

## SITUATION ANALYSIS OF IRREGULAR STEPWISE CROSS-BORDER ETHIOPIAN MIGRANTS IN THE SUDAN IN VIEW OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Abstract

*The main objective of this research was to investigate the socioeconomic and human rights status of the irregular cross-border Ethiopian migrants in Sudan. The research targeted identifying key policy lessons that could contribute to the existing endeavors of managing migration and preventing human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. Data were collected through desk reviews, informant interviews, group discussions, and observations. The results show that Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum have been suffering beginning from their origin, en route, and destination. The most common drivers of the emigrants are found to be an amalgam of socioeconomic, political, and environmental factors as well as pseudo-success-stories of the pioneer migrants. The en route was perilous for the migrants in which they faced physical assault, confinement, mistreatment, sexual abuse, and robbery. At the destination, the emigrants had been suffering from religion-based disparagement, nationality-based stigmatization, restricted mobility, exploitative working conditions, confiscation of resources, sexual abuse, vulnerability to drug dependence, and maltreatment. The mechanism to alleviate the problem is triple: one is expected from Ethiopia, the other from Sudan, and the third is a combined effort. In Ethiopia, enhanced democratic culture, political tolerance, good governance, improved access to legal travel authorization (visa) for safe migration, awareness creation campaigns, enhanced monitoring of the private employment agencies, and increased cooperation among stakeholders are found to be vital solutions to prevent illicit cross-border human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. Sudan is recommended to comply with the international conventions it ratified and the national legal frameworks it enforced regarding human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, and refugee protection. Ethiopia and Sudan have also something great to do together to combat the quandary of illicit migration: abolition of visa obligation for the citizens of one another and establishing robust co-managed border supervision command post mandated to address conflicts, irregular migration, and displacement at border areas.*

**Keywords:** Cross-border migration, Ethiopia, Human rights, Human trafficking, Migrant smuggling, Sudan

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background and the Rationale

The issue of cross-border human trafficking and smuggling of migrants appeared on the global

agenda since 1815 at the Congress of Vienna (Austria), where an international commitment to end forced labor was made in the form of a pledge to eliminate the slave trade (UNHCR, 2006). This was

the first human rights subject dealt with at the international level. Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons usually by force, coercion, or deception for the purpose of exploitation (Gezie *et al.*, 2019). Cross-border migration is related to the broader global socio-economic, political, and technological transformations that are affecting a wide range of high-priority policy issues and our individual lives (IOM, 2019). Modern transportation and communication technologies have made it easier, cheaper, and faster for people to move from one place to another so easily and rapidly. At the same time, conflicts, poverty, income inequality, political intolerance and unemployment and/or underemployment are among the reasons that compel people to leave their homes in search of better livelihoods for themselves and their families (OECD, 2016; Deotti and Elisenda, 2016; Messay and Teferi, 2017; IOM, 2019). Other than conflicts and persecutions, as noted in UNHCR (2015) and OECD (2016), migration and human trafficking from developing countries, particularly Africa, are expected to continue rising because of persisting economic and well-being gaps with developed countries. As a result, the number of international migrants (persons living outside their country of birth) worldwide has continued to grow rapidly over the past 20 years reaching 272 million in 2019, up from 173 million in 2000 (IOM, 2019). The number of refugees and illicit migrants is also increasing. By the end of 2018, for example, refugee numbers mounted up to 25.9 million (IOM, 2019).

Moreover, cross-border migration has multifaceted implications on the status of migrants at a place of destination, which could be taken as both positive and negative outcomes on the demographic, cultural, and socio-economic circumstances of countries (Messay and Teferi, 2017). Similarly, OECD (2016) states that officially authorized cross-border migration holds the potential to improve the lives of migrants and advance welfare in countries of origin provided that appropriate public policies are put in place. There is also empirical evidence that shows the positive microeconomic impacts of migration

through remittance flows (e.g. Gallina, 2006; Deotti and Elisenda, 2016). It contributes to the balance of payments in the sending countries and its importance for individuals in covering expenses for food, education, transportation, clothing, and health care as well as housing construction, buying fixed assets such as plots of land. Betz and Simpson (2013) also argue that legal international migration has no negative impacts on native populations if properly harnessed. The IOM (2019) report corroborates the accounts above in that it accounts for the international remittance of 689 billion USD in 2018. The top three remittance recipients were India, China and Mexico. Similarly, USA was the top remittance-sending country followed by the UAE and Saudi Arabia (IOM, 2019). The contribution of remittance to the Ethiopian economy and the livelihood of low-income households is also enormous (Redehegn *et al.*, 2019; World Bank, 2020).

The problem comes when migration, particularly cross-border migration, is carried out illegally causing great adverse impacts on the migrants, sending households, and the population at the destination. The most critical consequences of illegal cross-border migration, in the current global milieu are related to insecurity, abuse, unsafe working conditions, humiliation and labor abuse (Mohammed, 2016; Messay and Teferi, 2017). Organized crimes in many destination countries seem to confirm this trend (OECD, 2016). Likewise, illegal migration causes an increased unemployment rate to destination countries, especially in the economic stagnation period (Garson and Loizillon, 2013). Moreover, migration of labour from sending households leads to a reduction in agricultural production, potentially threatening the national food security (Redehegn *et al.*, 2019). Other adverse impacts pinpoint to the fact that there is a growing occurrence of flashpoints attributed to anti-immigrants' feelings, which menace the stability, solidarity and integration in the host country. It can also be a cause and consequence of inequality and unequal development as the immigrants sometimes are unable to access, at least temporally, the existing services such as housing in their destinations (Amin, 1995; van Liemt, 2004).

Immigrants are those who enter with the intention to stay, work and live in the host country assuming that the majority of their earnings are obtained in the destination country (UN, 1998; Schaeffer and Mulugeta, 2011). Ethiopia is one of the largest origins, transit, and destination of illicit cross-border migrants in Africa (Messay and Teferi, 2017; Girmachew, 2019; Messay, 2019). International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in their series of reports estimate that hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians arrive in the Middle East every year. According to ILO (2013), the number of trafficked Ethiopian women and children in the Middle East was as large as 130,000. In 2014, about 91,000 migrants arrived Yemen from the Horn of Africa, of which 80 percent were Ethiopians transited through Djibouti. Likewise, it is estimated that the number of Ethiopians traveling to Sudan each year is as large as 100,000, of which most are stepwise migrants and daily laborers (IOM, 2017a). Stepwise migrants are low-capital migrants that can intentionally follow a stepwise trajectory, working their way up a hierarchy of destination countries and accumulating sufficient capital in the process to eventually gain legal entry into their preferred destinations (Paul, 2011). It helps the migrants to mitigate cost barriers and immigration policy restrictions to realize their destination preferences.

Several factors have been instigating Ethiopians to leave their birthplaces and cross international borders illicitly. The factors include, but are not limited to, fast population growth (about 2.6%/year) and the resultant high competition for resources such as farmland, prevalence of poverty, high population fertility rate (total fertility rate of about 4.6), high inflation rate (greater than 10% for most of the recent (Messay and Teferi, 2017). Once recruited by the traffickers, the Ethiopian migrants are subjected to move in one of the major routes to destination areas such as the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Europe, and South Africa. The three main irregular routes are the Eastern Route (through Djibouti or Somaliland to Yemen and then to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries), the Western Route (through Sudan, Libya then Italy); and the Southern Route (takes them to

South Africa after crossing many African countries) south and southeast of Ethiopia (Marchand, *et al.*, 2016). The focus of this research is the migrants of the Western Route. The common characteristic of every irregular route is that the migrants usually face perilous, sometimes lethal, challenges on their way to the destination areas right from their start. The overall objective of the research is to investigate the socioeconomic and human rights status of the stepwise illicit cross-border Ethiopian migrants in Sudan, and to identify key policy frameworks for effective prevention of illegal migration and human trafficking in Ethiopia.

## 1.2 Theoretical Foundation

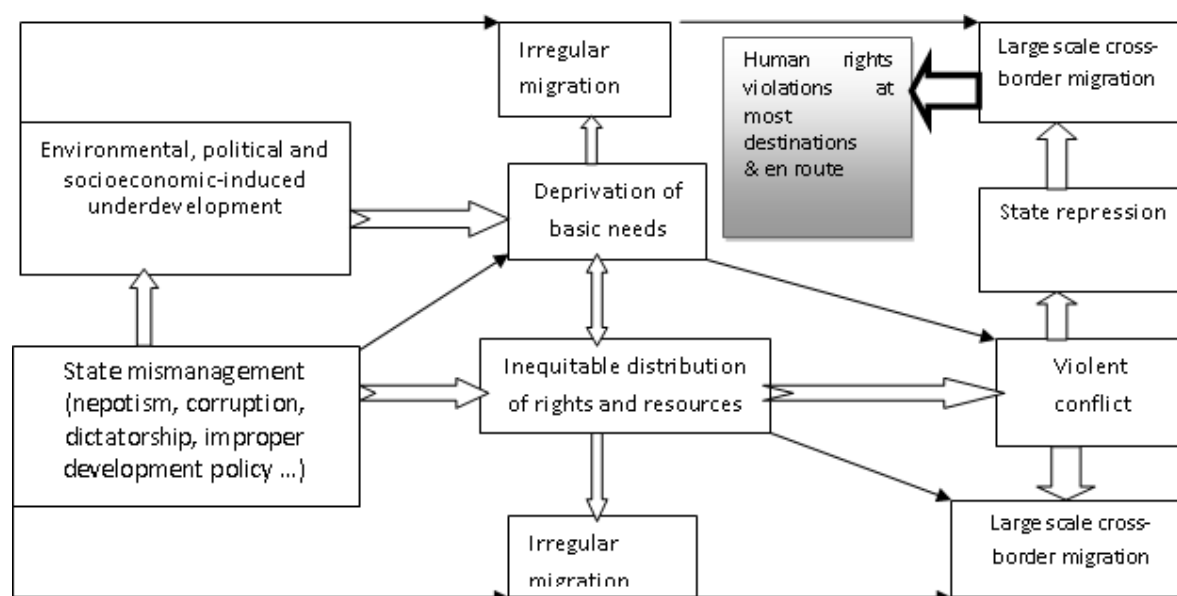
The theoretical foundation of this study is the level-based analysis of migration theories. It is believed that level-based analysis of migration theories, i.e. micro-level, macro-level and meso-level, are useful to better understand the movement of people in a wider perspective. Hence, it is the best fit for Ethiopia, as an origin, destination, and transit of migrants. Micro-level theories consider migration decisions from an individual perspective, whereas the macro-level theories consider migration decisions from the country's economic perspective. In meso-level theories, migration decisions lie in between the two former theories. Family bonds, social networks, per groups and isolated minority communities determine migration decisions (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). Micro theories often draw on rational choice theory, which makes several controversial assumptions about how and why individuals make decisions to migrate (Boswell, 2002; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). It argues how potential migrants weigh up the various costs and benefits of migrating (Boswell, 2002; Jennissen, 2007). Costs could include the financial and psychological resources invested in moving and integrating with the country of destination, while benefits could include a higher salary or physical safety. Micro-level theories encompass the neoclassical migration theory, the push-pull factors, the behavioral models, and the theory of social systems (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). It emphasizes structural and objective conditions that act as push-pull fac-

tors for migration. Some of these factors include non-inclusive development, environmental predicaments, socioeconomic-induced underdevelopment, un/underemployment, low wages, or low per capita income relative to the country of destinations in the Middle East & western countries for Ethiopian migrants (de Haas, 2010; Mohammed, 2016). The government's mismanagement-induced push factors may include, but not limited to, deprivation of basic needs (such as lack of access to education, health-care institutions and credit facilities) nepotism and inequitable distribution of resources/rights. Pull factors would include conducive migration legislation and the labor market situation in receiving countries, such as the Gulf States (Mohammed, 2016). Involuntary displacement would be explained through political factors like civil war and state repression (as the case in Ethiopia between the 1960s to late 2010s) or fear of violence and conflict (Marchand, *et al.*, 2016).

Bosewell (2002) argued that meso-level theories such as Social Capital Theory, Institutional Theory and Network Theory could help explain the fact that migration is assumed to occur within a migration system. The core assumption behind the migration system theory is that migration contributes to change the economic, political, social, institutional, and cultural ties as well as migration flows in both the receiving and sending country (Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016). Good examples are such ties between Ethiopia and Sudan as well as Ethiopia and the Middle East. Geographical proximity, cultural ties, and most recently the presence of road transportation directly from Addis Ababa to Khartoum have made it easier, cheaper, and faster for Ethiopians to easily access superficial information about Khartoum and beyond. According to meso-theories (Bosewell, 2002; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016), the conditions generating movement are understood as the dynamics of relations between two areas, rather than a set of objective indicators. Networks refer to a set of individual and collective actors (actual and potential migrants, their families, overseas employment agents/firms, religious/social groups, traffickers, etc.), and the multiple social and symbolic ties that link them together (Mohammed,

2016). Once formed, networks can substantially influence the direction and volume of migration flows, providing resources that help people to move, such as information, contacts, economic and social support. The resources that flow through networks make migration more attractive and feasible option for other members of a network and can generate what has been termed chain migration: the phenomenon of serial, large-scale migration from one particular area to another defined area (Deotti and Elisenda, 2016). A case in point is youth migration from Ethiopia to the West or to the Middle East or to South Africa. Systems and networks may make places easier to reach or obtain protection or more attractive as destinations than others (Jennissen, 2007; Mohammed, 2016).

Summarizing the relative strengths of these three approaches, one could conclude that macro-theories offer the most insight into the factors initially triggering 'pioneer voluntary migration' and provide the best explanation for forced displacement. Meso-theories are best at explaining the persistence of voluntary migration, and why it occurs from some areas and not others of similar biophysical scenario. They can also help explain the choice of destination for both voluntary migration and forced displacement victims. Finally, micro-theories can help show how the macro and meso factors are translated into individual decisions to move. This typology of theories provides a useful background for explaining international migration and is a good starting point for constructing a general theory of the causes of migration. However, the task here is to examine policy responses that can help mitigate these causes. This requires a rather different sort of typology, based on the possible different levels of intervention. Here it is useful to distinguish between four different types of causal factors: root causes, proximate causes, enabling conditions, and sustaining factors. Looking at the situation of Ethiopian cross-border illicit migration and the challenges therein through these three lenses (macro, meso and micro theories), it seems the interplay of the three theoretical foundations are prevailing. No single theory can adequately describe the Ethiopian situation. It is a bit complex; causes are many and the consequences are harsh (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework explaining the Ethiopian illicit cross-border migration and the challenges therein. (Source: Adopted from Boswell (2002))

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 shows that migration root causes are the underlying structural or systemic conditions, which provide pre-conditions for migration or forced displacement. In terms of the theories discussed above, they are combinations of macro, meso and micro factors such as economic underdevelopment, weak state performances, social fragmentations and intolerable inequalities shaping the interaction between sending and receiving countries. Proximate causes refer to the immediate conditions that trigger movement, which again can be macro, meso or micro: the escalation of violent conflict, individual persecution, the collapse of local livelihoods or ‘new opportunities’ at assumed destination areas. Enabling conditions (such as national migrant-related legislations, border controls, travel possibilities, job opportunities, and existence of relative/s and remittance facilities) render the actual journey, entry and stay in countries of destination. Finally, sustaining factors encourage persistent or chain migration from particular places or countries of origin. These are almost exclusively a function of migration networks. All categories of causes of migration point towards the situation of cross-border Ethiopian migration and imply different types of policy response.

### 1.3 Population movements and illicit out-migration in Ethiopia: A brief literature review in view of the experiences of emigrants in Khartoum

Ethiopia is the cradle of humankind as confirmed by the ancient fossil pieces of evidence at the archaeological sites in the Great Rift Valley areas such as Hadar Paleontological Site in Mille district (Yonas, 2012). It is an ancient original abode of human migration before various parts of the world were occupied. Both short and long migratory movements have been going on for millennia in Ethiopia. The Great Ethnic Migrations occurred starting from the first half of the 16th century to the mid-17th century that involved diverse tribal and ethnic groups of Hadya-Sidama, Oromo, Somali and Afar (Messay and Teferi, 2017; Girmachew, 2019). The Oromo expansive movement somewhere from the southern part of Ethiopia (most probably from the Medda Walabu area in Bale) and its settlement as far as the northern part of Ethiopia was remarkable in Ethiopian history (Bahru, 2002; Shivered, 1986 in Kassahun, 1998). In fact, in this most recent decade, pronounced population movement has been taking place owing to the current political instability, social conflicts and natural disasters in Ethiopia.

Internal population movement accelerated in the early 20th century with the rise of urban centers, expansion of industrial establishments and social services as well as the temporary occupation of the Italian colonial powers (1936–1941). Migration during the Imperial Era (1930–1974) was spontaneous; whereas the post-1974 (the time when the military junta /commonly known as Derg Government/ came to power in Ethiopia) was more predominantly controlled by the state. After the fall of Derg in May 1991, Ethiopia witnessed growth in GDP, fast urban expansion and infrastructure development, which in turn, resulted in huge rural-urban and intra-rural migration of citizens (Weaver, 1988; Messay and Teferi, 2017; Girmachew 2019). On contrary, the appalling regional and individual economic inequality, the harsh political and governance situations, and the grand corruption (mainly between May 1991 and April 2018) in the country pushed millions into poverty, unemployment, conflict and other severe social ills. These, in turn, have caused suffering to the majority of the Ethiopian youth who were forced to escape the overall perils. The only choice for the majority was therefore emigration, whether illicit or authorized. The incident was accelerating until the outbreak of COVID-19, which halted both authorized and illegal outmigration.

The newly emerging rural youth households have been virtually landless owing to almost nonexistence of land distribution in Ethiopia since 1991, which appears to be a big motivation to leave their home (Dessalegn, 2004; Messay, 2012; Redehegnm 2019). Moreover, the present high rural population pressure (greater than 360 persons per square kilometers in some southern areas), land degradation and diminished carrying capacity of the land, together with erratic rainfall conditions (Messay *et al.*, 2017) are vital push factors. The experiences of many of the male Ethiopian emigrant respondents in Khartoum corroborate this fact. ILO (2019) in its World Migration Report 2020 indicates that the great majority of the cross-border migrants are youth owing to lack of adequate job opportunity and placement for graduates. While access to education has increased (from only two state-owned universities in 1991 to

about 50 universities at present, for example) over the past two and half decades, ironically the number of unemployed educated youth has also increased. Evidence shows that many young people rarely have a decent job and often none or limited social protection along with being subjected to poor working conditions (Deotti and Elisenda, 2016). The situation is even worse for women, who cannot find decent work opportunities and are most often concentrated in the insecure informal sectors, because of which they prefer to move abroad in any way possible.

Ethiopia and Sudan share one of the longest non-demarcated borderlines in the world (about 750kms). As a result, there has been a sustained relationship between the peoples of the two countries. Several research findings and reports (such as Weaver, 1988; IOM, 2019) show that a large number of Ethiopians travel to Sudan owing to geographic proximity, historical ties, agricultural activities, daily labor and conflicts. Some also travel to Sudan fleeing government arrests, and environmental disaster risks. For example, during the great African drought/famine of 1984/5 about 300,000 starved farmers and herders moved to Sudan (Weaver, 1988). These facts justify the two concepts discussed in meso theories of migration (i.e. systems and networks) (de Haas, 2010). The two countries are linked by economic, political, and cultural ties as well as long-established migration networks.

## 2 Research Methods

To meet the intended objectives of this research, data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through interviews with illegal stepwise Ethiopian migrants in the Sudan who have been experiencing the perils of trafficking and/or smuggling. Discussions were also made with potential migrants gathering at the gate of the Embassy of the Republic of Sudan (in Addis Ababa) seeking for information, traffickers, and visa. Primary data were also generated from several informants (other than the migrants), who shed light on different facets of the migration process related to illicit cross-border migration and its pitfalls. These

include experts working at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the Ethiopian Embassy in Khartoum. Ethiopian migrant association management team in Khartoum (especially Souq-al-Diem area, the Ethiopian corner in Khartoum), and some relevant NGOs (operating in Addis Ababa) were accessed for data. Other vital data sources were a few domestic worker employers in Khartoum, relevant researchers (working in Addis Ababa University (AAU), University of Khartoum (UoK) and Ahfad University for Women (AUW)), a few returnees from Sudan and other Middle East countries, potential migrants at Metema (Ethiopian border city) who were looking forward to crossing into the Sudan territory, some community members living in Metema, a few Ethiopian employment agents in Addis Ababa, some family members left behind the migrant, Ethiopian public transport bus drivers from Addis Ababa to Khartoum (a distance of over 1,400km) and relevant consultants. Document review was found to be an important source of data for the research to capture the extent, progresses, and challenges related to cross-border migration, human trafficking/smuggling, and the consequences of such movement on the migrants. Several reputable publications and reports were reviewed intensively.

Data analysis and reporting have taken the form of descriptive and narrative analysis techniques. The descriptive technique involved describing key numerical circumstances uncovered from the data focusing on total numbers and averages. The narrative analysis focused on the reformulation of stories presented by each respondent considering the context of each case and the different experiences of each respondent. The narrative analysis goes along with the thoughts of micro migration theories (such as push/pull factors, behavioral models & theory of social system). As noted in Boswell (2002), the micro perspective of migration is an important level of analysis in terms of showing individuals view of the various conditions in migration and how individuals make decisions based on objective factors. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee Approval (ECA) of the Center confirmed the overall ethical matter of the research process for Population Studies of the College of Development Studies,

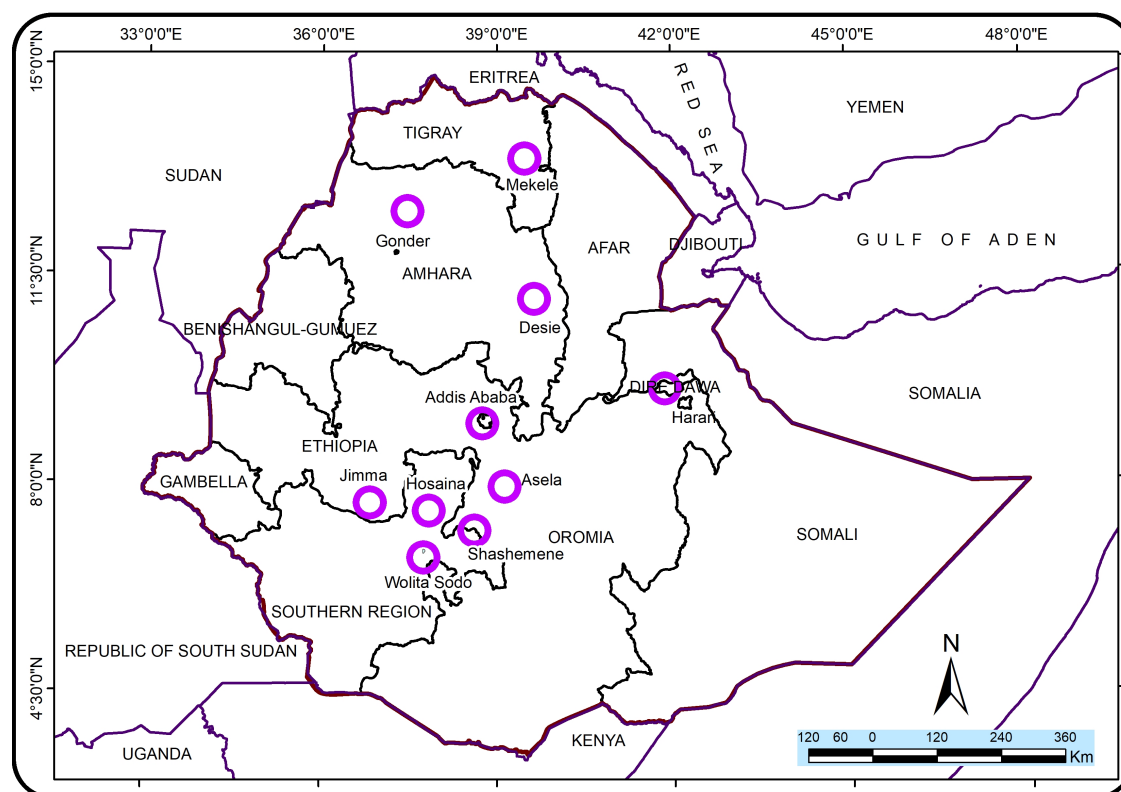
Addis Ababa University.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Major sources of cross-border migrants, recruitment processes and the en routes in view of the experiences of stepwise Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum

The origin of cross-border illicit migrants in Ethiopia are various, mostly urban areas and their environs, including (but not limited to) Addis Ababa, Adama, Assela, Bahir Dar, Dire Dawa, Dessie, Gonder, Hawassa, Hosana, Jimma, Robe, and Shashemene (Figure 2). The majority of the observed and interviewed emigrants in Khartoum are from Addis Ababa, Gonder, Jimma, and Shashamane areas. The reason may be geographic proximity (for Gonder and the environs), religious and cultural ties (for Jimma and Shashamane areas), and access to information and chain migration (for those from the Addis Ababa and surrounding areas).

According to the interviews and discussions held with key informants, major rural migrant source areas in Ethiopia are those characterized by high unemployment and precarious jobs, erratic weather conditions (mainly lowland areas), high population pressure, scarce water resources, and low agricultural productivity. These characteristics can be considered as push factors. The results validate the thoughts indicated in macro migration theories (Boswell, 2002), which emphasize the interplay of push-pull and pull factors for a massive migration to happen. It is hard to mention any non-migrant-sending area in Ethiopia as most areas and quite several rural households are assumed to have sent their members abroad in one way or another. It also concurs with the ideas elucidated in micro theories in that individual decision to migrate and weigh up the various costs and benefits of migration would be vital for Ethiopians to move (Boswell, 2002). Correspondingly, the Ethiopian migrants in Khartoum, have invested quite a lot of financial and emotional resources to move to Khartoum; and in Khartoum, too, in search of higher income and physical safety corresponding to the thoughts of micro migration theories.



**Figure 2.** Major cross-border migrant source areas in Ethiopia

It is observed at the gate of the Embassy of the Republic of Sudan (in Addis Ababa) that quite numerous young Ethiopians from different parts of the country (both urban and rural areas) come to the Embassy either for a visa or to find traffickers for their plan to move to Khartoum as a temporary destination area. Most of them are either teenagers and in their early adulthoods school dropouts or certificate level graduates from junior technical colleges. About six informal discussants for this research, for example, had come to Addis Ababa from Hasandabo (a small town near Jimma city) to assess traffickers who would assist them either in getting passport/visa or who would facilitate their move to Sudan even without passport/visa. Various studies and research reports (For instance, Messay, 2019; Redehegn *et al.*, 2019) indicate that the role of brokers in human trafficking is vital in Addis Ababa. This is not only in facilitating passport/visa based on the informal networking they have established with the officers in some embassies and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Main Department for

Immigration and Nationality Affairs, but also for arranging temporary shelters in Addis Ababa city for the migrants as they are new to the city. In the same way, the informal discussants around the gate of the embassy confirmed that brokers are just approaching them to facilitate everything related to their travel, starting from sheltering in Addis Ababa, passport/visa facilitation, en route to and temporary shelter in Khartoum.

Mistreatment, deception, and abuse are realities at the gate of the embassy itself. It is common to see every morning a large crowd of young people gathered around the gate of the embassy disputing with the security people around. The security persons always command them offensively to go away from the embassy and wait for the working hours. Also, some personnel at the front desk for visa service were not treating them to the standard of customer service. Teasing, annoying, and frustrating the visa seekers (potential migrants) were common, though the staff treat other visa applicants very nicely in a



particular way. Again, there were quite a lot of intermediaries informally orienting the crowd of migrant visa seekers around the gate about visa application processes, fees, and informal alternatives towards Khartoum. Informal discussants of about 10 young people waiting for the opening of the gate to collect their visa confirmed that the embassy staffs at the front desk for visa service are double standard. They easily identify migrants for their lack of experience and accents/dialects and impolitely condemn them for the slightest offense while they treat others far more leniently.

The interviews held with Ethiopian informants in Khartoum and the visa seekers at the Embassy of Sudan in Addis Ababa indicate that there are different agitators and actors in the recruitment and trafficking of illicit cross-border migrants. These include local brokers, returnees, visitors, relatives, friends, and licensed employment agencies. Local brokers are individuals going around at the community level lobbying potential young migrants from communities. These people are vital for the reason that they have key networks with the traffickers (both inside and out of Ethiopia) and entice potential migrants with important information about 'the opportunities' abroad and the processes required for passport/visa application and the en route. They promote their services by using the success stories of a few people they have already sent abroad. They also actively disseminate information about 'employment opportunities' in destination countries. The result is consistent with several related studies conducted in Ethiopia (For instance, ILO, 2011; Messay, 2019; Redehegn, *et al.*, 2019).

The brief story of an interviewee (hairstylist in a Sudanese barbershop) in Khartoum is worth mentioning at this juncture. In the interview, she has given a brief account of her migration starting from the time she met her former teacher (a retiree) in Asella (a zonal city in Central Ethiopia) while she was trying to apply for a vacancy in secretarial service in a government office. Listening to her joblessness challenges for a while, the retired teacher (that time serving as a local broker) instructed her

in detail as to how she would manage to go abroad and get a well-paying job at the destination. In the conclusion of their discussion, she agreed to meet another key person in Addis Ababa, who at the end of the day facilitated her journey by bus to Khartoum through Metema, a border town between Ethiopia and the Sudan. At the time of the interview, she had already lived in Khartoum for about six years without any significant savings in financial terms. She was almost hopeless and prone to low payment, ill-treatment, forced overtime work, and sexual abuse by her employer. Next to the local brokers, come other brokers in Addis Ababa for harboring and transportation. These were what most of the interviewees in Khartoum have experienced. The traffickers in Addis Ababa receive the victims from local brokers and transfer them to other traffickers at the Ethiopia-Sudan border (most likely in Metema town) within their network. On their way, the migrants are prone to ill-treatment, sexual abuse, and assault. From Metema, they are forced to join a group of human traffickers located in Sudan territory. The informal discussions held with the community at Metema indicate that these are contrabandists who know the desert routes very well and have contacts with informal labour brokers and/or other group traffickers in Khartoum. Some research findings and reports also confirm the involvement of local authorities and armies patrolling the desert routes in the trafficking process. Consistently, Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana (2016) indicate that brokers, recruitment agencies, rural agents, smuggling networks, and unstructured institutions heavily influence cross-border migration. For instance, migrants who travel without smugglers are more vulnerable and often face many more problems on their way (Marchand *et al.*, 2016)

The role of returnees in agitating potential migrants and facilitating illicit cross-border migration can't be underestimated. Returnees involve in the situation at various stages of trafficking processes with different capacities (IOM, 2015; Ati, 2017; Redehegn *et al.*, 2019). While some might just facilitate migration for a fee through their contacts in Addis Ababa or the country of destination, others establish

a trafficking network for handling the whole process. Often, these returnees start brokering by helping a sibling, relative, friend or neighbor to migrate and thereby continue the practice as local brokers thereafter. These kinds of traffickers are very common in communities where a 'culture of migration' has emerged. Returnees are also reported to be active and successful recruiters as they are members of the same community and can tell success stories of their own more persuasively. The results support the migration network theories discussed above (Jennissen, 2007; Mohammed, 2016).

The process of trafficking Ethiopians usually ends in the hands of the destination area traffickers. In the case of Khartoum and the surrounding areas, the Ethiopian emigrant informants have given a brief account of the traffickers. The emigrants pointed out that the traffickers make use of the vulnerability, solitariness, and helplessness of the migrants as opportunities for abuse and smuggling. The traffickers purposively put the migrants in a situation of defenselessness through deception, control and intimidation. The discussants indicate that the traffickers have good information about everything around since most of them are either Sudanese or foreigners (mostly Ethiopians, South Sudanese or Somalis) who lived in Sudan quite for a long period. They have strong links with other co-workers in Ethiopia, Libya, and the Middle East. For those migrants who want to continue their journey, the traffickers around Khartoum often transfer them to other groups who are more clued-up about the long journey to Libya through the deserts.

According to a discussion made with experts in the Ethiopian Embassy in Khartoum, there are also Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum who have become traffickers themselves through time. Sometimes, they fund the migrants to travel to Khartoum illicitly or legally. They also have strong links with the chains of brokers and smugglers in Ethiopia and the destination areas. In Khartoum, what they do is, receive new arrival migrants from Ethiopia, supply them with temporary shelter in a large group, place them as domestic workers and/or laborers, and col-

lect their wages directly from the employer. The new arrivals are requested to sign an agreement of at least two years to receive their wages from the hands of the broker, not directly from her employer. In case they have a passport or other official documents, they are required to keep it in the hands of the broker as a security against the agreement. Based on the interest of the migrants, the Ethiopian brokers also transfer the new arrivals to other more experienced traffickers for more journeys abroad. As noted in Ati (2017) and other several pieces of research and reports, the brokers make huge money out of the transfer.

### 3.2 The status of Ethiopian illicit migrants in Sudan

Data related to the number of Ethiopians living in Khartoum is deficient and inconsistent. It is scarcer when it comes to illicit step-wise cross-border migrants due to its inconvenience for a centralized registration system. However, some interviewees at Ethiopian Embassy in Khartoum estimate that tens of thousands of Ethiopians live in Khartoum, temporarily or permanently. Quite several Ethiopians migrate to Sudan every day although the exact number is not known. The rate of migration seems to accelerate every year, according to the informant. The IOM (2019) World Migration Report corroborates the verbal account of the interviewee in that the number of Africans living in different regions is accelerating over the last decades.

The interview result shows that most of the Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum are young, less educated females. They are stepwise migrants planning to move ahead to other countries in Europe or Gulf states. In Khartoum, they are mostly working in low-paying economic activities like housekeeping, babysitting, cleaning, waitress/waiter, factory daily laboring, guards, messengers, *irreksha* driving, shop keeping, beauty salon, bakery, daily laborers in mining industries, cooking in hotels, painting, carpenters. A few of them are low-level professionals in health care & IT sectors. A few of them are also found engaged in their own promising businesses like cafeterias, restaurants, coffee/tea houses, beauty salons, metalwork, and woodwork. An expert at the em-

bassy narrates that human trafficking from Ethiopia to Sudan is increasing over time though the journey is full of challenges including rape, harassment, mass arrest, imprisonment, beating, and sometimes deaths. The living condition of most of them in Khartoum is very harsh. In most cases, they rent a small room and live in very congested and inhuman situations (as large as 18 persons per room). One can imagine how risky their life is during the COVID-19 pandemic period. In this regard, almost all the respondent Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum shared the same view that it is a lack of decent livelihoods and employment opportunities that pushed them out; not because they preferred the existing harsh conditions, mistreatment and nostalgia they are facing throughout the trajectory of illicit migration. These results further support the ideas of push-pull factors for migration (Bosewell, 2002; Mohammed, 2016; Wickramasinghe & Wimalaratana, 2016).

Researchers at the University of Khartoum, Ahfad University for Women, and the experts in the Ethiopian Embassy in Khartoum observed Ethiopians living in Khartoum for more than 40 years without work/residence permit. Particularly these days, it is hard for foreigners to access decent jobs in Sudan as the economy is getting worse owing to the conflicts, the economic sanction by the USA, and the cessation of South Sudan with its oil. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is also complicating the situation. Even for a Sudanese employment opportunity is very rare. Therefore, the coming to Ethiopian undocumented migrants to Sudan is just like adding fuel to the fire. This may be why the Government of Sudan tries to control illicit emigrants, because of which several Ethiopians are confined in Sudanese prisons (though the numerical data is blurred) for the illegal entrance to the country. Even in January 2020, about 100 Ethiopians have been arrested from Khartoum streets according to many interviewees and informal discussants.

### *Life in Souq al-Deim Ethiopian Corner*

Quite many Ethiopian stepwise illicit migrants were interviewed and informally talked to in Khartoum. Most of the interviewees are found in a city corner

known as Souq al-Deim, an unclean and dusty corner where daily laboring and small-scale businesses are carried out. Most of the residents of Souq al-Deim are young females. They came from several areas (both rural and urban) of Ethiopia, the majority being from Gonder, Wollo, Gojjam, Jimma, and Shashamane areas. They identify themselves as coming from poor and uneducated families. The majority had completed the second cycle of primary school, i.e. Grade 8 according to Ethiopian Curriculum. Some of those interviewed had worked in the urban areas previously, while others had migrated from rural areas for the first time. At the time of the interviews, which were held in Souq al-Deim and the cafeteria of the Ethiopian Embassy in Khartoum, most of the young females were engaged in temporary works waiting for traffickers to travel further ahead to the Middle East, Europe or any other better countries such as Egypt. Some are engaged in an arranged fake marriage with Sudanese men who could drop them somewhere in better countries through a tourist visa.

Most Ethiopian migrants in Souq al-Diem are found engaged in small-scale businesses like a barbershop, retailing utilities, street coffee/tea sell, cobblestone carving, metalwork, woodwork, bakery, daily laboring, and many other small informal businesses. A few are found engaged in driving *irreksha* (as locally named, a three-wheeled vehicle mostly used as taxi service). Quite a lot of them are street vendors offering coffee/tea and fast-food services without having a permanently built structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall (or head-load). The street vendors are very much complaining about mistreatment and exploitation by the police officers in the area. The fact that most of them have only temporary work and residence permit (known as *e-qaamaa* or *butaaqaa* /Temporary Central Registration Card/) has exposed most of them to mistreatments and exploitations by the local police.

The migrants are required to have *e-qaamaa* to engage in the mentioned small informal businesses. To get *e-qaamaa* is not simple. First, one should pay for *e-qaamaa* about 15,000SDP (about 330 USD) for

medical scrutiny, fingerprinting and other services. *E-qaamaa* service must be renewed every 3 months. It is found to be a great challenge to pay the said money and get/renew the registration card. One of the migrant interviewees said that it was almost impossible for her to pay this amount of cash because of which she was forced to engage shortly in 'idiot jobs' to collect money. The 'idiot jobs' she said include sex work. This shows that some migrants engage in businesses that they don't want to do just to get relieved from temporary financial challenges until the traffickers find them ways to move further ahead to their preferable destination areas such as the Gulf countries or Europe.

### ***Mistreatment, exploitation and discrimination***

The migrant community complains that mistreatment/harassment and exploitation exist even in the presence of *e-qaamaa*. Some police officers frequently come to their working places for bribery and fraud. They influence particularly the female migrants to give them money or some other unethical and illegal incentives (such as forced sexual intercourse) for any ordinary unintentional mistakes like misuse of a dustbin, *e-qaamaa* renewal overdue, and false accusation of prostitution. One of the female key informants indicated that she suffered frequent false accusations by police officers in case of unwillingness to pay them a bribe or sexual relations. She remembers a police officer's untrue allegation of wrongdoing and imprisonment 6 times within a few months in 2019 alone. She was required to pay the police station 2,000 SDP (about 40 USD) to be released for each case. In total, she faced 20 times imprisonment cases since she arrived in Khartoum some ten years ago. Moreover, she faced frequent robbery. More dangerously, she escaped many rapes attempts by gangsters and even by a police officer. A study conducted on human trafficking among Ethiopian returnees reported similar findings (Gezie et al., 2019).

Mistreatment and exploitation challenges are not only the cases happening to female migrants, but the male interviewees had also reported having faced almost similar challenges as females do. A case in

point is a 27-year-old key informant interviewee who has sadly narrated his experiences in this case. He has a small shabby barbershop in Souq al-Diem area. Only because he is a migrant and has no permanent residence and work permit (other than *e-qaamaa*) he faces several exploitations and verbal abuses, if not physical abuse. Bribery and illegal requests by some police staff for free service (haircut, facial massage, etc.) are quite frequent, for which he cannot say no in fear of severer abuses and ill-treatment. His plan to join his brother in Saudi Arabia failed two times because of a lack of money to pay the traffickers at the Sudan-Libya border. In his second attempt in 2016, he was arrested and imprisoned for about 18 months in a single room with a poor sanitation facility, little food/water supply, and no facility to sleep and bath. His attempts to go back to Ethiopia also failed because of many factors: no passport/visa, no adequate startup money to establish his livelihoods in Ethiopia, and fear of criticisms/mockings from his relatives and friends 'for coming back empty-handed'.

The professionals interviewed at Ahfad University for Women (AUW) and the University of Khartoum (UoK) also agree that they have observed harassment of various types happening to Ethiopian migrants in Sudan. They agree that 'the migrants are abused en route and here in temporary destination area'. The maltreatment is even severer in their journeys from Sudan to other destination areas through Libya and Egypt. One of the professional respondents at the Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity, Peace and Rights (RIGDPR) of AUW disappointingly narrated that:

*'... though RIGDPR is working to create a society where women and men are viewed and treated equally and are truly respected regardless of their sex, ethnicity, socioeconomic and political variations, the cruelty that cross-border migrants are facing in Sudan and Libya is heartrending'. The institute planned to create conditions to which all live in peace, dignity and their rights are protected and respected in a society free from all forms of abuse and violations. It is causing more intense distress when the ill-treatment and exploitation are coming from the*

*government security staff like what some police officers are applying to the Ethiopian poor emigrants struggling for bare livelihoods in Souq al-Diem area. . . '.*

A professional key informant interview at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology (DSSA), Faculty of Economic and Social Studies of the University of Khartoum enlisted the harassment happening to the Ethiopian emigrants at their workplaces. These include verbal harassment, sexual harassment by some policers, bribes to the policy officers only because they have no documents to stay in Khartoum or for their informal street business, false accusations of Ethiopians and Eritreans for sex works. The informant at DSSA said, 'sometimes a few women are truly found engaged in sex works, which is strictly forbidden and considered to be a severe crime case in Sudan. I think this is just to collect money that they may pay to the traffickers on their further en route to other destination areas. This may be due to most governments considering undocumented (illegal) immigrants (those who enter or stay without legal documents and permission) as burdens and sources of crimes as compared to documented (legal) immigrants (Schaeffer and Mulugeta, 2011).

It is found that some Ethiopian immigrants in Khartoum are temporarily employed as domestic workers waiting for the traffickers' call for further travel ahead across Libya or Egypt. During the interviews, a Christmas Concert was organized by the Ethiopian Diaspora Community in Khartoum. Fortunately, several domestic workers came to attend the Concert, and they had to pay 200 SDP (about 4 USD) as an entrance fee. The attendees were estimated to be about 500 people. Almost all of them were young Ethiopians, and a few Eritreans and Sudanese. It is so emotional that most of them were busy greeting and chatting more importantly than watching and dancing. They look like suffering from homesickness. The number of middle-aged persons is very small. About 70% were females. Among the concert attendees, six female shared their time for the interview. They emotionally narrated that they suffered a lot both en route and in Khartoum. In their domestic works, they were suffering forced overtime,

lack of rest periods, and severe limits on communication and freedom of movement. They indicated that they were prevented from leaving by various forms of penalty and threats, including retention of passports, and withholding of wages. They experienced psychological, physical, and sexual violence. These all are in opposition to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2002) that declares effective action to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children in the countries of origin, transit and destination that includes measures to prevent such trafficking, to punish the traffickers, and to protect the victims of such trafficking, including by protecting their internationally recognized human rights. It is also against the Principles of Human Rights: autonomy, dignity, equality, fairness, and respect.

The experience of a key informant, currently serving as a waitress at the Ethiopian Embassy in Khartoum, is also striking. She was born to a well-off family in Addis Ababa, specifically around Desalegn Hotel. She is about 35-year-old. She went to Sudan some 5 years ago under the assistance of a smuggler whom she paid 16,000 ETB (about 500 USD at the current exchange rate). She strongly believes and regrets that a trafficker who was lobbying her to go to Khartoum and then to Europe within a few weeks deceived her. She recalls that she crossed the Ethiopia-Sudan border with hundreds of other young migrants with whom she suffered a lot with thirst, hunger, exhaustion, ill-treatment, and the heat in the desert. She was beaten and raped in Metema (a border town in Ethiopia) and Gedarif (a small border town in Sudan) where she was harbored by the traffickers to escape the border surveillance staff. Her many attempts to move to Europe failed because of a lack of money (far more than what they promised in Addis Ababa) that the traffickers were asking. She is very much regretting not being married and giving birth, not saving, and losing her beauty to the 'Sudanese uncomfortable environment', as she put it. She perceives that she wasted half of her life for nothing. Still, she does not want to go back home. Surprisingly, she still wants to go to Europe or any Gulf country by whatsoever means.

### ***Mass arrest***

The results of this study further revealed the mass arrest of Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum. Some of them were arrested because they did not have *E-qaamaa* or *butaaqaa* while some were arrested only because they are foreigners. They were taken to a very chilly place called Hudaa Omdurman Prison (far from the city of Khartoum). According to the informants, the arrestees were tortured and robbed. They were asked to pay 50,000.00 to 100,000.00 SDP (about 990 to 1,980 USD) as a penalty for their 'wrongdoings'. Two major problems emerged here: for one thing, they did not have the money to pay & in case they manage to pay it, there is no guarantee for them not to be arrested repeatedly. However, Ethiopian Embassy in Khartoum is trying to help the migrants to its level best in collaboration with other organizations such as IOM. It encourages the emigrants in many ways to go back home. It facilitates their release from prisons, to get an exit visa, and to be exempted from penalties. As a good example, the embassy sent about 104 victims (by Ethiopian Government budget) to Ethiopia on 04 January 2020). IOM is also trying to support the migrants in any way possible but still, it has no adequate budget for Ethiopians. More interestingly, the Embassy has built a Safe House in its compound where illegally trafficked persons stay for a while and then are deported to Ethiopia via bus or airline, with the support of the Ethiopian Government and IOM.

In general, irrespective of whether they came in legally or illicitly, the majority of the interviewed and observed Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum found themselves in degrading working and living situations to survive. They faced various forms of ill-treatment and exploitation revealed in the interviews and observation. To mitigate such harm and cruelty among neighboring people (though not the stand of the government and the majority of the people), the key informant interview at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology of the University of Khartoum recommends a series of dialogue among the IGAD Countries as to how they can introduce common favorable policies to manage illicit cross-border migration. There shall be a common

conduce ground legal framework on how to deal with emigrants, whether they are legal or illegal. Moreover, the governments of IGAD are recommended to be aware of their respective people as to how they understand each other, respect diversity, and avoid stereotypes.

### **3.3 The danger of further moving ahead to other destinations from Khartoum**

#### ***Options to travel further ahead and the dangers therein***

The stepwise Ethiopia emigrants try to apply different techniques to further travel to Libya, Egypt, Europe, the Gulf States USA, and Canada. The safest way out for women is to arrange a false marriage to a Sudanese or any well-off man who can arrange a tourist visa for them and himself. This is a marriage of convenience entered into without intending to create a real marital relationship. Pieces of literature show that this marriage type is common in other countries usually gaining an immigration advantage from the marriage. With this marriage arrangement, an emigrant Ethiopian woman in Khartoum is required to pay her 'fake husband' 20,000 SDP (about 400 USD). She is also expected to cover all official expenses to get a marriage certificate, transportation cost, short-time accommodation expenses in a destination country, and all other unforeseen expenses. The 'fake husband' is responsible to apply for a tourist visa and move his 'fake wife' to accompany and drop her in any preferable country in Europe or the Middle East. Regarding the 'false marriage', one of the interviewees, a street tea/coffee vendor in Omdurman Sub-city around the main campus of the Ahfand University for Women, narrated that she entered into a 'false marriage' to a Sudanese man in December 2019. She paid him 20,000 SDP (about 400 USD) for the favor. Her target was to join any refugee camp in Europe after she would move to Spain through a tourist visa accompanying her 'fake husband'. She indicated that she had to pay lots of money to the negotiator between her and the man in addition to the costs she was expected to pay for visa, transportation, and accommodation at the destination city in Europe.

Another option to further move ahead for Ethiopian emigrants in Khartoum is by using international smuggling networks, with full of tremendous risks. Hundreds and possibly thousands of refugees have been kidnapped and sold to traffickers in the deserts such as Egypt's Sinai Peninsula in this option. As noted by Ati (2017), usually, the migrants have been held and tortured until their relatives can raise thousands of dollars in ransom money. International organizations, such as the Human Rights Watch, usually accuse security authorities in Sudan and Egypt of ignoring this violent trade in human beings and, in some cases, even colluding with traffickers. They smuggle their captives to the Suez Canal, where they sell them to Sinai Bedouins, who then transport them across the Sinai Peninsula to 'torture camps where their final 'owners' collect enormous ransoms' (Connell, 2013 cited in Ati, 2017). Surprisingly, the ransoms demanded are over 40,000 USD (a sky-high amount for poor Ethiopian families). What is very astonishing here is the fact that most interviewed women were ready to use the international smuggling networks to travel to their planned destination though they have quite adequate information about the severe challenges en route.

Similarly, the Ethiopia Country Statement by Expertise France, AMMI & RMMS (2017: 1) indicates that human trafficking in East Africa (including Sudan and Ethiopia) takes place within the context of migrant smuggling networks and also independently of the network:

*'Ethiopian migrants transiting through Sudan, Libya and Yemen, usually find themselves vulnerable to groups that specialized in kidnap for ransom, extortion, debt bondage, sex-trafficking and forced labour. Similarly, some Ethiopians, who seek the services of overseas employment agencies to facilitate labour migration to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, become victims of human trafficking when they reach their destination'.*

The experience of an interviewee working as a waiter in a hotel in Khartoum is worth mentioning regarding the international smuggling networks as a means to

travel abroad, and the perils therein. Since childhood, this specific interviewee had dreamed of becoming a captain. As a result, he joined the former Ethiopian Naval Training Center (NTC) in Asmara and graduated in 1983/4. He served the naval force for about 7 years until he 'betrayed' the naval force and escaped to Sudan in 1990. He planned to travel to Europe or the USA through Libya. After staying for a while in Sudan, he attempted to enter Europe through Libya. However, his plan was aborted when the lorry, in which he was being smuggled, along with many others, attracted the attention of the Libyan police force near Tripoli. He was imprisoned for about 18 months starting from the time the lorry he was smuggled in was intercepted. He recalls that he traveled thousands of kilometers by truck for about 12 days through a horrible desert. A bottle cap of water with small bread was served only in the morning and evening. After 18 months of ruthless and horrible imprisonment in Libya, he was deported to Ethiopia with the help of IOM. Surprisingly, he again moved to Khartoum by bus after a brief stay with his mother in Addis Ababa. He is 58-year-old, not married, no child. He very much regretted his earlier decisions.

Another option to leave Khartoum is to be registered at the UN Refugee Agency (UNRA) and/or International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) as a stateless person. 'This is very procedural, a rare occurrence, the most preferred and safest,' said most interviewees. They either hide/avoid their Ethiopian citizenship or submit fake documents (sometimes may be true) as if they are fleeing the 'harsh political situations' in Ethiopia while the real factors may be different. The major target here is to move to a developed country under the assistance of IFRC or UNRA. A challenge here is that after they registered as stateless, some may face difficulties in accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement in the city. Often, they are not allowed to go to school, see a doctor, get a job, open a bank account, buy a house or even get married officially. Without these things, no doubt, they can face lifetime obstacles and disappointment. This is against Article 6 of the UNODC (2004)'s 'Protocol to Pre-

vent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime' which urges Each State Party the 'the provision of medical, psychological and material assistance; and employment, educational and training opportunities'.

Like the two other cases, the experience of an interview working as a driver... of what important for this research. He was born around Shashamane town (a potential for good agricultural and business area in central Ethiopia) and went to Sudan 8 years before. He recalled his life in Ethiopia was just hand to mouth because of which he left his wife and three children behind and left to Sudan for a better job opportunity. As soon as he arrived, he joined a refugee camp seeking political asylum. After working as a daily laborer and a waiter for a few years, he managed to buy *irreksha* (in his Sudanese friend's name) and started a short-distance transportation service business in Khartoum. His daily income was about 1,000 SDP (about 20 USD). Again, he very proudly and happily expressed that he heard the good news that his application to move to Australia as a stateless refugee was accepted. Then, he would be moving to Australia within six months from January 2020. He was dreaming that he would soon start a new life with his wife and children in Australia. He wished to see his children attending better school, and support his brothers, too. Similar findings were reported by Paul (2011) in his conducted on Filipino migrants.

### ***Immigrants and a crossroad?***

The results show that the life of most illicit emigrants is encircled in harsh challenges. It is challenging them to continue living in Khartoum because of their illicit entrance and the resultant vulnerability to abuse, ill-treatment, bribery, and lack of access to necessary services such as education, healthcare, and banking. It is also clear that proceeding to their targeted final destinations by using international smuggling networks may also result in tremendous risks. Consistently, reports of several organizations and research findings indicate that countless cross-border migrants who attempted the international smuggling

networks were endangered. It is also briefly discussed that the 'false marriage' arrangement to proceed to the dreamed destination area is costly, immoral, unreliable and insecure. Another option for many emigrants who are in a vulnerable situation may be coming back home by the support of the Ethiopian Government and/or any concerned organizations and think of livelihoods strategies at home or trying more secure and legal way of looking for job opportunities abroad if migration is inevitable and of great interest. A few of the interviewed Ethiopian immigrants in Khartoum wish to go back home. These are only those who had saved some amount of money, who have relatively well-off close family in Ethiopia, and those who did not own relatively secure businesses and not earning better income in Khartoum.

Saving (if there is any) is almost impossible as most of them were not entitled to access bank services in Khartoum, either to save money or remit through bank system, owing to lack of official Identification Card or residence permit in Sudan. Sometimes, they remit the money through an informal value/money transfer system (IVTS), usually in the hands of individuals who legally move from Khartoum to Ethiopia, paying higher commissions to the carrier than formal banking systems do. Informal money transit is risky in that sometimes the carrier may deny/cheat or ask quite a lot of commission for the service they rendered. Another key challenge related to saving money at home is the misuse/cheating of the money by their close families at home. A case in point is the story of an interviewee who left Ethiopia 12-years ago and engaged in a street coffee/tea business in Omdurman sub-city (lying on the western banks of the River Nile opposite to the city center of the capital). She indicated that she paid a 10,000 SDP (about 200 USD) commission for the informal money carrier to remit 50,000 SDP (about 1,000 USD) for the expenses of her father's 40th Day Memorial Service Ceremony for the dead (traditionally known as *tiskar* in her birthplace, Maksegnit in Gonder). Her attempt to remit 350,000 ETB (about 11,000 USD) to



her uncle living in Addis Ababa for her saving is unsuccessful as the person misused/consumed the money disloyally. Disloyalty and misuse of their close family for the money they are remitting for their saving is one of the severe challenges for quite a number of the interviewed Ethiopian immigrants in Khartoum.

### **3.4 The shared responsibilities and attempts of addressing illicit cross-border migration by Ethiopia and Sudan**

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), every country in the world is affected by the crimes of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. As a result, UNODC put in place the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto (UNODC, 2004) urging 'Each State Party shall adopt such legislative and other measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offenses, when [trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of migrants] committed intentionally'. However, the major challenges for most countries are the capacity to identify the criminals and assist the victims, many of whom endure unimaginable hardships in their bid for a better life. The UNODC (2004)'s Protocol further urges Each State Parties to take actions and cooperate in areas of protection of victims of trafficking in persons, keeping up the status of victims of trafficking in persons in receiving States, prevention of trafficking in persons, exchanging information exchange, training and border measures. In the same way, in addition to what has been mentioned, UNODC (2004)'s Protocol recommends each state party to cooperate in criminalization and liability of cross-border migrant smugglers, prevention of smuggling of migrants, and returning of smuggled migrants.

Ethiopia and Sudan are expected to work together and/or indecently in common to combat the existing risks related to trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. Though the reality on the ground is still frustrating, as indicated in Ati (2017:3) and IOM (2015), the Sudan government has already started positive steps to fight human smuggling and trafficking. Some of the measures in this regard

include signing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; hosting the UN Conference for Transitional Organized Crimes that covered human trafficking in 2005; issuing the first anti-trafficking law in the country in 2010 at Kassala State; and enacting a law against illegal immigration and human trafficking in 2013 in Gedarif State. The Sudan government decided in September 2013 to issue work permits to approximately 30,000 refugees in Kassala State, which reduces the refugees' vulnerability to exploitation, forced labor, and trafficking. It also signed the Joint Strategy with UNHCR and IOM to address human trafficking, kidnapping, and the smuggling of persons in Sudan in December 2013. Sudan initiated prosecutions in over 25 suspected human trafficking crimes in Khartoum and Kassala states; and established in 2013 the 'Rapid Emergency Taskforce and Response Unit' to deal with trafficking crimes in eastern Sudan; Likewise, Sudan established a national committee to combat child trafficking and illegal immigration and initiated an anti-trafficking section within the Sudanese Working Abroad Secretariat (SWAS) (Ministry of Labor) to repatriate abused workers from the Middle East, mainly female domestic workers and boys who were used as hajan camel racing riders. The country ceased its public denial of the existence of human trafficking in Sudan and acknowledged the scope and extent of the country's human trafficking problem. In addition, the Sudanese Government endorsed a Joint Partners Strategy with the UN and IOM to address trafficking and smuggling (2015-2017) that increased its capacity resulting in greater numbers of trafficking victims rescued and assisted. Sudan is engaging in greater levels of engagement on training and workshops with partners to strengthen and build capacity to fight against human trafficking and smuggling.

Similarly, the role of Ethiopia is immense in combating irregular migration and the human suffering herein. This is because Ethiopia is a source, transit, and destination country for irregular migration within Africa, as well as to the Middle East and Europe (Marchand *et al.*, 2016; Expertise France, AMMi and RMMS, 2017). The government of

Ethiopia has undertaken several measures to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking in East Africa in general and in its territory in particular. First, Ethiopia enacted Refugees Proclamation No 1110/2019 to be applied without discrimination based on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, political opinion, or other similar grounds. Second, in 2018, the Ethiopian government lifted the ban on overseas migration. The new legislation aimed at protecting its citizens from ill-treatment by establishing regulations for recruitment agencies, minimum age requirements, a minimum level of education, and training for migrant workers before departure. Third, Ethiopia has ratified International Treaties relating to refugees and made an integral part of the law of the land. These include The Geneva Refugee Convention (1951), the New York Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967), The Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problems in Africa (1969), United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This has helped Ethiopia to control, hunt, and bring to justice human traffickers and smugglers. Fourth, Ethiopia is assisting in the interception of individuals vulnerable to trafficking and convicting an increased number of traffickers; overseas recruitment agencies, and amplified awareness across the country on trafficking and trafficking-related crimes through its community dialogue program. There are also some efforts by the government and partners to strengthen the capacity to collect, share and manage information better, but the gap remains big. Fifth, Ethiopia enacted Proclamation No. 909/2015 to 'Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants; and National Coordination Mechanism has been re-established by Proclamation No 909/2015.

According to the data obtained from OEWD of MoLSA, Ethiopia has also signed bilateral labour agreements with four Middle East destinations for Ethiopian workers, namely Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Jordan. The issue of labour agreement is under discussion with many other courtiers in Africa, Middle East, Europe, and East Asia. Specific to Su-

dan, the target is to protect seasonal labourers who travel to Sudan as daily laborers in the agriculture and construction sectors. This creates a viable legal framework for the protection and safety of workers. The country established National Anti-Trafficking Council and Taskforce to address trafficking at national, regional, zonal, and district levels with a focus on prevention, prosecution, and protection. Similarly, foreign policy reform is one of the most acclaimed improvements in current Ethiopia under the leadership of HE PM Dr. Abiy Ahmed. The official visits, discussions, and agreements with all neighboring East African and Arabian countries as well as an end to the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict have great contributions to peacebuilding and stability of the region, which in turn, helps greatly in combating the existing human trafficking and smuggling in the area. Ethiopia is always keen to withdraw its stranded illicit migrants in other countries such as Djibouti, Libya, Mozambique, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, UAE, and Yemen with the support of IOM, the governments, and other organizations. One excellent example is the repatriation of hundreds of Ethiopian citizens working in Lebanon who are stranded because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Above all, Ethiopia is currently working hard to transform its economy and democratic leadership to create a conducive socioeconomic and political environment where every citizen works freely, develops/grows, avoids illicit cross-border migration and transforms his/her life within the territory. With this, citizens will travel abroad only legally in case of inevitable situations like the availability of more paying job opportunities and training.

Ethiopia and Sudan have still, even more, to do to adequately combat the perils of human trafficking and smuggling in persons in their territory. Hitherto, the lack of proper border demarcation between the two countries is a cause for frequent disputes among local people resulting in population displacement, injuries, and weak border surveillance in the area. As noted in Ati (2017), Sudan's reporting of investigations, prosecutions, or convictions related to human trafficking is not adequate. There is also a lack of adoption of proper/practical measures to combat traf-

ficking, which has resulted in new forms of trafficking arising within the country. Similarly, there is a gap in proactively identifying victims among vulnerable populations and in the process of transferring victims to organizations and institutions providing care. Consistently, the US Department of State in its report on Trafficking in Person (2019) mentioned Ethiopia as not being fully in line with the minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking and smuggling, but it is making momentous efforts. According to the report, Ethiopia has not sufficiently addressed internal trafficking, including child sex trafficking, and lacked standard procedures for front-line responders to proactively identify trafficking victims among vulnerable migrants. Similarly, the provision of sufficient victim services to male victims has not yet started. Besides, Ethiopia's internal civil unrest in some border areas of the country's regional states has generated millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs), which in turn, may fire up the existing cross-border out-migration leading to further human trafficking and smuggling. Regarding IDPs in Ethiopia, IOM (2019) indicated the existence of 2.9 million new conflict-induced displacements in Ethiopia in 2018, the largest number globally. Moreover, there were more than 290,000 new disaster-induced displacements in Ethiopia. The gaps shown under this sub-title strongly justify the fact that Ethiopia and Sudan have something great to do in common to combat the existing severe trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in their territory.

Given the UNODC (2008)'s framework for action, the major motivation for illicit out-migration from Ethiopia is inadequate enforcement of Labour standards, absence of bilateral labour agreement with major employing Middle East countries, and the assumed 'better income in some destination countries than the case in Ethiopia'. The fact that Ethiopia and destination countries tolerate restriction of freedom of movement, long working hours, poor, inadequate health and safety measures, substandard wages, and housing provisions is highly contributing to the expansion of human trafficking and smuggling. Another factor that contributes to the proliferation of

trafficking in view of the framework is the absence of Labour inspection and monitoring in countries of destination. This situation is especially true in already marginalized sectors such as cattle/camel herding and domestic services. The data obtained from interviews with PEALT and related pieces of literature show that the government of Ethiopia is doing its level best to protect the rights and well-being of Ethiopian migrants in destination areas. The activities include awareness creation on human trafficking, licensing and monitoring foreign employment agents, patrolling borderlines, and transporting Ethiopian victims from risky areas. The government has been organizing a series of repatriation schemes from Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and the other Gulf States. The beneficiaries of the programs have been those who were unable to continue to support themselves or fund their travel home, the migrants were left helpless.

There is no comprehensive victim-sensitive compensation mechanism for the victimized migrants in each destination country that could be solved through the ongoing bilateral agreements between Ethiopia and the countries. The statements of the PEALT interviewee indicate that a well-balanced bilateral agreement ensures not only to adequately redress the problem but also to avoid secondary victimization, in which the migrants are treated as criminals not as victims, risk detention and deportation if the employer notifies police that the worker has absconded. The problem is multidimensional that even where justice is about to be served, they cannot explain what happened to them to police and service providers due to the language barrier. There is also an attempt of providing the returnee victims with comprehensive and immediate services for the injuries and trauma they survived. To prevent the exploitation of Ethiopian migrant job seekers, MoLSA has introduced requirements for migrant workers to produce foreign employment contracts by which they verify employers' compliance with national law. Although this measure regulates Labour migration, it does not hinder trafficking and even exploitation. Concerning this, some returnee interviewees stated that they were forced to sign modified contracts other than

what they did in Addis Ababa upon their arrival in destination countries.

Furthermore, Ethiopia entered into a labour agreement with some major destination countries to protect the rights of its migrant workers in the countries. According to an interview made with an expert in PEALT of MoLSA, Ethiopia has concluded a visa abolition agreement with Kenya. Likewise, the FDRE Diaspora Policy was launched in 2013 (MoFA, 2013) to guide the country's diaspora affairs and in particular to maximize the economic potential and skills of the Ethiopian Diaspora for national development. The policy promotes diaspora engagement and participation in investment, trade, and tourism, and thus encourages foreign currency inflow as well as knowledge and technology transfer. Concerning this, the interviewed Ethiopian Diaspora Community leaders in Khartoum are complaining about the remoteness of residence permit (against the convention) and the absence of Ethiopian banking service in Khartoum (unlike the cases in Djibouti and Juba) hindering them to access bank services for saving and remittance. The community leaders recommend the state-owned Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) to open its branch in Khartoum (like its attempts in Washington, D.C, and Dubai) where hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians live either permanently or temporarily as step-migrants. Mostly, the most interviewed and observed Ethiopian illicit emigrants in Khartoum are suffering abuses against related conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### 4 Conclusion and Recommendations

This research realized that cross-border human trafficking and smuggling of migrants in Ethiopia and Sudan are pervasive; the causes are varied and multifaceted; the stakeholders are numerous, and the consequences are severe and diverse. In Ethiopia, almost every corner of the country (both urban and rural) has been affected by the perils of illicit cross-border migration and human trafficking. Ethiopian youth are migrating out mainly through three routes where the western route to Sudan was specifically

investigated in this research. Most Ethiopian immigrants' situations in Khartoum were found to be unfortunate in every aspect from the time they decided to illicitly travel. The target of most of them is a failure. Their intentions to go ahead with the remaining long journey to 'better destination areas' through the deserts of Sudan and Libya are full of perils; while continuing living in Khartoum is non-paying, wasteful, and unsafe. Similarly, returning home after all the futile difficulties that they faced en route and at the destination is considered as poignant and disgraceful for most of them. However, the only safest option for them seems to go back home with courage and start a new livelihood system integrating the experiences and skills they gained from the perils of migration. The results of the study imply the urgency and importance of addressing the root causes of migration in general and irregular migration in particular in Ethiopia.

Pertinent to the complexities of cross-border human trafficking from Ethiopia to Sudan and beyond, the remedies could be multidimensional. To address the existing embarrassing situations, inclusive development interventions, enhanced agricultural production systems, rule of law, proper job creation strategies, and improved awareness creation approaches are recommended. The provision of loans and revolving funds with strict follow-up on projects that are carried out by the youth has to be given attention by concerned government sectors such as Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency (FJCFS). It is exigent and vital for the government to enhance good governance and develop a democratic culture and political tolerance to curb the prevalence of ethno-political challenges. It looks like a critical time for the government, CSOs, NGOs, researchers, religious organizations, community leaders, and political parties to indoctrinate Ethiopian youth to look for opportunities at home in place of planning for a risky unlawful migration business. Moreover, Ethiopia should put in place continuous awareness creation campaigns on the risks of illicit outmigration to fight human trafficking and illegal cross-border movement through the media, formal and informal education, religious institutions and teachings, and other means

necessary.

Moreover, cross-border co-operation should be enhanced between Ethiopia and Sudan on issues like harmonization of border control procedures and joint patrols and bilateral exchange of information related to human trafficking and smuggling, including proper demarcation of borderlines. Likewise, although fragmented elements of migration policy do exist in different proclamations and policies, Ethiopia does not have a concerted policy framework on migration. Therefore, a comprehensive national migration policy is recommended to be in place. In the same way, the passport and visa procedures in Ethiopia should also be modernized, decentralized, and accessible at least at all regional towns. This could help reduce the predicaments of securing a passport and of resorting to illegal channels. It is quite clear that reducing human trafficking through the promotion of safe migration may have positive outcomes for both migrant-sending families and the migrants themselves. Similarly, it is essential to work towards supporting the potential migrants to acquire all the necessary skills and knowledge for the success of the intended employment opportunity abroad. Bilateral agreements between Ethiopia and Sudan as regards to enhancing co-operation against human trafficking and constant monitoring of the implementation of the agreement would be a sensible mechanism to ensure the protection of Labour migrants.

Concerning rehabilitating the victimized emigrants in Khartoum, the Government of Sudan should be abided by the Palermo Protocol (UNODC, 2004) so that the Ethiopian immigrants in Khartoum would be protected, respected, supported, and will have access to basic services such as health, education, banking, shelter, and livelihood mechanism. In addition, the Ethiopian Government should establish adequate rehabilitation centers and raise funds that could be used to assist the distressed returnees. Comprehensive and immediate services such as temporary shelter, medical and psychosocial care, legal aid, food, clothing, and reintegration schemes are vital for the victims. Particular attention should be given to the specific

needs of women, children, and elderly victims. The government, NGOs, and CSOs can play key roles in establishing rehabilitation centers where victimized returnees could recover from the ill-treatment and trauma they encountered in Khartoum and the en-route. At the centers, they could be re-educated and socialized to better adapt themselves to their previous socioeconomic environment.

As regards prosecution, effective prosecution of human trafficking calls for more works and concerted efforts of the community, the victims, the police, the administrative and legal authorities, and other relevant bodies. In this regard, it seems very highly important to have different institutions mandated to collect, share and manage information about trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants from Ethiopia to Khartoum and beyond, and a centralized body to manage, analyze and share the data meant for prevention of the perils and investigation and persecution processes of the traffickers and smugglers. In conclusion, we recommend the enhanced dialogue between the governments of Ethiopia and Sudan as to how they would prevent the perils of illicit cross-border migration and avoid 'stereotypes' among the neighboring peoples. Moreover, increased cooperation and exchange of best practices between the two countries on counter-trafficking efforts and strengthening cross-border patrols to end border encroachments is vital. Furthermore, the launching of a branch of Ethiopian bank in Khartoum to serve the immigrants to remit money and/or access other banking services is very essential.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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