepts of social norms and stigma to assess their impacts as drivers of unsafe migration and vulnerability to trafficking. It further examines the impacts of social norms and stigma as practical and behavioural barriers of returnee migrants' reintegration and access to effective service provision.

### 1.2.1. Human trafficking

Notwithstanding the potentially significant economic benefits of obtaining foreign employment, migration is a risky proposition. Migrants are exposed to various risks of violence and exploitation throughout the migration cycle, one of which is trafficking in persons. Though migration and trafficking are different, irregular and unsafe migration increases the risk of migration turning into trafficking.[21] Migration and trafficking in persons can therefore be seen as a continuum, rather than a single event or step,[22] entailing a *"series of organized acts and circumstances with an extensive range of actors involved, exposing the migrants to various kinds of abuse and exploitation which is difficult to prevent".*[23]

Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transferring, harbouring or receiving of a person for exploitative purposes through the use of force, threats, coercion, deception[24] or other means.[25] Trafficking can occur across international borders as well as internally from one location to another within a country, and is enabled by a complex and interwoven web of migration intermediaries and service providers, ranging from families and friends, local brokers, employment agents, travel agencies, state officials and employers.[26] Elements of trafficking, as defined by the Palermo Protocol,[27] are highly likely to touch a migrant's journey – spanning recruitment during pre-migration, exploitation and violence during transit and in destination countries, and human rights violations during repatriation or return. Throughout the migration cycle, a person may move in and out of trafficking or exploitative situations, highlighting the dynamic and fluctuating nature of migration, rather than it being a static experience.

### 1.2.2. Stigmatization of trafficked persons

An effective response to the health and psychosocial needs of victims of trafficking requires adequate understanding of and support in navigating the process of "returning home". For many, the experience of stigma is a confronting reality and can be caused by a complex social process of social norms interacting with the perceived behaviour and merit of the returnee.

It is pertinent to note that the term "stigma" was originally used to refer to the markings on Greek slaves; separating them from free citizens.[28] More recently, stigma is used in the wider sense to refer to social disapproval and reactions and attitudes towards what is considered to be disgraceful or defective. The concept of stigma generally falls into two categories – "felt stigma" and "enacted stigma".[29] Felt stigma refers to the *"shame and expectation of discrimination that prevents people from talking about their experiences and stops them seeking help".*[30] Enacted stigma is the *"experience of unfair treatment by others".*[31] Because reintegration occurs on multiple levels – both at the individual, the family and community levels[32] – felt stigma and enacted stigma are equally harmful to the successful reintegration of trafficked persons.

Trafficked persons live with prevailing stereotypes, negative attitudes and discrimination associated with trafficking. To navigate felt and enacted stigma associated with trafficking, many survivors choose not to reveal the full extent of their trafficking experiences to family members or to keep it a secret.[33] Such narratives of trafficking survivors provide insight not

[21] Minaye, A. and Zeleke, W., 2015. Re-conceptualizing human trafficking: The experiences of Ethiopian returnee migrants. *Journal of Trafficking, Organized Crime and Security, 1*(1), pp. 9–23.

[22] Feingold, D.A., 2010. Trafficking in numbers: The social construction of human trafficking data. Andreas, P. & K. M. Greenhill (eds.), Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts: The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict. *Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2010),* pp.46-74.

[23] Reda, A.H., 2018. An investigation into the experiences of female victims of trafficking in Ethiopia. African and Black Diaspora: *An International Journal, 11*(1), p.12.

[24] Where a child is the victim, no use of force, threats, coercion, deception etc is required for it to be classified as trafficking.

[25] Summarized from the Palermo Convention.

[26] Reda, A.H., 2018. pp. 87–102.

[27] United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, a supplement of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

[28] Gray, A.J., 2002. Stigma in psychiatry. *Journal of the royal society of medicine, 95*(2), pp. 72–76.

[29] Scambler, G., 1998. Stigma and disease: changing paradigms. *The Lancet, 352*(9133), pp. 1054–1055.

[30] Gray, A.J., 2002. Stigma in psychiatry. p.72.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Fonseca, A., Hart, L. and Klink, S., 2015. Reintegration: effective approaches. *International Organization for Migration,* p. 13.

[33] Reda, A.H., 2018. pp. 87–102.

only into their perspective as victims living with stigma as part of their social context but also raise deeper questions about how stigma shapes coping strategies and assistance-seeking behaviour during reintegration. Accessing available services is a complex process, as trafficked persons must not only come to terms with the exploitation and violence they suffered, but also to do it in the public eye, among family and the wider community.[34] Part of the reintegration process is therefore anticipating and confronting stigma associated with trafficked persons and their experiences.

Therefore, consideration is always required into what precisely causes stigma – whether it is due to leaving home, failure to provide remittances to support the family, being a victim of sexual violence, or other factors. In addition, the degree of stigma can be affected by what extent the victim is seen as culpable, whether their status and belonging within a family or community is impacted, and whether different forms of trafficking are less stigmatizing, for example, forced labour compared to sexual exploitation.[35]

### 1.2.3. Social norms

Social norms are behavioural rules (usually informal and unwritten) on what is considered acceptable and appropriate behaviour within a group or given society. They can be classified as "descriptive norms", which are what other people do, and "injunctive norms", which are what others approve of. Descriptive norms are when a person observes the behaviour of others in the group and follows suit. Descriptive norms thereby help to prevent "social collision". On the other hand, injunctive norms are when a person sees how others react to compliance or non-compliance with the norm and thereby form beliefs about what should be done. Injunctive norms enable people to build "alliances" through gaining social approval. Ultimately, people usually *"comply with the norm because they anticipate social rewards for doing so and social punishments for not complying".*[36]

Social norms vary across cultural contexts, as do the strength or influence of particular norms. Some communities might be more lenient about compliance, whilst others, particularly in small, isolated rural communities, may tolerate very little divergence. In such contexts, social norms exert strong influence and result in social sanctions for transgression.[37] In Ethiopia, one of the strongest cultural mores is that of *"yilugnta". Yilugnta* is defined as *"the intense concern for public opinion and involving the repression of doing what one might like or prefer to do for fear of social opprobrium".*[38] *Yilugnta* is instilled from a young age and emphasizes social conformity and the obligation to adhere to community morals and values.

Social norms play an important but often overlooked role in migration decisions and choices. Social norms can influence the likelihood of migration as well as who migrates (considering factors such as gender, age and sibling birth order).[39] It also affects experiences of reintegration, with some returnees unable or unwilling to comply with social norms due to life-altering experiences abroad. Therefore, is it essential to understand what culturally entrenched social norms exist and interplay in a community where a social change or development intervention is being implemented. Identifying where social norms might act as roadblocks, as well as how existing local cultural values and worldviews can be leveraged, will impact the success of any programme or service intervention.

### 1.2.4.  Reintegration

There is no agreed definition for "reintegration" but it generally refers to the *"re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, for example, of a migrant into the society of their country of origin".*[40] However, it cannot be assumed that re-entering one's country of origin and into its society is necessarily a "homecoming" or returning to something familiar. In fact, the life-altering events experienced by survivors of trafficking and exploitation means that "reintegration" back into their former lives and the way things were before migration may be unrealistic. Rather, the situation is more likely to be "integration anew"[41] upon return to their families and home communities. Reintegration is considered as "complete" or "sustainable" when those who return are able to participate meaningfully in the economic and social structure of their

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[34] Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. *Leaving the past behind: When victims of trafficking decline assistance,* pp. 123–133.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Cislaghi, B., Manji, K. and Heise, L., 2018. Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices, Learning Report 2: Theory in support of better practice. Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, pp. 1–23.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Crivello, G. and van der Gaag, N., 2016. Between hope and a hard place: Boys and young men negotiating gender, poverty and social worth in Ethiopia. p. 15.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Fonseca, A., Hart, L. and Klink, S., 2015. Reintegration: effective approaches. *International Organization for Migration,* p. 13.

[41] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

country of origin.[42] Integral to this is the ability to be economically self-sufficient, have stable social ties with the community, and have levels of physical and psychosocial well-being that allows further migration decisions to be made out of choice, and not necessity.

Reintegration happens at different levels and various factors culminate to determine its success. At the individual or personal level, successful reintegration is affected by factors such as gender, class, education level, social networks, a family's financial or social standing, and the person's emotional, psychological and physical well-being. Also influential is the nature of the returnee's journey and trafficking experience. Factors such as length of absence, the nature of exploitation experienced, support services received prior to return, and the level of preparedness for return also impact the outcome of reintegration. Reintegration also takes place at the family and community level, where a spectrum of cultural and social norms, gender roles, and perceptions and attitudes in relation to migration and trafficking are expressed. At this level, returnees – with their transformed notions of identity, community and home – may find support, social networks and resources to facilitate recovery on one hand, and resentment, stigmatization and exclusion on the other. At the broader external environment or structural level, reintegration is influenced by political, economic, social and institutional conditions at the local, national and international level. The ability to reintegrate is determined by the availability and accessibility of support services, the employment market, and local and national government competencies. Reintegration programmes or services such as those that provide job training or placement, legal assistance, health care, psychosocial support, community engagement and education to prevent stigmatization, are intended to facilitate the process for "overall social and economic recovery" of a trafficked person.[43]

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[42] IOM, 2016. Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return. Accessed 31 July 2020. Available at www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf.

[43] IOM, 2016. Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return.

# | 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS |

## 2.1. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Stigma and social norms are complex and multi-faceted concepts. Therefore, this research used qualitative methods that allowed for in-depth exploration and conversations. A mixed method approach was utilized, consisting of a literature review, online consultations, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), field observations and validation meetings. A total of 76 participants took part in this research (6 online and 70 face-to-face). Details are listed below.

**Briefing Meetings:**
Initial briefing meetings were undertaken with key IOM staff working on the ASPIRE project to enhance the conceptual understanding of the research. This process was also important to complement the development of the methodological approach of the research.

**Literature Review:**
A review of selected literature on migration and trafficking, social norms, stigma, mental health, gender and reintegration was conducted to prepare for the conceptual foundation that informed the research. The literature reviewed included published NGO reports, government reports, international organization reports, independent scholarly journal articles, World Bank documents, news articles, as well as IOM documents. A full bibliography can be found in Annex II.

**Online Consultations:**
Three consultations were undertaken online with stakeholders specializing in social protection in the area of trafficking in Ethiopia. The duration of the consultations ranged from 1 hour – 1.5 hours and included:
- 5 CSO staff
- 1 government office representative (national level)

**Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Group Discussions:**
Fieldwork was conducted in Ethiopia in November and December 2019. Narrative enquiry using semi-structured interviews was used to collect data regarding the personal background characteristics of returnees and their family, returnees' pre- and post-migration stages, migrants in-destination experiences, attitudes towards migration, and existing psychosocial reintegration support systems. Interviews and discussions were conducted in Amharic, Oromifa and English, based on the preference of the research participant, and ranged from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours each (with the average length between 1 to 1.5 hours).

Government, media and NGO staff that were interviewed for the research were identified by IOM Ethiopia and formally invited to participate. Non-probability (i.e. purposive, availability and snowball) sampling techniques were used to select community members, including migrant returnees, family members and community leaders. Assistance to identify and organize community participants was provided by Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs at Zonal level. A total of 33 interviews and 9 FGDs (with a total of 70 participants) were conducted, which included:
- 10 female returnees
- 16 male returnees
- 10 family members (5 fathers, 3 mothers, 1 sister and 1 wife)
- 17 community elders and religious leaders
- 5 government office representatives (1 national level, 1 state level and 3 district level)
- 7 non-governmental organization staff
- 5 journalists / media professionals

As not all migrants are subjected to trafficking, the trafficking status of each participant was ascertained by interviewing about their age and conditions during their recruitment, travel and at destination. Of the 26 returnee migrants interviewed, 25 described experiences of exploitation[44], with 17 of these highlighting indicators of being trafficked. The trafficking status was determined by whether a returnee was recruited using deception, fraud or force by brokers or anyone else, and if there was any subsequent exploitation.[45]

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[44] This included restricted freedom of movement, extended working hours, denial of medical treatment, and financial extortion during imprisonment abroad.
[45] This included experiences of financial extortion by brokers, unpaid wages by employers, sexual and/or physical exploitation.

Data gathered from the research was thematically analyzed to understand both the situation of migrants and survivors of trafficking, as well as the frameworks, assumptions and relationships between principal stakeholders. Particular attention was paid to the ways in which each perceived the other stakeholders, in order to develop an idea of how their conceptions influence their attitudes and actions.

A breakdown of organizations that participated in the research can be found in Annex III. A summary of the returnee migrant participants can be found in Annex V.

**Validation Meetings:**
A presentation and executive summary of the key findings and recommendations were presented to government stakeholders, CSO and NGO staff that participated in the research for feedback and clarification. A three-hour online meeting was held with NGOs and CSOs in July 2020 and a three-hour face-to-face meeting was held with government representatives in August 2020. In addition, for government, NGO, CSO and media research participants that were unable to attend the validation meetings, feedback was also collected via written responses.

## 2.2. FIELDWORK LOCATION SITES

The locations where the fieldwork was carried out included:
- Addis Ababa
- Adama (Oromia Special Zone)
- Jimma town, Chedero Suse *Kebele* and Dabena Abu *Kebele* in Gomma *Woreda* (Jimma Zone)
- Jena Alula *Kebele* and Abe Dengeleza *Kebele* in Robe *Woreda* (Arsi Zone)[46]

**Figure 1. Map of Ethiopia highlighting in red the locations where the field research took place**
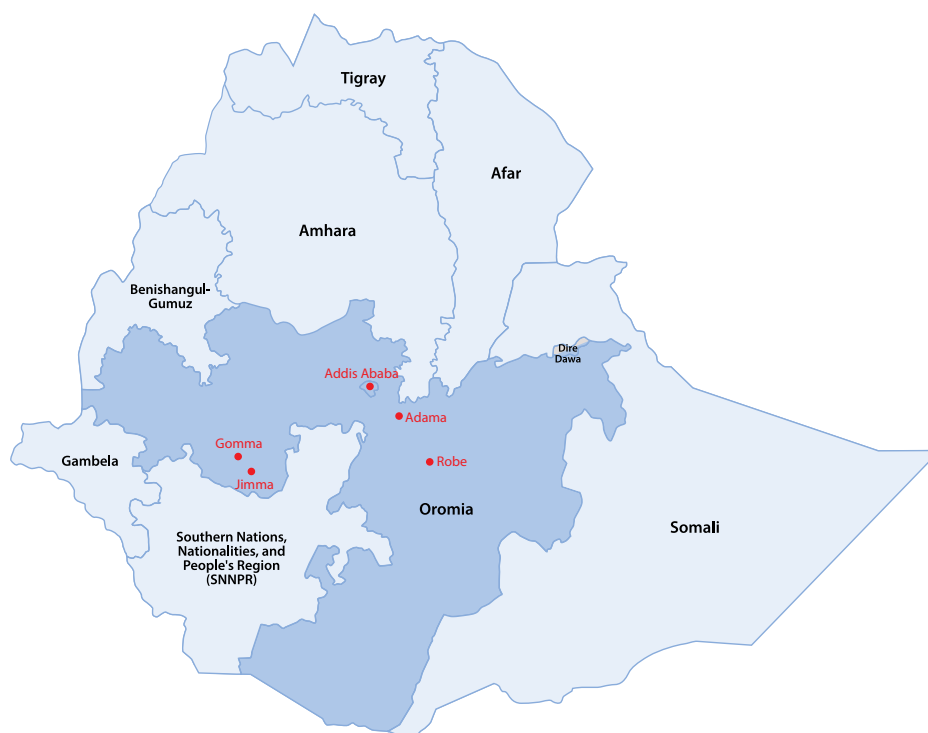


*Note:* This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Gomma and Robe *Woredas* were purposively chosen as field research locations by IOM due to their high prevalence of outward youth migration.[47] Addis Ababa was selected due to national government offices being based there as well as a high presence of NGOs and CSOs supporting returnee migrants and victims of trafficking.

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[46] Ethiopia comprises of nine regional states and two city administrations (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa). Each region is divided into zones and each zone into *woredas*. The *woredas* are further divided into *kebeles*, the basic administrative units. In the cities, the administrative division follows a different hierarchy. Each city is divided into sub-cities and each sub-city into *woredas* as well.

[47] Arsi and Jimma Zones have also been identified as migration hotspots in research conducted by Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020, and Habtamu, et al., 2017.

Arsi and Jimma Zones are both part of the Oromia Region. Oromo is the largest ethnic group (84% and 88% respectively), followed by Amhara (14% and 4% respectively). The majority of residents in both Zones are Muslim (58% in Arsi and 86% in Jimma). The remaining residents are predominately Orthodox Christian, with a small percentage of Protestant Christians.[48] The majority of people in Arsi and Jimma are pastoralists and farmers, with coffee being a major cash crop for the past century.

## 2.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the sensitive nature of this assessment's subject matter and the experience of serious physical, psychological and emotional traumas of returnees, ethical considerations and safety precautions were established and implemented to ensure the protection and well-being of the research participants. A careful research design that adhered to ethical guidelines[49] helped avoid potential harm to the participants' current and future lives. Furthermore, the researchers involved in collecting the data were selected on the basis of their experience of interviewing and working with vulnerable groups.

**Informed Consent:** The explicit consent of participants was obtained prior to conducting each interview. The purpose of the research, how the findings would be used, as well as the conditions of participation were all explained to the research participants in their local languages,[50] both verbally and in written format. Participation was voluntary, with participants having the authority to refuse to partake in the research, as well as the full right to decline answering any questions and withdraw at any time during the interview. Consent forms were signed by all participants that took part in the research. A copy of the consent form (English version) can be found in Annex IV.

**Privacy and Confidentiality:** The privacy of the participants was promoted and all interviews with returnee migrants and their families were undertaken in their homes or in spaces deemed comfortable for the returnees, such as at the homes of their relatives or secluded outside areas. Interviews with returnee migrants were conducted separately from interviews with family members, unless stipulated by the returnee that they wanted their family member present. No government or IOM staff were permitted to be present during the interviews or FGD with returnees, family members or local leaders.

**Anonymity:** In order to protect informants, names and roles are not used in referring to the data gathered. No identifying photos of survivors of trafficking and returnee migrants or their family members have been used in the research. Photos of other stakeholders that participated in the research have only been taken and featured where explicit written consent has been provided. The names of participants featured in the case studies throughout this report have all been changed to pseudonyms, with asterisks denoting hidden identity.

**Participant Safety:** Confidential data in relation to this assignment (both soft and hard copy formats) were stored according to IOM's Data Protection Principles and made accessible only to relevant Embode and IOM team members. In addition, the identity of each research participant was removed from the data by the researchers before sharing with the project team.

**Child Protection:** Interviews were not conducted with any child under the age of 17. The interviews with 17-year-olds were conducted in accordance with Embode's and IOM's Child Protection Policies. In order to understand the situation of unaccompanied migrant children, interviews were held with five staff from NGOs working directly with child migrants (aged from 5–17 years), rather than directly with young children.

**Sensitively Framed Questions and Questioning Techniques:** A delicate balance was maintained to ensure that the necessary information was collected but without causing undue distress or stress for participants. Attention was given to phrase questions using local vocabulary and easy-to-understand terminology. Emphasis was put on making the FGDs conversational and participatory, and care was taken for interviews to not be overtly interviewer-driven but for respondents to tell their own stories.

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[48] The Office of the Population Census Commission, 2007. Accessed 31 July 2020. Available at www.csa.gov.et/index.php/census-report/census-tables/category/301-census-tables.

[49] This included 'Forced Migration Review – Ethics Issue: exploring ethical questions that confront our work', 'The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victim of Trafficking', UNICEF's 'Ethical Research Involving Children' and Embode's Code of Conduct.

[50] This was either Oromifa or Amharic, depending on the locality.

## 2.4. LIMITATIONS

**There were several limitations encountered in undertaking this assessment.**

**Inaccessibility of female migrant returnees:** In the field research sites, female returnees were generally a lot harder to identify and access than males. This was for two reasons: in Arsi Zone it was generally found that more males migrated than females (although in Jimma Zone it appeared that migration was common for both females and males); and secondly, female migrants tended to be more "hidden". Local government representatives who assisted the researchers with organizing interviews with migrant returnees were much more easily able to identify male returnees than females. Additionally, when male returnees heard about researchers present in the community they would actively approach the research team and self-nominate to be interviewed. Females did not do this. The more concealed nature of female returnees may be linked to the heightened stigma associated with female migrants, which is explored in this research.

**Identification and selection of returnees:** In Arsi and Jimma Zones, government representatives facilitated the identification and selection of the majority of returnee migrants interviewed for this research. Whilst their support was integral and invaluable, it did mean that only migrant returnees "known" to them were accessed. As highlighted in section 1.3.2. "Stigmatization of trafficked persons'" victims of trafficking may often prefer to remain unidentified. In addition, given that representatives from these service providers also live within these communities and cultural milieu, they cannot be exempt from the social norms and stigmatizing attitudes that may exist within the context.

**Small sample size:** The timeframe available for conducting the field research was narrow. The multiple site locations were geographically dispersed, which meant substantial time was spent travelling between them. As such, the number of research participants that could be interviewed during the fieldwork was limited. In addition, in order to understand stigma and social norms, the researchers needed to engage different stakeholders across families, community leaders, media, government and NGOs. This meant that a total of only 26 returnee migrants could be interviewed during the field research. Whilst the findings still offer some deep insights, the sample size does not allow for the disaggregation of data across demographics (i.e. gender, ages, religion, ethnicity and locality) or behaviour (i.e. regular vs irregular migration, voluntary vs forced return etc) to be statistically useful. However, where possible, the findings have been supported with existing research, including quantitative studies with Ethiopian migrants.

**Duration period of research:** The duration that the migrant returnees had been back in Ethiopia ranged from 3 days to 3 years.[51] Whilst some initial evidence was found that indicates the length of time since returning home impacts the degree stigma and whether a returnee has successfully reintegrated, this was a cross-sectional study that collected data from a cohort of participants at a specific point in time. A longitudinal study would be required to understand how time, as well as certain events and behaviours that take place during that period, contribute to the dissipation of stigmatization towards returnees.

**Geographic locations of research:** The study locations were selected due to being "hotspot" areas of outward migration.[52] However, due to the significant cultural, religious and economic differences between the states, districts and even townships and villages in Ethiopia, the research findings cannot be indiscriminately extended to the country as a whole. Various factors impact the prevalence of migration, who migrates, the presence of brokers and agents, the routes migrants take, the risks they face, as well as the way they are received back into families and communities. Therefore, whilst some of the findings may be reflective of the situation nationally, other aspects are likely to be specific to the particular locations that were researched.

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[51] Based on the sampling framework designed for the research, any returnee who had been back from more than 3 years since the last time they migrated did not qualify to be interviewed.

[52] Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) are the regions with the highest prevalence of outward migration from Ethiopia to the Middle East and other parts of Africa. The hotspots in these areas include Jimma and Arsi in Oromia, South Wollo in Amhara, Eastern Zone in Tigray, and Hadiya, Gurage and Wolaita in SNNPR.

# 3. OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION AND
# | TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN ETHIOPIA |

## 3.1. COUNTRY CONTEXT

Ethiopia is a landlocked country with approximately 109 million people, making it the second most populous nation in Africa.[53] Its population is expected to double in the next 30 years; making it one of the fastest growing nations in the world. The working-age population increased from 55.6 million in 2013 to 65 million in 2020,[54] which can be related to the entrance in the labour market of a large number of youth who completed their education.[55] With 40% of the population currently under the age of 14 years,[56] creating enough jobs for this increasing and overwhelmingly young population is a critical challenge for the nation.[57]

Despite being one of the fastest growing economies in the region, Ethiopia continues to remain one of the poorest countries globally, with a per capita income of USD 790.[58] Approximately one quarter of the population still live below the national poverty line.[59] Sustaining its positive economic growth and accelerating poverty reduction requires significant progress in job creation as well as improved governance, as high labour force participation rates are essential in developing economies like Ethiopia, owing to low incomes and the absence of social security systems.[60]

Whilst inequality in urban areas of Ethiopia has declined in recent years, there has been rising inequality in rural regions as well as increased internal conflict, exacerbating unemployment and poverty.[61] Compared to their urban counterparts, young people growing up in rural areas are more likely to be from economically worse-off households, leave school early, lack access basic services, and are more susceptible to adverse events.[62] With limited educational, employment and financial opportunities in rural villages, migration offers a solution for young people aspiring to improve their lives. Migration has become such a prevalent phenomenon in Ethiopia in recent years that remittances have become a key source of foreign exchange earnings, rivalling and/or exceeding export revenues, foreign aid, foreign direct investment or other private capital flows. In 2018, recorded remittances totalled USD 5 billion and made up 7.4% of the country's GDP.[63] However, the real figure is likely to be substantially higher, as informal remittance inflows into the country are estimated to be as much as 78% of total remittances in some corridors.[64]

Whilst those that are university-educated and wealthy are heading to Europe and the United States of America, early school leavers with little financial resources are migrating to the Middle East.[65] With Middle Eastern countries being located in close proximity to Ethiopia, as well as their high demand for low-skilled labour like domestic workers, construction workers and farm labourers, Ethiopia has become renowned as a major exporter of labour to the Middle East.[66] From a study with 1,450 Ethiopian returnee migrants,[67] it was found that more than 70% of migrants come from rural *kebeles*, with 89% of them aiming to migrate to Saudi Arabia, although other Middle East countries such as United Arab Emirates and Kuwait are still significant in terms of destination countries.[68]

Various studies indicate that migrants with little or no formal education bear a higher risk of exploitation. Leaving school early is considered a vulnerability factor for trafficking as it prevents aspiring migrants accessing regular migration

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[53] World Bank, 2019, The World Bank In Ethiopia Overview. Accessed 31 July 2020. Available at www.worldbank.org/en/country/ethiopia/overview.

[54] Worldometer, 2020. Ethiopia Demographics. Accessed 31 July 2020. Available at www.worldometers.info/demographics/ethiopia-demographics/#broad-age.

[55] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

[56] Worldometer, 2020. Ethiopia Demographics. Accessed 31 July 2020. Available at www.worldometers.info/demographics/ethiopia-demographics/#broad-age.

[57] Admassie et al., T., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

[58] World Bank, 2019. The World Bank In Ethiopia Overview.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Crivello, G. and van der Gaag, N., 2016. Between hope and a hard place: Boys and young men negotiating gender, poverty and social worth in Ethiopia, pp.1-50.

[63] 7D News, 2018. 'Ethiopia Draws $5b in Remittances during 2018'. Accessed 3 February 2020. Available at https://7dnews.com/news/ethiopia-draws-5b-in-remittances-during-2018.

[64] Cooper, B., and Esser, A., 2018. Exploring barriers to remittances in sub-Saharan Africa series, Volume 4 - Remittances in Ethiopia. Centre for Financial Regulation & Inclusion.

[65] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

[66] Reda, A.H., 2018. pp. 87–102.

[67] Of these returnees, 47.5% were from Amhara, 25% were from Oromia, 19.7% were from Tigray, 4.7% were from SNNPR, 1.6% were from Addis Ababa and the remaining 1.2% were from Somali, Harreria, Afar, Benishangul Gumuz and Dire Dawa. (Admassie, et al. in 2017.)

[68] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65..

pathways, which in Ethiopia require a minimum of grade eight completion.[69] Though there have been improvements in school enrolment rates and decreasing gender gap, gross enrolment rates for secondary school (grades 9–10) was only 44.8% in 2016.[70] Significant improvements are still needed to address the quality of and equitable access to education in rural areas, especially for girls. The rate of student dropouts is higher among girls than boys, due to existing social norms that are particularly common in rural Ethiopia, such as early marriage and girls being held responsible for a multitude of tasks in the household, which can interfere with their education and learning outcomes.[71]

## 3.2. HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ETHIOPIA

Cross-border human trafficking has become prevalent in Ethiopia, with many Ethiopian migrants becoming stranded and exploited in transit countries, such as Djibouti, Libya, Somalia and Yemen. According to research conducted with 1,342 Ethiopian returnees, the magnitude of human trafficking among returning migrants was estimated at 50.89%.[72] However, reliable and comprehensive data on the number of men, women and children from Ethiopia who have fallen victim to trafficking is not available.[73]

Reports indicate that between 60 to 70% of labour migration has been facilitated by illegal brokers,[74] particularly in rural areas, which increases the vulnerability of migrants to forced labour upon arrival in their final destinations.[75] The likelihood of being a victim of human trafficking for migrants from rural areas is 1.49 times higher than migrants from urban areas.[76] Youth were particularly vulnerable, with the likelihood of being trafficked for those aged 18–20 being about five times more than that of migrants aged 30–50.[77] Traffickers target young people as they are less informed about the potential risks associated with migration and more susceptible to peer pressure. Young people were also generally less informed about potentially dangerous situations in transit countries[78], lack any knowledge of the laws and their rights in destination countries, as well as undertake the journey without adequate money and supplies.

Females are also more vulnerable to trafficking due to gendered norms that shape girls' interactions with a broad array of social institutions[79] as well as a high demand for females for domestic work and sex work in destination countries.[80] It is reported that the likelihood of being trafficked is 1.55 times higher for females than that of males.[81]

## 3.3. ETHIOPIA'S ANTI-TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Since 2012, Ethiopia is party to the UN Trafficking Protocol and has ratified it as part of its national law.[82] In line with the UN Trafficking Protocol, paragraph 2 of Article 18 of Ethiopia's constitution considers human trafficking as a form of inhuman treatment. The provision explicitly specifies that *"trafficking in human beings for whatever purpose is prohibited."*[83] The constitutional provision is accompanied by the Criminal Code of Ethiopia adopted in 2004, which under Article 597 paragraph 1 and 2 states: *"Whoever by violence, threat, deceit, fraud, kidnapping or by the giving of money or ther advantage to the person having control over a woman or a child[84], recruits, receives, hides, transports, exports or imports a woman or a minor for the purpose of forced labor, is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from five years to twenty years and fine not exceeding fifty*

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[69] Under the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Law (Proclamation No, 923/2016) which came into effect in January 2018, migrants must have a minimum of 8th grade of education.

[70] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

[71] Reda, A.H., 2018 and Jones, et al., 2014.

[72] Gezie et al., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. pp. 1–11.

[73] Reda, A.H., 2018. pp. 87–102.

[74] During the research, participants did not differentiate between "illegal brokers" and "traffickers". Throughout the report the term broker has been used, which reflects the language used by research participants. However, many of the accounts given by returnee migrants showed clear indications of being trafficked. However, it is important to note that not all illegal brokers are traffickers.

[75] IOM., 2020. The Desire to Thrive Regardless of the Risk: Risk perception, expectations and migration experiences of young Ethiopians migrating along the Eastern Route towards the Arabian Peninsula. Background Analysis by Migrant Category: Obock, Djibouti. International Organization for Migration, Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa, pp. 1–52.

[76] Gezie et al., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. pp. 1–11.

[77] Ibid.

[78] For example, some of the returnees interviewed were unaware at the time of their migration of the civil wars in Yemen and Libya, which are main transit countries from Ethiopia to the Middle East and Europe, respectively. As a result, some were unable to cross the border and had to return home, whilst those that did manage to enter spoke of being caught in crossfire, bombings and even captured by the terrorist group ISIS/ISIL.

[79] Jones et al., 2014. Rethinking the 'Maid Trade': Experiences of Ethiopian adolescent domestic workers in the Middle East. pp. 1–7.

[80] Reda, A.H., 2018. pp. 87–102.

[81] Gezie et al., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. pp. 1–11.

[82] GA Resolution 55/25, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, November 2000.

[83] Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 1995.

[84] Whilst the Criminal Code gives particular focus to women and children, Proclamation No.1178/2020 extends the definition and protection to any "person" that is trafficked, regardless of age or gender.

*thousand Birr."*[85] The Constitution and Criminal Code are further supplemented by two proclamations: Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation No.923/2016, and the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No.1178/2020.[86]

### Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation No.923/2016[87]

Proclamation No.923/2016 was enacted on 19 February 2015 and introduced stringent measures aimed at improving the protection of migrant workers. According to Article 5 and 6, recruitment and placement of overseas employment services is provided only through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) or licensed private employment agencies.[88] Article 5 specifies that services to be provided for persons wanting to undertake overseas employment *"shall include interviewing and selection; causing medical examinations; approval of employment contracts, provision of preemployment and pre-departure orientations, facilitation of departure of employed workers and other similar services."* Article 6 paragraph 2 explicitly prohibits direct recruitment and employment of workers except when such employment and recruitment is done by staff of an Ethiopian Mission, international organizations, or where the job opportunity is acquired by the job seeker's own accord in a position other than domestic service. Recruitment and placement of workers for employment to countries that do not have a Bilateral Labour Migration Agreement (BLA) with Ethiopia is also prohibited.[89] However, overseas employment through licensed private agencies recommenced only in 2018 after a ban went into effect from October 2013 of placement of Ethiopian workers for overseas employment to the Middle East.[90]

The same proclamation under Article 7 stipulates travel (or overseas employment) requirements, including the completion of grade 8 as a minimum level of education and a certification of occupational competence that is issued by Competence Centers that operate under MoLSA. MoLSA (or appropriate authority) is also obliged to provide regular pre-employment and pre-departure trainings on basic rights, cultural norms at the destination county and basic communication and other skills under Article 8. In addition, under Article 63, MoLSA and, as appropriate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are responsible for ensuring that the rights, safety and dignity of workers deployed in overseas employment are upheld. Where workers rights are violated by employers and/or employment agencies (outlined under Article 53), the Ministry shall provide workers with support (Article 64).

### Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Persons Proclamation No.1178/2020

Proclamation No.1178/2020 came into effect on 1 April 2020. It recognizes the duty of the government in enacting a *"legal framework and creating a system that enable crime prevention, holding perpetrator accountable, protecting and rehabilitating victims specially to undertake activities that reaches section of the society vulnerable to the crimes and in taking into consideration the age, sex and special needs of the victims".*[91] Article 3 defines what constitutes an act of trafficking and it qualifies it as an act of crime.[92] Article 5 of the same proclamation also declares assisting and aiding human trafficking is punishable by law.[93] In addition, the smuggling of any person for any financial gain, including the facilitation and preparation, as well as the transportation within or exiting the territory of Ethiopia is also a criminal offence.[94]

With regard to protections available to victims of trafficking, Article 23 of the Proclamation obliges MoLSA to provide the necessary support and repatriate victims of trafficking back to Ethiopia and integrate them into their local community in collaboration with governmental and civil society stakeholders. Article 24 requires provision of protection and rehabilitation for victims of trafficking, with care and attention to the special needs of women, children, and persons with mental health problems or disability. The same provision demands treatment of victims in a protective manner, including appropriate medical treatment, social and legal services, psychological counselling and support, temporary shelter and related services.

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[85] Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2005. The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Proclamation No. 414/2004. Accessed 20 September 2020. Available at www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/70993/75092/F1429731028/ETH70993.pdf.

[86] Proclamation 1178/2020 replaced the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants No 909/2015, which served from 2015-2020. The proclamation was the main legal framework for the prevention of TiP and SoM, prosecution of perpetuators and protection of victims, but was replaced because it lacked clarity, was inconsistent with other laws and did not provide adequate responses to the problem.

[87] At the time of writing, Proclamation No.923/2016 was under revision (Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 5 August 2020).

[88] Licenses must be issued by MoLSA and employment agencies must comply with a range of requirements specified in Part 4 of Proclamation of No.923/2016 in order obtain and retain a license.

[89] At the time of writing, the Government of Ethiopia had signed BLAs with Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and were also in the process of drafting a BLA with Kuwait.

[90] The ban covered only labour migration to the Middle East as facilitated by private employment agencies. Other forms of labour migration, e.g. those facilitated through direct recruitment, were not banned.

[91] Proclamation No.1178/2020, Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons.

[92] Under Proclamation No.923/2016, acts shall be punishable with 7 to 25 years of imprisonment and fines from 20,000 to 200,000 ETB. In cases where the crime is committed by a juridical persons, the penalty can increase to fines of up to 2 million ETB and the death penalty.

[93] Punishable with imprisonment from 3 to 15 years and fines from 10,000 to 50,000 ETB.

[94] Punishable by 5 years to life imprisonment and fines from 10,000 to 200,000 ETB.

Victims' privacy and right to information shall be respected and they shall not be placed in a police station, detention centre or prison facility. Regional and other local level administrations follow the above legislation. They undertake tasks

related to reducing human trafficking, as well as support, protection and rehabilitation of returnees and victims of trafficking in close collaboration and through regional Labour and Social Affairs Bureaus. A fund has been established under the provisions of Proclamation No.1178/2020 with the objective to provide rehabilitation services, material support and compensation to victims of trafficking and smuggling.

The Proclamation sustains the National Council to Coordinate the Prevention and Control of The Crimes of Trafficking in Persons, Smuggling of Persons and Unlawful Sending of Persons Abroad for Work. The National Council is responsible for issuing directives for the creation of a National Referral Mechanism[95] for the rescue, rehabilitation, provision of support, reintegration of victims and other related matters. The Proclamation also transforms the former Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force into a National Partnership Coalition (NPC) for the Prevention and Control of The Crimes of Trafficking in Persons, Smuggling of Persons and Unlawful Sending of Persons Abroad for Work.

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[95] The final draft of the National Referral Mechanism of Ethiopia was submitted for approval in 2018. The National Council are the lead coordinator for referring trafficking victims to services provided by NGOs, CSOs and other government entities. The NRM seeks to ensure coordination among different actors in contact with victims of trafficking and migrants in a vulnerable situation, including those that have been exploited by brokers. At the time of writing, the NRM still needed to be rolled out at regional, zonal and *woreda* levels in Ethiopia.

# | 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS |

The findings draw on research from in-depth qualitative fieldwork undertaken from November – December 2019 and are presented according to key themes identified across the data sets. These findings are also supported by existing evidence-based research conducted during the literature review. The findings explore what drives the shifting and persisting norms surrounding migration, and how they affect reintegration, recovery and future potential success and well-being of returnees. They aim to shine a light on discriminatory social norms, make visible the often-hidden experiences of returnee migrants and survivors of trafficking, and identify how policy and programme actors can better respond to migrants' needs and priorities.

## 4.1. THE OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS FOR MIGRANTS ARE IMPACTED BY GENDER NORMS

> **Who is most at risk of being trafficked varies from one region to another... In each there is a norm/culture established.**
> *– NGO worker*

Migration always takes place within social contexts and constructs that extend beyond the actual migrants themselves.[96] Hence, recognizing how gender norms shape and influence migration in Ethiopia is important in order to understand how migration plays out differently for males and females.[97] The overarching gender norms and sociocultural landscape in Ethiopia impact roles, behaviours, expectations and relations; resulting in crucial differences between the drivers, risks, opportunities and experiences of male and female migrants.[98] Gender norms impact migration in many fundamental ways – from individuals and families defining who is the best potential migrant and why[99], to the mode of travel and route taken, the choice of destination and type of work undertaken there, and the effects and experience of reintegration upon returning home.[100]

However, it is also important to note the significant diversity of cultures, religion, ethnicity and socioeconomic status throughout Ethiopia. These differences impact social and gender norms across regions, communities and even villages. As such, the following findings focus on the research locations of Gomma *Woreda* in Jimma Zone and Robe *Woreda* in Arsi Zone, which may differ from other areas within the country.

### 4.1.1. How family roles and responsibilities play out along gender lines

The cultural frameworks and conservative gender norms[101] in Ethiopia impact girls and boys from a very early age. It defines their access to education, the degree of household responsibilities, and their vulnerability to gender-based violence; all of which impact their later economic and broader life opportunities.[102] Sociocultural norms and values place domestic responsibilities - such as cleaning, cooking, water collection and caretaking of younger siblings - largely on the shoulders of girls. The burden of household chores results in less time for girls to study in comparison to their brothers, and often forces them to leave school early.[103] In addition, in Ethiopia's highly patriarchal society, the education of boys has traditionally been prioritized over girls. Investment into girls' education has often not been deemed as "value for money", as most females are expected to marry[104] and stay at home to manage the housework and child-rearing, rather than obtaining outside employment.[105] The patrilocal marriage system in Ethiopia also means that girls will eventually leave the family

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[96] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[97] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

[98] Bilgili et al., 2018. Return migrants' perceptions of living conditions in Ethiopia: A gendered analysis. pp. 345–366.

[99] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[100] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

[101] Gender roles are clearly defined in Ethiopia and traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity tend to dictate men and women's participation in many activities in Ethiopia.

[102] See Eresso, M.Z., 2019; Jones et al., 2014; and Hynes et al., 2019.

[103] See Bilgili et al., 2018; and Jones et al., 2014.

[104] This attitude is particularly pertinent in rural areas where daughters are often married off at a young age to ensure their virginity at time of marriage – largely due to the risk of sexual gender-based violence in Ethiopia – and thereby protect the reputation of the family (Jones, et al., 2014). In a survey with 908 young people in Ethiopia, 13% of 19-year-old females had married compared to less than 1% of males the same age. The numbers are even more stark when comparing females from rural and urban areas, with 21% of 19-year-old females married compared only 3% in urban areas (Crivello, G. and van der Gaag, N., 2016).

[105] Reda, A.H., 2018. pp. 87–102.

home to reside with and support her husbands' family.[106] However, there has recently been a marked shift in attitudes towards education for girls.[107] With formal migration channels in Ethiopia generally only accessible to females but requiring a minimum of grade eight completion, families are now considering the education of daughters as a wiser return on investment.[108]

Migration in Ethiopia has become steadily feminized. The demand for domestic household labour in the Middle East is a major pull factor.[109] Females are traditionally considered more suitable for domestic work and the gendered division of labour from an early age in Ethiopia has better equipped young females for these positions.[110] In addition, the gendered socialization pattern in Ethiopian households conditions daughters to be more obedient and sensitive to the needs of their family than boys. This means that females are often considered a "better" migrant, as they are generally expected to be more altruistic and remit a larger share of their income[111] to support their parents and families back home.[112] *"In some areas the birth of a female child is considered as a future treasure for their family because they will go abroad and work. Especially in the Middle East they can work there as a house maid and [financially] support their family. So, this cultural attitude pushes them to go abroad and their exposure to migration puts them at risk of trafficking"*, said a government office representative.

The gendered norms relating to familial obligations and who is considered responsible for supporting the family also influence migration choices. In Jimma Zone, the research found that this duty was placed on women, with a father of one female returnee stating *"It's more common for females to migrate because it's a cultural thing. Females are more responsible for supporting the family. When males want to migrate, we discourage them because we think they will not get a job."* This was reiterated by another family in Jimma in which all three daughters had migrated abroad, whereas the son had remained at home, despite being the eldest. One of the female returnees explained, *"The reason I migrated was to support the family. My older brother did not migrate because it is the female who is more responsible for the family, rather than the male".*

However, other studies indicate that sociocultural norms in other parts of Ethiopia restrain female migration.[113] In these instances, the traditional attitudes about female virtue result in girls and young women being discouraged from migration in order to protect them against sexual assault. In addition, the gendered division of labour means that females are expected to stay at home, and patriarchal traditions consider males as being more responsible for financially supporting the family. This was found to be the case in Arsi Zone, where a significantly higher rate of males appeared to migrate than females. *"More males migrate. They do so because there are no jobs and males are responsible for supporting the family",* stated a male returnee from Arsi.

Localities both construct and constrict young men's identities through the expectations and opportunities that exist in them. For males, paid work is a source of respectability and self-worth. However, due to an underdeveloped private sector and high youth population in Ethiopia, many males struggle to make an income, particularly in rural communities, where employment opportunities are extremely limited and land shortages are increasing. This affects a males' transition into what is perceived as adulthood, which requires a man to achieve at least a small degree of economic independence. In many communities, including Arsi, there is the cultural expectation that men will financially provide for their wife and children. Therefore, males will often wait until they can get a job or earn an adequate income before seeking to marry. If they are unable to meet the constructed idea of masculine identity as the "provider", they lose face publicly and feel "stuck". Therefore, migration not only offers a solution to address their poverty, but also to overcome social marginalization and to achieve dignity and respectability.[114]

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[106] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[107] In 2015 the percentage of students in secondary schools that were female was 48.5% compared to only 37.3% a decade earlier (World Data Altas).

[108] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[109] The majority of both regular and irregular Ethiopian migrants travel to the Middle East. Currently, formal government channels for migration are only really available to Ethiopian females due to BLAs with Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, who have a foreign labour demand for domestic workers. Employment opportunities are more easily found for females due to this demand for cheap domestic labour, with females making up 68% of Ethiopian migrants in the Middle East (Bilgili et al., 2018).

[110] Bilgili et al., 2018. Return migrants' perceptions of living conditions in Ethiopia: A gendered analysis. pp. 345–366.

[111] Prior research conducted with 146 returnees found that 70.31% of female migrants sent remittances whilst abroad compared to only 45.24% of males (Bilgili et al., 2018).

[112] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Crivello, G. and van der Gaag, N., 2016. Between hope and a hard place: Boys and young men negotiating gender, poverty and social worth in Ethiopia. pp. 1–50.

## 4.1.2. Modes of transit and associated risks often differ for males and females

It is important to note that there are more opportunities for females to migrate through regular migration pathway[115] than males, due to the BLA's that Ethiopia has with Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, mainly for the provision of domestic workers.[116] This has been one factor in the mode of travel to destinations varying between male and female migrants, with most females flying abroad and the majority of males going overland and by sea. However, in spite of females having greater opportunities migrate regularly, only a small proportion of them go through officially registered employment agencies,[117] as compared to those facilitated by local brokers.[118] One male returnee stated, *"There are two illegal options [to migrate] – you go by foot and boat, and most males take this route. The other option is that you go by plane with documents which brokers organize, and females mostly take this option, but it is still illegal."*[119] This is particularly the case in rural areas where aspiring migrants have limited access to information and are less likely to comply with the minimum education levels[120] and other mandatory requirements[121]. The former ban on overseas employment through employment agencies to the Middle East[122] and the stricter migration requirements implemented under Proclamation No.923/2016 appears to have driven some females into irregular migration.[123] *"Due to the new law introduced by the government, legal migration has stopped. The changes were designed to decrease risks to migrants but are actually increasing them. This is because it is causing most females who would have migrated legally to instead migrate illegally through brokers, which exposes them to different risks,"* exclaimed a father of female returnee who had migrated irregularly and experienced various forms of abuse. But whether they are migrating regularly or irregularly, most female migrants are flying to the destination country[124] due to the risk of sexual violence against females migrating overland.[125] Parents therefore prefer their daughters to travel by plane where they are seldom exposed to abuse or trafficking during transit.[126]



**Wrecked boats in Obock, Djibouti. © IOM 2018 / Olivia HEADON**

In contrast to many females, aspiring male migrants usually choose irregular routes overland, due to the lack of regular migration pathways for low-skilled males. They undertake perilous journeys, travelling by foot through deserts and in severely overcrowded trucks, sometimes through the Sudan to Libya but most often through Somalia or Djibouti before undertaking a treacherous boat journey across the Gulf of Aden into Yemen and then onto their final destination of Saudi Arabia.[127]

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[115] At the time of writing, efforts were underway by the Government of Ethiopia to include overseas work opportunities for both men and women under revisions to Proclamation No.923/2016 and BLAs. Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 5 August 2020.

[116] Information provided by the NATTF during consultation for this research. The BLAs between Ethiopian and other governments are currently not publicly available.

[117] Of note, private employment agencies were de-registered during the ban of overseas employment to Gulf countries which was in effect from 2013-2018. This may partially account for the fact that many migrants are not deployed by employment agencies. In addition, under Article 36 of Proclamation No.923/2016, agencies are only able to conduct worker recruitment within the premises of its office, whereas illegal brokers will often recruit aspiring migrants from the rural *kebeles* in which they live or well-known transit hubs.

[118] It is important to note that many females still use brokers for their migration and often think they are migrating formally just because they are flying and have an entry visa. However, during the research it was found that they had not met the mandatory education and training requirements and had migrated to countries where no BLA was in place. Therefore, it is questionable as to whether their labour migration was formally within the regulatory requirements. Most did not know what type of visa they had (in a number of cases brokers sent female migrants on only one-month tourist visas, which expose them to arrest and deportation).

[119] Migrants, families and community members often use the term "legal" and "illegal" when referring to regular and irregular migration. This in itself can create negative connotations for returnees that migrated irregularly.

[120] Of the 26 returnee migrants interviewed, only 11 had completed grade 8 or above.

[121] See section 1.2.3., which summarizes mandatory requirements outlined in Ethiopian Overseas Employment Law Proclamation No, 923/2016.

[122] In October 2013, the Government of Ethiopia temporarily banned the migration of domestic workers to countries in the Middle East. This was mostly due to overwhelming reports of abuse and exploitation being experience by Ethiopian migrants and an influx of trafficked victims being returning to Ethiopia from Saudi Arabia. The ban was lifted in January 2018.

[123] At the time of writing, efforts were underway by the Government of Ethiopia to facilitate better alternatives of regular migration. (Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 5 August 2020.)

[124] Bilgili et al., 2018. Return migrants' perceptions of living conditions in Ethiopia: A gendered analysis. pp.345-366.

[125] If females do travel overland, the likelihood of experiencing sexual-based violence and/or trafficking appears to be extremely high. This has been found to be the case in other research, such as Admassie et al., 2017; Gezie et al., 2019; and Jones et al., 2014.

[126] Jones et al., 2014. Rethinking the 'Maid Trade': Experiences of Ethiopian adolescent domestic workers in the Middle East. pp. 1–7.

[127] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

**Figure 2. Main migration routes of irregular migrants travelling by foot from Ethiopia.[128]**
**Red is the Eastern Route, which is the main migration route for Ethiopians.[129]**
**Yellow is the Northern Route, which has decreased in recent years.**
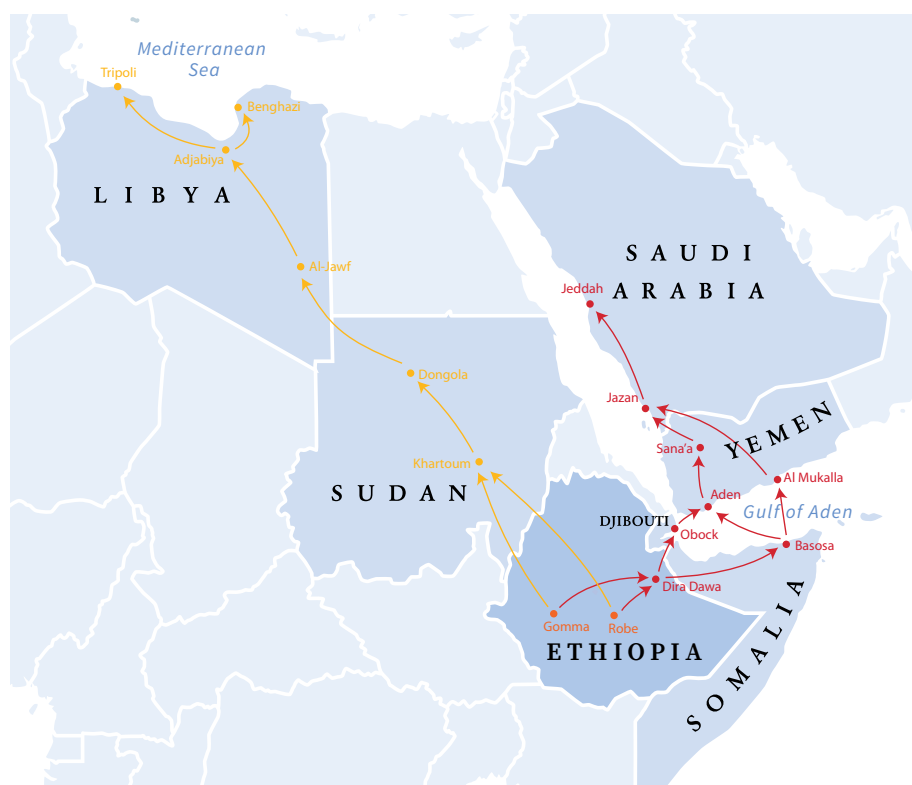


*Note:* This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

For many migrants, what starts out as a voluntary and independent journey, quickly turns into a situation of trafficking. Several returnees interviewed referred to being "caught" by brokers en-route, who demanded large sums of money (averaging about USD 300 to 500 but some paying as high as USD 10,000) to allow and facilitate migrants' onward journeys. With most migrants having travelled with insufficient funds, if any at all, they are unable to pay the demands of the brokers. Therefore, to extract the funds, brokers were often reported to physically torture the migrants, whilst forcing them to call their family to beg for the money. As a result, their already impoverished families were forced to sell their only assets or borrow the money at high interest rates, pushing families into further poverty. *"The brokers put a dead body in front of me and tortured me in order to force me to get my family to send money. My mother and wife sold their property and cattle to finance this"*, described one male returnee. Once payment was made, migrants were then sent to the next juncture in the route where they were handed over to a new set of brokers that governed that section of the journey. Each time the migrants were passed along a "chain" of brokers, the process of torture and ransom would be repeated, putting some migrants in thousands of dollars of debt.[130] *"I had to pay ETB 13,500 [~385 USD] to the broker in Dire Dawa… I was in a 'camp' in Dire Dawa where the brokers kept all the migrants. There were 333 of us – mostly males, there were only 21 females. From there we travelled for 15 days by foot to get to the sea. During this time, I was passed through a chain of five brokers and had to pay an additional ETB 4,500 [~130 USD]"*, said a male returnee.

All 16 male returnees interviewed had migrated irregularly by foot and had experienced such abuse and extortion. In addition to physical suffering, the psychological trauma from what they witnessed en-route is also profound. Returnees shared that they had lost friends and fellow migrants due to starvation; witnessed them being beaten, tortured and even burnt to death; seen them killed in road traffic accidents; thrown into the ocean by brokers; witnessed rape (against both male and female migrants); and members of their group had been killed by bombs and shooting whilst transiting through war zones in Yemen and Libya.

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[128] The research participants that had migrated irregularly overland had predominately taken the Eastern Route, with a few travelling along the Northern Route. There is also a Southern Route that runs from Ethiopia to South Africa. However, this route is less common and no participants in this research had migrated to South Africa.

[129] In 2019, approximately 79% of all migrants observed along the Eastern Route were migrating towards Saudi Arabia, 20% were headed to Yemen and only 1% to other countries on the Arab Peninsula (Migration Data Portal).

[130] These findings of extortion, torture and trafficking of male migrants by brokers en-route is corroborated by existing research conducted by Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020.

## CASE STUDY 1

Abdii* is 18 and one of 12 children. His parents are very poor farmers in Arsi and they find it difficult to provide the basic needs for all the family. Due to financial constraints, Abdii had only been able to complete primary school. So, he decided to migrate in order to find work and support himself and his family. He discussed the idea of migrating with his friend and they left together.

They got a car to Harar and then travelled on foot to Jijiga in Somali Zone where they were caught by a broker. The broker demanded they pay ETB 14,000 each (~USD 440) but Abdii did not have the money. So, the broker tortured him whilst calling his family and told his parents they would kill Abdii if they did not pay. Abdii was tortured for two weeks before his parents could raise the money needed, which they had to borrow.

Abdii was then forced onto a truck that was carrying approximately 170 people and sent to Somalia. On the journey, the truck had an accident and most of the people on-board died. Locals took Abdii and the other remaining survivors to the Ethiopian border and then dumped them there on the street. Abdii was found by the Red Cross who took him to a medical centre in Harar. They informed Abdii's family, and his brother came and arranged for Abdii to be transferred to a hospital in Asesla, which was closer to home. Abdii had to have one of his legs amputated due to the damage from the accident. He remained in hospital for one month and the medical treatment cost the family another ETB 70,000 (~USD 2,200), which they raised through relatives.

Abdii has been home for five months but cannot get out of bed, as he and his family cannot afford crutches or a wheelchair. Abdii still suffers physical pain from the beatings and accident. He is also very stressed and feels guilty because he blames himself for what happened. His mother has to sleep with Abdii every night because he becomes so distressed by the situation that he and his family are now in.

## CASE STUDY 2

Ziad* is 17 and from Wollo, where his family are farmers. His father was very poor and could not support him. Ziad's parents did not want him to migrate but Ziad thought migration would allow him to improve his life. So, he left home with only ETB 200 (~USD 5.60) to get to the nearest town. Three days after leaving, he called his parents and told them to prepare some money for the cost of his migration. At first they refused but then a broker caught Ziad. The broker tortured Ziad whilst calling his parents so they would hear his screams and pleas for help. His parents then sold their only ox and land, and sent ETB 25,000 (~USD 707) to the broker.

Ziad then had to travel by foot in a very large group of mostly males and some female migrants. When they got exhausted during the journey and collapsed, the brokers would beat them where they fell. Each migrant was only given one litre of water and one biscuit every two days. They then crossed from Djibouti to Yemen using a boat. The boat was overcrowded, with 180 people on-board. After they reached Yemen, Ziad and the other migrants were passed to another group of brokers and were held at a "camp". Again, Ziad was beaten and tortured and forced to call his parents to get another ETB 35,000 (~USD 990) to get to Saudi Arabia. This time his parents had to borrow the money. Ziad then travelled by foot with about 170 other migrants. They were each given two packs of biscuits, two loaves of bread and one litre of water to last for three days.

Ziad managed to cross into Saudi Arabia but was hiding in the bush from authorities for three days before he was caught and sent to prison. When Ziad got to prison, the guards ordered him to take off his clothes. He refused, so they beat him and he was forced to remove them. Ziad was kept in prison wearing just his underpants for one month and then sent back to Ethiopia by plane, travelling in only his underwear. He was received by IOM and has been staying at the transit centre where he has been given clothes, shoes, food and shelter. Ziad feels that he cannot return home with nothing after his parents have lost so much money.

### 4.1.3. Employment opportunities and risks are highly gendered

Both male and female migrants experience challenging conditions upon their arrival in destination countries, however, their experiences and types of risks vary due to the highly gender-segregated labour market. For female migrants, most are employed in the Gulf countries as domestic workers,[131] in which the oversight and enforcement of legal regulations remains inadequate.[132] Most female migrants have no formal contract with employers before departure or upon their arrival.[133] However, even where they do have contracts, the Kafala labour migrant sponsorship system[134] enables employers to exert complete control over the migrant worker. This system, which remains routine practice in most Gulf countries, creates an environment ripe for human rights violations. Additionally, because domestic work is not regularized as work in Gulf countries, even regular migrants in this sector do not have access to social and legal protection[135] as would be afforded to other forms of work and employment.[136] As a result, many domestic workers experience various kinds of abuse and exploitation.[137]

Seven of the female returnees interviewed for this research had worked as domestic workers in the Gulf[138] and all of them had experienced life under duress and maltreatment by their employers.[139] Other research conducted on the experiences of Ethiopian female domestic workers have also found that experiences of abuse appear to be neither exceptional nor infrequent, but rather routine.[140] The abuses by employers that returnees reported included non-payment of salary, insults and belittlement, physical violence, insufficient food, denial of medical care when they became sick or injured, excessive work hours (some working up to 16 hours a day with no time off for the entirety of their employment, which could be years), social isolation (usually only allowed to contact their family by phone for about 10 minutes once every 2–3 months) and complete restriction of movement. *"My employers were not good to me. They were abusive and beat me. When I was not working, they would lock me in a room. My salary was ETB 4,000 [~USD 113] per month but I only got paid for three months out of the six months I worked,"* shared one female returnee. For many female migrants, they tolerate these conditions for lengthy durations due to the gendered societal expectations placed on them to provide economic support to their families.[141] But even when female domestic workers do want to escape exploitative and abusive situations, it is difficult for them to communicate with others or make any connections with people or organizations for assistance, as they are confined inside their employers' homes and hidden from the public sphere.[142] One female returnee explained, *"The risk is higher for female migrants because females are confined in the house whereas males work outside. So, if females are abused they don't have someone to see or reach them".* As a result, female migrants often find themselves exploited for a longer period than male migrants.[143]

Whilst males also predominately migrate to the Gulf, namely Saudi Arabia, they face a different set of challenges to their female counterparts. Unlike many of the female migrants, none of the male returnees interviewed had a job lined up before migrating. Their approach was to migrate irregularly and then find a job once reaching the destination country. As a result, males generally found it more difficult to find employment than females and a few had even returned to Ethiopia empty handed after trying for many months to gain employment. Of the male migrants interviewed that did find work (50% of the sample)[144], it was usually as daily labourers on farms, shepherding or on construction sites. The work was irregular, conditions physically hard and payment was usually very low. Some of the male returnees also experienced abuse

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[131] Of the 10 female returnee migrants interviewed for this research, seven had worked in the Gulf countries as domestic workers and another one had aimed to do so but got caught in transit and deported. The remaining two female returnees had been domestic workers in Libya and the Sudan.

[132] Reda, A.H., 2018. pp. 87–102.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Under the Kafala system, a migrant worker's immigration and legal residency status is legally bound to an individual employer for their contract period. The migrant worker is unable to change employers or leave the country without obtaining explicit written permission from their sponsored employer. The power that the Kafala system delegates to the employer over the migrant worker has been likened to a contemporary form of slavery. (ILO)

[135] Despite BLAs the Government of Ethiopia has with Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, once workers arrive in the destination countries, ensuring they are not being exploited remains difficult. The Ethiopian Mission or Consular office in the country of destination rely on employment agencies to notify them of deployed workers in the country (Article 38 of Proclamation No.923/2016). In addition, limited resourcing of Consulars/Missions, particularly in countries where there are thousands of Ethiopian migrant workers, means that oversight of these workers is challenging. As such, even females that migrate through regular channels still face risks of abuse and exploitation.

[136] Zeleke et al., 2015. Mental health and somatic distress among Ethiopian migrant returnees from the Middle-East. pp. 1–6.

[137] Prior research conducted with 1,342 returnee migrants found that females were 1.55 times higher to be trafficked than males (Gezie et al, 2019).

[138] The remaining female migrants interviewed had worked in Libya (1) and the Sudan (1) and one had been caught at the Saudi border and deported.

[139] In three instances, the female migrants did not even realize they had been exploited, stating they had a "good" employer simply because they were not beaten and were paid on time each month (only approximately USD 200 per month). However, all were required to work excessive hours and given no time off and were confined inside with no freedom to leave the house.

[140] See Abdi Ali, D., 2018; Eresso, M.Z., 2019; Jones et al., 2014; Nisrane et al., 2020; and Reda, A.H., 2018.

[141] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[142] ILO research with 1,450 migrant returnees found that 91.6% of females reported that they lived with their employer, compared with only 26.9% of males.

[143] Gezie et al., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. pp. 1–11

[144] The remaining 50% were arrested and deported whilst crossing international borders or had to return home during transit due to illness, injury or being abandoned by brokers.

and exploitation by employers. *"I was working on a farm in Saudi. I experienced different physical violence and beatings by my employers. The payment was supposed to be monthly but then they did not pay me and threatened to turn me into the police"*, said a male returnee. However, in contrast to female migrants, their work was usually outside in public settings where they may more easily be able to escape abusive employers and look for non-exploitive opportunities.[145] Another male returnee said, *"In Yemen I was working for eight months at a construction site. They would make us work all day and only food would be given to us. If we asked for money we would be shot. I used a broker to escape and had to pay him ETB 15,000 [~USD 425] to get me out of the poor working condition and into Saudi Arabia. I made it to Saudi but after I got there I could not find a job and got sick. I stayed there for eight months and then had to return back to Ethiopia empty-handed."*

However, working informally without work permits in public outdoor areas means that males are more vulnerable to arrest, imprisonment and deportation, as they are more readily identified by authorities than their female counterparts who work in private homes.[146] Detention and deportation practices have become increasingly common in most destination countries[147], particularly in recent years from Saudi Arabia.[148] Deported migrants are more likely to return empty handed due to being forcibly returned home before they have the opportunity to work and accumulate funds or because they lose any savings and belongings they have accrued. Existing research with male returnees found that negative changes in status and power dynamics in returnees' families often occur when migration ends negatively, such as in the case of deportation.[149] In addition, home communities may be suspicious of returnees who are deported and make assumptions that their imprisonment was due to criminal or immoral behaviour abroad.[150]



Key informant interview during the field Research in Oromia, Ethiopia.
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None of the male returnees interviewed in this research fulfilled their ambition of financially improving their lives and that of their families. In fact, most ended up significantly worse off due to high payments to brokers and being arrested and deported before arriving in the destination countries, or shortly thereafter.[151] *"We were aware of the challenges and risks in migration, but we chose to take a risk, hoping if we got lucky we would be able to change our life and our families' lives. But it turned out that we and our families ended up worse off,"* said a male returnee.

[145] Gezie et al., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. pp. 1–11.

[146] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

[147] Kleist, N. and Bob-Milliar, G., 2013. Life after deportation and migration crisis: the challenges of involuntary return. *DIIS Policy Brief,* pp. 1–4.

[148] Between March 2017 to November 2019, more than 330,000 Ethiopians were involuntary repatriated from Saudi Arabia (IOM, 2020). The vast majority of these migrants were males who travelled to seek informal labour arrangements. Given the sudden and unprepared forced deportation of such a large number of migrants, the reintegration of these returnees has remained largely unaddressed.

[149] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

[150] IOM, 2019. SNNP Regional Report.

[151] This was also found to be the case in research conducted by Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. Quantitative research with Ethiopian male migrants that assesses the rates and quantity of remittances was not found.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Safe migration interventions and programmes need to be gender-responsive, considering the different risks and vulnerabilities to male and female migrants.

2. Awareness-raising efforts for safe migration among communities should include addressing sociocultural norms and stereotypes related to masculinity and femininity that heighten vulnerabilities and produce negative migration outcomes.

3. Formal migration channels and processes need to be expanded to be more accessible to Ethiopian citizens seeking to migrate, particularly for males. Such expansions should be informed by data-driven assessments undertaken by the Government of Ethiopia to identify available job opportunities for both sexes in destination countries and supported through formal bilateral labour agreements.

4. Improved government oversight of regular migrants in destination countries and enhancement of destination specific support mechanisms is needed. This could be done through the already established government labour attaché system in foreign Ethiopian Missions. Examples of how this could be improved can be taken from other significant labour sending countries such as the Philippines.[150]

5. Enhancement and further resourcing of local organizations and migrant worker networks in key destination countries that provide support to migrants and victims of trafficking.

## 4.2. THE DESIRE TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVES OUTWEIGHS THE RISKS OF TRAFFICKING FOR ASPIRING MIGRANTS

> **Before migration, I knew the risk and challenges of migration, but it was the only alternative I was left with. I tried almost everything to create a job for myself here, but I could not succeed.**
> *– Male returnee migrant*

Adolescents in Ethiopia, like their peers around the world, aspire for better lives than those of their parents. They also want better lives for their parents and families. For youth living in rural communities, land fragmentation, environmental degradation, natural resource depletion and climate change are making it increasingly difficult to earn a living from agriculture, and non-agricultural jobs are almost non-existent, especially for those that have not been able to complete their schooling.[153] Therefore, for many young people, foreign employment is often seen as the only viable solution. Of the 26 returnee migrants interviewed – both male and female – all stipulated that the reason for their migration was due to poverty and lack of economic opportunities in their home communities. A few interviewees also mentioned that this was exacerbated by political instability and ethnic discrimination[154] which limited their employment prospects. Most of the migrants and their families were so impoverished that they were not even able to meet the most basic necessities, such as sufficient food, decent shelter and basic school materials.

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[152] The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), under the Department of Labour and Employment, regulates the recruitment and overseas employment of Filipino migrant workers, while the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) administers welfare services to Filipino workers abroad.

[153] Jones et al., 2014. Rethinking the 'Maid Trade': Experiences of Ethiopian adolescent domestic workers in the Middle East. pp.1–7.

[154] Ethnic tensions have rocked Ethiopia in recent years. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council, almost 2.9 million Ethiopians were displaced in 2018 due to conflict. This was the highest number of newly internally displaced people due to conflict in the world.

## 4.2.1. Awareness-raising alone has limited effectiveness in preventing risky irregular migration

In some areas of Ethiopia, such as Gomma and Robe *Woredas* where the field research took place, migration has become a coping mechanism for the economic and development challenges facing young people. In such areas, many youth view migration as the best or only way for them to overcome financial hardship and to meet their needs and those of their family. Indeed, migration has become so prevalent that some people have begun describing a "culture of migration"[155]. One local elder stated, *"There are so many young people leaving from this community that there will not be anyone left to bury us when we die".*

When migrants are able to send home remittances, their families will often invest in building or improving their house, buying land, purchasing a motorbike or livestock and other assets that improve their lives significantly. When other young people from the community witness this, they are influenced to migrate in the hope that they too will achieve the same success, resulting in a bandwagon effect. *"I thought by migrating I would change my life because I saw others migrating and changing their lives",* stated one female returnee. In these communities where outward migration has become so predominant, peer pressure has intensified, irrespective of the risks[156], especially among young males. *"The push for migration often comes from a person – especially a young person's willingness or aspiration to be the one who can change the life of the family… a lot of these young men, but also women, they have a big aspiration to be the one who can succeed in changing lives,"* said a CSO staff member. However, success stories are few and far between, and many aspiring migrants find themselves in tragic circumstances of trafficking and exploitation.

Of the 26 returnee migrants interviewed, 10 were aware beforehand of the risks and potential challenges they could face[157] and decided to migrate anyway. With no job opportunities or way to support themselves, the sense of hopelessness of succeeding in their home country meant that many aspiring migrants felt it was better to take the risk and potentially succeed than to stay and remain in the certainty of poverty. One male returnee migrant that was interviewed stated, *"I understood that migration was risky – including to the extent of getting killed. But I thought it was better than staying here."* This sentiment was echoed by many of the other returnees that were interviewed who weighed up the opportunities at destination versus the risks of being trafficked. *"Migrants know and calculate their level of risk of abuse and make their decision to migrate. There is a strong desire to try in spite of the risks",* said a CSO staff member.

### Figure 3. Awareness of risk of migration

Aware of risks

Unaware of risks

### Figure 4. Migrants that had sought out information before deciding to migrate

Actively sought out information

Did not seek out information

However, there did appear to be a "risk-opportunity imbalance", whereby young people, particularly first-time migrants, underrate the risks of migration and over-estimate the chance of success.[158] One contributing factor for this is the cultural and religious beliefs about "luck" and the "will of God" deciding their destiny.[159] Multiple returnees spoke about being "lucky" or "unlucky", with statements such as *"If you are lucky you can succeed"* and *"the working conditions depend on your luck".* Whilst many migrants were aware of the potential risks, this almost fatalist belief resulted in them not preparing themselves adequately with information or resources to mitigate or minimize these risks. In fact, of the 26 returnees interviewed, only one stipulated that they had actively sought out information prior to taking the decision to migrate.[160] Journeys that begin without reliable information on costs and payments,[161] duration and specific danger points en-route, living and working conditions and legal requirements in destination countries,

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155 The phenomenon that Cohen (2004) calls "culture of migration," whereby "migration is socially accepted and pervasive in the society, and decisions about migration are rooted in everyday experiences."
156 Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.
157 This includes challenges along the route and in destination, such as the lack of food and water, the sea crossing, the war in Yemen, extortion of money by brokers, the risk of physical and sexual violence, and deportation.
158 Gezie et al., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. pp. 1–11.
159 In prior research with 1,726 Ethiopian returnees, 49% believed that life is predetermined (Minaye, A., et al, 2017).
160 This finding is supported also by IOM research *'The Desire to Thrive Regardless of the Risk',* 2020. The report found that migrants from Oromia region are generally less prepared than migrants travelling from other regions of Ethiopia. Migrants from Oromia were found to have less knowledge about the route due to not seeking pre-departure information, as well as returnees being unlikely to share their story with others due to the stigma of failed migration.
161 Aspiring migrants often believe that irregular migration is a cheaper solution than migrating regularly. However, due to the large sums extorted by brokers, it usually ends up resulting in being more expensive than formal pathway (Admassie et al., 2017).

and support services available from consulates and CSOs, leave migrants particularly vulnerable.[162] Those living in rural areas also often lack information about formal migration procedures, or find them too inaccessible or complicated to navigate.[163] Where these knowledge gaps exist, informal agents and brokers easily take advantage of aspiring migrants - providing misinformation and offering false promises[164], which inevitably leads to the likelihood of migrants being trafficked and exploited.[165]



FDG with community leaders in Arsi Zone, Ethiopia
© Embode 2019 / Verity KOWAL

In recent years there has been significant effort and resources invested to halt irregular migration in order to prevent the trafficking of Ethiopians. The government, NGOs and CSOs, as well as community leaders have all undertaken advocacy and awareness-raising about the risks of migration, with the expectation it would stop irregular migration. However, formal evaluations of such efforts appear to be rare, and interviews with returnees indicated that, in the absence of credible alternatives, awareness-raising about the dangers associated with irregular migration has often not resulted in young people changing their decision to migrate unsafely. Whilst some returnees interviewed for the research had migrated without any knowledge of the risks, and may have indeed benefited from such information, many others chose to migrate even after knowing the potential challenges that lay ahead. A few returnees also stated that they voluntarily share their experiences with youth in the community in order to prevent others from migrating irregularly, however, acknowledged that it had limited effectiveness. *"I share my experiences with friends and other potential migrants so that they take it as a lesson and don't go through the difficulties I faced. I speak to my brother as well because he is still trying to migrate illegally, and I am advising him not to do it. Often, they do not listen to my advice,"* said a male returnee. Community elders and religious leaders in the four rural *kebeles* visited during the field research had all been advocating against irregular migration and advising youth and parents about the dangers of trafficking. However, they felt that their interventions were becoming ineffective due to no provision of alternative livelihoods or economic solutions being implemented in the community. *"If it were not for our advice, more young people would have migrated. However, the young people are losing trust in us because we have been promising that the government will provide jobs, but they have not and the young people have given up on this happening"*, exclaimed one community elder.

The ineffectiveness of stopping irregular migration by solely raising awareness of risks is also evident in the high rates of young people re-migrating, despite experiences of abuse, exploitation and debt incurred during previous migration attempts. During the interviews, returnees shared horrendous stories of torture and suffering, but when asked whether they would re-migrate, many still responded that they would, with one returnee explaining *"Re-migration is not about having an interest – it's a last resort. It's when there is no other choice"*. It appears that many young people are willing to do whatever it takes and endure unimaginable hardship for the potential of a better life. This was summed up by one CSO staff member, who said *"It's just all so sad. You take the risk, you didn't manage, you're sent home – it's just this negative spiral that you go again and again. There's almost no reason not to go again because at home you can't manage so you better go and try at least… I can imagine how heavy it is on you socially and emotionally."*

Although a lot of awareness-raising and advocacy takes place at grassroots level via community conversations at religious services, schools and local gatherings, media also has a role to play in spreading important information and messages at a mass scale. Media outlets in Ethiopia have already been reporting on and conducting educational programmes relating to migration and trafficking, although the approaches and foci have varied depending on the degree of understanding about the issue. *"It is important to differentiate between irregular and regular migration, and to advise [aspiring migrants] at least to migrate through formal channels. Regular migration might not help them prevent the risk of abuse and exploitation, but it could minimize the degree of risks"*, acknowledged a journalist. Where media can provide balanced, accurate and neutral information on the realities of migration – including both risks and opportunities, as well as migrants' rights and available services – migrants at all stages of the migration cycle can make informed choices about their next steps and reduce their vulnerability to potential risks.

[162] Hynes, P., Burland, P., Thurnham, A., Dew, J., Gani-Yusuf, L., Lenja, V., Tran, H.T., Olatunde, A. and Gaxha, A., 2019. *'Between two fires': understanding vulnerabilities and the support needs of people from Albania, Viet Nam and Nigeria who have experienced human trafficking into the UK.* University of Bedfordshire and International Organization for Migration (IOM). pp. 1–120.

[163] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

[164] In research conducted with 1,726 Ethiopian returnees, 42.1% had got their information on how to migrate to the Middle East from brokers (Minaye, A., et al, 2017).

[165] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

## 4.2.2. Migrants are perceived as "taking the easy way out" of poverty

In Ethiopia, unemployment stands at a staggering 19.1%.[166] Furthermore, young people aged 15–29 years experience the highest rates of unemployment, underemployment, low incomes and poor working conditions. Youth in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged due to lack of job opportunities and increasing landlessness, resulting in young people resorting to migration to urban areas and abroad to seek work.

Most strategic stakeholders[167] interviewed were compassionate to the experiences of victims of trafficking and exploitation, as well as understanding of the drivers that led to their decisions to migrate. However, during the research, evidence was found of victim-blaming among some stakeholders mandated to support migrants and trafficked persons. *"They [migrants] are responsible for their experience because they chose to migrate instead of working and improving themselves in their country… Migrants could prevent the bad experience if they focus on their education instead of taking migration as an alternative"*, stated one NGO worker. This was also echoed by a government office representative who said, *"[The] problem is returnees' attitude towards work in the country. They often lack interest to work and improve their lives at home."* Even one media professional held this attitude, stating, *"Youth are saying there is no job for them. I don't believe that. The jobs are out there. Employers are being hurt because the youth don't work hard… The migration system is creating lazy youth that want to leave the country to be successful."*

One CSO staff member commented on the prevalent attitude of victim-blaming, stating *"Migration is not perceived as positive. In most cases, the whole narrative is that there are adequate opportunities in the country but it's not true. They assume migrants are leaving as a short cut because they don't want to work hard in their community. The way migrants are perceived in this country needs to change".*

## 4.2.3. Decision-making and parental influence in Jimma and Arsi

All of the returnees interviewed for this research claimed that migrating was their own decision and they were not pressured or influenced by their family.[168] However, there was a significant difference in the decision-making and planning process between aspiring migrants in Jimma and Arsi Zones. In Jimma Zone, decisions about migration generally involved consultation with close family members. Although it was initiated by the young person, they would discuss their desire to migrate with their family. All the parents interviewed expressed that they were opposed to their child migrating and tried to influence them to stay. However, with no job opportunities available locally, and parents' unable to provide their children with basic necessities, they felt they had no choice but to ultimately support their child's decision to migrate. *"We cannot ask them to stay because we cannot offer our children something better here"*, said a father who had three children that migrated abroad. Families would help fund the journey by selling off their assets or taking out a loan. *"I did not encourage my daughter to migrate. The initiative came from her and I agreed. So, I sold my two cattle, which was all I had"*, said the father of a female migrant.

**Figure 5. Migrants from Arsi that consulted their family about migration**

Consulted their family

Left without telling their family

In Arsi Zone, the researchers interviewed eight male returnees and two female returnees. Except for one of the female migrants, all of the others made their decision to migrate in isolation and left home without discussing or telling their parents or family. *"It was my own decision – my family did not pressure me. I left without the knowledge of my family"*, said a male returnee from Arsi. Young males would just "disappear" suddenly. The family would only become aware when the migrant called a few days later to inform them, or if the migrant was caught by brokers en-route who extorted their families for money. *"He migrated without my consent. I didn't know he was going – he only told me after he left. I did not encourage it, but I knew it was because our living condition was not good"*, said the wife of a male migrant in Arsi. Community elders and leaders in Arsi Zone, as well as NGO and CSO staff interviewed, also reiterated this trend of

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[166] Trading Economics. Ethiopia Unemployment Rate, 2018. Accessed 17 August 2020. Available at https://tradingeconomics.com/ethiopia/unemployment-rate.

[167] Strategic stakeholders are those who have a mandated responsibility to migrants and survivors of trafficking due to their professional role, and include government representatives, NGO and CSO staff, as well as media.

[168] This finding is also supported by research conducted by ILO with 1,450 Ethiopian migrant returnees in which returnees were asked whether they had decided to migrate or if it was due to the decision or pressure of others. The results show that more than 92% of respondents had made the decision themselves to migrate, and in less than 3% of cases the decision was taken by the parents. Another study by IOM with 2,140 migrants found that 87% took the decision alone and only 1% were pushed by their families. Certainly, in all cases, the weight of peer pressure - in a context of severe poverty and lack of prospects - influences the decision process, which cannot be completely independent. (Admassie, A., et al, 2017.)

young people from particular areas migrating without the knowledge of their family.[169] It appears to have become so common and firmly established in Arsi that it seems to be perceived by male migrants as normal and reasonable behaviour. However, migrating independently without the support of family, has been found to significantly increase the risk of forced labour.[170] In addition, the increased risk of extortion en-route and the reduced likelihood of gaining employment and sending home remittances, results in further guilt and blame put onto migrants for the debt caused to their family, as they were not consulted on the decision.

In contrast to these findings, some government office representatives, NGO staff and even community leaders claimed that parents push their children into migration. *"Families are responsible in aggravating human trafficking because they often want to benefit from remittances sent by their migrant children. So, they encourage them to migrate,"* said one government office representative interviewed. This was even echoed by one NGO worker in Jimma who declared *"The family is the one most responsible [for human trafficking] because they are the ones encouraging their children to migrate".* Whilst strong kin and lineage relationships in Ethiopia certainly create responsibilities and feelings of family obligations[171] (as was highlighted in section 4.1.1.), migration appeared to be driven by young people's desire to help their parents and families, rather than the push coming from parental expectations.[172] *"There was no pressure or expectation from others to migrate – I made the decision myself. But I could not sit at home and see my parents suffering and their house was getting old and needed repairs. I was trying everything [in my home community] but I could not make enough money"*, said a female returnee.
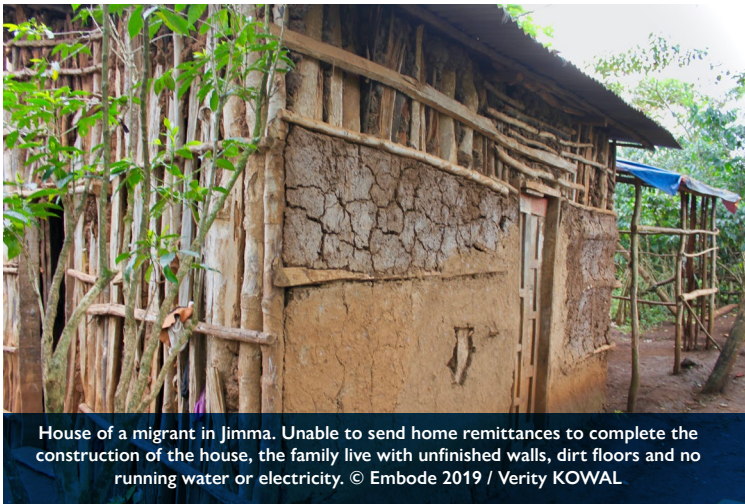


House of a migrant in Jimma. Unable to send home remittances to complete the construction of the house, the family live with unfinished walls, dirt floors and no running water or electricity. © Embode 2019 / Verity KOWAL

The portrayal of parents using their children as a source of income ran counter to what the researchers observed in Jimma and Arsi to be caring and protective parents whose preference was for their children to remain at home.[173] This shifts the focus and blame from the systemic issues of poverty, lack of income opportunities and basic service provision, of which the strategic stakeholders are responsible for. *"The pressure was from the government by not giving us the opportunity to live decently in our country. But parents don't want us to leave. So, we decide on our own"*, said one male returnee. Without the implementation of pro-poor strategies that facilitate tangible economic solutions and employment opportunities in rural communities, particularly for youth and women,[174] the high rates of irregular migration will continue. *"I have not seen the root causes being addressed – the economic situation in Ethiopia is not changing"*, acknowledged a CSO staff member.

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[169] In Addis, the researchers also interviewed a male returnee from Wollo, a district in northern central Ethiopia which also has high rates of outward migration. From the interview with the returnee, as well as information provided by NGOs and CSOs, it appears this pattern of migrating unannounced may also be commonplace in Wollo, although further research would be required to confirm this.

[170] A study conducted for ILO with 1,450 Ethiopian migrants, found that approximately 90% of respondents who migrated independently were in a situation of forced labour, whereas those who migrated with the assistance of their family or friends were significantly less likely to end up in forced labour. (Admassie, et al., 2017.)

[171] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[172] This is based on findings in Gomma *Woreda* in Jimma Zone and Robe *Woreda* in Arsi Zone. The situation may vary in different regions of Ethiopia. In particular, SNNPR Zone as well as North Wollo and South Wollo in Amhara Zone were mentioned by both NGO and government stakeholders as areas where parents encourage and celebrate migration. For example, in some communities in SNNPR and Wollo, ceremonies are held by parents to farewell migrating children and blessings are provided by religious leaders.

[173] Research with 2,140 migrants found that 59% of females and 64% of males did not inform their family they were migrating. The main reason provided was that their family would have tried to prevent them from going. (IOM, 2020).

[174] Admassie et al., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Job creation and generating income opportunities for young people in their communities is key to preventing unsafe migration. Strengthening and further resourcing of Rural Job Creation and Food Security Agency is required to help achieve it.

7. Community education needs to move beyond just awareness-raising on the dangers of migration to include risk reduction. It should include pre-departure information on what specific actions young people can take to mitigate risks if they do decide to migrate, as well as services they can reach out to for assistance if abuse or exploitation occurs. An assessment should also be undertaken to determine what are the most trusted sources of information and effective modes of transmission for the target population (whether through mass media, anti-trafficking groups in schools, or community conversations led by local leaders or other returnees).

8. Strategic stakeholders need to better recognize the positive role of parents in trying to protect and support their children. The Government of Ethiopia, NGOs and CSOs can assist parents with accurate information and encourage them to have open discussions about migration with their children. Education among young males is needed in Arsi (and potentially other regions in Ethiopia based on further study) on the importance of family discussions and agreement about migration decisions.

9. Further research is needed into other localities in Ethiopia with high rates of irregular migration, such as SNNPR, Amhara and Tigray Zones, to assess the levels of awareness of migration risks among youth, decision-making processes and parental influence.

## 4.3. RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IS MARRED BY BLAME AND SHAME

> **The community are so harsh on us that I wish I had died like the other migrants. I am even considering re-migrating because I am so ostracized here.**
> *— Male returnee migrant*

Because reintegration occurs on multiple levels – at the individual, family, and community levels – both felt stigma and enacted stigma are equally harmful to the successful reintegration of the trafficked person. Research on returnee experiences in Ethiopia show that tensions, strains and conflicts in familial and community relationships emerge during the reintegration process.[175] This is linked to the intangible weight of the aspiration of migration as a gateway to improved economic outcomes for family members "left behind". Sacrifices such as financing the cost of migration, as well as separation and lack of communication between family members and those who have migrated, are expected to be rewarded in the form of remittances.

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[175] See Bilgili et al., 2018; Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007; Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020; and Reda, A.H., 2018.

## 4.3.1. Victims of trafficking and exploitation are blamed for "failed" migration

> **The community is not that much supportive and positive towards me because they do not know the problems I went through. Usually, unsuccessful migration is not so welcomed in the community.**
> *— Female returnee migrant*

Discrimination and ostracism were experienced by a number of the returnees within communities, especially towards those that had been "unsuccessful" in their migration attempts and had not been able to send home remittances. When a family has gone into great debt or financial loss to pay for migration costs or ransom to traffickers, and the migrant is then unable to send home money, there is great blame and shame put on them. It is pertinent to note that this attitude appeared to be held more among the broader community than the actual families of returnees. *"There is a difference when you come back financially well off and when you fail to succeed financially. If you don't come back with money, then friends and community are not so welcoming. There is some degree of discrimination",* stated a male returnee migrant.

However, migrants themselves carry a lot of guilt, as they blame themselves for the situation of their family being even worse off than before. *"I feel that I can't return home with nothing after wasting my parents' money",* said a male returnee. Family "reunions" are regularly fraught with feelings of shame, guilt and a sense of responsibility by persons who have been trafficked for their "failed migration" and coming home empty-handed or in debt.[176] This was probably the most prominent cause of distress that the returnees raised during the research. It is also one of the key drivers of re-migration, as migrants feel they are responsible for finding a solution to the debt their families are now in and it's not possible for them to earn the money in their home communities. *"Even returnees are re-migrating despite having had bad experiences the first time because they feel guilt and responsibility seeing their families suffer in poverty and that they were not able to help them the first time",* stated an NGO worker.

Felt stigma and self-blame impact upon vulnerability to future trafficking, as individuals who have already experienced harm are desperate to make it up to those whom they feel they have let down and may consequently be willing to engage in risky re-migration. *"There is high rate of re-migration in our community. One reason for this is because they suffer financial loss with failed migration, so they try again to repay their family",* said a community leader. Many of the returnees interviewed admitted that they were considering re-migrating in order to pay off their debts and deliver on their promises to their family. Feelings of failure and expectations to resolve the financial situation of their family are likely to be heightened for males. This is due to the tendency of incurring debt to pay brokers' ransoms, being less likely to gain employment abroad, as well as social expectations that links masculinity to financial success. Stigma associated with the perceived failure of migration is exacerbated by the patriarchal cultural values where males are given higher status than females in communities and family systems.

Outside of family and friends, formal support services for returnees appear to be non-existent in the rural *kebeles* of the research study sites.[177] When returnees were asked what support would be the most helpful to them, the single biggest request was economic opportunities – whether it be a job, land for farming or a loan to set up a small business.[178] Typically, the drivers that propelled them to migrate – primarily poverty and a lack of employment opportunities locally – are still present and have in fact been compounded by the debt, guilt and stigma associated with unsuccessful migration. Economic empowerment programmes, such as microfinance and skills training for returnee migrants and victims of trafficking, are therefore extremely important in preventing risky re-migration and helping returnees rebuild their lives. For returnees whose families are indebted from their migration, economic opportunities would assist in returnees gaining back social acceptance and alleviating both felt and enacted stigma stigma.

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176 Jones et al., 2014. Rethinking the 'Maid Trade': Experiences of Ethiopian adolescent domestic workers in the Middle East. pp. 1–7.
177 At the time of writing, a new proclamation (number - 1178/2012 E.C) had been adopted by the Government of Ethiopia, which sets out how to reintegrate returnees into communities. A new structure is being built at the government level, including transforming the Anti Trafficking Task Force to National Coordination Mechanism (National Partnership Coalition). (Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 5 August 2020.)
178 The Government of Ethiopia provides some support programmes, such as microfinance, to a select number of returnees. However, none of the 26 returnees interviewed had received any government support since they returned home, despite the majority of the interview participants in Jimma and Arsi being identified and selected for participation in the research by local government office representatives.

**CASE STUDY 3**

Hakim* (aged 16), Ahmed* (aged 17) and Fassil* (aged 18) grew up in the same small rural village in Arsi. They were all from large families and their parents were farmers. None of the boys had attended secondary school, as their families were too impoverished to buy school materials and the boys also needed to work to support themselves.

To overcome life's hardships, Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil discussed the idea of migration with their group of friends. Their parents did not know about their plans to migrate and the boys left without telling them. They started their journey on their own but were caught by brokers near the border of Somalia. The brokers beat Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil to extort ETB 18,000 (~USD 520) from each of them. Their families had to sell their only cattle and land to pay the ransom.

Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil travelled with the brokers in a group of about 120 migrants. The journey was harsh – they walked by foot and were not given any food or water. Very few of the group survived the journey, with most dying of dehydration and starvation or from beatings by the brokers.

From Somalia, Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil caught a boat to Yemen. There were four boats transporting about 110 people on each. The crossing was taking too long and the sun was starting to rise. The brokers were panicking about being caught by authorities, so they purposely sunk two of the boats, with all on-board drowning in the sea. Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil were fortunately on the boats that survived but were left traumatized by what they witnessed.

When Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil got to the border of Yemen they were told there was civil war so could not enter. They then had to beg their parents for more money in order to be able to return home. During the journey home they were arrested and imprisoned in Somalia by local authorities. Upon their release, they were dropped to the Ethiopian border and then walked the approximate 700km back to their village.

Upon returning home, their families were welcoming and happy that Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil were alive. However, Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil say that the community has not been positive towards them. Before they migrated, things were normal but now community members ignore them and say they don't want them there. The community see them as "troublemakers" because they blame Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil for their parents' financial problems.

Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil are currently doing ad hoc work as day labourers in construction. The work is intermittent, and they only earn 80 ETB (~2.30 USD) per day. They walk for two hours from their village to the nearest town to work and then sleep on the street. Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil said that they want to prove to their community that they are hard-working and can be successful so that the community will change their perception of them.

Despite their terrible experiences migrating previously, Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil said that if things continue as they currently are, they will re-migrate because they feel hopeless and ostracized. When asked what support would be most helpful to them Hakim, Ahmed and Fassil stated they would like the community to change their perception and attitude towards returnees like them and be more supportive. They would also like a job opportunity to help get them out of their difficult situation and be able to support themselves and their families.

### 4.3.2. Negative community perceptions of returnee migrants cause further distress for those that return home

> " **The treatment from the community is not that positive because they think returnees behave somehow against the societal norm. They don't want to reintegrate them into the community.** "
> – *NGO worker*

Exposure to different cultures and practices in destination countries, as well as the traumatic experiences that many migrants go through, unsurprisingly has life-altering effects on migrants.[179] As a result, often the thinking and behaviour of returnees may have changed from the social and cultural norms of the community. *"If you have migrated, you have seen other parts of the world, you have been exposed to other things – it might be for good or for worse – and you come back and you are not necessarily well perceived by the community because then people say 'oh you have changed'. And my point is 'of course you've changed – You've been exposed to some things; you've met other cultures'. But that can sometimes be a bit difficult to come back to a family and then live life as before you left",* stated an CSO staff member that works on the reintegration of returnees.

Upon their return home, migrants frequently find it challenging to integrate back into local life. The emotional toll and symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can manifest in ways that family, friends and other community members do not understand; often leading to strained or even broken relationships.[180] *"When the returnees have mental health problems they get into conflict with others and this causes discrimination. They are frustrated with their situation and they protest against the government or take money from the family and leave, and this causes community members to see them as troublemakers",* said a community elder. Negative community perception and attitudes towards migrants causes further isolation and distress for those that return home. Some returnees interviewed explained that they are looked down on and not trusted, which mars their social reintegration. Gossip of some returnees being "unlucky" or "troublemakers" quickly spreads within a community, impacting opportunities for marriage, employment and taking up social positions in society.[181] One female returnee described the stigma she felt, stating *"I feel as if I am a failure because of my failed migration and the resulting discrimination by the community."*

In the absence of community acceptance, opportunities may exist for returnees to provide psychosocial support to each other. This was highlighted by a CSO staff member, who said *"Sometimes you find a very supportive family who will take them [returnee migrants] back and sometimes they don't find that. So, they feel more comfortable sharing their experiences with fellow returnees."* Several returnee migrants themselves also spoke about the possibility of fellow returnees assisting each other. *"I think there is no solution to improve the community. They do not understand the situation of returnees because they have not experienced it themselves. It's better to work with returnees so they can support each other",* said a female returnee. Certainly, given that many youth from the same locality migrate and therefore have shared experiences and a sense of empathy, establishing formal opportunities for returnees to provide social and emotional support to one another could provide a sense of community and belonging.



Unaccompanied migrant children eat a meal together at IOM Migration Response Centre in Djibouti where they are being cared for as they wait to be returned home.
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[179] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.
[180] Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. *Leaving the past behind: When victims of trafficking decline assistance.* pp. 123–133.
[181] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

> **★ PROMISING PRACTICE**
>
> An example of a promising practice emerging in this area in Ethiopia are "peer support groups" that the Red Cross have recently started trying in localities with high youth migration:
>
> *"We have 3 'safe spaces' which essentially are kind of community centres where they [returnee migrants] can get access to information about what kinds of services are available, both in the community but also those provided by the Red Cross. We have some ongoing formal and information activities. So, the formal activities would be psychosocial support peer groups, it could be social activities organized by Red Cross volunteers, it could be other types of activities organized by other community members but through referral of the Red Cross.*
>
> *One example in Gobesa in Arsi is that we have a football team which consists of half the host community and half the returnees. So, we also see "ok maybe you don't need specialized treatment but actually you just need to be part of a network". So, we have supported the football team with equipment and trained them, and in turn they also play a role in making sure that young deportees who feel low can be part of something in a regular activity."*

The process of reintegration does not necessarily mean assimilation back into life exactly as migrants knew it before. In fact, given the life-changing events migrants experienced, this is unlikely to be realistic. Framing the needs and obstacles of returnees through a lens of reintegration may be one of the obstacles created by governments and organizations, as in many cases the changes that migrants experience en-route or in-destination beckons a situation of "integration anew" upon return to Ethiopia.[182] However, that does not mean that migrants are unable to regain acceptance into communities and adjust to life. Social support from family, friends and other community members can facilitate rehabilitation and integration.[183] One community elder shared how they were working to welcome back and reintegrate returnees, saying *"The strength in our community is the culture of supporting and caring for each other. We comfort each other and share what we have. The whole community comes and blesses the youth when they return."* Where this kind of emotional support from communities exists, it can have a significant impact on the recovery and reintegration of returnee migrants.

Time also seems to be a factor in experiences of stigma and reintegration. *"During the first 1-2 months we're back our family is happy. But after that things become difficult because migrants' perceptions and attitudes have changed and this causes tension",* said a female returnee migrant. However, whilst the initial return and reintegration into families and communities can be often very challenging, experiences of stigmatization did not seem to be irrevocable. After an initial adjustment phase, it appears that many returnees are more socially accepted back into the community.[184] Among the returnees interviewed, those that had been back for longer than a year had more successfully reintegrated than those who had only returned a few months prior. Most returnees that had been back for more than a year expressed being treated normally, and in some cases they had even got married and started a family. Stigmatization therefore seems, in many situations, to be time bound, although further research would be required to investigate whether certain events and behaviours also contribute to this dissipation of stigmatization over time. However, with the high rates of re-migration,[185] some migrants risk being caught in a cycle of return and repeated stigmatization.

### 4.3.3. Unsafe media reporting can cause returnee migrants and survivors of trafficking further harm

The media plays an important role in generating broader public understanding of the difficulties faced by migrants, and shaping the way migrants and trafficked persons are socially perceived. As the media are responsible for providing information and stories to the public, the narratives and depictions of migrants in mass communication can either help perpetuate or eradicate negative and harmful attitudes. Of course, the narratives told in the media are influenced by the personal opinions and knowledge of those reporting them. During interviews with media professionals, divergent views were expressed about migrants. One journalist stated, *"There should not be stigma and discrimination against survivors and returnees… Returnee migrants need support from the community as well as the concerned government departments."* Whilst

[182] Ibid.
[183] Beck, D.C., Choi, K.R., Munro-Kramer, M.L. and Lori, J.R., 2017. Human trafficking in Ethiopia: a scoping review to identify gaps in service delivery, research, and policy. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 18*(5), pp. 532–543.
[184] Bilgili et al., 2018. Return migrants' perceptions of living conditions in Ethiopia: A gendered analysis. pp. 345–366.
[185] Research conducted with 2,140 Ethiopians aged between 15 and 29 years that were migrating to Saudi Arabia found that 64% had attempted the journey at least twice before. 41% spent less than one month in Ethiopia before remigrating. (IOM, 2020).

on the other hand, another media professional showed very discriminatory and stigmatizing attitudes towards migrants, declaring *"The reputation of Ethiopia is being destroyed by migration. Uneducated persons are being sent and the image these [destination] countries have are of these little uneducated kids. When I go abroad now, I feel ashamed".* The perceptions and attitudes seemed to be somewhat influenced by the level of direct engagement the journalist had with returnee migrants, as well as proximity to communities of origin where they could see first-hand the realities on the ground.

The media have a responsibility and duty of care to protect returnees they interview from further harm. From a rapid review of news articles online about the exploitation and abuse of Ethiopian migrant workers, numerous examples were found of news outlets publishing the names, ages, locations and even photographs of victims. Cases of such victims in the media have at times resulted in stigma and discrimination towards victims upon their communities discovering such information.[186] *"Media coverage of victims of trafficking is quite discouraging. Returnees and victims are portrayed in ways that compromise their social standing when they return to their community",* said a CSO staff member. Although the media outlets interviewed had in place policies and protocols for the protection and safety of their informants, some did admit to publishing identifying information of trafficking victims. *"We are happy to show their identity and disclose their name if they consent",* stated one media professional. Whilst obtaining consent is essential for interviewing any person, particularly those that are vulnerable, interviewees may not always be informed and aware of the potential negative impacts of what they are agreeing to. It is not always safe for the identity of a victim of trafficking or abuse to be disclosed, and the media must always ensure that the best interest of the survivor is the priority.

### 4.3.4. Impact of religion on reintegration experiences

Previous research conducted with 1,450 returnee migrants in Ethiopia found that being Muslim was *"positively and significantly associated with a higher probability of migration".*[187] Given that the main destination for most low-skilled migrants is the Middle East, this indicates the importance of cultural similarity between sending and receiving countries on the basis of religion.[188] Some interviewees stated that Muslim families preferred their daughters to go to Arab countries. Due to the religious affiliation, it was expected that the migrant would adapt more easily in another Muslim country, having somewhat of an understanding about the associated beliefs and lifestyle.[189] In addition, it is also seen as a protective factor, with an NGO worker stating, *"The similarity in religion makes Arab countries more attractive to migrants and their parents, as they think they'll be safer there than in non-Muslim countries".* Despite this, it was found that Muslim migrants sometimes still experience judgement and blame within their home communities. Simply leaving the community to migrate abroad can be viewed as sufficiently "deviant" to warrant stigma, with one Imam stating, *"In our culture and Muslim belief it is considered that people should not migrate. So, if they do and have problems as a result then it's considered their own fault."*

In comparison, Christian migrants working as domestic workers in the Middle East are more likely to experience stress[190] as well as increased risk of abuse[191] due to religious bigotry in destination countries.[192] It was also shared by an NGO worker that some Christian migrants were pretending to be Muslim in order to get jobs in the Middle East. Prior qualitative research conducted with 18 domestic workers in Saudi Arabia found that both employment agents and employers urge Christian domestic workers to convert to Islam. Many of the Ethiopian migrants in that research stated that they had agreed to this verbally (although emphasized they did not convert for "real") due to it resulting in slightly better working conditions with their employer after conversion. Once they agree, they are taken to the migration office so they can say the Shahadah[193] and then given a certificate of conversion.[194] For Christian migrants, the religious discrimination and bigotry is not only experienced in destination countries but also upon returning home.[195] A CSO staff member interviewed explained that Orthodox Christians that migrated to the Middle East often have to go through extensive rituals when they returned home, which is outlined in the following example:

186 Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. *Leaving the past behind: When victims of trafficking decline assistance.* pp. 123–133.

187 Admassie et al., 2017. Migration and Forced Labour: An Analysis on Ethiopian Workers. ILO. p. 61.

188 A significantly higher number of returnee migrants interviewed as part of the research identified as Muslim – of the 26 migrant returnees interviewed, 23 were Muslim, 2 were Orthodox Christian and 1 Protestant Christian. Although the reason for this may reside in the choice of the research locations (in Jimma 86% of the population are Muslim and in Arsi 58% are Muslim. The remaining residents are predominantly Orthodox Christian, with a small percentage of Protestant Christians).

189 This was also reported in research conducted by Habtamu, et al., 2017, with 1,036 Ethiopian returnee migrants.

190 Habtamu et al., 2017. Prevalence and associated factors of common mental disorders among Ethiopian migrant returnees from the Middle East and South Africa. pp. 1–11.

191 Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

192 Ketema, N., 2014. Female Ethiopian migrant domestic workers: An analysis of migration, return-migration and reintegration experiences. pp. 1–119.

193 Islamic creed declaring belief in the oneness of God and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's messenger. Honest recitation of the Shahada is generally the only requirement for conversion to Islam.

194 Ketema, N., 2014. Female Ethiopian migrant domestic workers: An analysis of migration, return-migration and reintegration experiences. pp. 1–119.

195 Ibid.

*"People need to be taken to a monastery for cleansing and take holy water. That's a normal practice actually – it has to happen that way if you are migrating to a Muslim country and coming back into a very strong Orthodox community. They have 'assigned' priests to individual souls that pray for your soul and also pray for you when you die. That person will not come and pray for you to be forgiven by God [if the returnee has not gone through the cleansing rituals], so it's quite strong. They really have to go through those rituals, and for you to be buried without having the "Fattat" prayer they do during the burial for your soul to be forgiven by God it is like you are going straight to hell. So, you can imagine the fear they may experience. If you are a Muslim and you migrate to a Muslim country, when you come back you don't need to go through those rituals.*

*For instance, a woman who had been in the Sudan had eaten halal meat. Because of this she had [been considered] 'converted'. Then she came back to Gondar and if she didn't go through the rituals to convert back again to Orthodox Christianity they didn't consider her as a Christian. This was a problem because she was ill when she came back and died a few months later and they refused to bury her at the Christian cemetery."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Empowerment programmes, such as microfinance, skills training and entrepreneurship development, need to be expanded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to reach returnee migrants and victims of trafficking in remote, rural communities.

11. National reform is needed to strengthen the capacity of government agencies, CSOs and NGOs working on receiving and reintegration of returnees. There is a need for a multi-stakeholder process to agree a national, timebound and funded Migrant Returnee strategy (with local implementers also involved), and a review of the operationalization of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), including identification of victims so that tailored support can be provided. The strategy should include not only an overview of how to improve support services, but also give significant cognisance to the resources of remittances, skills, knowledge and experiences that migrants bring back to Ethiopia. Such resources can be harnessed to support job and income creation, entrepreneurship, as well as bilateral relations with destination countries.

12. Communities and families need further education about the challenges migrants face and how to best support returnees and ensure they are warmly welcomed back into their home communities. This should be in partnership with and led by community elders and religious leaders whose opinions and guidance are highly respected in communities.

13. Increased focus and investment is needed by both government and NGOs/CSOs into community resources to provide emotional and psychosocial support for returnee migrants. This could include establishing support groups (which should be separate for males and females) in which returnees can share experiences and/or participate in social activities.

14. Media reporting should include information and advice on what families, friends and communities can do to support returnees and make the transition back into their home life easier. Training should be provided to journalists and editors on the issue of migration and trafficking to ensure well-informed reporting. Special attention needs to be given to the responsibility of the media to ensure the protection of victims of crime, including the importance of anonymity to prevent against social stigma.

15. The Government of Ethiopia should collaborate with NGOs and CSOs to capture and record information on trafficking in a national centralized database which can be used to support policymaking and programme decisions.

## 4.4. VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE EXPERIENCE EXTREME SHAME AND STIGMA

> **There's a lot of shame and guilt that follows a migrant's return and by default that is difficult to talk about. Then there's the whole component of violence and sexual gender-based violence, which is a very stigmatized and difficult thing to talk about in general in Ethiopia.**
> *— CSO staff member*

As a devoutly religious country,[196] Ethiopia maintains very traditional attitudes around sex and sexuality. Social norms attached to issues of virginity, prostitution and homosexuality can result in the stigmatization towards victims of trafficking and returnee migrants who have experienced sexual violence – usually at the hands of brokers, employers and/or authorities – during the migration process. This stigma and shame associated with sexual abuse has a significant impact on returnees' reintegration into their families and communities, as well as access to services to support their recovery, or access to justice and reparations.

### 4.4.1. Returnee migrants are stigmatized in communities for fear of carrying diseases

Existing research into vulnerability and needs of returnee migrants in other countries has found that those returning home with sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS has often led to the disownment of the victims.[197] This was also found to be the case in Ethiopia, with a few NGO staff and government office representatives mentioning that some community members feared that returnees would bring back sexually transmitted diseases which could be spread to others.[198] *"Communities are suspicious of migrants bringing back diseases such as HIV. Some people have come back with this in the past because they were raped or prostituted and infected others in the community. Now there is an assumption that all returnees will be 'contaminated'. This attitude is held towards both men and women",* shared a government office representative. One female migrant shared how she returned home with a mild skin condition, which was likely a reaction from cleaning chemicals she had to use whilst she was a domestic worker. However, a neighbour thought she was diseased and was verbally abusive towards her, insisting she leave the community and go back abroad.

### 4.4.2. Female victims of sexual abuse are at risk of being ostracized and outcast

In many parts of Ethiopia, particularly in rural communities, importance is placed on the virginity of females.[199] Females that are not virgins are often considered "unsuitable" for marriage[200] and "unworthy" to be mothers. This point was raised by several government office representatives, with one commenting that *"Female returnees in particular experience stigma and discrimination. There is a high risk of rape for female migrants and in some areas, females are expected to be virgins before marriage. So sometimes female returnees may not be able to get married because the community discriminates against them and thinks they are not a moral person."*[201] Umarried women in their twenties and thirties are often labelled to as *"komo ker"*, which is a derogatory term meaninig "unwanted".[202]

Given the high risk of sexual assault against female migrants[203], especially those who migrate informally, rumours about what is perceived to have happened to her, rather than what did happen, can lead to accusations and stigma. *"Communities are not very welcoming to those female migrants who travelled long distances with male brokers, due to the cultural beliefs in the communities",* stated an NGO worker. This may also likely explain why female returnees are more "hidden" in communities than male returnees (as highlighted in the section 2.4. 'Limitations'). A community elder admitted *"Almost every case in*

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[196] According to the latest national census in Ethiopia (conducted by the Central Statistics Agency in Ethiopia in 2007), 62.8% of the population are Christian (43.5% Orthodox and 18.6% Protestant) and 33.9% are Muslim.

[197] Hynes et al., 2019. *'Between two fires': understanding vulnerabilities and the support needs of people from Albania, Viet Nam and Nigeria who have experienced human trafficking into the UK.* IOM. pp. 1–120.

[198] The field research was completed before the outbreak and spread of COVID-19. However, the risk of ostracization due to community fears or suspicion of returning migrants being infected with COVID-19 is also a likely risk.

[199] Eresso, M.Z., 2019. Sisters on the move: Ethiopia's gendered labour migration milieu. pp. 27–46.

[200] Child marriage is still a prevalent and persistent problem in rural Ethiopia. The cultural norm of forcing young girls to marry is due to deep-rooted concerns by families of potential premarital sex and the need to ensure the virginity of their daughter at the time of marriage (Eresso, M.Z., 2019).

[201] It is pertinent to note that of the 10 females interviewed, 8 were single (6 never married and 2 divorced prior to migration), despite being of marriageable age (their ages ranged from 20-34 years). Only 1 female migrant had married after returning home (1 had married a fellow migrant whilst abroad and returned with him to Ethiopia).

[202] Admassie et al., T., 2017. ILO. pp. 1–65.

[203] During the research, 26 community members (16 returnees, 5 family members and 5 community leaders) were asked the question whether males or female migrants were more at-risk during migration and why. Overall, 70% of respondents said females were at higher risk than males (another 8% did not know), with most stipulating it was due to sexual violence against females. Among the returnee migrants themselves, 87.5% said that females were more at risk.

*this community the migrant has been trafficked. We are mostly aware of male cases – the females we are not so aware of".* This seems to highlight the desire for female returnees to remain under the radar, because even if they do not experience abuse during their migration, assumptions and rumours about them can still impact their acceptance back into the community. In such cases, returnees prefer to stay at home rather than to go out publicly where they face gossip and stigmatization.[204]

When female migrants are raped and return home pregnant or with a baby as a result, knowledge of her victimization often does not mitigate the stigma and victim-blaming.[205] The following story of one interviewee who suffered sexual abuse whilst abroad highlights both the risk and trauma faced by migrants, as well as the rejection and isolation they can face upon returning home.

## CASE STUDY 4

After being raped by her stepfather and then disbelieved by her mother, Hiwot* ran away from her rural village to go live with her aunt in Addis. After some time living with her aunt and working as a daily labourer and domestic worker, Hiwot got into a relationship. She moved in with her boyfriend and they had a son together. However, not long after, Hiwot and her boyfriend broke up and he stopped supporting them.

The daughter of her aunt had migrated to the Middle East and that is how Hiwot got the idea to migrate. Her cousin warned Hiwot that conditions were not good but Hiwot decided to migrate anyway, as she needed to earn money to provide for her baby. So, she contacted an employment agency who processed her flight ticket and a three-year work visa.[206]

Hiwot migrated to Libya and worked there for four years as a domestic worker.[207]  However, she was only given her salary for the first two months (total of USD 400) and then her employers stopped paying. Hiwot was beaten, locked inside the house, and insults and mistreatment were common. She asked her employer to take her back to the employment agency, but they refused. Then Hiwot became sick and escaped from her employers' home and took herself to the police for help. However, because her work permit had expired, they imprisoned her.

During her imprisonment, Hiwot was repeatedly beaten and sexually abused by the guards. On one occassion she was taken to hospital due to the severity of her injuries. Before she was sent back to prison, the doctors gave her medicine to take, however, the guards would not allow her to take it. In fact, Hiwot had become pregnant and the medicine was to terminate the pregnancy, but the doctors had not told her this.

Hiwot spent a total of seven months in prison and then IOM came and asked for any Ethiopian prisoners and she gave her name. She stayed with IOM in Libya for one year until she was processed, as her passport had been kept by the employment agency. Hiwot gave birth at the IOM centre and later came back home to Ethiopia with her baby.

Upon her return, Hiwot's aunt was not welcoming towards her because she came without money and with a baby. Her ex-boyfriend had since married and would not allow Hiwot to see their son. Hiwot has now spent the last year residing at a women's shelter in Addis Ababa because she has nowhere to go and none of her family will support her. She is stressed because she cannot stay there much longer but does not know what she will do next.

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[204] Ketema, N., 2014. Female Ethiopian migrant domestic workers: An analysis of migration, return-migration and reintegration experiences. pp. 1–119.

[205] Research conducted in the Balkans by Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007 also reported victim-blaming to be prevalent towards returnee migrants that were trafficked into sexual exploitation.

[206] According to Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation No.923/2016, the employer is responsible for the cost of visas and work permit, round-trip transport, insurance and employment contract approval fees. Hiwot paid her passport issuance fee (expense to be paid by the worker under Proclamation No.923/2016) but was charged 4,500 ETB (~USD 123) by the employment agency for visa and permit costs. She then had another 800 USD deducted from her salary by her employer which was paid to the employment agency to reimburse flights and other fees. The agency did also not provide Hiwot with pre-departure orientation or ensure she had undergone the required training and obtained a certificate of occupational competence.

[207] The employment agency was in breach of Proclamation No.923/2016 by deploying Hiwot for domestic employment to a country that does not have a BLA with Ethiopia.

### 4.4.3. Male victims of sexual abuse experience extreme shame

Mainstream discourse on the abuse of Ethiopian migrants tends to focus largely on the experiences of females. In undertaking the literature review, a plethora of research was found on the abuse and exploitation experienced by female domestic workers from Ethiopia.[208] In contrast, very little was available on the experiences of male migrants from Ethiopia, particularly in relation to sexual violence.[209] *"As a country, the community relates sexual violence with females. Most of the reports related to sexual exploitation focus on those committed against females, rather than males. Even the community uses "she" as the subject/victim. So, it requires more attention",* said an NGO staff member. Numerous interviewees, including male migrants themselves, stated that rape was one of the risks that males face during the migration process, particularly from brokers whilst en-route. However, male victims are unable to discuss the abuse or seek help due to stigmatization of homosexuality. *"Females are more easy targets for exploitation and sexual gender-based violence but we have seen it so frequent with men now... Definitely rape for women is horrible but it is socially more open than with men. Here male-to-male abuse just cannot be discussed... the shame is so much deeper,"* said one CSO staff member.

Homosexuality is highly condemned in Ethiopia, from both a social[210] and legal[211] perspective. For young men that are sexually abused, there is a perceived loss of masculinity which does not fit into the cultural, religious and traditional perceptions of male identity. *"There are a lot of expectations to the male role model and if you don't live up to that then you're stripped of your identity",* stated another CSO staff member. As a result, male victims of such crimes not only suffer from the psychological trauma of the actual abuse, but also from felt stigma and potential ostracism by their friends and family.[212] One returnee shared a story of a fellow male migrant that highlighted the devastating effect of this. *"The risk is higher for women but there is also a lot of abuse experienced by men. Rape and sexual abuse are common for both males and females. There was a male migrant I knew that was migrating to Yemen with his sister. Brokers tried to rape his sister, so he stepped in to protect her and they raped him instead. Later, the brother and sister had a falling out and the sister told his wife about the rape. When he discovered this, he committed suicide."*

The lack of recognition that males can be victims of sexual violence, as well as the stigma associated with it, has devastating consequences for males' access to support services. Not only are they less likely to engage in help-seeking behaviour, but even if they do, services tailored to the needs of male victims do not exist. *"We try to assist male victims if they show symptoms, but it takes a long time for them to open up. They are not willing to disclose. Even in Addis Ababa there is rehabilitation for female victims of sexual abuse and exploitation but there is not one for males",* commented an NGO worker. Ignoring the sexual abuse of males has negative consequences for both males and females. Not only does it create a barrier to accessing support for male victims by reinforcing unhealthy cultural beliefs about men's supposed invulnerability, it also reinforces a viewpoint that equates "female" with "victim"; thus hindering our ability to see women as resilient and having agency.

### 4.4.4. Stigma creates barriers to help-seeking among survivors

The stigma experienced by both male and female victims of sexual violence has major implications for both reporting cases to authorities as well as accessing support services. For victims still living in exploitative situations in transit or destination countries, they already face the barrier of reporting crimes against them to local authorities because of the risk of imprisonment and deportation due to their often irregular status.[213] However, even upon returning home – and in instances where their perpetrator is known and within Ethiopia – victims of trafficking and sexual crimes are still reluctant to report due to the social stigma attached to the experience. This makes victims of trafficking difficult to identify and access, and has implications for the Government of Ethiopia in its duty to provide systems and an environment that enables the disclosure and reporting of sexual and violent crimes.

Moreover, the likelihood of sexual abuse victims seeking counselling or support for their traumatic experiences is notoriously difficult. Victims, and even their families, are often fearful that accessing services from anti-trafficking organizations or

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[208] See Abdi Ali, D., 2018; Eresso, M.Z., 2019; Getnet et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2014; Ketema, 2014; Kuschminder, K., 2014; Nisrane et al., 2020; and Reda, A.H., 2018.

[209] The only exception to this was *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants* (Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020).

[210] According to the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project, only 2% of Ethiopians believe society should accept homosexuality, which was the second-highest rate of non-acceptance among 45 countries surveyed. Studies have also found that persecution of homosexuality is prevalent, particularly in lower-class, rural communities – areas where many migrants originate from (Overs, C., 2015).

[211] Same-sex sexual activity is considered a felony under the 1995 Ethiopian constitution, under Article 629 of the Criminal Code. It is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment.

[212] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

[213] Ibid.

NGOs assisting returnee migrants can result in identifying them as sexual assault victims within their communities.[214] *"Females often do not dare to come and disclose themselves [to access services]. They feel ashamed and they don't want to affiliate themselves with the support giving organizations,"* said an NGO staff member.[215] This fear is exacerbated if the services are situated within their home locality and delivered by members from within their community. Victims can feel distrustful of the confidentiality of service providers and fear prejudicial views of staff.[216]

Existing research in other countries has shown evidence of service providers for victims of trafficking having paternalistic ways of viewing and treating victims.[217] This was also raised by some female returnees interviewed in Ethiopia. *"The biggest problem is with the nurses because they are mean and think they know our problems better than the returnees ourselves"*, said one survivor of sexual violence. *"On the rare occasion, I speak to the nurse who just tells me not to worry,"* shared another returnee.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Further research is recommended to better understand the prevalence of sexual assault of male migrants, the barriers they face in seeking help, and how they can best be supported within their families and communities. This should be conducted in a way that allows for anonymity in participant responses.

17. The Government of Ethiopia should undertake the identification and assessment of services and resources to help victims of sexual violence, especially for males, and institutionalizing arrangements for referral. This information should then be shared with and utilized by NGOs and CSOs supporting returnee migrants and victims of trafficking who are unable to offer these services directly.

18. During vulnerability assessments of returnees, staff/professionals should provide information and advice on quality counselling and support services available to victims of sexual violence and encourage help-seeking behaviour. Wherever possible, psychologists and mental health experts should be used in the assessment and intervention stages.

19. Training for government officials, NGO/CSO staff and health workers should cover the sexual abuse of migrants, the nuances between the experiences of male and female victims, and how to sensitively support them in their recovery. This should include special considerations and approaches, such as friendly and non-judgemental language and the option of a counsellor based on their gender preference.

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[214] Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. *Leaving the past behind: When victims of trafficking decline assistance.* pp. 123–133.

[215] Of the 10 females interviewed, only one admitted to being sexually abused. This was impossible for her to hide as she returned to Ethiopia with a baby. She was also likely willing to discuss the experience with the research team as she had already been outcast by her family (so there was no further threat of rejection). Although none of the other nine female returnees disclosed being sexually assaulted, there were indirect indicators that some may have been experienced such abuse (i.e. severe PTSD and comments made by them and/or their family members about issues of sexual violence being common during migration).

[216] Hynes et al., 2019. *'Between two fires': understanding vulnerabilities and the support needs of people from Albania, Viet Nam and Nigeria who have experienced human trafficking into the UK.* IOM. pp. 1–120.

[217] Brunovskis, A. and Surtees, R., 2007. *Leaving the past behind: When victims of trafficking decline assistance.* pp. 123–133.

## 4.5. MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE MISUNDERSTOOD, HIGHLY STIGMATIZED AND LEFT UNTREATED

> **There is stigma and discrimination in the community towards my daughter since she is back with a mental health problem. They blame her for her situation and when she hears this she gets angry and sometimes gets into fights. The community mostly don't understand her problem.**
> *– Father of female returnee migrant*

Ethiopian migrants face an array of stresses at all stages of the migration cycle; from the circumstances in their place of origin that induced their decision to migrate, the often perilous journey abroad, to the oppression and exploitation in destination, as well as difficulties with reintegrating back into their home communities.[218] The traumatic experiences faced by victims of trafficking and many migrants, including salary denial; overwork; physical abuse and torture; sexual abuse; sleep deprivation; confinement and imprisonment; starvation; denial of medical treatment; degrading treatment by employers, brokers and authorities; witnessing killings[219]; as well as ostracism and stigma upon return, takes a significant psychological toll.

Whilst the resilience and coping mechanisms to deal with such events can vary greatly among individuals[220], it should come as no surprise that migrants and victims of trafficking experience significantly higher rates of mental disorders than the wider population of Ethiopia,[221] including depression, anxiety, PTSD and somatization.[222] Quantitative studies have indicated prevalence rates of mental illness among Ethiopian migrants to range from nearly a quarter (24.1%)[223] to over half (58.3%)[224] of returnee migrants.[225] However, the magnitude and severity of mental health problems also are impacted by sociodemographic factors, including gender,[226] economic status and social support,[227] as well as the actual conditions during trafficking and exploitation, including its duration, experiences of sexual and/or physical abuse, and restriction of freedom, among others.[228]

Psychological distress among returnees often resulted in feelings of frustration, irritability, anger, shame, sadness and disrupted social identity.[229] Managing these feelings was particularly difficult for some returnees and would thereby cumulate in behaviours that were considered culturally inappropriate, resulting in community discrimination and isolation. *"The returnees themselves show some changes. They often find it difficult to fit into the community. They come back with different behaviours/characters due to their experiences and exposure. The stigma is mainly because of the change in behaviour the returnees show"*, shared an NGO worker.

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[218] Habtamu et al., 2017 and Gezie et al., 2018.

[219] For the interviewees that migrated informally by foot, a number of them shared that they had witnessed fellow migrants being beaten, tortured and even burnt to death, as well as thrown overboard boats by brokers and drowned.

[220] Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020. *'No place for me here': The challenge of Ethiopian male migrants.* pp. 1–69.

[221] Psychiatric morbidity has been found to be two to five times higher among women migrating as domestic workers to Middle Eastern countries than in the native populations there (El-Hilu, et al., 1990). A study with 1,387 returnee migrants in Ethiopia found that 51.9% of returnees suffered from anxiety compared to 3.3% of the general population (Gezie et al., 2018). Another study with 1,036 Ethiopian returnee migrants found the prevalence of suicidal ideation to be 15%, compared to 6.3% among the non-migrant population in rural Ethiopian (Habtamu et al., 2017).

[222] Habtamu et al., 2017. Prevalence and associated factors of common mental disorders among Ethiopian migrant returnees from the Middle East and South Africa. pp. 1–11; and Gezie et al., 2019. Human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees: its magnitude and risk factors. pp. 1–11.

[223] This study was conducted with 1,036 Ethiopian returnees. (Zeleke et al., 2015).

[224] In a study with 1,387 Ethiopian returnees, the prevalence of symptoms of depression was estimated at 58.3%, anxiety at 51.9% and PTSD at 34.5% (Gezie et al., 2018).

[225] The prevalence of mental health problems among returnee migrants may potentially be even higher due to returnees in hospital with psychiatric or physical health conditions not being included in the studies.

[226] In an interview with a staff member from an NGO that runs three shelters in Addis Ababa for child migrants, they stipulated that there are higher rates of attempted suicide among females – there are at least two cases per year at the girls shelter but no cases at the shelter for boys. In addition, although not Ethiopian focused, studies have shown that females are disproportionately affected by mental disorders compared to males, due to gender-specific risk factors such as gender-based violence, low socioeconomic status, and greater responsibility of caring for others (Gezie et al., 2018).

[227] Returnee migrants who had better social support were found to have a reduced risk of developing mental health problems (Gezie et al., 2018).

[228] Gezie, L.D., Yalew, A.W., Gete, Y.K., Azale, T., Brand, T. and Zeeb, H., 2018. Socio-economic, trafficking exposures and mental health symptoms of human trafficking returnees in Ethiopia: using a generalized structural equation modelling. *International journal of mental health systems, 12*(1), pp. 1–13.

[229] Beck et al., 2017. Human trafficking in Ethiopia: a scoping review to identify gaps in service delivery, research, and policy. pp. 532–543.

## 4.5.1. Beliefs that mental health problems are a result of supernatural causes

Ethiopia has a long history of traditional health beliefs and practices, which consider mental disorders and psychosomatic problems to be caused by supernatural forces.[230] They also distinguish between temporary and permanent "insanity", with some behaviours labelled as incurable.[231] In present-day Ethiopia, the two major religio-cultural systems, the Coptic and the Islamic, still share the common belief that mental illness is the result of a disruption in the relationship between a person and the external or spirit world.[232] This can be caused by bad spirits[233] who gain possession of their victims because they break rules, commit sins, or do not pray enough;[234] or it can be the result of malevolent curses, the evil eye (buda) or the ill will and envy of common people.[235] In the majority of cases (70–90%), the sufferer is a female.[236]

This belief that mental health problems are due to supernatural causes, rather than understanding it to be an outcome of trauma, was raised by three NGO/CSO staff as an issue they had encountered in some communities where they provided services to returnee migrants. One NGO worker explained, *"There are reasons for mental illness during and after migration. The expectations might be different from what they can achieve. They do not know how to face the challenges and find solutions. They may develop PTSD, become schizophrenic etc. The community may not have the knowledge of how to deal with these issues. The community might think it's satanic or a curse because they don't have information about mental illness."*

In Oromia region, where the field research took place, this belief was also expressed by both religious leaders and elders as well as some returnees.[237] They shared that community members often avoid and reject those suffering from mental health problems. This stigma obviously limits the social functioning of sufferers and can be a major obstacle to their recovery.[238] In addition, the stigmatization often extends beyond the sufferer to the family as a whole[239] and family members often struggle to cope with the social consequences of the presence of mental illness in the family.[240] *"No one will take care of mentally affected persons because they perceive it as a curse that is incurable",* shared an NGO worker.



FGD with community leaders in Jimma Zone, Ethiopia
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Families will often seek out the help of religious leaders to conduct prayers, spiritual rituals or even exorcisms. Whilst this is widely practiced, many of the religious leaders and community elders interviewed were also aware that mental health issues could also be due to traumatic experiences; indicating that a simplistic view of Ethiopian perceptions of mental illness being solely supernatural is not sufficient. In fact, prior research has shown that modern psychological and psychiatric treatment is viewed positively by most Ethiopians and that they are willing to integrate to two approaches, rather than considering traditional and modern treatments as mutually exclusive.[241] However, due to the lack of knowledge about appropriate care and support for those experiencing mental health problems, often the recommendation provided by religious leaders and elders to families is to isolate the returnee, which is likely to only exacerbate their condition.

[230] See Jacobsson, L., 2002; Monteiro, N.M. and Balogun, S.K., 2014; Shibre et al., 2001; Zeleke et al., 2015; and Fejerskov, A. and Zeleke, M,. 2020.

[231] Monteiro, N.M. and Balogun, S.K., 2014. Perceptions of mental illness in Ethiopia: a profile of attitudes, beliefs and practices among community members, healthcare workers and traditional healers. *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health, 7*(3), pp. 259–272.

[232] Jacobsson, L., 2002. Traditional treatment of mental and psychosomatic disorders in Ethiopia. In *International congress series,* Vol. 1241, pp.265-269. Elsevier.

[233] Zar is a spirit possession deity system that is found throughout parts of Northeast Africa and the Middle East. It is thought to have originated in Ethiopia and is part of cultural belief about mental illness in Ethiopia. (Monteiro, N.M. and Balogun, S.K., 2014).

[234] Jacobsson, L., 2002. Traditional treatment of mental and psychosomatic disorders in Ethiopia, pp. 265–269.

[235] Monteiro, N.M. and Balogun, S.K., 2014. Perceptions of mental illness in Ethiopia: a profile of attitudes, beliefs and practices among community members, healthcare workers and traditional healers, pp. 259–272.

[236] Jacobsson, L., 2002. Traditional treatment of mental and psychosomatic disorders in Ethiopia, pp. 265–269.

[237] Previous research cited in Monteiro, N.M. and Balogun, S.K., 2014. found that the belief that mental illness was due to spirit possession was common among the Oromo ethnic group. However, differences between religions, ethnicity and geographic region are significant in Ethiopia so this belief may not be as prevalent in other parts of the country.

[238] Shibre, T., Negash, A., Kullgren, G., Kebede, D., Alem, A., Fekadu, A., Fekadu, D., Medhin, G. and Jacobsson, L., 2001. Perception of stigma among family members of individuals with schizophrenia and major affective disorders in rural Ethiopia. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology, 36*(6), pp. 299–303.

[239] Research conducted in Ethiopia with 178 relatives of individuals who were diagnosed with mental illness found that approximately 75% of the respondents experienced stigma due to a family member having mental illness, 42% were worried about being treated differently, and 37% wanted to hide the fact that a family member was mentally ill. (Shibre et al., 2001)

[240] Shibre et al., 2001. Perception of stigma among family members of individuals with schizophrenia and major affective disorders in rural Ethiopia. pp. 299–303.

[241] Monteiro, N.M. and Balogun, S.K., 2014. Perceptions of mental illness in Ethiopia: a profile of attitudes, beliefs and practices among community members, healthcare workers and traditional healers. pp. 259–272.

**CASE STUDY 5**

Tigist* lives in Jimma and is one of five children – three girls and two boys. The family's living condition was very bad and when her father died, Tigist's two older sisters migrated to the Middle East so they could work and send home remittances. When Tigist was 19 she finished grade 10 and also migrated to Saudi Arabia.

Tigist was employed as a domestic worker for four years where she was paid USD 200 per month. She worked every day without a break and was not allowed to leave her employers home. She only spoke with her family once every two months on the phone.

In 2018, Tigist went back to Ethiopia to visit her family. Her plan was to only remain home temporarily and then return to her employer. However, whilst she was back, a female neighbour was very hostile towards her. She told Tigist to leave and go back abroad because she thought Tigist was diseased due to a skin allergy she had. Tigist refused and got into an argument with the neighbour who "cursed" her. After this, Tigist started experiencing significant mental health problems, which she believes is caused by this curse.

Tigist and her whole family are now discriminated against in the community. People think Tigist is cursed or possessed with an evil spirit and therefore avoid her. The family have taken her to a traditional healer, but it did not work. The elders and religious leaders in the community have recommended to keep Tigist at home and away from other people, so she has now not left the house for one year. Tigist's older sister currently looks after her full-time. Both sisters want to re-migrate but at the moment Tigist cannot because of her mental health condition and her sister needs to stay home to look after her.

Tigist's sister says she tries to help her as much as possible, but she doesn't know what to do. She believes that maybe counselling will help her but there are no services close by and she is unaware of any support they could access. Tigist's sister also thinks that the community needs more awareness and education about returnee migrants and what they go through, so they don't hold this bad attitude towards them.

## 4.5.2. Returnees don't speak up about their problems due to concerns about the effects on others

> " **I don't talk to anyone. I just sit and contemplate how I ended up in this situation where I can't help my family or myself. This causes me more stress and I feel like I don't know how to handle things anymore.**
> *– Female returnee migrant* "

Returnees often do not reveal the extent of their traumatic experiences and the suffering they have faced to their families, as they say they do not want to "burden" them with additional problems.[242] Several participants indicated that they did not speak with their parents or other family members about their traumatic experiences because they could not understand the suffering they had gone though. *"There are mental and psychological problems experienced by most of the returnees. We don't speak with our families because they don't understand our problems. They don't know the experience we went through, and telling them our experience just adds worry and regret on the family. So, rather than burdening the family, we just chose not to share with them",* said a male returnee.

All the returnees implicitly or explicitly expressed that they feared losing social acceptance from their family, friends and the community at large, if they spoke about their experiences. However, talking about their experiences can be an important part of processing and dealing with what has happened to them. For many, speaking with the researchers was the first time they had shared their experiences with someone.

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[242] This concern about creating worries for their family was also was raised in the IOM research *'The Desire to Thrive Regardless of the Risk'*. Of the 2,140 migrants interviewed, 22% said they migrated without informing their family because they did not want to worry them (IOM, 2020).

### 4.5.3. Service providers need further capacity-building

Even where mental health services are available and accessible, returnees suffering from serious mental health issues don't tend to seek professional help to address their psychological distress, due to the risk of discrimination and ostracism within their communities. An NGO staff member explained, *"There is fear that they [returnee migrants] would be denied access to financial support and job opportunities if they admit to mental health problems… Therefore, they don't want to be seen in hospitals getting treatment for mental health issues, as they are afraid of discrimination if people from their local community see them there."* The NGO worker further stated that of the 118 returnees that were being supported by their organization at the time of the research, only 10 had taken up the offer to receive counselling and mental health support. The NGO worker also noted that the adult returnees were less likely to agree to attend mental health services than teenage returnees. The researchers also found that some returnees interviewed were either unaware or unwilling to acknowledge they were experiencing mental health problems. When asked explicitly whether they had been experiencing any mental health difficulties since returning, some stated that they had not. However, when enquiring more indirectly about their feelings, many expressed significantly heightened levels of stress, sleeplessness, and feelings of shame and despair.

**Figure 6. Take up of counselling services by returnee migrants**
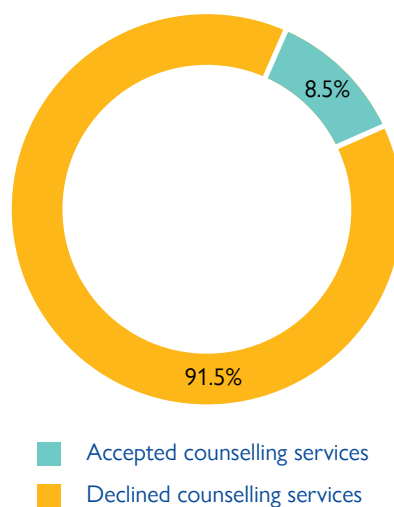


8.5%

91.5%

- ▮ Accepted counselling services
- ▮ Declined counselling services

Despite the fact that mental health problems rank among the most common effects of abuse and exploitation experienced by migrants, the services addressing mental health concerns of returnee migrants during the recovery and reintegration phase of the migration process are sparse.[243] Nearly every returnee interviewed for the research had experienced significant trauma and were suffering from extreme stress, anxiety and other mental health issues. However, due to limited knowledge among NGO staff and health workers about the often fragile mental health status of the returned migrant population,[244] counselling and psychosocial support is only being provided to returnees with the most obvious mental health symptoms, such as those who are suicidal, or unable to speak and communicate. An example of this was a female trafficking survivor who had experienced horrendous physical and sexual abuse, forced labour, imprisonment, and rejection from her family when she returned, had spent the past year in a women's shelter and had not received any counselling. When asked why, she said *"The counselling services are only for the 'mentally ill', not for all the returnees."*

Additionally, prior research on the mental health of Ethiopians returning from the Middle East and South Africa found people commonly had physiological symptoms associated with their psychological distress, such as stomach aches, headaches, poor appetite, palpitations and nausea.[245] Often, the association between symptoms of a somatic nature are not easily recognized by service providers as related to mental health problems.[246] Both NGOs and government departments generally admitted that the capacity, knowledge and skills of their staff in relation to mental health were inadequate. *"Even the specialists in mental health, including our staff, often have limited understanding of mental health problems the returnee migrants struggle with. So, this can cause secondary trauma and their problems might even worsen due to wrong and unprofessional treatment they receive",* admitted an NGO worker.

The social stigma associated with mental health issues, combined with the lack of understanding by health professionals about mental health problems and how to treat it, and lack of psychiatry or counselling services in remote rural communities, creates real challenges to addressing the mental health needs of returnee migrants in the Ethiopian context. *"Nationwide, enough attention has not been given to mental health problems, in the health sector and in general. There are problems related to skilled personnel, lack of facilities, and awareness gaps",* shared a government office representative. Overcoming these barriers will require urgent and increased focus on innovative and culturally sensitive intervention strategies - at national, organizational and community level - in order to improve the quality of life for returnees and their families.

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[243] Amanuel Hospital is the only hospital in Addis Ababa that provides mental health treatment. In Jimma town, Jimma University Specialized Hospital treat patients with mental health problems. Some NGOs such as Agar also provide some psychosocial support and counselling.

[244] Zeleke et al., 2015. Mental health and somatic distress among Ethiopian migrant returnees from the Middle-East. pp. 1–6.

[245] See Getnet et al., 2016; Habtamu, et al., 2017; and Zeleke, et al., 2015.

[246] Jacobsson, L., 2002. Traditional treatment of mental and psychosomatic disorders in Ethiopia. pp. 265–269.

## PROMISING PRACTICE

A partnership between two NGOs (Hunde Oromia and Facilitators for Change) and Jimma University (JU) provides an example of a promising practice taking place in Jimma. The NGOs get assistance from staff and interns from the College of Public Health and Medical Sciences of Jimma University Specialized Hospital:

*"Psychological problems, such as depression and mental instability, are one of the main challenges often faced by returnees. En-route they face different traumas that affect them physically and mentally. Upon return they worry about their future and the poverty their families are in. To resolve this challenge, our organization is working with JU. The objective of this collaborative work with JU is to provide psychological and social support to the returnees. For this purpose, we are working with Psychology and Sociology Department of JU. We have provided this service for around 7 months. They [returnees] seem happy with the support and service we provide them because all of the support we provide is given for free. The families are also happy with our service because we are sharing their burden."* – Facilitators for Change

*"We have an MoU with JU and a local hospital where we refer returnees that need treatment. First, we differentiate those with psychological trauma and the level of distress through a vulnerability assessment. Then returnees who have severe mental illness are referred to JU specialized hospital who provide counselling and psychological support. We have also invited professional [mental health] experts from the Psychology and Psychiatry Department at JU, and the returnees benefited from the counselling and training provided by those experts. In addition, in order to reduce stigma and discrimination, training was provided for community representatives and for families of returnees."* – Hunde Oromia

## RECOMMENDATIONS

20. In order to cultivate public understanding about mental health and to break down misconceptions and stigma, public campaigns and improved media reporting are needed. These should focus on the causes of mental health issues, professional services available, how to support those experiencing mental health problems, and actions for maintaining good mental health. Testimonies from respected medical professionals as well as those who have overcome mental health problems (including returnees) would also help to show that recovery is possible and proven.

21. Community education is needed on how to better support returnees experiencing mental health issues. This should be culturally sensitive and focus on building the knowledge and capacity of community elders, spiritual leaders, traditional healers and families in a way that still respects and involves their religious beliefs.

22. Beliefs and concerns held by family members need to be taken into account when planning for interventions with returnees experiencing mental illness. Treatment plans should incorporate the impact of the illness on the family as well as individual patients.

23. Staff providing services to returnee migrants and survivors of trafficking need to be better trained and equipped in the area of mental health, both in conducting initial screening and assessments, as well as the delivery of counselling and psychosocial support.

24. Strengthening and institutionalization of cross-sector collaboration and referral linkages is needed between those receiving and supporting returnees (i.e. NGOs and CSOs) and medical institutions (i.e. hospitals and clinics).

25. Expansion and/or development of institutions and facilities that can provide mental health services and trauma counselling is needed. This should include outreach services to rural communities that are unable to easily access services in major towns and cities.

Despite the high level of risk and cases of trafficking and exploitation, foreign labour migration, including through irregular and unsafe means, continues to occur at unprecedented levels in Ethiopia. It is estimated that approximately three million Ethiopians live and work overseas[247], and many more millions live away from home within the country, remitting income to support their families. In the study sites of Gomma *Woreda* in Jimma and Robe *Woreda* in Arsi, there was a sense of desperation amongst young people due to the complete lack of income opportunities and limited choices about what they could do. These conditions and situational vulnerabilities put young people and their families in an incredibly challenging position and lead to decisions to migrate through irregular means and smuggling routes, even when they are aware of the dangers they may face. This puts into question the effectiveness of awareness-raising activities, without sufficient implementation of pro-poor economic policies in rural areas of Ethiopia.

The demand and supply of cheap labour from poorer to more developed and industrialized regions provide the basic economic dynamic for the migrant labour market. Within such a context, risks and vulnerabilities in the labour migration process mainly emanate from the fundamental power imbalance between job seekers from relatively impoverished backgrounds who move away from their community and social support networks, and employers at destination who have higher economic standing and greater rights as nationals in their home country. This fundamental power imbalance leaves migrants at risk of abuse, violence and exploitation at the hands of unscrupulous agents and employers motivated by either profiteering or ignorance (such as in the form of bigotry). Saudi Arabia remains the primary destination for irregular migrants, representing 80–90% of Ethiopian labour migration.[248] Government officials and international organizations estimate 70% of Ethiopians migrants in Saudi Arabia are trafficked into forced labour.[249] These extraordinarily high levels of violence and abuse, which were also evident in this research by the fact that there were no positive stories from the 26 returnee migrants interviewed, is alarming. The recommendations therefore need to be taken highly seriously and responses urgently actioned. This also requires destination countries to join together with the Government of Ethiopia and international organizations to address this issue.

Prevention and protection efforts with regard to trafficking significantly focus on economic, legal and practical aspects of the causes, conditions and responses. Such a focus provides clear and tangible goals and outcomes for anti-trafficking efforts, including improved laws, regulations, recovery and reintegration services. But understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of trafficking are also key to informing responses to trafficking, particularly when they provide insights into why people behave and make the choices they do. Leaving home for labour migration means stepping away from one's community and the social and cultural norms that one is expected to remain within. The decision to seek work away from home may be one made by the migrant themself, or collectively by the family. In any case, there will be expectations, both personal and familial, for what the migration will lead to. This is why, when a migrant is trafficked and exploited, one of the most difficult consequences for them is the loss of hope, disappointed expectations and the potential blame and community-based stigma for having made the "wrong" decision to have left. Such personal psychological and social dynamics may magnify any trauma from the actual exploitation and abuse experienced as part of the trafficking experience. Victims of trafficking and exploitation often feel and are perceived as changed persons on returning home. Many will not only be traumatized from their experiences of abuse and violence, but they will also return home to face stigmatization where they have not fulfilled the expectations of their family and community. Inevitably, in situations where migrants face blame, judgement and ostracization, this can drive remigration; resulting in a continual cycle of abuse and trauma for these vulnerable young people.

This research also identified the influence of governance structures on responses to trafficking, as mandated by local and national frameworks. Various government agencies were limited in their capacity and coordination efforts with respect to collecting data and coordinating responses in regulating migration. The research findings also indicate that existing governance gaps may be incentivizing irregular migration practices which circumvent regulatory safeguards put in place to protect migrant workers. Furthermore, weaknesses in existing governance structures encourages migrants' higher reliance on informal structures of community and family in dealing with any challenging migration events and experiences. As a

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[247] Aduguna, G., 2019. Migration patterns and emigrants' transnational activities: comparative findings from two migrant origin areas in Ethiopia. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7(1), pp. 1–28.

[248] U.S. Department of State. *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ethiopia. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.* Accessed 4 November 2020. Available at www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/ethiopia/.

[249] Ibid.

result, migrants often heavily depend on their families and communities, rather than government services, for their social protection needs.

Using Gomma *Woreda* in Jimma and Robe *Woreda* in Arsi as case studies, this research sought to understand both how social norms and stigma enable and contribute to trafficking, as well as how they may prevent appropriate and effective reintegration after the trafficking experience. One of the key themes arising from the research is that the social norms existing and enabling the unsafe migration at the beginning of the migration journey are different but related to what the returnee face on coming home. To what extent these findings are contextual or common across various regions of Ethiopia requires further investigation. However, the research clearly indicates that responses to trafficking need to be informed by better and more objective understandings and insights into cultural and social norms. This needs to include further training for duty bearers, particularly in the areas of mental health and sexual violence against males, and also initiatives at the community level to enable communities to use their own cultural and social resources to better empower and strengthen themselves and their youth.

# | ANNEXES |

## ANNEX I – GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Assisted voluntary return and reintegration:** Administrative, logistical or financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country or country of transit and who decide to return to their country of origin.

**Bilateral labour migration agreements:** Agreements concluded between two States, which are legally binding and are essentially concerned with inter-State cooperation on labour migration.

**Borders (international):** Politically defined boundaries separating territory or maritime zones between political entities and the areas where political entities exercise border governance measures on their territory or extraterritorially. Such areas include border crossing points (airports, land border crossing points, ports), immigration and transit zones, the "no-man's land" between crossing points of neighbouring countries, as well as embassies and consulates.

**Broker:** Middleman or intermediary who facilitates transit and/or employment for migrant workers. The deception that brokers often use during the recruitment process leaves migrant workers vulnerable to forced labour.[250]

**Child:** Every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

**Country of destination:** In the migration context, a country that is the destination for a person or a group of persons, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.

**Country of origin:** A country of nationality or of former habitual residence of a person or group of persons who have migrated abroad, irrespective of whether they migrate regularly or irregularly.

**Country of transit:** The country through which a person or a group of persons pass on any journey to the country of destination or from the country of destination to the country of origin or of habitual residence.[251]

**Deportation:** Also referred to as removal or, sometimes, expulsion. A formal act by which a State physically removes a non-national from its territory to his or her country of origin or a third country after refusal of admission or termination of permission to remain.

**Deportee:** A person who has been or is being expelled from a host country.

**Duty bearers:** People who hold positions of authority, leadership and influence, particularly in relation to the protection of people against trafficking and exploitation.

**Employment agency:** Any private agency other than a government body, which makes a worker available to an overseas employer by concluding a contract of employment with a worker. A licensed agency requires a certificate of competence issued by the MoLSA to enable the agency to engage in providing overseas employment exchange services.[252] A licensed employment agency is officially responsible for screening and matching candidates with job openings, orienting them about their future jobs, processing contracts, obtaining necessary clearances, arranging for travel, visa and other related tasks.

**Exploitation:** Making use of a situation to gain unfair advantage for oneself.

**Forced labour:** Includes *"all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily"*.[253] Forced labour manifests itself through a wide range of penalties and

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[250] In the Ethiopian context, the term "broker" is often also used to describe a trafficker.
[251] Adapted from International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
[252] Based on the definition provided under Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation No.923/2016.
[253] ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

coercive actions, including human trafficking, slavery, debt bondage, abuse of vulnerability through threats and violence, and restrictions of the freedom of movement. According to the ILO (2012), the three principal dimensions of forced labour are (i) the unfree recruitment, (ii) the duress of work and life, (iii) the impossibility to leave the employer.

**Identity document:** An official piece of documentation issued by the competent authority of a State designed to prove the identity of the person carrying it. The most common identity documents are national identity cards and passports.

**International migration:** The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence and across an international border to a country of which they are not nationals.

**Irregular migrant:** Movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination.

**Kebele:** A *kebele* is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia, similar to a ward, a neighbourhood or a localized group of people.

**Labour migration:** Movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment.

**Labour-sending country / source country:** These terms relate to the country from which large groups of workers are recruited. In this regard, the key labour supply country is Ethiopia (for Middle East countries).

**Migrant:** An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants.[254]

**Migrants in vulnerable situations:** Migrants who are unable to effectively enjoy their human rights, are at increased risk of violations and abuse and who, accordingly, are entitled to call on a duty bearer's heightened duty of care.[255]

**Migrant worker:** *"A person who is engaged or has been engaged in remunerated activities in a State of which he or she is not a national".*[256]

**Migration:** The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.

**Migration cycle:** Stages of the migration process encompassing departure, in some cases transit through a State, immigration in the State of destination and return to their country of origin.

**Peers:** Group of people, usually of similar age, background and social status, with whom a person associates and who are likely to influence the person's belief.

**Psychosocial support:** *"Refers to the close relationship between the individual and the collective aspects of any social entity. Psychosocial support can be adapted in particular situations to respond to the psychological and physical needs of the people concerned, by helping them to accept the situation and cope with it".*[257]

**Psychosomatic illness:** Physical illness that is caused or aggravated by mental or emotional factors, such as anxiety or stress.

**Returnee:** A person who has emigrated and returned to his or her country of origin.

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[254] At the international level, no universally accepted definition for "migrant" exists. The present definition was developed by IOM for its own purposes and it is not meant to imply or create any new legal category.
[255] Adapted from High Commissioner for Human Rights, Principles and Practical Guidance on the Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations.
[256] Article 2 (1) of the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990).
[257] International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**Regular migration:** Migration that occurs in compliance with the laws of the country of origin, transit and destination.

**Regular migration pathways:** Migration schemes or other migration options that allow eligible persons to migrate regularly to the concerned country of destination based on conditions and for a duration defined by such country.

**Reintegration:** A process which enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life.

**Remittances (migrant):** Private international monetary transfers that migrants make, individually or collectively.

**Risk reduction:** Refers to migrants' strategies to mitigate risks against potential challenges along the route and upon arrival in destination. These strategies can be voluntary, for instance obtaining information on the journey, or involuntary, for instance travelling in group when the group is set up by the broker.[258]

**Social norms:** Behavioural rules (usually informal and unwritten) on what is considered acceptable and appropriate behaviour within a group or given society.

**State:** A nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government.

**Stigma:** Disapproval of, or discrimination towards, a person based on perceivable social characteristics that are considered to be disgraceful or defective.

**Trafficking:** Trafficking in persons means *"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 a 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".*[259]

**Unaccompanied children:** Children, as defined in Art. 1 of the Convention on the Right of the Child, who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.[260] In the context of migration, children separated from both parents or other caregivers are generally referred to as unaccompanied migrant children (UMC).

**Vulnerability:** Within a migration context, vulnerability is the limited capacity to avoid, resist, cope with, or recover from harm. This limited capacity is the result of the unique interaction of individual, household, community, and structural characteristics and conditions.

**Woreda:** Also known as a district, *woreda's* are the third-level administrative division of Ethiopia. They are further subdivided into a number of *kebeles* or neighbourhood associations (see above definition of *kebele*).

**Young people or youth:** These terms characterize the period of transition from childhood to adulthood and generally include people from 15 to 24 years of age.[261]

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[258] Ibid.
[259] Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, commonly known as the Palermo Convention.
[260] Adapted from United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6: Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin (2005) CRC/GC/2005/6, 6.
[261] With the recognition that the meaning of the term "youth" varies according to economic, social and cultural contexts in difference societies around the world.

## ANNEX II – LITERATURE REVIEW BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## ANNEX III – LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

The researchers used socio-analytic methods to analyse data gathered. Attention was paid both to stakeholders that were accessible, as listed below, as well as those who did not agree to the consultation request, whom are not listed. Therefore, findings should not be attributed to any particular stakeholder. We appreciate all the agencies and organizations that were able and willing to meet with the researchers and the invaluable input they provided.

**Government**
- National Anti-Trafficking and Smuggling Taskforce, Addis Ababa (Federal level)
- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Addis Ababa (Federal level)
- Oromia Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs, Addis Ababa (Regional level)
- Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs, Jimma (Zonal level)
- Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs, Arsi (Zonal level)
- Bureau of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Jimma (Zonal level)

**NGOs**
- Hunde Oromia
- Timret Lehiwot Ethiopia (Better Migration Management)
- Facilitators for Change
- Agar Ethiopia Charitable Society
- Hope for Justice (formerly Retrack)

**International Organizations**
- IOM Transit Centre
- Danish Red Cross delegation in Ethiopia
- Netherlands Red Cross delegation in Ethiopia

**Media**
- Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN)
- Ethiopian Broadcasting Service (EBS)

## ANNEX IV – CONSENT FORM

This research is part of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) Assessing Stigma for Prevention, Improved Response and Evidence base (ASPIRE) project, which aims to increase protection of migrants and improve support for returnees. The research will help inform programme and training activities in Ethiopia.

I ……………………………………………… agree to participate in the research being conducted on behalf of IOM.

1. My participation in this research is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw or stop my participation at any time during the interview without penalty.
2. I understand that the discussion and the information will be valuable for the research. However, if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by an IOM designated researcher. Notes will be written during the interview.
4. I understand that my name or anything that will make me identifiable will not be included in any reports or publications from this research.
5. Any personal identifying information I share will be stored safely and securely and not shared beyond the research team.
6. If during the interview the researcher is made aware of any person currently experiencing serious abuse or is at high risk of serious and imminent harm, I understand that the researcher may need to report this to authorities and therefore in this instance there will be limits to confidentiality.
7. The purpose of this research has been explained to me and I have been given the opportunity to have my questions answered.
8. An audio tape and/or photos of the interview will be made only with my explicit permission. If I don't want to be taped or photographed the interview will not be recorded digitally.

Please circle:

      I  AGREE  /  DISAGREE to being audio taped during the interview.

      I  AGREE  /  DISAGREE  to photographs being taken during the interview.

I am participating in this research freely and understand the terms of this consent. I give permission to IOM and the researchers acting on behalf of IOM to collect, use, disclose and dispose of the information I have provided.

…………………………………………          …………………………………………

**Signed**                                             **Date**

…………………………………………          …………………………………………

**Interpreter's signature**                    **Parent / guardian signature**

## ANNEX V – RETURNEE MIGRANT PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

| Gender | Age Migrated | Age now | Religion | Ethnicity | Education level | Region | Siblings migrated | Migration type | Method | Destination | Job | Imprisoned | Considering re-migration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 27 | 31 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 7 | Jimma | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | Saudi Arabia | Worked (job unknown) | No | Yes |
| Male | 23 | 25 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 10 | Jimma | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | Yemen | Didn't work | Yes – in Yemen (8 months) | Yes |
| Male | 23 | 24 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 9 | Jimma | Yes | Irregular | Foot | Unknown | Worked (job unknown) | No | Yes |
| Male | 27 | 32 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 7 | Jimma | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | The Sudan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia | Worked (job unknown) | Yes – in Yemen | No (but already migrated twice) |
| Female | 25 | 32 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 4 | Jimma | Yes | Regular[262] | Plane | Bahrain and United Arab Emirates | Domestic work | No | Yes |
| Female | 19 | 25 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 10 | Jimma | Yes | Irregular[263] | Plane | Saudi Arabia | Domestic work | No | Yes |
| Male | 16 and 19 | 25 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 7 | Jimma | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | Yemen and Saudi Arabia | Construction | Yes – in Yemen | Only if regular |
| Female | 23 | 25 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 3 | Jimma | No | Irregular[264] | Plane | Saudi Arabia | Domestic work | Yes – in Saudi Arabia (4 months) | Only if regular |

262  Unconfirmed. Respondents sister also migrated and said it was formally but was not (see footnote 253 below).
263  Respondent stated she migrated through formal channels but not possible as there was a ban on migration of domestic workers to Saudi Arabia at the time she migrated.
264  Respondent thought she was migrating regularly at the time but later realized it was not.

| Gender | Age Migrated | Age now | Religion | Ethnicity | Education level | Region | Siblings migrated | Migration type | Method | Destination | Job | Imprisoned | Considering re-migration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 30 | 35 | Muslim | Oromo | No schooling | Jimma | Yes | Irregular | Plane | United Arab Emirates | Domestic work | Yes – in Saudi Arabia (2 months) | Yes |
| Male | 22 | 32 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 4 | Jimma | Yes | Irregular | Foot and vehicle | The Sudan and Libya | Domestic work, hospitality and construction | Yes – in Libya[265] (8 months) | Yes |
| Female | 22 | 18 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 9 | Jimma | Unknown | Irregular | Plane | United Arab Emirates | Domestic work | No | No |
| Male | 24 | 28 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 10 | Arsi | No | Irregular | Foot, vehicle and boat | Yemen and Saudi Arabia | Farm labour & construction | No | Only if regular |
| Female | 26 | 28 | Muslim | Oromo | Unknown | Arsi | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | Saudi Arabia | Domestic work | No | No |
| Male | 18 | 19 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 7 | Arsi | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | Yemen | Didn't work[266] | Yes – in Somalia (6 days) | Yes |
| Male | 17 | 18 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 6 | Arsi | No | Irregular | Foot and boat | Yemen | Didn't work[267] | Yes – in Somalia (6 days) | Yes |
| Male | 16 | 17 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 5 | Arsi | No | Irregular | Foot and boat | Yemen | Didn't work[268] | Yes – in Somalia (6 days) | Yes |
| Male | 22 | 23 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 10 | Arsi | No | Irregular | Foot and boat | Saudi Arabia | Didn't work[269] | No | No |

265 Was held captive by ISIS – not imprisoned by local authorities.
266 Respondent did not make it to destination. Had to turn back due to civil war in Yemen. Was then deported from Somalia.
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid.
269 Respondent did not make it to destination.

| Gender | Age Migrated | Age now | Religion | Ethnicity | Education level | Region | Siblings migrated | Migration type | Method | Destination | Job | Imprisoned | Considering re-migration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 22 | 23 | Orthodox Christian | Oromo | Grade 10 | Arsi | No | Irregular[270] | Plane | Kuwait | Domestic work | No | Yes |
| Male | 21 and 26 | 28 | Muslim | Oromo | College | Arsi | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | Saudi Arabia | Didn't work[271] | Yes – in Yemen | Yes |
| Male | 18 | 19 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 6 | Arsi | No | Irregular | Foot and vehicle | Somalia | Didn't work[272] | No | No |
| Male | 16, 21 and 26 | 28 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 9 | Arsi | Yes | Irregular | Foot, vehicle and boat | Saudi Arabia | Farm labour & construction | Yes | No (but already migrated 3 times) |
| Male | 26 and 31 | 35 | Muslim | Oromo | Grade 4 | Arsi | Yes | Irregular | Foot and boat | Yemen and Saudi Arabia | Plantation labour & construction | No | Only if regular |
| Female | 26 | 34 | Orthodox Christian | Amhara | Grade 6 | Wollo | No (but cousin did) | Regular[273] | Plane | Libya | Domestic work | Yes – in Libya (7 months) | Only if regular |
| Female | 25 | 36 | Muslim | Amhara | Grade 6 | Wollo | Unknown | Irregular | Vehicle | The Sudan | Domestic work | No | No |
| Male | 17 | 17 | Muslim | Amhara | Grade 10 | Wollo | No | Irregular | Foot & boat | Saudi Arabia | Didn't work[274] | Yes – in Saudi Arabia (1 month) | No |
| Female | 20 | 20 | Protestant Christian | Amhara | Grade 11 | Jimma | Unknown | Irregular | Foot, vehicle and boat | Saudi Arabia | Didn't work[275] | Yes – in Saudi Arabia (2 weeks) | Yes |

270 Respondent said she migrated through formal channels but the Government of Ethiopia did not have a BLA with Kuwait at the time so it's not possible that was the case.
271 Respondent did not make it to destination. Caught by police in Yemen and deported.
272 Respondent did not make it to destination. Injured in a traffic accident during transit.
273 Unconfirmed. The respondent did not go through the mandatory training required to migrate formally so even though she went through an employment agency it may still have been irregular.
274 Respondent was caught at Saudi border and deported.
275 Ibid.