

Understanding Migration Industry in Ethiopia

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Introduction - background and rationale

- Recently migration and cross-border human mobility has become one of the top global concerns in development and security agendas.
 - ❖ The inclusion of migration in the 2030 UN agenda for sustainable development confirms and reinforces the importance of relations between migration and development (Gerard 2014).
 - ❖ On the other hand, in the context of the contemporary “migration and refugee crises”, unregulated migration has become a major concern for global and national security (Gerard 2014).
- Ethiopia is the hub of international migrations in the Horn of Africa.
- Ethiopia is very important as source, transit and destination of international migrants.
- Annual emigration from Ethiopia is estimated to be between 500,000 and 600,000, of which 60-70% are irregular migrants who use different land and sea routes and networks (RMMS, 2014, 2015; Belloni, 2015 Ayalew 2017).

- There are three major overland routes of irregular migration:
 1. The eastern route (to the Middle East and the Gulf States)
 2. The southern route (to Republic of South Africa)
 3. The north-western route (to Sudan – Libya/Egypt-Europe)
- Most of the migrants to the Middle East and Gulf States are young women.
 - Between 2009 and 2012 there were 387,061 registered regular labour migrants to the Gulf. 93.64% of these are mostly less educated females (Asnake and Zerihun, 2015: 22).
- To the contrary, migration to RSA is dominated by young men mainly from Hadiya and Kembata Zones in Southern Ethiopia.
 - In 2009 IOM estimated that between 17,000 and 20,000 migrants from the Horn of Africa arrived in RSA annually (Horwood, 2009).

- In the northwestern route, a 2013 UNHCR study on mixed migration in Libya estimated that 50-100 Ethiopian migrants/refugees cross into Sudan everyday.
 - This indicates that between 18,000 and 37,000 Ethiopians migrate to the Sudan via Matama annually (RMMS, 2014).
 - In 2015 an estimated 154,000 migrants entered Europe through the Central Mediterranean, and most of them are from Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea who used this route (RMMS, 2015; Sahan Foundation and IGAD, 2016).
- In this project, with a **focus on brokerage**, we examine the roles and functions of **migration facilitation industry** in promoting, organizing and sustaining migratory exits, mobility and transitions.

Migration industry

- ❖ Migration scholars have incorporated the concept of ‘migration industry’ to explain actors and processes involved in border controls and those facilitating contemporary irregular labor and refugee mobility, particularly from the Global South to North (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Nyberg Sørensen, 2013, Andersson, 2014b).
- ❖ Migration industry encompasses ‘service providers’ to facilitate migration, including human smuggling networks, trafficking rings, money lenders, recruiters, transportation providers and travel agents, legitimate and false paper pushers, contractors, formal and informal remittance and courier service owners and so on’ and ‘control providers’ such as private contractors performing immigration checks, operating detention centers and/or carrying out forced returns.
- ❖ Migration industry ‘greases the engines of international migration’ by providing and articulating the expertise and infrastructural resources needed for cross-border movements.
- ❖ By taking into account ethnic, gender and religious dimensions, our study focuses on brokerage and infrastructure (technologies, actors, and networks) that shape migratory mobility (Xiang and Lindquist 2014: 124).
- ❖ We study the interplay between different private – both formal and informal brokers – humanitarian and state actors and institutions, including social networks and technologies that inform, facilitate and condition a migration process

Migration industry in Ethiopia

- ✧ In the face of limited opportunities for legal migration paths, a vast majority of Ethiopian young men and women, mainly low skilled ones, opt for overland exits through dangerous and long trails across deserts and seas until they arrive in Europe, the Middle East, RSA or other destinations
- ✧ The mobility of migrants is organized or facilitated by the engagement and interactions of actors, including brokers; family members; former migrants en route and in diaspora; bus, taxi or lorry drivers; and the local people along the trails
- ✧ Migrants accomplish long overland journeys through collective, accumulated and improvised forms of knowledge and resources acquired, developed and shared by those in transit and their communities. In addition, various types of formal and informal brokers known in local parlance as *delala* (singular) *delaloch* (plural) arrange specific transport services and other facilities of mobility to cross borders, deserts and seas (ILO 2011, Ayalew, 2017; Fernandez 2017)
- ✧ Risks of migration are mediated and journeys are organized through the entanglement of transnational social and *delala* networks, use of diverse mobility routes, social media and communication technology or devices such as mobile phones and informal money transfer institutions.

Employment agents and brokers

- ❖ Following the 1998 overseas employment proclamation, more than **400 Private Employment Agencies (PEAs)** have been established, which have sent thousands of labour migrants, mainly female domestic workers to the Middle East (de Regt & Tafesse, 2015; Kubai, 2016).
- ❖ Besides the PEAs, there are a wide range of unauthorized **migration industry professionals such as *leqami* (lit. recruiter), *delala* (broker) *ashagari* (transborder broker), and *hawalas* (informal money transfer agents) emerged in Ethiopia, along the migration routes and in Diaspora** (Ayalew 2017). These actors provide various migration services ranging from guiding migrants to ‘safe routes’ and providing necessary papers to arranging border crossings.
- ❖ when the services of legal overseas private employment agencies, became lengthy and costly, the informal brokers have become alternatives in organizing direct flights or overland journeys to destinations by informally using their connections.
- ❖ Migrants consider **overland migration and services of the brokers less bureaucratic and time consuming, cheaper and more rewarding** (Fernandez, 2013) notwithstanding its hardship and risky nature. Thus, both male and female migrants prefer and trust local brokers more than the formal government agencies that have imposed tight regulation and strict requirements to regulate migration.
- ❖ However, in the existing studies, the exit of migrants, mainly women, from Ethiopia is narrowly portrayed in terms of **victimization and suffering** (ILO, 2011; Triulzi, 2013; RMMS, 2014a, 2014b; Fernandez, 2017). There is a tendency to reduce the complex processes of overland migratory exits from Ethiopia to narratives of human smuggling and trafficking (Abebaw, 2013; De Regt & Tafesse, 2016; Kubai, 2016).
- ❖ In this study **we highlight the context in which the practices of brokering and smuggling emerge and migrants’ collective practices of mobilization, facilitating infrastructures to monitor high-risk pathways to Europe, the Gulf States and RSA.**

Objectives

- This research project is set out to explore the role of **migration industry** in organizing migratory departures from Ethiopia and in cross border mobility.
- By going beyond the **victimization, individualizing and criminalizing** tendencies, we rather highlight the context in which **the practices of brokering and smuggling emerge and work**.
- To examine the socio-political and economic logics that shape planning, promoting and organizing the migration processes.
- To investigate how selected **government organizations, brokers and PEAs** engage in the recruitment, mobility and placement in the Middle East as well as overland and stepwise migratory journeys towards RSA and Europe.

Specific questions

- What kind of advice, knowledge and information do brokers and PEAs provide potential migrants?
- How do PEAs and informal brokers as well as state agencies intersect in the process of recruiting, moving and placing of Ethiopian workers in the Gulf States?
- How do migration facilitators and migrants use communication devices such as mobile phones, WhatsApp and Viber etc to share information, plan migration, and transfer money at the time of original migration and managing transitions?
- How do the brokers dynamically and creatively adapt to changing migration regulations at origin and destination?
- How do gender relations and ideologies shape the migration facilitations?
- What are the qualities of brokers preferred by men, women, boys and girls as well as different ethnic groups? What is a good broker?
- What qualities and skills do the brokers emphasize when recruiting for overseas work?
- How do the costs, payment arrangements and “contracts” with the broker vary for men, women, children and different ethnicities?

Methodology

- **Research Approach:**

The study will rely on a conventional qualitative research methods:

- In-depth and informal interviews,
- Focus group discussions (FGD),
- Observations,
- Collection of life histories and stories, photographs,
- Extended case studies tracing migratory departures, journey, border crossing ...
- Documents

Targets of the Study:

- Brokers
- PEAs
- Potential migrants
- Returnees
- Government and non-government organizations
- International organizations: IOM, ILO
- UNEC A - Social Development Policy Division (SDPD)
- AU's Division of Labour, Employment and Migration,

• **Research Sites:**

- Fieldwork will be carried out in three locations of origin and three locations of transits:
- Three origin sites: Addis Ababa, Hadiya and Wollo
- Three major transit towns: Moyale, and Metema and Samara?