



'NO PLACE FOR ME HERE'

The challenges of Ethiopian male return migrants





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INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is a large source of migrant flows to almost all parts of the world, especially to the Gulf States in the Middle East, as well as to South Africa and other African destinations. More than one and a half million Ethiopians live abroad as migrants and refugees. Several hundred thousand Ethiopians migrate annually, almost two hundred thousand alone as domestic workers to the Middle East. The vast majority of these Ethiopian migrants are irregular, travelling without visas or other legal papers. They use southern routes to reach South Africa, northwestern routes to travel through Sudan to Libya and perhaps on to Europe by sea, or eastern routes through Yemen to the Gulf States (RMMS, 2014). At the same time, Ethiopia itself hosts the second largest number of refugees in Africa, mainly from around the Horn of Africa, including South Sudan and Somalia, just as Ethiopia is struggling with massive numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs). Almost three per cent of the Ethiopian population has been displaced since 2017 (IOM, 2019), and in 2018 the country had the highest number of conflict-related IDPs worldwide, with nearly 2.9 million new displacements (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2019). In March 2019, the Federal Government of Ethiopia endorsed an IDP recovery plan to try and resolve the displacement situation of over three million IDPs nationwide, but ethnic tensions and local conflicts continue to force people to flee their homes.

Ethiopian migration is mainly driven by a lack of livelihood opportunities, coupled with insecurity and surges in unrest in different parts of the country. Two to three million Ethiopians enter the job market every year from a population that has grown beyond 110 million to become the second largest in Africa. While the country has experienced relatively high economic growth, averaging more than ten per cent from 2007 to 2017 compared to a regional average of five per cent, it still ranks as 173 out of 189 countries and territories in the UN's Human Development Index.

Migration flows can be expected to be maintained in this context of widespread poverty and the lack of livelihood opportunities, although many recipient countries are increasingly trying to reduce the inflows of Ethiopians and other migrants and refugees. In the course of just five months, between October 2013 and February 2014, 170,000 Ethiopian migrants were deported from Saudi Arabia when the local authorities began cracking down on irregular labor migration. The Ethiopian government responded by banning labor migration until early 2018, when a new law to regulate employment agencies and protect labor migrants came into effect. Saudi Arabia conducted further rounds of deportations from March 2017, having to date deported 350,000 Ethiopians, with thousands arriving weekly from Saudi Arabia, being rushed on to planes from deportation centers, often without their belongings.

Migration in Ethiopia, as elsewhere, is highly gendered (Meron, 2019). No matter whether we consider the practicalities of migration journeys (modes of travel, destinations etc.) or the perceptions, burdens and effects of migration, these concerns are heavily shaped by gendered patterns of socialization, norms and roles. Earlier, women were found to represent the greatest share of Ethiopian migrants, around 60 per cent (Kuschminder and Siegel, 2014), as they made up virtually the entire population of those migrating for employment as domestic workers, though almost 80 per cent of the returnees who were forced out of Saudi Arabia between 2017 and 2019 were men. Though far from sufficient to understand the complexities of Ethiopian women's migration, particularly as domestic workers in the Gulf States, the majority of academic work on return migrants in Ethiopia has been devoted to this group (see Minaye, 2012; Birke et al., 2009; Kuschminder, 2017).

Ethiopian men have few opportunities for regular migration, being virtually unemployable as domestic workers in the Gulf States, so instead they take on 'outdoor' jobs as shepherds, day laborers or guards.

Thus we know a lot less about Ethiopian male than female return migrants. The major destinations of Ethiopian male migrants include the Gulf States and South Africa, as well as the route via Sudan to Libya and onwards into Europe. Ethiopian men have few opportunities for regular migration, being virtually unemployable as domestic workers in the Gulf States, so instead they take on 'outdoor' jobs as shepherds, day laborers or guards. They regularly undertake perilous journeys on foot or using ground transport (freight trains, traffickers' trucks etc.), facilitated by brokers or smugglers who often approach migrants with 'free' guidance before eventually taking control of them. A case in point is the continued use of Yemen as a transit corridor. Despite Yemen's current violent conflict, Ethiopian migrants still use the country to transit to Saudi Arabia or the Gulf States. This has led to several worrying developments over the past year. Recently, thousands of Ethiopian male migrants have been detained by local authorities in the port city of Aden and held in a local football stadium without their basic needs being attended to. Likewise, there have been reports of Houthi rebels capturing Ethiopian migrants on their way to Saudi Arabia and forcing or paying them to partake in training camps before sending them into battle.

This report is about Ethiopian migration, but it makes two further points worth emphasizing: the situation for Ethiopian men, and the significance of return migration. Though most Ethiopian migrants are assumed to travel voluntarily (Minaye and Zeleke, 2017), their returns cross a much broader spectrum between notions of voluntary and forced migration. Migrants typically return for a whole range of reasons, from making a personal and voluntary choice to return home and reconsidering migration plans while in transit via an inability to integrate into the host country or the pull factors of their countries of origin to forced or coerced return (Biligili et al., 2018). We sometimes think of the return journey and the process of reintegration as one that is the opposite of arduous and challenging outgoing migration efforts. Rarely, however, are attempts to return and resocialize easy processes of either assuming one's old roles and relationships or becoming someone new. The process of returning and facing reintegration may in fact be every bit as tough as leaving one's place of origin, given the numerous obstacles placed in the way of economic, social and psychological reintegration. Returning therefore rarely marks the end of a migration journey. Rather, these multidirectional processes are fluid, and many migrants see themselves in a continuous process of discussing and negotiating their staying or moving (Vathi, 2019), whether with themselves, their families or communities. Most Ethiopian returnees re-migrate within the first year because of debts they have accumulated, social stigma and their inability to reintegrate. There is a continued need to challenge dichotomous (or linear) representations of mobility and immobility, as this report will emphasize.

The process of returning and facing reintegration may in fact be every bit as tough as leaving one's place of origin, given the numerous obstacles placed in the way of economic, social and psychological reintegration.

In the course of their complex journeys, Ethiopian migrants are faced with a variety of stressors such as exploitation of their labor, sleep deprivation, refusals to pay them salaries and different forms of emotional, sexual and physical abuse. All such challenges are strongly associated with the mental conditions of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and somatization.

Reintegration programmes often maintain a focus on economic reintegration, employment etc. for very good reasons, as the lack of livelihood opportunities is an important driver of migration in the first place. A 2014 ILO study found that only 3.5

per cent of Ethiopian return migrants are employed full-time after their return, with 45 per cent deeming their socio-economic situation to be bad upon their return. However, sound reintegration and return migration depend on other crucial factors as well, one of them being psychosocial well-being, something existing programmes and policies of reintegration have not given much importance to (King, 2019). This remains a challenge, as psychosocial problems are much more frequent among individuals who have experienced serious adversity or abuse, and the evidence suggests that one in every four Ethiopian migrants returning from the Middle East has been found to be suffering from probable mental health problems (Zeleke et al., 2015). At the same time, mental health remains a cultural disgrace in many parts of Ethiopian society, with very few people having access to or seeking professional help because of the stigma associated with it, including beliefs that see mental problems as enduring and incurable, a reflection of violent sins (ibid.).

Although many forced returnees are provided with humanitarian assistance immediately on their return, reintegration processes may be long and require extensive psychosocial support because of the hardships migrants have endured, both over the course of their outward journey and in being deported by the local authorities in their destination countries. Of the more than 12,000 returnees from Saudi Arabia consulted by MSF over mental health issues, 96 per cent reported having witnessed violence or abuse during their journeys (ECHO, 2019). For Ethiopian men, reintegration processes and psychosocial well-being may pose special challenges to their identities and masculinities. Migration journeys may be seen as rites of passage, both in themselves and through household expectations that boys will return as men and breadwinners able to feed their families through newfound skills and capital. When migration efforts fail or attempts to save money are unsuccessful, often in combination with forced returns or deportations, as frequently occurs in respect of Ethiopian migration, masculine ideals are challenged and masculinities undermined or misperceived by families and communities, causing great difficulties for male returnees.

The aim of this report is to explore the return migration and reintegration of Ethiopian men in order to understand the psychosocial challenges they face. Although it addresses issues of a psychosocial nature, the report is not clinical and does not approach the question of returnee well-being from a perspective capable of evaluating clinical symptoms medically. Instead, it offers a holistic view of the effects and affect of the return migration and reintegration of Ethiopian male migrants. Likewise, the report does not aim to establish absolute causality between certain individual and structural conditions and forms of well-being, just as we do

not focus on the structural efficiency of programmes and policies of reintegration. Rather, the report centers on Ethiopian return migrants in order to understand their experiences and strategies in dealing with processes of returning.

The report is structured as follows. After a number of methodological deliberations concerning the research process, the report takes an in-depth look at Ethiopian migration and return migration, describing its current circumstances and its existing support systems for reintegration, as well as core Ethiopian policies governing migration. Then follows a detailed look at the state of knowledge on return migration and reintegration with a focus on psychosocial well-being, masculinity and trauma. The final three parts of the report develop the main questions asked here with reference to the empirical explorations and data collection conducted for this report, investigating the drivers of male outmigration in Ethiopia, the lived experiences of migration and migratory journeys, and the multifaceted difficulties of reintegration and readjustment.

METHODOLOGY

Though migration forms a central coping strategy in pursuing improvements in livelihoods, limited data and limited primary knowledge has been produced on this issue for Ethiopia, and the country lacks comprehensive statistics on migrants and returnees. This report uses both primary and secondary sources of data to explore the complex experiences of return that male Ethiopian migrants go through. The primary empirical basis of the study draws on fieldwork conducted at two sites in Ethiopia, the federal capital Addis Ababa and Oromia regional state. The study used various data-collection tools such as in-depth interviews with key informants, collecting migrants' biographies and narratives (self-descriptions and own definitions of their situations), key stakeholder interviews and focus-group discussions. As many aspects of reintegration are subjective, drawing on individual stories has helped provide nuances with respect to the complex reintegration process. Prior research has established that mental health problems are often expressed somatically in Ethiopia (see Habtamu et al., 2017), i.e. in experiencing headaches, stomachaches, problems sleeping or poor appetites. However, most of the migrants consulted for this report talked quite openly about mental distress, though the somatic aspects were also covered during the interviews.

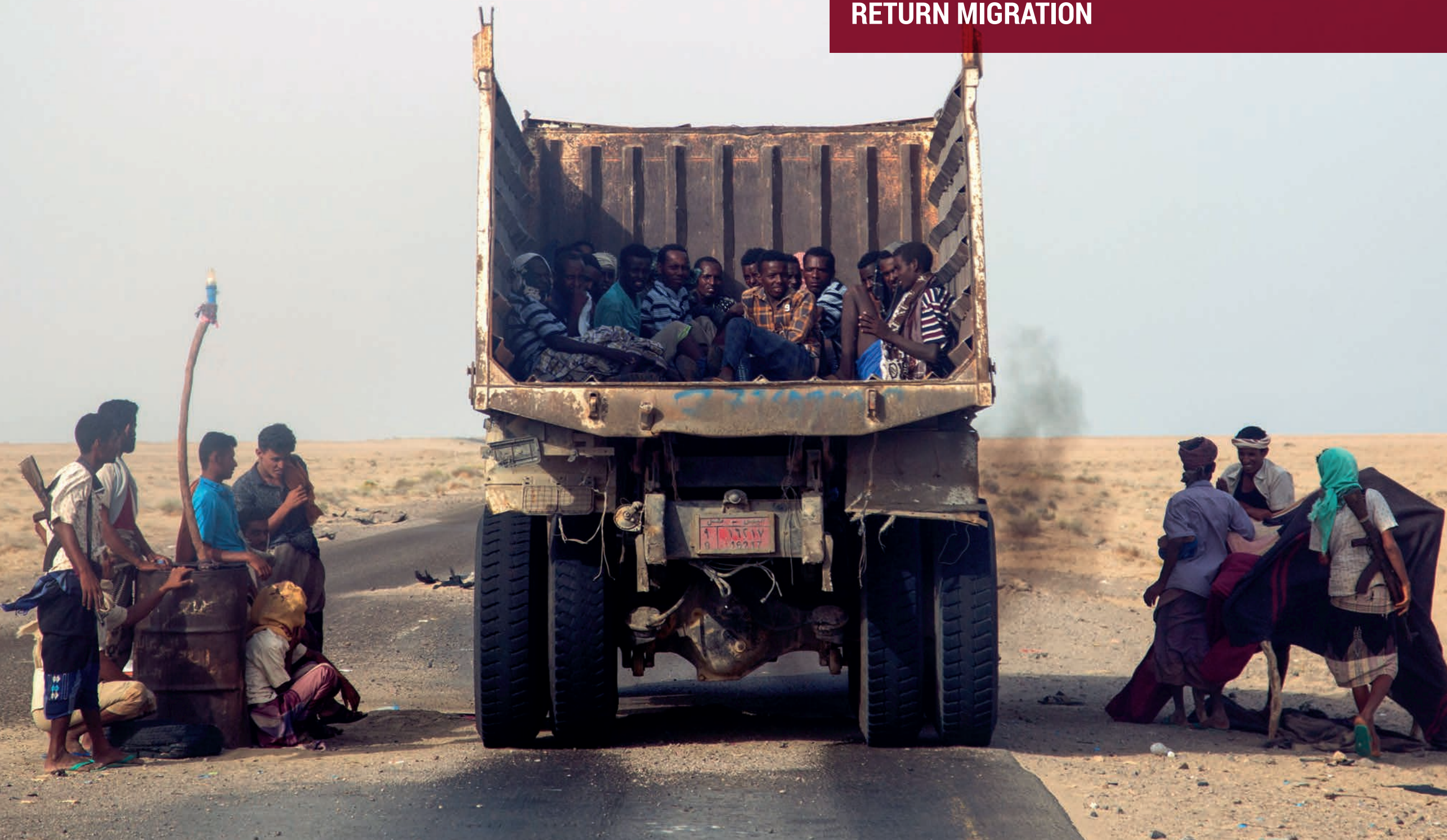
In Addis Ababa, twenty-five male return migrants were interviewed individually. The in-depth interviews were conducted with the aim of grasping the nuances of their migration decisions, experiences in the course of their journeys, return processes and potential reintegration. The detailed interview guidelines we developed included questions on the lived experiences of the return migrants at different phases of their migration trajectories. The guidelines were produced with reference to the following themes: background information on migrants' lives prior to migration, factors

affecting the initial decision to migrate, lived experiences en route and in the destination country, the return process and the experience of reintegration. In selecting key informants, due attention was given to their diversity, especially the diversity of the countries they migrated to. Accordingly, the selected informants were returnees from different countries located in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, including the Gulf States. The second criterion was the duration of their stays abroad or overseas, ranging from short stays to prolonged ones of several decades. Ethno-regional diversity was also taken into consideration in identifying key informants. Finally, a focus-group discussion (FGD) was also held in Addis Ababa with a group of return migrants.

At the second research site of Oromiya, Arsi Zone, Shirka district, ten returnee male migrants were interviewed individually. At this site, another FGD was held with a group of male returnees in the town of Gobessa. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were held with different government and non-government stakeholders in order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the existing psychosocial reintegration support systems and the different challenges pertaining to reintegration.

Appropriate ethical precautions were taken in approaching individuals with experience of serious physical, psychological and emotional traumas (Mackenzie et al., 2007: 4). The very nature of return migration raises important issues of sensitivity regarding the questions asked, the vulnerability of the research subjects and other issues that need to be addressed at different stages of the research, including both fieldwork and data analysis. A careful research design helped avoid potential harm to the participants' current and future lives, as the research team carefully designed the approach in order to take into consideration ethical guidelines regarding the confidentiality, privacy and informed consent of the informants (Düvell et al., 2008). Furthermore, the research assistants involved in collecting the data were selected on the basis of their rich experience of working with vulnerable groups, in addition to their language abilities. Before being deployed to the field they were given orientations on the data collection process, including the key ethical precautions they should take. In order to protect our informants, we have anonymized all interviewees in all the statements used here. A list of anonymized interviewees can be found towards the end of the report.

**ETHIOPIAN MIGRATION AND
RETURN MIGRATION**



Ethiopians commonly make migration journeys to the Middle East (particularly to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait), as well as to African countries, mostly with the aim of seeking employment locally and in fewer instances with the ambition to reach Europe.

Despite the conflict in Yemen twenty thousand migrants regularly arrive at the Horn of Africa every month, most of whom are Ethiopians.

There are three main irregular migration routes out of Ethiopia. To the east, migrants take desert and sea routes from Afar, Dire Dawa and Jijiga, often through Djibouti (across the Bab el-Mandeb strait) or Somalia. From there, they venture into Yemen in transit to the Gulf States. One interviewee described his two-month route from Ethiopia to Saudi Arabia as going from his home in Wellega to Addis Ababa and further on to Harar before travelling to the border town of Wajaale in Somaliland. From there, a group of 26 people were taken in a vehicle to the coastal town of Bossaso, where they got on a boat with two hundred others, travelling for two consecutive days without food or water before reaching the Yemeni coast. They then travelled through Yemen for a month, through the dangerous mountains, before being confronted by Saudi border patrols and subsequently being imprisoned and deported from Jeddah. Another migrant described the routes through Djibouti, travelling through Djibouti railway station and overseas into Yemen before being forced back into Somaliland and the 'safer' route through Bossaso. Despite the conflict in Yemen twenty thousand migrants regularly arrive at the Horn of Africa every month, most of whom are Ethiopians. In the first three months of 2019 alone, 150,000 migrants arrived in the war-torn country in hopes of transiting to other Gulf States. Crossing the sea into Yemen is very perilous, and boats regularly capsize, leaving the migrants to drown.

The second route is to the south. Here, migrants often travel to the city of Moyale on the border with Kenya and into this neighboring country, where they are typically helped by brokers, jumping on freight trains or traffickers' trucks that take them down through Tanzania and Mozambique before they reach what is frequently their final destination, South Africa. Many migrants reportedly die because they are transported in trucks meant for gasoline, making breathing difficult. Great parts of the journey may also be taken on foot, a journey that can take several months, as

the migrants have to hitch rides, pay for their passage, gather funds for onward travel and stay hidden from the watchful eye of the local authorities, which may choose to detain and deport them back home.

The third, northwestern route takes migrants past Gonder and through the cities of Metema or Asosa (a widely used transit city) on the border with Sudan, in which many travel through Bunj towards Malakal and from there all the way down to Juba. From here, they can travel through the northwestern corridor into Libya and further into Europe over the sea. Others go to Egypt through Sudan and then on to Israel, where they exploit religious ties to obtain employment (Minaye, 2012).

The road through Sahara towards Libya is extremely arduous. One Tigrayan migrant we interviewed told the story of a group of Ethiopian migrants, of which he was part, who all paid \$4,000 to brokers to be taken to Europe through Sudan and Libya. In the Sahara their lorry broke down, and the brokers went away, telling them they would return with a new vehicle. As their water supply dwindled, the migrants began drinking urine to counter the immense drought, but 26 out of the group of 55 had died by the time a new set of brokers arrived and transported the remaining migrants onwards. Once in Tazerbo, Libya, the group was installed in a big (deportation) hall referred to by the migrants as a 'Megazen'. The hall was rented by brokers and accommodated some two thousand migrants, who were all forced to pay \$5,500 to continue their journeys overseas. Those who could not pay were beaten and tortured, the interviewee himself being subjected to electric shocks.

After staying in the hall for seven months, the migrant was able to pay the \$5,500 the brokers demanded from money deposited by friends in Sudan and Ethiopia. With a group of 380 on board a ship, they travelled for 27 hours before the ship became flooded with water. An Italian rescue ship picked them all up but headed towards Tripoli and attempted to disembark them in the Libyan port. The group refused and stayed on the ship for fifteen days before the Libyan army intervened and tried to force them off the ship. A fight broke out, in which some forty migrants were killed, and the remaining migrants were taken back to the megazen. After a stay of several months, during which he contracted tuberculosis, the migrant was finally forcibly returned to Ethiopia against his will.

All these routes are highly dangerous, though in different ways. Some only lead to precarious forms of employment, while other roads are extremely dangerous in themselves. Common to all of them is that they mainly facilitate irregular migration

MAIN MIGRATORY ROUTES



because of the few legal routes and opportunities available to the migrants. Ethiopian migrants are generally young and single (or married and quickly divorced to strengthen local cultural legitimacy in migration destinations), a great many of them being under 18. Many come from Oromia and Amhara. Their migration journeys are facilitated by different mechanisms: many depend on brokers, typically in Addis Ababa, while others, mostly women, use private employment agencies in the capital to facilitate their transit (Busza et al., 2017). The brokers typically manage a particular jurisdiction or territory, for example, being responsible for taking migrants from Adama to Awash, at which point a new broker takes over and leads the group on to Logia, each broker demanding a sum of money for every new stretch of the route. In many instances, brokers arrive at villages and advertise positions as maids or waitresses in the Gulf States, hiding the harsh realities that leave smuggled or trafficked migrants with no legal rights, often combined with heavy (sometimes invented) debts to the smugglers.

More than a million migrants (most from Yemen, but more than 150,000 from Ethiopia) were airlifted out of Saudi Arabia, many of whom came through the notoriously violent deportation centers or were rushed aboard planes without their belongings.

A 2017 study of more than a thousand Ethiopian returnee migrants found that approximately 28 per cent suffered from common mental disorders. Fifteen per cent of the participants said they had had suicidal thoughts. There also seems to be a higher prevalence of mental disorders among migrants from Addis Ababa and Oromia compared to elsewhere in the country. This may be linked to urbanization and its effects, but the most plausible explanation is that Ethiopians living in these areas are predominantly Christian. Ethiopian migrants working for households of a different religion than their own are likely to suffer increased abuse during their time there, as well as facing challenges upon returning home, as their communities may fear they have been 'polluted' by working abroad in a different religious setting. Ethiopian Muslims also seem to be a little less likely to be mentally affected by work as a migrant in the Middle East, sharing some (though not many) religious, cultural and linguistic bonds with their employers (Habtamu et al., 2017).

In 2008, Lebanon initiated the first of several bans whereby Middle East countries prohibited Ethiopians from migrating there for work. Lebanon's argument mainly related to the high number of reported abuses, deaths and suicides among Ethiopian women employed in the country as domestic workers. In early 2013, as already noted, the Saudi King Abdullah and the Saudi authorities set in motion a number of initiatives to deal with 'illegal migration' into the country. An amnesty period of seven months was declared for migrants either to formalize their stay with residence and employment permissions or to leave the country. After the amnesty period, the authorities started searching for irregular migrants, who were now detained in one of 64 deportation centers, primarily in Riyadh and Jeddah (Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat, 2014). More than a million migrants (most from Yemen, but more than 150,000 from Ethiopia) were airlifted out of Saudi Arabia, many of whom came through the notoriously violent deportation centers or were rushed aboard planes without their belongings. The return started as a trickle, with a small number of arrivals each day, but it then suddenly increased to some seven thousand returnees a day, greatly stretching the logistical arrangements of the humanitarian response. The highest number of returnees arrived in Ethiopia between November 2013 and December 2013. Subsequently another steady flow of returnees arrived from January 2014, which tapered off by March 2014, when all those whom Saudi Arabia had immediately expelled seem to have returned. The first flight to arrive at Bole Airport, on 13 November 2013, had 35 migrants on board, and by March 2014 the number of arrivals had reached 163,018. Most of the returnees arrived between mid-November and the third week of December 2013. This process was repeated in 2017, with more than 330,000 Ethiopians forcibly returned from March 2017 to November 2019.

Upon their arrival the returnees are provided with support by the Ethiopian Red Cross (free phone services and ambulances for emergency cases) and the MSF (including mental health consultation), complemented by the International Office of Migration (IOM) and its agencies in Ethiopia's regions. As expected the relief operation was faced with challenges due to the unprecedented nature of the emergency, the large and overwhelming number of returnees of varying ages and needs, and the short time frame in which to deal with them. These challenges included the availability of accommodation in the transit centers, difficulties in drawing up accurate plans and executing humanitarian responses due to inadequate prior information about returnees (very limited information was provided by Saudi Arabia) and the limited funding available.

The rushed forced return saw the Ethiopian government institute a temporary ban on migration to the Gulf States with the explicit aim of preventing the harassment, trauma and intimidation of Ethiopians seeking work there. The ban was maintained until 2018, when a new law targeting the many illegal private employment agencies, many of which function as de facto human traffickers, and aiming to safeguard the rights and conditions of labor migrants was introduced. Despite the policy and the law, the Ethiopian government has only weak enforcement capabilities against infringements (Fernandez, 2019).

EXISTING SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR REINTEGRATION OF RETURN MIGRANTS IN ETHIOPIA

The existing support and reintegration system for return migrants in Ethiopia formally consists of a cross-sectoral approach involving a wide range of government and non-government actors. The different government institutions involved in the provision of support services and in facilitating the reintegration of return migrants include the Office of the Federal General Attorney, Federal Job Creation Agency (JCA), Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), Federal Technical & Vocational Education and Training Agency (TVETA), Micro-Finance Enterprise, Women, Children & Youth Affairs Ministry, Economy and Finance Ministry, Agency for Return Migrants Administration (ARRA), Ethiopian Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, National Disaster Rehabilitation and Management Council (NDRMC) and media outlets.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) has two major responsibilities. One is facilitation of the deployment of Ethiopian labor migrants overseas, and the provision of enabling conditions for these migrants upon their return by assisting them in the process of reintegrating into the domestic economy. The second responsibility of the ministry is mainly related to irregular migrants, those who have left the country or have returned through irregular channels. The national task force presided over by the Deputy Prime Minister is composed of representatives of all the major federal public agencies whose institutional profiles and mandates have direct relevance for the support and reintegration of return migrants. Whereas the task force is primarily meant to coordinate and lead the support and reintegration efforts of all the major government and non-government organisations, the enabling legislation requires the Office of the General Attorney to lead and coordinate the work of the federal task force on a regular basis under the Deputy Prime Minister.

The national task force is divided into four Work Teams: 1) Illegal Migration Prevention Work Team, 2) Return Migrants Rehabilitation and Reintegration Work Team, 3) Law Enforcement Work Team, and 4) Illegal Migration Research Work Team. While the Job Creation Agency (JCA) and MoLSA are the coordinators and deputy coordinators of the Return Migrants Rehabilitation and Reintegration Work Team, the IOM is a member of the work team.

In addition, MoLSA is also mandated to devise ways and create conditions under which return migrants can formally and legally be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the national economy. However, the psycho-social services that MoLSA and its agencies provide are limited to preliminary counseling and advisory support aimed at regaining the confidence and stability of new arrivals. The psycho-social support provided is neither regular nor clinical.

A serious challenge faced by MoLSA in discharging its responsibilities is the lack of proper documentation, organisation, management and dissemination of data related to return migrants. In order to alleviate the problem, MoLSA has recently conducted a project in collaboration with the IOM aimed at encoding and organizing returnee data for the years 2017-2019. In accordance with this data and in collaboration with the IOM, MoLSA provided support for a total of 206,920 return migrants, of whom 157,681 were male and 47,579 female.

The JCA (Job Creation Agency) claims to have created 14,000 new jobs for return migrants in 2018/19, though we do not know which jobs, what the prospects are for job security over time, nor what the wage levels are. In the same year, the JCA provided rehabilitation and social integration support for 203 male returnees from Tanzania, as well as economic reintegration support for 99 returnees. The Ministry of Health, for its part, planned to provide general health-care support for 40,000 return migrants in 2018/19 but only ended up helping 17,457. The Ministry screened 15,457 returnees for medical needs, provided youth-centered medical support for 950 returnees (involving HIV tests, family planning and other related medical services) and helped in counseling and the provision of psycho-social support for 1,050 return migrants in that year.

As far as support services, disaggregated gender and legal status are concerned, most return migrants supported by MoLSA and JCA were male returnees, and all those who received support were irregular migrants deported primarily from Saudi Arabia and Yemen, other African countries and Europe. The Ministry of Health mainly provided support for female returnees.

DRIVERS OF MALE OUTMIGRATION FROM ETHIOPIA

Migration does not require a degree or high school diploma. ,

-Interviewed migrant.

The causes of male migration from Ethiopia are multiple and not mutually exclusive. The predominant factor explaining male outmigration is evidently the pursuit of a better life abroad, confronting dissatisfaction with types of employment, salaries and destitution at 'home'. In what is for many of Ethiopia's poorest a society lacking access, whether to education, business, housing or social support, migration initially appears to be an open process that anyone may undertake. The likelihood of success may increase with funding to support the migratory journey, just as it helps migrants avoid the abuses and torture of brokers. Nonetheless migration journeys may start with almost nothing, and several of those who were interviewed for this report had no more than \$20 with them when they left. There is also an attractive temporality at play for young Ethiopian men especially when it comes to migration: though the journey itself may turn out to take months to conduct, the decision to travel away from home may be taken in a split second. Among our interviewees were some migrants who did not tell their families or wives they were migrating before leaving, and one young man made the decision suddenly on the way home from shepherding, being unwilling to face his father after losing the family's animals.

There is also an attractive temporality at play for young Ethiopian men especially when it comes to migration: though the journey itself may turn out to take months to conduct, the decision to travel away from home may be taken in a split second.

Expectations of improvements to one's life may be fueled by individual cases of success, sometimes communicated through friends or displayed in villages, and sometimes through agencies and especially brokers, who roam the countryside and cities exaggerating how one's life may be changed through migration. It takes only a few instances of successful migration (often perceived as the building of a

house back in the local community or remittances sent to the family) to create expectations of triumph and progress through migration. Others may have heard about successful migration on the radio or from other forms of public news.

In addition to the ambition to improve one's life status, politics and conflicts (most frequently from ethnic tensions) were other reasons for male outmigration in a few cases. An example of politics as a driver of male outmigration is the lived experience of an OLF member during the transition period before the FDRE government came to power. Born in Illibabor, and having spent more than 25 years of his life abroad, mainly in South Africa, this respondent explains why he left Ethiopia:

I was a member of the OLF during its struggle against the tyranny of the Derg regime. After the fall of the regime, as a result of the TPLF leading a fight against it, my party initially started conversing and initiating dialogue with the TPLF-led transitional government, but my party later came to hold divergent views and as a result left the dialogue to continue with the armed struggle instead. Following the development, the party informed its members about the existing situations and told us to make our own decisions in relation to the choice to fight, noting that, from that point in time, there would be a threat to our lives and security from the TPLF-led government. As a result, I decided to leave the country, initially travelling to Kenya ...

In another instance, a migrant travelled from Eastern Hargaghe to Addis Ababa, leaving his wife and three children in the context of ethnic clashes and subsequent imprisonment: 'I came to Addis Ababa running away from the ethnic fights and subsequent instability in Eastern Hararghe, but later, since my support to my wife and children need not be discontinued, I decided to travel to Sudan looking for a job'. What motivates these men, despite differences due to their personal situations, resonates with many of the findings of related inquiries, including poverty, a lack of jobs, a search for better paid jobs and seeking improved standards of living. A shelter coordinator we interviewed explained migration with reference to drought, population pressure and a lack of infrastructure, but mainly it still seems to be the ways in which these factors intersect with livelihoods, employment and the aspiration to better of one's life that mostly drives migration.

Financial concerns are, after all, central determining factors in both opportunities and transformations (including into adulthood), including in Ethiopian society: 'Money is the basis of everything in our culture. You can't even marry the girl you love unless you pay a large amount of money to her family', as one young migrant explained. For those living in extreme poverty, financial concerns are not only a matter of social status or potential mobility but rather of subsistence and sheer existence, as one migrant framed it: 'Facing death is not an option. That is why we decide to run away from starvation'. It is important to note, however, that destitution and deprivation are not objectively measurable, but should be seen in a relative sense as well, as potential migrants may see their own fates as being bad in comparison to others', even when they do not live below the poverty line.

**WHAT WE KNOW: RETURN MIGRANTS,
MASCULINITY AND WELL-BEING**



The notion and multifaceted nature of 'returning home', and not least the dualities between expectation, anticipation and the realities facing return migrants upon their return, has been well covered by studies of migration in recent decades. We know from other studies that returning often produces an initial period of significant stress and trauma in adjusting (Erdal and Oeppen, 2018; Majidi, 2009; Erdal et al., 2018). Return migration is typically understood from the point of view of various social, economic and psychological processes of reintegration, not as the end of a linear trajectory, but rather as another phase in the migration life-cycle. There are deep emotional complexities at play in returning, whether it is to a place associated with home, or merely to what can be considered the point (or even just the country) of one's birth or other origin. The return may have been anticipated as a process of individual stabilization (against the bearable and unbearable dynamism of migration journeys), recognition and development, facilitating a change in maturity, status and appreciation, but it is often seen to be an illusion that may instead be an experience of rupture and disillusionment (Christou and King, 2014; Vathi, 2018).

Atnafu and Adamek (2016) report Ethiopian women who saw their immediate return as 'freedom of life', a freedom to move, eat, sleep and work as they pleased. As soon as their planes left Bahraini territory, after they had all been deported 'voluntarily' by the local authorities because they did not have funds for return air tickets, a weight fell from their shoulders. From the relief of escaping what many described as a prison (for some literally, for others only figuratively), the process of reintegration often turned out to be difficult and protracted, if it had an end state at all. These particular women were regarded by their communities as a 'diaspora' that has lived and worked abroad for a few years, a status identified with wealth and prestige. Returning without either was difficult for the family to accept.

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Returning back home may therefore be as much of a culture shock as the process of migrating to a foreign and unknown country in the first place, not least when the return ends in a foreign city or one different than that from which the migrant left, as is the case for most of the interviewees in this study. Return to what is then the next question. There is no return to exactly what there was before the migration experience. Migrants, like all people, change in encountering new experiences, and

they may personally have moved far beyond the situations and places they left behind. Upon their return, then, the question is whether they are expected to resume or find themselves resuming past positions it may be bad or impossible to adapt into. Migration trajectories are complex, and forced returnees especially may well see their migration efforts as unfinished and incomplete, their return thus mainly functioning as a preparation for new mobilities. This may have important consequences for the idea of homemaking, that is, that if return migrants do not see their return as final, homemaking in its many forms does not seem to make much sense, potentially pushing some return migrants into voluntary states of temporary precarity. We should be careful, however, not to identify a definite inside and outside: either return migrants are fully reintegrated into their families and communities, or they are not.

The imagined borders between voluntary and forced return migration can be seen as fluid.

For the return migrant, a plethora of individual issues shapes their reintegration. This includes their degrees of agency – are they reassuming a position with no or little autonomy, do they have the agency to move, or do they feel trapped in a certain context? Returning to a situation of vulnerability is a likely scenario for many Ethiopian migrants, most of whom are low skilled and do not come back with financial savings, greatly shaping their prospects for resource mobilization for themselves and their families. Most of the return migrants who took part in this research did not attain their goals in living and working abroad. The reality of being unable to make possible improvements to their families weighs heavily on migrants when they return home, sometimes lowering their status and on other occasions strongly stimulating efforts to migrate again quickly in hopes of eventual success (Birke et al., 2009). Returning to financial instability and reverting back to a situation of dependence on one's family is a long way from the initial idea of migrating precisely to support that family. Likewise, many families pool resources, selling houses or land, to finance the migratory journeys of their children, making returning empty-handed even more difficult. This may be reinforced by the potential inability to work because of trauma and lead to emotional regret for years wasted abroad. But individual factors also include volition, which may go in many different directions: the volition to reintegrate and reassume a position once held in the community, or the volition to break from earlier expectations and roles to define a new course in one's life. We know that strong social networks and the ability to sustain them and

gain access to them again when one returns are crucial for reintegration efforts. Creating new and renegotiating existing or old relationships can help strengthen a sense of belonging.

In the space between perceived failure and success, whether by the migrant or the migrant's family and community, returning home can also be stressed as important. The assumption of a boundary between voluntary and forced migration, according to which the former should be safe and with few negative consequences, while the latter is problematic and holds out far greater potential for psychosocial problems to arise, should not be taken at face value. First, return migration in its many forms may produce effects that were not foreseen and are difficult to understand, no matter whether the return was voluntary or coerced. But perhaps more importantly the imagined borders between voluntary and forced return migration can be seen as fluid. 'Voluntary' migration may very well be pushed or nudged by factors that shape the individual migrant's choice to migrate. Voluntary return, while obviously challenging, can also be a relief, given that many Ethiopian migrants might be locked in unbearable situations of hardship, with few opportunities to return home voluntarily, even if they wanted to. Voluntary, self-prompted return rarely seems to be an option, and many Ethiopian migrants are known to have turned themselves in to the local authorities in order to 'force' them into a return that is in essence voluntary (see Atnafu and Adamek, 2016).

RETURN MIGRATION AND PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING

Even though the psychosocial well-being of return migrants is central to successful efforts to return from migration and reintegrate, research on this concept is still limited (Vathi, 2018). Psychosocial well-being is best considered as lying along a continuum, as an unfolding and developing experience of life. It is not an outcome, but a 'state of being that arises from the dynamic interplay of outcomes and processes' (McGregor, 2007). In research on poverty, well-being is often conceptualized as combining a person's 'objective' circumstances and their own 'subjective' perception of their condition. That is, in its broadest form, it encompasses a combination of what a person has, what they can do with what they have, and how they think about what they have and what they can do. We do not need to engage in a conceptual debate here, but merely note that we approach well-being from a psychosocial perspective in order to accentuate the emotional, social and cultural aspects of return migration. Well-being is shaped by a host of different individual, structural and circumstantial factors that are difficult to separate, both in form and

in their effects. The focus on the individual migration experience naturally gives priority to unique experiences of migration and potentially denies us the ability to generalize. Nonetheless, it is not the aim of this report to create an axiomatic understanding of the factors and experiences of return migration for Ethiopians, but rather to provide a glimpse into the nature of their experiences.

Though individual subjectivities are important, relationality also remains a core feature of psychosocial well-being.

The return experience, involving adjusting oneself to the dynamics of the return context, is intricately linked to notions of the past, present and future, three dimensions that cannot be separated. Migrants will relate to current events based on their past experiences, as well as their future expectations or imaginaries. We might implicitly assume that migrants returning to their place of departure are going 'home', but we cannot assume that the migrant still affords this place such qualities. Spaces and places never remain the exact same over the course of years, whether in the objective conditions of their physical infrastructure, housing etc. or in the relationality of the point of return. Many different forms of social and economic capital are spatially tied to a place, such as access to credit, employment opportunities, education, self-sufficiency or subsistence agriculture. This evokes important questions of what return migrants associate with their new-old place of living, as well as how it and their relationship with it have changed through the course of the migration journey, perhaps challenging their memory of what they left behind, which could very well have been idealized during the time they spent away from it.

Psychosocial well-being accentuates how deeply the instrumental (economically driven) and emotional dimensions of migrant life intersect and complement each other (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015). One's inability to provide financially for one's family leads to frustration, just as social concerns over declining family care, peer pressure and pressure from families or community misconceptions can lead to social isolation and thus an inability to take up employment, forming a problematic cycle of aggravation. Stigma and accusations of blame from families because of unfulfilled expectations may lead to failures of support and reassurance (Atnafu and Adamek, 2016). The complexity of reintegration is thus substantial, with successful reintegration efforts depending on different forms of human and financial capital, power relations and networks, time and space, traditions and values in the place of one's return.

Identity and subjectivities greatly shape motivations and life expectations. Individuals react differently to events due to some of the factors already described. Their coping mechanisms and ways of interpreting and reacting to the world vary greatly, being influenced by their individuality, their upbringing and the events they have experienced in their lives thus far, which are unique to them. All migrants will have different degrees of resilience to different events. Some might see minor events reactivate past emotions, instilling forms of trauma in them, while they can also experience terrifying events that are less conflictual because of cultural backgrounds or past experiences. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find patterns of reaction to events across such large groups as Ethiopian return migrants. Though individual subjectivities are important, relationality also remains a core feature of psychosocial well-being, strongly influenced by relationships and interactions, with positive outlooks depending on migrants' abilities to reestablish themselves and access networks and support upon their return.

Another appreciable factor is that the limited preparation of the journey before it takes place (e.g. a lack of awareness about the jobs to be undertaken, low cultural awareness or limited skills) seems to exacerbate the risks of mental stressors influencing migrants' psychosocial well-being (Habtmu et al., 2017) and thus also affecting return migration at a later stage, particularly in the case of migratory journeys that are short or medium term in length. As we shall see, this study also shows that, while migratory journeys may be initiated with few to no financial resources, this greatly increases the likelihood of violence and abuse along the way.

MEN, RETURN MIGRATION AND MASCULINITIES

Ethiopian migration, as in all parts of the world, is greatly shaped by gender norms. Just as it has become increasingly feminized in recent decades, gender is a crucial factor shaping the forms, journeys, impacts and conditions of migration (Bilgili et al., 2018). As men and women often travel via different routes to (relatively) different destinations and seek out different employment opportunities in the destination countries, they experience return migration and reintegration differently. The often explicit focus on the female vulnerabilities of migration and acceptance of them positions men in a vulnerable state of inattention subject to stereotypical assumptions that they are resilient and able to cope with the stressors of migration. Migrating men are situated in complex cross-pressures based on social norms of manhood and masculinity.

Drawing on a sample of returnees, Bilgili and colleagues (2018) found that Ethiopian men are more likely to conduct short-term migration than women (often not voluntarily but because of the irregular nature of their journeys), have less contact with relatives and friends in Ethiopia while away, and are much more vulnerable to forced deportation. They are also much more likely to be employed or to have their own businesses than women upon their return, many of whom return home to housework, even though they were employed abroad.

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Gender is performative, situational and relational (see Kleist, 2010), always renegotiated and in flux. Despite the greater likelihood of men perceiving return positively, even upon their return their social status has to be renegotiated and struggled over, as they have to find a place again in their families and communities. Hopes of upward social mobility often prove to fail, greatly challenging masculine statuses and identities tied to social norms. Several of the migrants interviewed for this report explained how they left their communities and families as 'men' and came back as 'women', emasculated through their inability to provide for themselves financially.

VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA

Finally, it is impossible to apprehend Ethiopian migration without recognizing the impact of abuse, violence and trauma. The majority of Ethiopian migrants are irregular migrants who both travel along perilous roads to their destinations and engage in precarious low-skilled work once there, seldom having legal papers or the ability to uphold their rights through formal institutions. The violent and traumatic migration experience, and not just the process of returning, is a key factor in shaping the return experience (Bilgili et al., 2018). We cannot consider the process of returning or reintegration without understanding the conditions under which the men migrate. And we know that the journeys and eventual stay and employment in the destination countries are dominated by social, physical, psychological and economic hardship.

Men rarely take up migrant employment as domestic workers, but they are still exposed to abuse, violence and trauma. They travel and live under extremely precarious conditions, with regular deaths on migrant boats to Yemen or in lorries going south towards South Africa, just as they are often locked up in megazens as soon as they leave Ethiopia, no matter whether they travel to the east, west or north. Coupled with knowledge of how severe life events of humiliation and defeat can be, like those evidently experienced by many Ethiopian migrants, these conditions greatly affect psychosocial well-being, with traumatic experiences potentially leading to a failure of reintegration, especially given the limited access to mental health provision, counselling or support upon return that we already know about.



LIVED EXPERIENCES: CHALLENGES EN ROUTE, IN TRANSIT AND IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Everyone is for himself or herself in the desert.

-Interviewed migrant from Addis Ababa
travelling through Sinai to reach Dubai.

Male migrant workers experience strenuous challenges, forms of abuse and grave violations of any or all their human rights during their journeys, both en route within transit states and in their destination countries. Most of these experiences, as an informant put it, are 'debilitating, degrading, traumatizing, and, by and large, cause deep rooted feelings of indignity and hopelessness'. Respondents confirm the idea that most of the challenging and degrading experiences that male migrant workers encounter take place during travel and in transit states, exacerbated especially by their inability to pay the costs of irregular migration and their exposure to various risks.

During their travels, Ethiopian migrants regularly experience or witness extensive abuse, rape (committed both on women and men), violence, murder, torture or death from thirst, hunger or heat.

Those who travel with the help of brokers, especially if aiming to go to Europe, are often used as forced labor, including by local police forces. Migrants told us especially of Libyan police forcing detained migrants to dig ditches to build barracks, load and unload weapons into and from storehouses, transport logistics for troops or even participate in fighting before robbing the migrants of their belongings and selling them off to brokers. In Libyan prisons, several migrants experienced having to work as day laborers for local Libyans, who would hire the prisoners to work in their fields, but pay the police, not the migrants.

The broad nature of these experiences were summed up by one interviewee as follows:

The major challenges that migrants face on the way are diseases. There are many who die of diseases since they are unable to get health care. In some circumstances they also are trapped in conflicts and fights while passing through transit routes like Yemen. In cases where migrants are caught by the police in transit states without a visa they will be imprisoned where they don't eat well, catch diseases and are sexually exploited.

Such challenges and harmful experiences are often exacerbated by ethnic tensions along the migration routes. One migrant who travelled through Yemen to reach Saudi Arabia explained how groups of brokers are divided between Oromo and Tigrean ethnicities, with ethnicity being decisive in fights for market share. At night the two groups would often clash, leaving many migrants dead or wounded, described by another migrant as running into the hundreds every day. The same hostility is transferred to the prisons, where fights between Oromo and Tigray migrants were a common occurrence. In the following we split up the abuse experienced into two of the prevailing forms: physical violence, and sexual exploitation, abuse and violence.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND TORTURE

The most frequently described challenge that male migrant workers experience in the course of their migratory journeys is physical torture (beatings, stabbings, being tortured with electric shocks, torture by chaining the hands and legs together and even killings), not least in the big halls in transit countries that the migrants describe as 'Megazens', warehouses where brokers keep and torture migrants for ransom money before allowing them to continue on their journeys. These acts of violence are often committed by the human smugglers as a way of forcing migrants' families and friends, both abroad and back in their home countries, to send such 'ransom money'. Linked to this are sales of migrants between brokers, resulting in the repeated experience of physical torture, inhumane and degrading treatment and

repeated sufferings by the migrants in again usually humiliating attempts to force families and friends to pay ransom money for their lives and security. The following story of one interviewee who suffered repeated physical torture substantiates the severely debilitating experiences that male migrants face during their journeys towards their desired countries of destination:

During our travel to Europe being led by Eritrean brokers through Sub-Saharan Africa and Libya, we traveled in a car that stopped and failed to work in the middle of the Sahara Desert. Our brokers then told us that they had to return back to get us a different car and asked us to wait in the middle of the Sahara Desert. In the desert we waited for a couple of days during which our supplies dwindled, and we suffered from hunger, harsh weather and thirst. As a result, 6 out of 55 people died. Observing that people were dying, we got up on to some hill and burnt a fire to signal for help. Seeing the signal, other brokers came and gave us water and food, but more migrants died. The new brokers took us to a place called Tazerbo, where they asked us to pay \$5500 in order to continue our journey over the sea. In Tazerbo we were accommodated in a big hall (a megazen) where there were other migrants brought by different brokers. There were about two thousand migrants. Again, the brokers started to force us to call our friends and relatives and ask them to send us ransom money. Those who refused were beaten, stabbed or killed to frighten others and have us obey their commands. They tied my hands behind my back and my legs together and then began torturing me with electric shocks.

Yemen is another such example, a distressing transit country in which brokers roam free. It is usually the case that young Ethiopian migrants spend time in Yemen before they begin traveling to Saudi Arabia, attempting to work to scrape together the funds for the next step in the journey. According to our respondents, many Ethiopian male migrants staying in Yemen only survive by begging for food and water. Among the painful experiences our respondents shared is the physical exploitation that young male migrants suffer when they are caught by soldiers in the mountains, along the route to Saudi Arabia. In these cases, soldiers first confiscate their money, mobile phones and other valuable belongings (including excess clothing) and force them to work as laborers. Many young male migrants are forced to carry logistical supplies up to mountaintops, where the soldiers' garrisons are located.

The same forms of exploitation occur in Libya:

The real challenge that migrants face relates to the forced labor that migrants are required to engage in by Libyan police. The police force migrants to dig ditches for building garrisons, they make them load and unload weapons from trucks, and transport logistical supplies to hill tops for troops and even engage in war. In cases where the migrants are carrying weapons to stationed soldiers and the Libyans suddenly engage in fights, the young migrants are required to fight on behalf of the soldiers. Many young Oromo migrants died this way...

Most of the returnees who took part in this research did not achieve their goals of living and working abroad but in many cases were caught a few days after entering their countries of destination. This is particularly true of those migrants who aimed to enter Saudi Arabia to live and work. But working in the transit states is not a viable option either. Working in countries like South Sudan, which is troubled by civil war, is obviously extremely challenging. One respondent described the nature of the work and the experiences he encountered in the workplace:

I was initially hired as a laborer distributing bread to small shops. In accord with our agreement the employer was to provide us with daily meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner, and shelter. But they gave us little food, and we used to suffer from hunger... I also worked as a bartender and a hotel manager. While working as a bartender, soldiers used to come and order drinks, and after they had had many drinks, they left without paying for them. In such circumstances, we were obliged to pay for the loss (in order to compensate for the prices of the bottles of drinks not paid for by the soldiers). Such challenges have seriously been degrading and debilitating...

The picture is not radically different in South Africa, where life as a migrant includes threats, exploitation and violence. Several respondents reported that irregular migrants suffer from all kinds of challenges in the country, ranging from being robbed and physically attacked by gangs to death. Many Ethiopian male migrants run businesses of all sorts, and while some succeed, most fail, or are robbed or

killed. Xenophobic attacks, robberies and killings are widespread and were identified by interviewees as the main threats to the lives, businesses and other livelihood endeavors of Ethiopian male migrants in South Africa.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND VIOLENCE

Simply put, the circumstances of our journey don't allow the luxury of discussing sexual abuse and violence.

-Interviewed migrant.

Rape and others forms of sexual violence seem to be an everyday reality for many male migrants. Sexual exploitation is perpetrated by employers, smugglers, brokers or local groups, just as it is widespread in situations where brokers sell off migrants to guerillas, who do with them as they please, including rape and sexual abuse. Though most of the migrants we interviewed initially reported that they have not themselves been victims of sexual violence or GBV, they admitted knowledge of such abuses against their close friends, relatives or neighbors. However, some ended up sharing their own stories of attempted sexual violence, and we learned that male migrants do discuss and pass on information regarding the risk of exposure to sexual violence against themselves and the importance of protection, if only in extremely intimate settings, as among best friends. The following quote from an interviewee substantiates both the experience of sexual violence and exchanges of information about it among the migrants:

In relation to rape committed against male migrants, I had information from my cousin. He told me that a Sudanese boss had attempted to rape him but that he escaped. I used to consider such information false until I had it from my cousin and a friend in Sudan. However, I never personally experienced such a problem. But the problem is pervasive in Arab countries. For instance, a very good friend who is from Tareta (a tiny village in Shirka Wereda) was a victim of rape. They cheated him and took him to his place of work, where they raped him by force. We took him to a hospital. But he was unable to work, and finally he was deported back to Ethiopia. I don't know his whereabouts now.

Although there are documented instances of sexual violence inflicted upon male migrants by Sudanese and Saudi citizens, as well as repeated cases of sexual violence perpetrated by Yemenis against male migrants, the mainstream discourse on violations of the rights of Ethiopian migrants tends to describe this as a challenge only faced by female migrants. But several of our interviewees underlined the frequency of male migrants being offered money to participate willingly in intercourse or of being forcibly raped. Attempts at rape, sometimes gang rape, take place especially in the countryside, where male migrants are taken on the pretext that they are going to work. There are also instances in which migrants are asked to influence or convince other workers to have sexual intercourse with their male employers:

My boss offered me a lot of money and asked me to sleep with him, but I refused. He even went further and asked me to persuade other male workers for him but again I refused. This type of sexual exploitation is usually inflicted upon male migrants by taking them to the countryside, telling them, through deception, that there is work there, or else they commit this either by bribing or through force in the working space.

Other cases in which male migrants are forcibly raped occur at night, when migrants are often subjected to sexual exploitation by their employers or local co-workers. The information collected during fieldwork at both sites shows that male migrants are also forcibly raped at gunpoint, as armed and organised groups of individuals, especially in Somalia and Saudi Arabia, take advantage of unarmed migrants.

Ethiopian male survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse usually hide their experiences out of a fear of social stigma, even if the sexual acts against them constitute violent crimes. However, in situations in which their exploitation and abuse results in health complications, they are often compelled to reveal the fact of their having been abused in order to access health care and the support of friends. The severity of such situations is exacerbated by the fact that irregular migrants can neither obtain formal health care nor report these crimes, even though the migrants are fully aware of who has forcibly raped them. Their status means that any contact with the local authorities will likely result in their deportation and surely imprisonment. This only strengthens stereotypes associated with homosexuality

among Ethiopians and increases the fear of potential ostracism, leading to continuous efforts to hide such crimes even from family and friends: 'many people hide their exposure to sexual exploitation and violence. They disclose their experiences only when they feel sick and unable to handle the pain by themselves', as a migrant explained it. In worst-case scenarios, however, such victims of sexual exploitation not only suffer from the abuse perpetrated against them and associated psychological trauma, but also from their subsequent alienation and rejection, including by their Ethiopian friends. Fortunately, some do find help and support:

I knew a boy from Arsi Dida'a who had been raped. He was raped in the middle of the night while he was sleeping. Two Yemenis committed it. As a result he had some health complications, and due to the severe pain he was unable to go to the toilet. We brought him to the hospital, and finally he was cured with the help of God. I also knew another male migrant from Jimma who was raped by individuals who misinformed him about the employment opportunities in the Yemen countryside. Once he was there, a group of young men raped him forcibly at gunpoint, and when I met him he was still bleeding.

One interviewee explained what were perceived to be the social costs of exposing sexual violence: 'revealing problems of sexual violence would turn upside down the lives of any male migrant returning home in terms of social life, respect and role in the community they live in'. Another migrant explained that 'It is not commonly talked about obviously because it is a deeply disgusting practice in our society, it is a taboo, and hence people would like neither to talk about it nor listen to discussions of such kinds'. Rumors about widespread sexual violence against migrants also lead to accusations or stigma against returning male migrants for having been exposed to it. 'Boys and girls who are victims of sexual assault are simply left behind – nobody helps them', as one interviewee expressed it, while another made a plea for a remedy: 'I don't know why our society does not talk about homosexuality when it is really a problem for many return migrants.' Among the destination countries, South Africa stands out for its protection, at least in theory, of the rights of homosexuals. Several migrants mentioned this as shaping the type of sexual relations they engaged in and the related stigma. But South Africa is also infamous among migrants for the high incidence of rape in the prisons to which migrants are

taken if they cannot prove their right to stay and are arrested by the local authorities. However, sexual exploitation is not always directly forced upon migrants. One interviewee explains the particular situation in prisons, where young migrants may use their bodies to obtain material goods:

In prison, there were young migrants who faced sexual exploitation. But I cannot say that this is wholly forcible. Since staying in prison is miserable, as there is no food, the prison cells are dirty and the prisoners catch diseases such as TB, migrants become depressed, and to handle it young people crave cigarettes. And it is to get these cigarettes that young male migrants become willing to sell sex. Adults in prison deliberately smoke cigarettes, signaling that they have many bundles and that they will give it to the boys if they are willing to engage in intercourse with them.

Conditions in prison cells and the megazens were repeatedly described as unbearable. They are too small to accommodate all the prisoners, or in the case of the halls the 'hostages' held by the smugglers. They are dirty (prisoners are forced to use them as toilets), are sites of communicable diseases, and migrants are subjected to robbery and torture, and are confronted by other sick and dying migrants. The bad conditions make it almost unbearable for migrants but reinforce the brokers' strategy of breaking the migrants to have their families send ransom money. In many of the megazens, which exist throughout the relevant transit countries, the brokers are Ethiopians.

**RETURNING 'HOME': THE MULTIFACETED
DIFFICULTIES OF REINTEGRATION AND
READJUSTMENT**



Most of the returnees who took part in this research were deported after being caught and imprisoned in the territory of the destination country they travelled to or are forced to return back to their country because of various challenges. Others have been returned to Ethiopia through the agency of the IOM and its Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme, a joint EU–IOM initiative. Finally, a few migrant returnees travelled back to Ethiopia on their own after facing the strenuous challenges of their journey. All of them arrived back with serious physical or mental problems, no money and little clothing.

The major challenges that return migrants face upon their return include health problems, the stereotypical attitudes of others, stigma, discrimination and rejection by their families, financial and resource constraints. Male return migrants face particular challenges of absolute poverty (destitution), frustration, feelings of guilt and a lack of confidence. Although returnees often come back with the expectation (sometimes based on promises made and sometimes on rumors) that MoLSA or the IOM will cover the costs of reintegration, accommodation, clothing and transportation, many are faced with the stark reality that this may not be possible, further complicating their return.

After receiving emergency health care and treatment upon their arrival, most of the returnees were registered by the ERCS or IOM and stayed for a couple of months before being sent to organisations such as the AGAR Rehabilitation Center or agencies in regional states. Other interviewed migrants, especially young male returnees who sought to avoid all interaction with the authorities, simply walked out of the airport not knowing where they were going, some eventually seeking help from the Oromiya Regional Bureau, who transferred them to shelters. Language barriers are another key challenge they face upon arrival. As migrants come from different regions of Ethiopia, they may not be conversant with the language of the federal capital and thus face challenges in communicating.

The following sections present a brief kaleidoscope of some the central psychosocial and physical problems male migrants face upon their return, acknowledging the complex nature of both the challenges and their potential responses. These multifaceted challenges of the reintegration and readjustment process range across economic, social, psychological, cultural and physical concerns, from a lack of employment opportunities to depression, anxiety and social stigma.

TRAUMA, HOPELESSNESS AND EMASCULATION

Regardless of whether the interviewed migrants traveled south, west, north or east, their journeys were immensely traumatizing. Young migrants experienced situations of violence, death, grief and extreme personal hardship, as their fellow travelers die of thirst, conflict or torture. Many have been in situations where they were forced to give up other people's lives, unable to carry injured companions through the desert and having to leave them for dead. This is illustrated by two different experiences of interviewees: 'I know a man called (...). The smugglers asked him to make a phone call to his family to make a deposit on his behalf. But he was unable to remember the phone number of his two daughters in Saudi Arabia. As a result, they killed him in front of us'. As another migrant explained, 'It took two months to reach Bossaso, and the journey on sea took three days. (...) One of my friends from Wollo died, [and] the other three lost their minds on the sea due to extreme suffocation'.

I know a man called (...). The smugglers asked him to make a phone call to his family to make a deposit on his behalf. But he was unable to remember the phone number of his two daughters in Saudi Arabia. As a result, they killed him in front of us.

One young migrant described the macabre violence he had seen inflicted on his friends, including eyes being pulled out by using a water bottle (done by placing an empty water container on the eye of the victim and hitting the plastic bottle, after which the eye usually pops out), experiences that are scarring for life. All the interviewees being men, many of them also recounted horrible experiences of seeing young girls and women being gang-raped by brokers, policemen or soldiers. The lasting effects of these horribly dehumanizing experiences on the migrants are clear: 'The traumatic experiences I underwent hurt me so much. Even after my placement at (the shelter, ed.) I tried to kill myself. I couldn't sleep most days because of thinking too much about what I have been through' one migrant explained. The failures of migrants' journeys, their subsequent placement in shelters and their inability to care for their families have detrimental human effects, as a migrant from Tigray told us: 'My wife calls me and tells me that she is going to leave our children and hang herself. As a result, I don't sleep at night'.

Almost all the returnees also reported sustained feelings of loneliness and helplessness. Fearful of returning to their communities and families and being confronted with their debts or perceived failures, many migrants are caught in contexts in which they don't have anybody or know anybody, whether in Addis Ababa or in other regions of Ethiopia. One migrant who returned from South Sudan through the IOM explained this concern in the following way; 'In Addis Ababa, I don't have anyone I know. I found out that people are not cooperative in Addis Ababa. While sleeping under the bridge, the street children who were sleeping under the bridge thought that I was a thief and told me to go away. I was begging in the street in Addis Ababa, but no one gave me anything. I spent days without food. One day the policemen found me sleeping in the street and thought that I was drunk and had lost my way home and they slapped me and told me to go away. I have been at (a shelter, ed.) for two weeks. I have not been given any clothing or shoes. They only give me meals.'

Inadequate support or information about reintegration processes only serves to aggravate these feelings of loneliness and of isolation from others. Most returnees arrive at Bole International Airport without adequate clothing or shoes and with empty pockets, exhibiting different levels of psychological challenge. While immediate support is provided to most returnees by the humanitarian responders, the ensuing process of traveling further inland is one of vulnerability. In circumstances where migrants come back empty handed there is a growing sense of rejection by close family members. They live in a vacuum between migratory journeys and the realities of having to face questions and skepticism if they return home empty-handed: '(...) there is no place for me here in Addis. I feel hopeless here.'

The hopelessness of their perceived failures is only aggravated further by patriarchal cultural values regarding family life and gendered roles in the community. Men are seen as having superior positions to women, who are expected to be socially, culturally and economically dependent on them. This idea of men as decision-makers is nested even in everyday uses of language and proverbs, with Amharic clearly indicating strong patriarchal values that underpin the discriminatory notions about women's involvement in decision-making. Most informants emphasized that migration experiences that end negatively in, for instance, deportation and forced return often cause negative changes in status and power dynamics in returnees' families. The notion of wendinet, implying manhood in Ethiopian culture, is scripted on the basis of the strong patriarchal values and the power of relationships: 'As a result of the migration we often get emasculated. If a

man doesn't provide for his wife, and if a man does not manage to buy a loaf of bread for his starving kids, he is no longer a man'. The failed migration projects of male family members are thus described as reversing gender roles by leaving women to be the heads of families, while male return migrants describe themselves as being reduced to setinant (womanhood).

DISTRESS FROM DEBT BONDAGE AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Most of the migrants we interviewed described their migratory journeys as failures because of their inability to earn money for themselves and their families, which forces them to return empty-handed. Among the major financial challenges male return migrants face include their inability to pay debts owed to families, relatives and friends, the lack of job opportunities, and delays in obtaining start-up capital or seed money as part of reintegration efforts supported by local organisations. All the respondents who had been deported from Saudi Arabia indicated that they owed their families and relatives money ranging from 20,000 to over 70,000 birr.

Most returnees arrive at Bole International Airport without adequate clothing or shoes and with empty pockets, exhibiting different levels of psychological challenge.

According to the returnees from Saudi Arabia, the first thing that keeps them constantly worried is the question of how they are going to repay the 'ransom' money that had to be paid to release them from the megazens. This is also cited as a reason why respondents decided not to return to their families but rather stayed to find jobs in Addis Ababa: 'I tried to migrate to Saudi Arabia two months ago, and now I am here in Addis Ababa. I cannot think of going back to my family. They would be angry, not about the decision I made to migrate, but about the money I lost in the unsuccessful attempt to migrate abroad. I worked very hard to get the 20,000 birr, which I got selling cattle. This is going to make my family very angry. I don't plan to go back to them. I am planning to work in Addis Ababa as a day laborer'.

Thus, since in most cases migrants fund their journeys by selling land or cattle or borrowing from families and friends, a failure to succeed translates into an inability to repay debts and support their families' livelihoods. Since the families of migrants

obtain loans by providing their land as collateral, they find repaying their debts difficult (in the context of the failed migration of their children), which in turn leads to alienation from their families and communities. This becomes a key reason why return migrants do not think of returning back to their families and neighborhood, fundamentally challenging their social reintegration.

Returning to their families empty-handed, which was mentioned most often, would only make them appear as losers, as worthless or failures in the eyes of the community, rendering employment, marriage and many social relations virtually impossible. Those who have wives and children are anxious because of their inability to provide for their needs: 'knowing that there are our wives and children expecting us to provide them with the means of survival and not actually living up to their expectations deeply saddens and constantly keeps us worried'. The shelters don't help: 'Here at (the shelter, ed.), we spend our days eating and sleeping. We are not allowed to leave the compound. We could have helped ourselves had we been given seed money and allowed to choose the kind of businesses we would like to engage in. We are healthy and capable of working and supporting ourselves and our families, but they keep us locked up in here. We feel worthless'. Interviews with shelter management in this particular case indicated that the migrants were locked in the camp because one of them had brought back cigarettes from the town and had offered them to people who were in rehab.

The other major financial challenge male return migrants face is a lack of job opportunities. Return migrants stated that the difficulty in obtaining employment was one of the reasons why they migrated in the first place, yet they may not have been employed during their migration journeys and certainly do not find employment when they return to Ethiopia. Promises are apparently sometimes made to them by organisations or local authorities about seed capital for starting up small businesses, but these funds rarely seem to materialise: 'The major challenge associated with reintegration are the lack of an immediate response from organisations. Concerns and even depression arising from the problem of not being economically productive in the short run and because of poor actual needs assessments, as evidenced by longer training programs relative to our prior skills, choices and immediate needs are the challenges that most of us are faced with'.

SUFFERING FROM STIGMA AND THE BREAK-UP OF FAMILIAL RELATIONS

As a result of the social attitudes towards us, most of us are compelled to remain lonely, isolated and dejected.

-Migrant from Addis Ababa.

Return migrants encounter substantial rejection, dejection and isolation from the societies they return to, whether in the city or the countryside. Male migrants who return to Ethiopia with no indication of having lived a successful life abroad are likely to be gossiped about and isolated and to experience mental distress. This is especially the case in local communities, where they are called 50/50's, a name used to suggest that they are only half sane. Young male migrants who return to Addis Ababa without any discernable changes to their lives are suspected of having suffered prison life and torture, or even worse, having been subjected to sexual exploitation and/or being HIV positive. The difficulties of getting married and taking part in social life are also explained in terms of social attitudes to returnees as being 'losers and unlucky', information about the destinies of migrants that quickly spreads:

In the first place people in the neighborhood are likely to have been informed about our travel to South Africa. If after our return back to our country people see that we have not been successful in going abroad, they begin heaping all kinds of assumptions upon us. People think that we got back being HIV positive, or beaten, tortured and robbed, or even forcibly raped. This is the kind of ascription we get from people, and this has seriously affected migrant returnees. I know many migrant returnees who actually went crazy as a result of their rejection and such gossip.

Social stigma obviously complicates social reintegration, if not preventing it altogether. Return migrants explained that they are not respected in society, not trusted (especially with money), do not take part in various community-based organisations (i.e. are isolated) and are not regarded as mentally healthy: 'I returned back to my place of birth with bare hands. After coming to my village nobody welcomed or supported me. In fact, my father died while I was abroad. Many of our

communities consider us losers and unlucky. There are also times when we are unable to get wives due to such backward and biased social attitudes to male returnees'. Another interviewee expressed a similar feeling: 'People in my neighborhood would think that I am useless and shameful. And because of my failure to succeed like others who went abroad and succeeded in supporting their families here, I would be rejected and lose the respect of others. This is how people in my neighborhood would see me. I will never go back.' This sentiment was often repeated: 'Nobody trusts us. People think that we are mentally sick, as they believe that what we might have experienced throughout the course of our travels abroad has tortured us to the extent that we have gone mad. We are regarded as being unpredictable, unreliable, unstable and sometimes dangerous. I usually observe that my presence around people makes them feel insecure and discomforted'.

The interviewees also identified a failure or difficulty in communicating with their former friends and others' gossip about one's failure to achieve one's migration goals as causing depression, a loss of confidence and resulting loneliness. One returnee who had tried to migrate, leaving his university education unfinished behind him as he travelled towards Europe via Sudan and Libya, explained that after his return he found it uncomfortable to communicate with his former friends, who were now graduates and employed. He revealed that initially, when spending time with his former friends, he could not understand their conversations as he was not up to date and does not have the kind of intellect that characterizes their thinking and how they see things. He then chose to stop seeing them and instead only spent time on his own.

These stigmas, coupled with events that occurred during migration journeys, often lead to broken relationships with one's parents, children and spouses: 'The state of insecurity we often find ourselves in forces us to lose communication with the family we leave behind. During my stay away for eight years I only talked to my wife and our son during the first year. The hardships I encountered did not even give me the chance to talk to them or send remittances back home. That cost me my family, as my wife, who was only 24 at the time I left, decided to be in another relationship, which is understandable'.

Another interviewee shared the feeling of guilt towards his parents and the presumed resentment of the community: 'Knowing how my parents feel about me every time they look at me, I hate myself and think of going away. I feel rejected, dejected and unwanted. I don't feel that I am welcome at home or in the neighborhood. I am

staying here because I don't have anywhere to go. But I feel I must leave this place (...). But home is not what it used to be, and coming to terms with the new realities that had arisen while they were away was difficult: 'Despite the hardships encountered on the way and in the destination countries, we often tend to compare the living conditions in our birth villages with those of the places we have been to'.

FEELINGS OF BROKEN PROMISES BY INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORITIES

Whether in fact true or not, it is impossible to avoid the feelings of broken promises that many of the interviewed migrants expressed, whether of local Ethiopian institutions and shelters or of the IOM. Several migrants said that the IOM in particular gives migrants 'hollow promises' that the pull factors of migration (e.g. raised standards of living, access to job opportunities, education) would be granted to them if only they would return to their respective home countries. The IOM is seen to 'lie' to migrants and not to live up to the promises it made to facilitate their reintegration effectively.

'The hardships I encountered did not even give me the chance to talk to them or send remittances back home. That cost me my family.'

At the centers, some feel they are being locked up as though they were mental patients, unable to leave the compound (and sleeping together with those who are in rehabilitation from mental distress). At the same time they feel as though they are not being supported towards a better future, seeing the training as insufficient and slow, and viewing the relevant organisations as incapable of living up to promises made about jobs back home in Ethiopia. One migrant came to the extreme conclusion that the organisation 'sent some of us here (to the shelter, ed.) as a form of punishment'. But the same unfulfilled promises are associated with the government authorities as well: 'I heard that the government has planned to facilitate conditions in the country for return migrants, whereby we could borrow money and start a business once we organise ourselves. But practically, it is only promises that we hear, which are not kept. People who work in the Kebele administration keep on telling us to wait, and we have waited for a long time now'.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS



Ethiopian men wanting to migrate abroad have very limited options for regular, legal migration. As a result, they embark on perilous journeys through the deserts of Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia before reaching conflict-ridden transit countries such as Yemen and Libya, where the trafficking, trading and smuggling of migrants is a lucrative business. These are countries where 'everyone carries weapons' except the migrants. Most of these male migrants, who are typically between 15 and 25 years old, leave Ethiopia imagining improved living conditions, seeking to escape poverty and pursuing the betterment of their lives, inspired by the few cases of successful migration indicated by newly built houses and rumors of remittances.

Most travel with insufficient funds, if any at all, to cover the high costs imposed on them by brokers, who govern different jurisdictions or parts of the journey, each requiring a deposit to allow the migrant to continue in his progress towards the destination. Those who cannot pay are locked up in megazens, literally big halls used by brokers to confine the migrants, where they are beaten, starved, tortured or killed, as the brokers demand 'ransom money' from them to continue the journey, forcing them to call family and friends and beg for funds. If ransom money is transferred to save the migrant (e.g. by his family, which has probably pawned his house and land), he may continue on the next part of the journey, encountering plenty of challenges outside the megazens: hunger, thirst, extreme weather, suffocation, robbery, forced labor, physical torture, sexual exploitation and abuse, imprisonment and serious psychological distress.

Those who cannot pay are locked up in megazens, literally big halls used by brokers to confine the migrants, where they are beaten, starved, tortured or killed, as the brokers demand 'ransom money' from them to continue the journey.

Brokers are identified by all the migrants in this research as a key source of abuse, physical and psychological violence, and trauma along the migration routes. The vast desert lands that surround Ethiopia, whether to the east or west, are largely outside the control of any government, and this is where the brokers reign free. But they also exist and work everywhere across Addis Ababa, in all regional states (where they hunt for people dissatisfied with their current standards of living), along all the borders and in all the transit countries. They are the major perpetrators of violence and abuse, whether carrying it out themselves, selling migrants to other brokers or imposing unpaid work and abuse on migrants. For the most part too,

they are not foreigners but Ethiopians making money out of the misery of migrants. One of the arrangements the brokers make is to operate on a 'go now, pay later' basis, which only forces migrants into debt bondage and exploitation over time. Relationships that may start as consensual almost always end in abusive experiences.

Return and reintegration involve a personal struggle, a complex and multilayered process closely linked to the uniquely distressing circumstances of migratory journeys, to which all individuals react differently.

To accumulate money for the next part of their journey, migrants often work as camel- or goat-herders, farmers (on local farm fields), businessmen (mostly in South Africa), bartenders, mechanics and most of them as day laborers – similar jobs to those they are likely to find if they reach their destinations. Many never reach their destinations, however, and some only do so for a few days or weeks before being caught by the local authorities, imprisoned in unspeakable conditions and deported back to Ethiopia. Although there are instances of voluntary and assisted voluntary return, most returnees are deported through Saudi Arabia's massive air repatriation scheme, which sees migrants landing in Bole International Airport with literally nothing, perhaps not even shoes. Upon returning to Ethiopia, some avoid interaction with the authorities and trickle into Addis Ababa, while others are directed to local shelters or maybe to one of the few institutions in the city that provide physical or mental care. From here, they move on to make efforts to adjust or integrate in familiar or unfamiliar cities, or in most cases make preparations for the next attempt to migrate abroad in the hope of a better life, even in the face of repeating the traumatic events they have already gone through. 'It is better to die en route than to live an undesirable life here', as a returnee framed the urge to move.

The institutional mechanisms supporting and reintegrating return migrants in Ethiopia in theory consist in a cross-sectoral approach in which a wide range of government, non-government and international actors carry out their respective tasks. Though the intention behind the cross-sectoral approach is that each stakeholder institution assumes its own respective responsibilities, coordination and integration among these institutions remains limited. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and its branches at the lower levels of government administration have in particular been faced with the challenges of adequately

meeting the demands of rehabilitation and reintegration support of all return migrants. A wide gap exists between the services provided and the large demand for it, exacerbated by the massive number of returning migrants, for whom there are only inadequate services. The lack of sustained funding for programs and projects, the difficulties of accessing land to build one's own shelter, the inadequacy of trained manpower in targeted areas and the insufficiently coordinated referral systems are frequently cited as key challenges in providing adequate and appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration support for returnees.

The traumas inflicted on most migrants require actors working in Ethiopia to develop culturally sensitive intervention strategies, not least because of the stigma associated with psychosocial problems. Torture is almost guaranteed for any male migrant traveling along the irregular routes because of the exorbitant rates brokers demand for allowing any journey to continue. It is also vital to understand and work from the potential sociocultural dissonance that occurs when migrants return to their countries or communities of origin, not least because of the assumption that the vast majority of men on irregular migratory journeys seem to 'fail' with regard to whether or not they have been able to save and provide for their families while abroad. This implies a delicate balancing act of not overemphasizing vulnerability and protection so as not to stigmatize return migrants or take away their volition and agency. This is vital from a perspective that does not group mental and physical health efforts under the broad umbrella of general health because of the sensitivity associated with the first.

While employment, or a lack of it, remains a central driver of Ethiopian migration, the lack of resources makes it exceedingly difficult to live up to pledges made to migrants involved in voluntary return schemes about job support at home. The political ambition to provide skills training, access to financial services, loans and business support, mentoring and career counseling are all very reasonable if they can be fulfilled. The reality none the less remains that such support is the exception rather than the rule for most migrants. And for some of those who are provided with training, it seems to be anything but tailored to their needs. Several reported that they were trained in vocational skills they already possessed, simply in the hope of obtaining some seed money to start a business, which they could not do without following structured courses at the shelters. For those who do not receive such support (even if ineffective), the inability to deliver on promises made is not just a problem in that few returnees are granted support in seeking out livelihoods or employment, but also because it discredits the entire system of relief and voluntary

return that surrounds Ethiopian migrants. Interviewed migrants feel left behind and succumb to hopelessness when they are failed by the system that promises them much but only delivers a little, some going so far as to see their forced involvement in misappropriated training as an institutional punishment. Altogether, the shelters are seen by some as effectively prisons which the migrants are not allowed to leave as they please but are fixed in place and kept in bad conditions. Institutional donors transfer funds to the shelters, but it is unclear to what extent these are put to use or how. Almost all the interviewees described months and months spent waiting, only to start vocational training for a skill they already possess.

‘ **If there are no other viable options in the coming weeks or months, I will be forced to begin another round.** ’

Delayed integration support, coupled with their lack of welcome by society generally, only serves to make returnees eager to migrate again, even in light of the traumatic events they went through the first time. Sustained migratory efforts are thus difficult to work around, if they should be at all in the first place. 'If there are no other viable options in the coming weeks or months, I will be forced to begin another round' one returnee told us, which was representative of most interviews. Migration is seen as a central coping and livelihood strategy for many, even though their actual experiences of migration are far from providing them with improvements to their lives.

This report constitutes an exploratory attempt to understand the nexus between migration journeys, reintegration and psychosocial well-being for Ethiopian men. It stresses the importance of recognizing and understanding migration as an ongoing and continuous process. Ethiopian migration needs to be understood more broadly as a phenomenon that takes place within social fields that extend beyond those of the actual migrants themselves. Not least it includes their family members and friends, with whom (and whose expectations and potential debts) they are confronted upon their return. This mainly relates to the trend observed in the study whereby aspects of reintegration and of the re-migration of male return migrants can be linked to their acceptance or rejection by their local communities. While it is programmatically logical to assume a difference between outward migration, return migration and reintegration, these shape each other in ways that accentuate especially the deep and fluid connection between the events of the journey and reintegration.

Reintegration cannot be isolated as a manipulable process determined by the level of support services provided to migrants. The Ethiopian men interviewed for this report all stress the life-altering qualities of their efforts to migrate, meaning that there is no separation of phases of migration into during and after. The traumatic events of irregular migration suggest it becomes an existential journey as much as a physical one, implying that its effects linger on even when the aspect of physical mobility may be considered to have ended. Migration is not a temporary process or journey, but rather an enduring process of personal, mental and existential change. For many, the physical act of migration endures as they engage not in linear but in circular efforts to move constantly in the hope of betterment. For them all, migration has lasting existential consequences.



There is no re-integration, there is only integration anew.

This puts the very notion of re-integration into question. The life-altering and irreparable effects of migration for these Ethiopian men, seldom for the better, means that what was before will never be again. As such, there are no processes of development, forms of treatment or possibilities of employment that can bring one back to how things were. That does not mean that support in adjusting to a new life after migration journeys is not possible, it simply means that the objective can never be to reinstate migrants 'back' into their communities with any expectation that they can resume social relations or positions like things were before.

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INTERVIEW SOURCES

Governmental and non-governmental actors

No.	Position	Type of organisation	Name of organisation	Location
1.	Acting Coordinator for Return migrants Follow Up and Support Work Team	Governmental	MoLSA	Addis Ababa
2.	Expert	Governmental	Job Creation Agency	Addis Ababa
3.	High Ranking Advisor of Deputy Minister	Governmental	Ministry of Health	Addis Ababa
4.	Social Worker	NGO, Charity	Community of Volunteers for the World (CVW)	Addis Ababa
5.	Project Coordinator	Non-governmental: Ethiopian Red Cross Society, Arsi Branch	Arsi Zone, Oromia Region	
6.	Head of the Labor and Social Affairs of Shirka Wereda	Governmental organisation: Wereda Level Administration of Oromia Region	Shirka Wereda, Oromia Region	

Return migrants interviewed

No.	Age	Place of origin	Religious background	Educational status	Marital status	No. of children	Current occupation	Country of return
1	52	Tigray	Muslim	12 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Libya
2	45	A. A.	Orthodox Christian	12 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Sweden
3	18	Welega	Muslim	10 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
4	20	Dire De-wa	Muslim	8 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
5	58	Illubabur	Protestant	12 th Grade	Divorced	1	Not working	South Africa
6	57	A.A.	Orthodox	9 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Sudan
7	24	A.A.	Orthodox	10+2	Single	0	Not working	Qatar
8	34	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	Diploma	Single	0	Not working	Qatar
9	35	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	12 th Complete	Single	0	Not working	Dubai
10	20	Amhara Region	Muslim	8 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
11	25	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	12 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Dubai
12	47	Negele Borena	Muslim	8 th Grade	Married	2	Not working	Somalia
13	30	A.A.	Muslim	10 th Grade	Divorced	2	Not working	Somalia
14	26	Gonder	Orthodox Christian	12 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	South Africa
15	42	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	B.A Degree	Married	1	School Director	South Africa
16	28	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	College Certificate	Single	0	Not working	Libya
17	18	Dessie	Muslim	No Education	Single	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
18	30	Harar	Muslim	7 th Grade	Married	3	Not working	Sudan
19	30	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	12 th Complete	Single	0	Barber	Dubai
20	27	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	10+2	Single	0	Not working	Libya
21	38	Amhara Region	Orthodox Christian	8 th Grade	Married	2	Not working	Saudi Arabia

Return migrants interviewed

No.	Age	Place of origin	Religious background	Educational status	Marital status	No. of children	Current occupation	Country of return
22	32	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	10 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	South Africa
23	25	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	10+2	Single	0	Not working	Italy
24	38	A.A.	Orthodox Christian	12 th Grade	Married	3	Hotel Manager	Somalia
25	27	A.A.	Muslim	9 th Grade	Married	2	Driver	Qatar
26	26	Gobessa, Oromia	Muslim	8 th Grade	Married	4	Not working	Saudi Arabia
27	22	Gobessa, Oromia	Muslim	5 th Grade	Married	2	Not working	Sudan
28	16	Gobessa, Oromia	Muslim	1 st Grade	Single	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
29	22	Shirka Wereda, Oromia	Muslim	9 th Grade	Married	1	Not working	Saudi Arabia
30	26	Gelebe Ammaa, Oromia	Muslim	5 th Grade	Married	2	Not working	Saudi Arabia
31	30	Tullu Rifensa , Oromia	Muslim	10 th Grade	Married	2	Not working	Saudi Arabia
32	18	Gorro Village , Oromia	Muslim	7 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
33	24	Gobessa, Oromia	Muslim	10 th Grade	Married	1	Volunteer	Saudi Arabia
34	29	Hanof Jawe, Oromia	Muslim	10 th Grade	Married	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
35	25	Gobessa, Oromia	Muslim	10 th Grade	Single	0	Not working	Saudi Arabia
36	42		Christian	B.A Degree	Married	1	School Director	
37	25		Christian	12 Complete	Single	0	Not working	
38	34		Christian	10+2	Married	1	Private	
39	26		Christian	10 +2	Single	0	Driver	
40	34		Christian	College Diploma	Married	2	Home Teacher	
41	28		Muslim	Certificate	Single	0	Private	

Photos

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Page 4-5: Berhanu Gezahegn / Ethiopia Red Cross Society, IFRC
(International Federation of Red Cross)

Page 14-15, 26-27, 36-37 and 46-47: Redux / Ritzau Scanpix

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