



Advancing Alternative Migration Governance



Aspirations, Decision Making and Networks of Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia

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List of acronyms

ARRA	Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Introduction

1.1 The problem and general background of the study

Driven by a multitude of factors, migration is one of the complex social challenges of the contemporary world. Natural calamities, population growth, advancement of modern transportation and communications, internal/regional political instability and problems, and the expansion of education are some determinants of the trend, magnitude and diversity of global migration (Schewel, 2019).

The present research attempts to investigate: the drivers of migration from Eritrea into the refugee camps in Ethiopia; the challenges encountered in the migration process; opportunities for staying in the refugee camps; the progressive advancement of migration from refugee camps to Addis Ababa; and their associated opportunities, challenges and future plans. The aspirations of refugees either to stay in their current location in Addis Ababa or country (Ethiopia) or to migrate internationally to other foreign countries have been investigated. In their youth immobility study in four countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) Schewel and Fransen (2020) have classified immobility aspirations as the 'aspiration to stay within one's current locality, and the aspiration to stay within one's country but internally migrating to other areas'. Schewel and Fransen's (2020) above immobility definition has been adapted to explore the staying aspiration of the Eritrean refugees living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. However, our study includes the aspiration of Eritrean refugees to travel to other foreign countries due to various drivers.

The study has also attempted to discover the different development interventions given to the refugees in camps and in Addis Ababa. Furthermore, the past, present and future aspirations of Eritrean refugees living in Addis Ababa have been thoroughly examined to understand the potential direction, magnitude and trend of their migration. The migration networks of the refugees from Eritrea to Ethiopia and again from Ethiopia to other countries have been studied to see the linkage between migration networks, trends and main destination of their migration.

1.2 A brief overview of the Eritrean context

The recent history of Eritrea can be coined under five periods: Italian Colonialism (1886-1941), the UK military rule (1942-1952), Federation with Ethiopia (1952-1960), the struggle for liberation (1961-1991), and the post-independence era (1991-present) (Plaut, 2016).

In 1885 the Italian troops landed at Massawa, Asseb and other locations and systematically spread towards the highland plateaus (Britannica, 2011). "The Italians' expansion onto the plateau was

initially opposed by Emperor Yohannes IV, the only Tigray to wear the Ethiopian crown in the modern times” (Britannica, 2011, p.152). From Eritrea, Italians made several invasions into Ethiopia; however, on March 1, 1896, they were decisively defeated by the troops of Menilek’s II at the battle of Adwa (Britannica, 2011). Though Italy again invaded Ethiopia in 1935, the Italian troops were defeated by the joint Ethio-British forces and evicted from Eritrea in April 1941 (Britannica, 2011). From 1942, the British administered the country, until 1952, when Eritrea was federated to Ethiopia by a United Nations resolution (Tekeste, 1997; Britannica, 2011).

The control of Eritrea by the British authorities was relinquished on 15 September, 1952 (Britannica, 2011). On September 11, 1952, the act of federation was ratified by Emperor Haile Selassie I and Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia from 1952-1960 (Tekeste, 1997; Britannica, 2011). The banning of a nascent trade union movement (in 1958) embittered many Eritrean workers - Muslims and Christians - who rallied to the national movement. Furthermore, the suppression and banning of political parties (in 1955), the changing of the name Eritrean Government to “Eritrean Administration” (in 1959), the imposition of the Ethiopian law and the banning of Tigrinya in state education helped to turn the entire generation of Eritrean students toward nationalism (Britannica, 2011). The federation was dead on November 14, 1962 when the Ethiopian Parliament and the Eritrean Assembly unanimously voted for the abolition of Eritrea’s federal status, and decided Eritrea to be a province of Ethiopia (Britannica, 2011).

In 1960, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was formed and later replaced by the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) which fought against the governments of Ethiopia for nearly three decades until 1991 (Britannica, 2011). Finally, Eritrea was separated from Ethiopia in 1991 when the Ethiopian government was defeated by the coalition of EPLF and TPLF (Tigray People’s Liberation Front) forces that brought the end of the 30 years long war (Tekeste, 1997; Plaut, 2016). The guerrilla forces EPLF and TPLF seized power both in Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1991 respectively. However, Eritrea gained its international recognition as a sovereign state in 1993 (Plaut, 2016). In the first period of the post-separation of Eritrea, the relationship between the new Eritrean and Ethiopian governments was good. However, later their relationship gradually deteriorated until it erupted into one of the bloodiest wars in Africa from 1998-2000 (Plaut, 2016).

Eritrea is a poor developing country. The country has different ethnic groups and ecological diversity (Tekeste, 1997). Its capital, Asmara, situated on a high plateau, is one of the most pleasant cities with temperate climate in Africa (Tekeste, 1997; Plaut, 2016). Most of the farmers depend

on subsistence rainfed peasant agriculture as a source of their livelihoods. Rainfall is erratic and soil is highly degraded. In good cropping years, the country produces 70-80% of the cereal requirement of the people while in bad years only 20-30%. This has put the country and its people at real and continuing risk. Thus, the country is highly dependent on commercial imports and food aid. The small mining and remittance income are sources of hard currency for the government (Plaut, 2016). The political-economy of Eritrea is fully controlled by the few elites: senior government and military officials (Plaut, 2016).

Eritrea has nine officially recognised ethnic groups: Tigreans, Tigrie, Afar, Saho, Rashaida, Bilen, Hedareb, Nara and Kunama, with rich cultural heritage. Each of the Eritrean ethnic groups speak their own language (Kibreab, 2000; Plaut, 2016). The people of Eritrea roughly equally follow Muslim and Christian religion (Kibreab, 2000; Plaut, 2016). The lowlanders are predominantly Muslims while the majority of the highlanders are Tigrinya ethnic group and Orthodox Christian (Plaut, 2016). Eritrea has a plural society in which the population is half-Christian and half-Muslim as a product of conquest in which various minority groups were forcefully subjugated and incorporated into the society (Kibreab, 2000 citing Bell, 1996).

As a result of internal political and economic dissatisfaction, on average as many as 5, 000 Eritreans flee every month across the border, at the cost of any danger they may face in crossing the Sahara and other deserts and the Mediterranean and Red seas (Plaut, 2016). Divergent political opinions are not officially tolerated and there is only a single legal political party in the country (Plaut, 2016).

1.3 Refugees in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a long historical tradition of opening its boundary and providing refuge to people of different countries fleeing conflict, persecution, usurpation, political repression, and requiring international protection. At the present time, there are about one million refugees who came from twenty seven African countries and Syria and live in different parts of Ethiopia. With an average of over 3,000 new Eritrean refugees arriving every month into Ethiopia, available resources are prioritized to cover immediate basic needs and prevention of COVID-19 pandemic (UNHCR, 2020a). Thus, currently, 178, 980 Eritrean refugees are living across the country which accounts for 22% of the total 796, 437 refugees living in Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2020b). Before the eruption of the conflict in November 2020, there were over 96, 000 Eritrean refugees registered by UNHCR and sheltered in the four refugee camps in the western part of Tigray region: Mai Aini

(21,682), Adi Harush (32,167), Shimelba (8,702) and Hitsats (25,248) (UNHCR, 2020b). There are also 8,424 refugees residing in the Tigray Region benefitting from the Government's Out of Camp Policy allowing them to live in communities (UNHCR, 2020b). The remaining Eritrean refugees outside Tigray predominantly lived in the Afar region (approximately 54, 000) and approximately 28, 000 Eritrean refugees live in the capital Addis Ababa (UNHCR, 2020b). Currently, the numbers of urban refugees are increasing in many urban areas of African countries (Zeager and Bascom, 1996). However, the urban refugees, even the skilled one, are excluded from public sector employment, the main employer, since they compete with Ethiopian nationals for the scarce employment opportunities and health, education, housing, water & transportation services (Wallace, 1985, cited in Kibreab, 1996).

1.4 Research objectives

In the contemporary period, migration becomes one of the main social challenges of different countries: the source, transit and receiving nations. In many African countries, the number of people migrating into the neighbouring countries seeking international protection have increased in the last two decades (Rogge, 1986; Zeager and Bascom, 1996). The rapid population growth experienced among developing countries and the associated lack of resources for livelihoods, shortage of employment and economic hardship, common prevalence of political instability and conflict, widespread land degradation, climate change, and lack of political freedom and democracy unpreventably escalated the trend, magnitude and the geo-social diversity of migration. As part of the ADMIGOV project, the specific objectives of the current research attempts to: 1) investigate the main drivers of Eritrean refugees flight to Ethiopia; 2) explore the challenges and opportunities of migrants in the different phases of migration processes from Eritrea to Ethiopia; 3) assess the networks and aspirations of Eritrean refugees living in Ethiopia; and 4) examine the development interventions given to the refugees and their future plans.

2. Methods and Approaches

2.1 Selecting sites and respondents

First, the map of Addis Ababa city was studied to recognize the existing administrative sub cities. On the basis of this experience, informal information was gathered from different people to know where Eritrean refugees reside within Addis Ababa. Based on this, we recognized two subcities, Nefas Silk Laphto and Yeka, where more Eritreans live. Again, these sub cities were further studied in identifying where more Eritrean refugees live within the two respective subcities. This helped us to identify areas of Eritrean refugees. Among these areas of higher concentrations of Eritrean refugees, some were purposely selected in consultation with the interview guides from among the Eritrean refugees. The location of the study areas in relation to the city centre was used as a major criterion to sample refugees for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Thus initially, the Arada (mainly Arat Kilo area; a central part of Addis Ababa), Nefas Silk Laphto (mid-center) and Yeka (relatively-outer) subcities were identified to be research areas. However, this research was only made in the latter two subcities. Accordingly, from Nefas Silk Laphto three research sites were selected from the middle-center part of the city: Genet, Jemo and Goffa Mebirat condominium sites. On the other hand, from Yeka subcity, two sites were located at the margin of northern Addis Ababa (the main entry point of Eritrean refugees): Tafo and Yeka Abado condominiums/sites. The different age and sex groups (see Table 1) of the refugees were considered by the researchers while selecting the respondents for the KIIs.

Then, for the current research, 48 key informants were randomly selected from the five different sites of the two sub cities where large numbers of Eritrean refugees were residing in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The researchers have collected the required information from the respondents of the five sites in the Nefas Silk Laphto and Yeka subcities. The individual respondents were randomly selected from the different blocks of each condominium site. As a result, from the first three research sites a total of 32 key informants, almost 11 from each site, were selected for the qualitative interviews. Furthermore, 16 key informants, 10 from Tafo and 6 from Yeka Abado condominium sites were included as part of the study. However, the data collected from three underage females (<18 years old) have been excluded due to ethical limitations (one from Genet site of Nefas Silk Laphto and two from Abado site of Yeka). Initially, the researchers also planned to collect qualitative data from nine Eritrean refugees living at Arat Kilo condominium site, the center of Addis Ababa. However, due to COVID-19 ramifications, the researchers were unable to collect the data from the intended nine participants to meet the planned 60 respondents

proposed in the ADMIGOV project. Thus, this is one limitation of the research. Therefore, the present research has been analysed based on the qualitative data generated from 48 Eritrean refugee respondents living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

This study has followed a qualitative interview method. For qualitative data collection, the members of Working Package (WP) 6 of the ADMIGOV project conducted migration research in four countries (Ethiopia, Mali, Turkey and Lebanon) and developed an individual interview guide in English. However, before the beginning of the qualitative data collection in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia the interview guide was translated into Amharic¹ which the majority of Eritrean refugees living in Addis Ababa properly understand and speak.

While collecting the qualitative data in October and November 2020, the researchers employed two Eritrean refugees who speak Tigrigna, the language of the refugees, as guides to communicate with the Eritrean refugees and with the researchers. Furthermore, another two refugee guides were employed to translate the individual interview guide questions from Amharic to Tigrigna and vice versa during key informant interviews (KII) in cases where the respondent did not directly understand the question, and to communicate their response in Amharic.

The qualitative interview guide used for data collection has seven different themes: current conditions of respondents, development interventions, plan to migrate or stay, factors in the decision to stay or migrate, migration decision making processes and future plan.

Before starting data collection, the respondents were informed by the researchers about the academic purpose of the research and were presented with an official letter written from the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia that supports the ADMIGOV project research. The interview was conducted only upon the consent of the respondents to provide the required data. Following the consent, the interview was carried out by raising one question at a time to get the reflection of the respondent. The interview with the respondent continued until all the qualitative questions of the interview guide were completed. On average, the interview with one key informant took about an hour. The

¹ The official national language of Ethiopia with its own alphabet called *Fidel*(ፊደል).

researchers, therefore, conducted an individual face to face interview with each Eritrean refugee and recorded the response in their notebook. For data protection, the recorded notes were destroyed after completing the qualitative data analysis. However, the transcribed qualitative data and analysis resulting from the current research are stored in the Surfdrive of the ADMIGOV project. As mentioned above, the in-depth qualitative data was collected from 48 respondents from five different sites of the Nifas Silk Laphto and Yeka sub cities of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For further in-depth interpretation and analysis, first, the collected qualitative responses/data were thoroughly transcribed from Amharic into English aligning with the major research themes. Second, the qualitative data were descriptively interpreted and analysed in relation with the main themes and specific objectives of the research.

2.3 Overview of respondents

This section discusses the age, sex, marital status, educational level, religion, language, and place of origin of the respondents. Age and sex are important factors for decision to migrate. A total of 33 male and 15 female Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa were included as respondents in this research. Our study confirmed that most (60.42%) of the interviewed refugees were young and aged between 18 and 30 years. The ages of the respondents ranged from 19 to 52 years old (Table 1). Generally, the majority of the Eritrean refugees were young, single, and male (68.75%), and largely completed primary and/or secondary education. The majority of the Eritrean refugees have completed primary and junior education (20) and secondary (21) education. However, a limited number of the refugees have attended Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET) (3) and some levels of college/university education (4) (Table 2). Research conducted on Eritrean and Ethiopian urban refugees in Sudan disclosed similar findings (Kibreab, 2000, p. 150). Generally, more than two-third (68.75%) of the Eritrean refugee respondents were males while the proportion of female respondents was also significant, accounting for almost one-third (31.25 %) of the total Eritrean refugees residing in Addis Ababa (Table 1).

Sex	Age (years)							
	18-30		31-40		>40		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	18	37.5	13	27.08	2	4.17	33	68.75
Female	11	22.92	3	6.25	1	2.08	15	31.25
Total	29	60.42	16	33.33	3	6.25	48	100

Table 1. The Number and Percentage Distribution of the Age and Sex of the Eritrean Refugee Respondents

Source: Key Interview results, October and November 2020

Orthodox Christianity was practiced by all the respondents except one who followed Protestant Christianity. Language is a key factor for the interactions of migrants with people both along their routes and in destination areas. Individuals speaking the languages of the destination areas could have better advantages to easily assimilate with the local communities than interviewees who do not speak the destinations' local or national language.

In our study, we found that Tigrigna is the mother tongue of all Eritrean refugees (which is also the local language of the refugee camps found in the Tigray Region of Northern Ethiopia). As all migrants spoke this language, they did not have any communication problems at refugee camps. On the other hand, 20 (41.67%) of the 48 interviewed migrants spoke Amharic (the official Ethiopian language) and another 17 (35.42%) spoke both Amharic and English. This means most migrants (37) had the advantage of speaking the Amharic and/or English language to communicate with Ethiopians. However, only two refugees who had completed their first degree had a better capacity to speak and listen English. Accordingly, this allowed them to communicate easily at their destination and along their routes to migrate into Ethiopia. As the migrants first entered and communicated with people who are Ethiopian Tigrigna language speakers, all of these refugees did not have any language barrier at the refugee camps. However, 11 of the 48 Eritrean refugees interviewed (22.92%) had recently arrived in Ethiopia and spoke only Tigrigna, and therefore faced communication difficulties at least in their initial periods of arrival in Addis Ababa.

Refugees from towns such Asmara, Segeneiti and Dekemehari largely spoke Tigrigna, Amharic and English. Thus, they did have better advantage of communication than others who originated from smaller towns and rural areas. Moreover, most older Eritrean refugees (40 years and above) spoke Amharic (Ethiopia's official language) in addition to their native Tigrigna language, as a result of which they communicate relatively easier than younger groups who spoke only Tigrigna.

Sex	Educational Levels									
	Primary & Junior Education		Secondary Education		TVET Education		College/University Education		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	10	20.83	16	33.33	3	6.25	4	8.33	33	68.75
Female	10	20.83	5	10.42	0	0	0	0.00	15	31.25
Total	20	41.67	21	43.75	3	6.25	4	8.33	48	100

Table 2. The Number and Percentage Distribution of the Educational Levels of the Eritrean Refugee Respondents

Source: Key Interview results, October and November 2020

Marital status is an important social factor in influencing relationships and migration decision making processes in any society. Our study confirmed that the majority of the refugees were single (26), followed by married (20) and widowed (2). The result of the present research showed that most refugees had no or few family members in their country of origin and would easily decide to migrate on their own.

Educational level affects the tendency of people to migrate. As many studies confirmed, people with better understanding about the route and the opportunities in the destination would predetermine where to migrate and how to migrate.

The Eritrean refugees who are living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, had originated both from urban and rural areas. However, the larger number, 38, (79.17%) of the Eritrean refugees had originated from

different urban areas whereas the remaining 10 (20.83%) of the refugees were displaced from rural areas. Asmara (15), Segeneiti (12) and Dekemehari (4) were the main places of origin for the Eritrean urban refugees in their order of importance. The other 8 Eritrean urban refugees originated from six different urban areas: Adi Quala (1), Senafe (2), Legien (1), Gensheba (1), Adi Keyih (2), and Edega Hamus (1). Among the 48 key informants who participated in the research, it was only 10, or less than a quarter of the total sample (20.83%), who migrated from different rural areas of Eritrea into Ethiopia.

Marital Status of Respondents	No.	%
Single	26	54.17
Married	20	41.67
Widow	2	4.17
Total	48	100

Table 3. The Number and Percentage Distribution of the Marital Status of the Eritrean Refugee Respondents

Source: Key Interview results, October and November 2020

44 of the Eritrean migrants were registered as refugees by the Ethiopian Government, whereas the rest (4) were unregistered. Thus, only four of the interviewed informants did not receive legal registered status as migrants or were in the process to receive it, as explored through the qualitative interviews. Among the 48 interviewed refugees, 41 had stayed between a minimum of one month up to a maximum of four years at the border area refugee camps located in the Tigray Region of Northern Ethiopia.

3. Migration Aspirations, Decision Making, and Networks

3.1 Drivers of migration from Eritrea to the refugee camps in Northern Ethiopia

To understand the drivers of Eritrean refugees living in Ethiopia, it is relevant to explore the socio-economic, political, and environmental challenges they face in their country. Many studies on migration verified that reasons for migration can be categorized as socio-economic, political and/or environmental factors. As confirmed by our qualitative study, the Eritrean urban refugees living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, have been driven by: 1) political factors mainly associated with forced military service and human right violations by the Government of Eritrea; 2) a lack of employment/working opportunities at the country of origin, and desires for better economic, income and education opportunities; 3) the desire to re-join family members living abroad or for matrimonial reasons; 4) the desire for better social services like medical services; and 5) the refugee admittance policy of the Government of Ethiopia (GOE).

As a political factor, forced military service and human right violations by local and regional Eritrean Government (EG) authorities were among the top reasons for Eritrean refugees to migrate to Ethiopia. Thus, many interviewees planned to escape from the unfavourable political administration and forced military service of the Eritrean Government (as stated by the refugees, which is a lifetime national [military] service. This forced many interviewees to migrate to and seek refuge in Ethiopia. According to respondents, the national service is mandatory for every able Eritrean citizen aged 15 years and above and this was well explained by one of our informants as follow:

... I left Eritrea in June 2015 and arrived in Ethiopia in July 2015 (and stayed long time at a refugee camp); after accessing migration information from colleagues, I migrated directly from Eritrea to Ethiopia; I left Eritrea for political reasons/due to the unsuitable political administration and did not want to participate in forced military services (which is the regulation of Eritrea Government for every citizen of capable age of ≥ 15 years); The decision to migrate came from my personal interest and information from my parents (my father) and I decided to migrate to Ethiopia.

Another interviewee, who was a farmer at his locality, also verified the above narration as he stated below:

... I do not want to be soldier and serve the country with a lifetime military service. There was local security and administrations problems in Eritrea - security forces violate our rights and do not permit us in moving even within Eritrea unless we get a permission letter to move from place to place. This affects my personal life and makes it difficult to continue living in Eritrea.

On the other hand, even if some people could be relieved from military service, for example due to health or other related reasons, they do not want their family members such as children to participate in the national (military) service. During our discussion, one widow female respondent explained:

I am a widow, born in Ethiopia but grew up in Eritrea. I am a registered refugee, I left Eritrea in 2018 and stayed in a refugee camp for two months. Then I moved to Addis Ababa. My initial plan was to help my children to escape forced military service, get better education for them and now I am living with my three children here [in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia].

There were some migrants among our respondents who had served in the military but who illegally left the service. These interviewees then disappeared from the national service and migrated to Ethiopia. Regarding Eritreans' freedom of movement, the refugees stated that it was not possible to obtain a visa or formally to emigrate from Eritrea, unless permitted by the Government of Eritrea and its delegates on grounds of seeking medical services (upon presenting a medical certificate) and upon completion of all required military services. As many of the Eritrean refugees reported, they were not interested to serve in the national service since it is generally poorly paid and a lifelong service. This also motivated them to illegally migrate to Ethiopia. This is explained by one of our interviewees as: *'I illegally escaped from the military service. It is not at all possible for all illegal migrants to return to Eritrea unless the rules are improved and /or the government is demolished. If I go back to Eritrea, I will be jailed.'*

Furthermore, one male Eritrean refugee who started to serve in the Eritrean military service has explained the human right violations of the government as the following:

In Eritrea, the people, the land and all other resources are the property of the government. Thus, I feel as I have no country or resource except my legs and health to migrate to another nation in order to improve my living standards and wellbeing. Since the forced military service is lifelong, the people of Eritrea are almost the slaves of the Government.

Therefore, all refugees confirmed that in Eritrea national military service is a lifetime duty, and that, furthermore, there was no basic or appropriate monthly salary attached to the service except the provision of a limited amount of flour or grain by the Eritrean government as a monthly subsistence. Resultingly, life in Eritrea was considered miserable by all the Eritrean refugee respondents. The findings of Plaut (2016) similarly support our finding that the imposition of ceaseless and indefinite forced military service is one of the main drivers for many young Eritreans to migrate to other countries. As he explained, some young Eritreans who served for decades in the national military service do not have any prospect of release (Plaut, 2016).

As deduced from the key informant interviewees, the political reasons for migration, mentioned above, are also linked to socio-economic factors. Almost all refugees wanted to get better socio-economic opportunities. In the initial period of their decision to migrate (i.e. migrating to Ethiopia), migrants considered their access to better jobs, income generating activities, living standards, and education and health services at destinations in Ethiopia or other third countries. As explained by one male interviewee: *'I migrated to Ethiopia for a better life. I am a mechanic and work as a [mobile phone] repairman with my brother in a rented shop. Thus, for me, life is better [in Ethiopia]* However, most interviewees could not achieve better socio-economic conditions in Ethiopia, for one or more reasons. As a result, these interviewees are interested or have planned to migrate to a third country, where they can meet their desired goals. They have already accepted that they cannot meet their goals either in Eritrea or in Ethiopia and think that their interests can be met by migrating to Europe, North America and/or Australia. This is well discussed by another key informant as articulated below:

I want to migrate to other countries outside of Ethiopia to look for a better life, education and work. I do not want to return to Eritrea as there are political, employment and administration problems and there is no adequate quality of education. In Eritrea, there was no work, and I don't want to give a lifetime military service. I am looking for a better life.

Similarly, the research conducted by Kibreab (2000), taking Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in Sudan as a case study, found government political repression and obligatory military service to be the main causes of the flight of many individuals (91 percent) from the urban centres of Eritrea into exile. However, though the refugees tended to single out one or two factors of displacement, in the context of the conditions that existed in their countries of origin, it is difficult to isolate a single factor as being the sole displacement cause. In most cases, it was a combination of factors:

political (violation of political and civil rights, lack of freedom of movement, conscription into the army and involuntary relocation from their areas of origin), economic (lack of employment and income-generating activities), and environmental (drought and land degradation) that forced people to flee (Kibreab, 1996).

As regards the role of networks and remittances as drivers of migration, several discussions with many of our key informant interviewees highlighted that previous migrants currently living in Europe, North America (USA & Canada) and Australia have influenced the interviewees, for example, by sharing information with them and/or remitting money to their families living in Eritrea, and even to current refugees living in Ethiopia. So, almost all interviewees were keen to migrate to these regions, which for most of them could not be realised as they originally thought. That is, many of them did not have the required application fee to request a visa for their intended destination country, some did not have any contact person at their intended destination country who could help them to facilitate the visa requirement, or even did not have any knowledge about how and where to apply and, for some, securing a visa took them a longer time, for example, over a couple of years. One female respondent stated that: *'I plan to migrate to the USA to rejoin my husband - no any change on this decision. But how long it will take to rejoin my husband is unknown. It is taking a longer time than I originally expected'*. A similar migration plan was explained by another key informant interviewee as follows: *I want to permanently migrate to the USA or Canada, to which I will get a visa. I want to migrate either legally or illegally, whatever will be possible. Reasons to migrate include seeking better work/life, education, join family and I plan to apply for a visa, preferably to the USA, but it is taking me a longer time.'*

Accordingly, some refugees decided to migrate to rejoin their fiancés or couples. In this regard, two males and six female refugees left Eritrea aiming to join their wives and husbands, respectively, living in Western Europe or North America, as mentioned earlier. With respect to family reunion, one female interviewee informed us:

I am away from my husband and the children miss their father and want to migrate to the USA. So family separation is one of the major drivers [of my migration]. Also, life is expensive here in Ethiopia and I fully depend on the remittances that I receive from my husband, which is a great burden to him.

Another key informant also confirmed similar fact as follow:

I left Eritrea in September 2018 together with my three children and stayed at a refugee camp and arrived in Addis Ababa in December 2018. Now, I am staying at [location in Addis Ababa]. My plan was to request a visa from the German Embassy to rejoin my husband, but I have not yet requested it and the process has not started. Also, there I have no good communication with my husband. However, I still want to rejoin him with our children. If this will not be successful, I want to migrate to anywhere without knowing where to go and whom to meet. I know this is my difficult decision.

As illustrated by this woman, many have lost hope and are desperate to migrate to a third country. Furthermore, a few respondents migrated to get better medical services for members of their family and/or themselves, as explained here by one interviewee:

... I migrated to Ethiopia hoping to get better medical support for my child and the migration decision was made by the family. I directly travelled to Addis Ababa, where later on my wife and children moved to a refugee camp to get registered as refugee. This was the requirement of the Government of Ethiopia to obtain a refugee title. Then my children and wife rejoined me in 2019 after getting refugee registration at the camp in Tigray region of Ethiopia.

Obtaining further and/or better education for themselves and/or other family members was an objective for many of the interviewees who participated in this research. This was clearly stated by one mother as: '*... My aim was to get education for my children and now they [my children] got a scholarship [granted by the GOE]. I am happy since my children have accessed educational opportunities in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This was one of my migration objectives for which I am partly satisfied...*'

Therefore, on the top of political reasons, many respondents clearly mentioned that poor and/or a lack of education opportunities forced them to leave Eritrea and seek education in their intended destinations. As many of the migrants were young, their interests for better employment/economic opportunities and education was found to be high.

On the other hand, none of the interviewees directly mentioned environmental problems as their reason to migrate. However, a few migrants indirectly disclosed environmental constraint as a factor in their migration. These migrants linked low agricultural productivity to severe environmental degradation in their place of origin, which forced them to leave their birthplace to

migrate elsewhere out of Eritrea. This is verified by one respondent who stated: ... *I migrated to Ethiopia to get a better living condition, I was a farmer in Eritrea but there was not enough agricultural production to help me [and my family] and I do not want to serve in the military and I decided to migrate to Ethiopia.*' The syntheses of all the various migration drivers indicate that migrants have multiple reasons to migrate at the same time.

Moreover, the GOE was willing to admit Eritrean refugees to its country. However, this was mentioned by none of the KIIs. The Ethiopian policy in admitting refugees was praised by international organizations such as the UNHCR and IOM, who have collaborated with the GOE in assisting Eritrean as well as other refugees in the country. For instance, UNHCR/IOM had collaborated with GOE to establish refugee camps in Northern Ethiopia and, at the time of writing, international organizations are constructing camps in Gander to transfer Eritrean refugees from Tigray region following the impact of the current conflict in the region.

3.2 Decision making and migration processes from Eritrea to the refugee camps and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

As confirmed by the results of the current research, the initiation and decision to migrate both to Ethiopia as well as to a third country is common practice among young Eritrean adults, and a decision which was largely made on their own. One refugee shared his experience:

.... The decision to migrate to Ethiopia came from myself and no one has influenced me. Before I migrated to Ethiopia, I tried to get a visa to go the USA but that failed and then I decided to migrate to Ethiopia to use it as transit country to the USA. I did not attempt to migrate to any other country other than the USA.

In other cases, the decision to migrate was made with the involvement of spouses/fiancés, or parents and closer relatives. Regarding the migration decision, one interviewee explained that:

I got the migration information from friends and relatives. The decision came to effect [my migration] after having a discussion with my husband and agreeing to migrate to Ethiopia. It is safer to live in Ethiopia than Eritrea and there is no security problem for the refugees.

Some interviewees who had migrated to Ethiopia before 2018 (a historical Ethio-Eritrea peace accord after 20 years of hostility) stayed at established refugee camps found in the border areas of Tigray region, until they were granted registered refugee status. However, many of our

interviewees migrated to Ethiopia after the Ethio-Eritrea peace accord in 2018. These migrants had the opportunity to travel by bus and arrived either at the border area refugee camps or directly at Addis Ababa. However, migrants before 2018 could not utilize this opportunity and as stated by one interviewee: *'all migrants before 2018 [the Ethio-Eritrea peace deal agreement] were obliged to stay at refugee camps.'* These Eritrean refugees made their journey to Ethiopia on foot and faced several challenges along their route, as stated by one key informant:

... I travelled on foot to a refugee camp in Tigray region, Ethiopia. I stayed for about four years at a refugee camp and travelled to Addis Ababa after getting the required documents and permission to live outside the camp and I preferred to live in Addis Ababa. All migrants before 2018 [Ethio-Eritrea new peace deal agreement] were obliged to stay at a refugee camp.

Moreover, there were a few refugees who initially migrated to Sudan and then to Israel and later migrated back to Ethiopia. These refugees travelled on foot to Sudan and then illegally crossed the Sahara Desert by car and the Mediterranean Sea by boat to reach Israel. However, some of these refugees were forced by the Israeli Government to leave Israel, and as a result they migrated back to Ethiopia. These refugees have encountered very difficult journeys. A refugee who experienced this form of migration explained:

I migrated to Sudan and later to Israel and back to Ethiopia where I arrived at Addis Ababa in 2018. My original plan was to escape from forced military service (where every Eritrean citizen 15 years and above has to serve the military) and join my fiancé living here in Ethiopia. I escaped from serving the forced military service and my objective in this regard is met. At present, I am married and living in Addis [Ababa] with my wife and our child.

Another forced returnee from Israel also discussed his experience as follows:

I came to Ethiopia in 2018 after 6 years of stay in Israel. The State of Israel forced me and now I am living in Addis Ababa. I do not want to stay living in Ethiopia considering the present conditions- mainly due to the absence of a work permit, job opportunity, and income. I do not want to return to Eritrea either. I can't go back to Eritrea as I illegally migrated out of Eritrea, and returning is difficult unless the government or its policies are changed. I may go back to Eritrea if the policy of the government changes.

Among our interviewees, there were some Eritrean refugees who were born in Ethiopia and moved to Eritrea after its historical referendum (in 1993) and then currently migrated back to Ethiopia again. Such refugees speak Tigrigna, Amharic and English, and are familiar with the Ethiopian culture as well. They know where to stay and whom to contact in Addis Ababa, as they maintained their previous communication. Some of these refugees still want to migrate to a third country. One interviewee explained:

I was born in Ethiopia to an Eritrean father and an Ethiopian mother and moved to Eritrea in 1994 with my uncle. Then, after some time, my guardian informed me to migrate to Qatar via Sudan/Khartoum. Then I made the journey to Khartoum in August 2010 and arrived there in October 2010. This was after travelling on foot and by vehicles for several days. I stayed in Khartoum up until February 2014 and came back to Ethiopia in February 2014. I stayed at a refugee camp in Tigray region and got registered refugee status after staying for four years (until 2018). Then later, in August 2018, I came back to Addis Ababa where I currently live. I can stay in Ethiopia (as I work and get some income to help myself) and migration to a third country is not an urgent issue for me. But, if I get the opportunity, I want to permanently migrate to Australia to rejoin my wife and child living there. This is a social factor which is currently important for me. Also, life in Ethiopia is very expensive and it is better to migrate to countries where better work, income and education opportunities could be obtained. So, if I get a visa for any other better developed country, I want to move to get a better economic opportunity.

Thus, even when they get their residence permit and refugee status in Ethiopia, almost all interviewees do not stop aspiring to migrate to a third country. As illustrated in the interviews, most wait to secure a legal migration process; however, others who think that they would not be able to access a legal opportunity attempt to migrate illegally to their intended final destinations, as explained by one key informant as follows:

... After I came to Ethiopia, I tried to emigrate twice from Ethiopia to the coast of Somalia and from there by boat, which was arranged by human traffickers and unfortunately I was not successful. There was a fight with illegal human traffickers over money (they demanded that I give them a lot of money which was beyond my capacity). I still want to migrate, if possible, legally, otherwise, illegally, from Ethiopia whenever I get any opportunity to materialize my goal.

Therefore, as deduced from our discussions and verified by some researchers, it is possible to identify two phases of the migration process for refugees. The first phase is from the country of origin to the refugee camps in border areas of the country of asylum, called the flight to safety. The second phase is movement from the refugee camps in the border areas of the country of asylums to urban centres (Rogge, 1986). However, according to the research findings of Kibreab (2000) in Sudan, refugees with a strong urban background do not simply come to the refugee camps of the border areas of the country of asylum without first knowing where to proceed. For example, the majority of Eritrean (87 percent) and Ethiopian (97 percent) urban refugees did not pass through the two phases of migration during their flight to Sudan; instead, they directly travelled to Khartoum (Kibreab, 2000).

In our case study, migrants experienced mixed phases of migration process. Some refugees – mainly those who migrated to Ethiopia before the 2018 peace deal – passed through the two phases of the migration process as discovered by Rogge (1986). However, many of the refugees who migrated to Ethiopia after the 2018 Ethio-Eritrea peace agreement experienced one phase of migration to travel directly from Eritrea to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

3.3 Major challenges of returning to Eritrea or staying in Ethiopia and the potential destination countries of Eritrean refugees

Regarding their final destinations, most migrants had prior information about their destination areas/countries. The refugees aimed to use Ethiopia mainly as a country of transit before migrating onwards to a third country of asylum. Almost all migrants were aware of where they could obtain better employment opportunities, a better level of education and health services. Accordingly, they aimed to migrate to Western Europe (mainly to Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Sweden), North America (USA and Canada), and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). Only two of the migrants did not have any plan regarding where to continue after migrating to Ethiopia. Although the refugees interviewed had their priority destination countries, all had multiple preferences. All wanted to move to countries for which they had enough information and to which they perceived that they would easily secure an entry visa. Accordingly, many of the interviewees did not have any intention to stay in Ethiopia. One respondent clearly said that:

I do not want to stay in Ethiopia. Life is difficult here, as there is no employment, educational or training opportunities. It seems that life is so difficult under the present personal and

national (employment problems) conditions of the country. There is no positive opportunity in Ethiopia.

On the other hand, for a few refugees who had good interactions with Ethiopians and had some source of income/work, migration out of Ethiopia was not an urgent issue. However, these refugees would still like to migrate if they had the opportunity. This was well explained by one key informant as follows:

I plan to migrate but if my migration will not be successful, life in Ethiopia is also possible. It is not my plan to stay in Ethiopia. However, if migration out of Ethiopia would not be possible, I can stay in Ethiopia as there is not any communication or social problems with Ethiopians. But for this, I need to get good work to help myself, residence and work permits. Currently, I work as a mechanic.

However, many of the refugees decided to migrate to Ethiopia to use it as a transit country to move to Western Europe, North America, or Australia. Moreover, the interviewees made clear that staying within Ethiopia is difficult as there are no available economic opportunities such as employment, or work licenses. Those who were working illegally earned low incomes and this forced them to decide not to stay in Ethiopia. Although some migrants decided to stay in Ethiopia, this intention was only on temporary basis until they obtained a visa for their intended final destination country. On the other hand, a few of them would decide to stay in Ethiopia if a few conditions were met. One of our key informants stated that:

I want to live in Ethiopia and receive Ethiopian citizenship; and I'm interested to be considered as an Ethiopian, which will give me the right to work and get education with full citizenship rights; I want to get my own house (housing rental is too expensive); I have difficulty in getting expenses for living (both food and housing rental). My current problem in Ethiopia is my lack of a job and reliable income source. The good opportunity is I feel no security problem in Ethiopia and no language barrier but the main problem is job security which is a major issue.

Moreover, a few interviewees were not in a position to decide either to migrate or stay in Ethiopia, although their inclination is still to migrate. This was verified by one of our interviewees who explained: '*...I am in between migrating or staying, but if things will be okay, I am inclined to migrate to Australia*'.

Almost all the refugees did not show any intention to return to Eritrea. According to them, they did not decide to return for one or more of these reasons: 1) they would be prosecuted for their previous illegal emigration or for not participating or illegally terminating their compulsory military service; and/or 2) because they would not get any education, employment or job opportunities. Consequently, for many interviewees, politico-economic reasons made them decide not to return to Eritrea.

Thus, for some of respondents, political reasons were the number one reason that deterred them from returning to Eritrea, as illustrated by one key informant who explained:

I don't want to return to Eritrea because of the current existing political and forced military service. I came here just two years ago and my migration experience is only from Eritrea to Ethiopia.

Another interviewee similarly confirmed the challenge of returning to Eritrea:

There is a political problem, and I am forced to render military service and encounter administration problems [violation of basic human rights and corruptions] in Eritrea.

Moreover, some refugees were concerned not only about their personal well-being but also about the safety of their family members, mainly their children, if they returned to Eritrea, as described here by one interviewee:

I do not want to go back to Eritrea as I am an illegal migrant to Ethiopia. Illegal migrants will be imprisoned by the Eritrean policy if they are returned to their country. Also, my children will be requested to join forced military service and there will not be employment and better education for my children.

As explained above, on the top of the political reasons, other multiple factors such as better economic opportunities and social affairs (better medical and educational services, family reunion for spouses/fiancés) motivated interviewees to continue their migration to a third country. This was clearly stated by one female respondent as:

... I do not want to return to Eritrea due to family reunion with [my husband] and the whole family wants to join him, there is an employment problem in Eritrea (it is not even possible to work in our country for some reasons such as lack of employment opportunities and

political reasons) and there is also an administration/political problem, which is not conducive for many of us

Irrespective of some complicated issues that refugees faced in Eritrea, a few interviewees explained that they may decide to go back to Eritrea if they can make it together with their spouses (but were also confused about their future decisions). One interviewee explained this as follows:

I do not want to go back to Eritrea as there is a security problem, forced military services and I have already illegally migrated (illegal migrants from Eritrea will be punished if they return to Eritrea). But if I am returning together with my husband, I can make it, whatever difficulties will be there. On the other hand, life is hard in Eritrea and we will not decide to go back.

3.4 Challenges and opportunities for Eritrean refugees

Eritrean refugees have encountered individual and shared challenges of different intensities during their migration process. The challenges of the refugees can be categorized as challenges along the displacement route, at refugee camps in destination areas.

1. Challenges along displacement routes

Along their routes to Ethiopia, some migrants travelled on foot for between about two to five days to arrive at the refugee camps in the Ethio-Eritrea border area. The refugees mainly travelled during the night to avoid the Eritrean security forces. On their journey, migrants slept and stayed in the forest and/or bushes during the day and travelled at night. The nocturnal refugee journey was extremely difficult as many of them were exposed to the attack of robbers and wild animals. Moreover, mainly female migrants were vulnerable to rape. The refugees' journey was extremely tiresome and difficult since they walked in the deserts of the Ethio-Eritrea border further challenged by a shortage of food and water. According to our key informants, some migrants had been attacked by fierce wild animals of the bushes and forestlands while some had been bitten by snakes. Fighting with hyenas was a common problem for many of the migrants. As one refugee described their journey:

I travelled on foot from Eritrea to the refugee camp in Ethiopia, travelling was done at night and was risky to my life. There was shortage of water and food during the journey. I came

with my mother, two sisters and one brother making a total of five family members and currently I am living in Addis Ababa.

2. Challenges at the refugee camps

Shortages of food, potable water and cooking fuel

As confirmed by the migrants, they received flour/grain, cooking oil and a piece of soap per month. In addition, some refugees received about 60 to 80 ETB per month, for their urgent expenses. However, the refugees reported that the food and other items were not enough to cover their needs for the whole month. Hence, many of the refugees suffered from starvation and a shortage of required resources. According to one key informant:

At the camp, I received some assistance for basic necessities such as 10kg of wheat grain, 2 kg rice, 1 litre cooking oil, 1 piece of soap, a blanket and mattress, and 80 ETB for urgent expenses. Every refugee in the camp received all these items per month. However, this was not enough to satisfy their monthly requirement.

Refugees were engaged in collecting firewood to be used for cooking and heating mainly at cold times. In this process, they spent much time out of their camps and even quarreled with the local community over the cutting down of trees. This caused deforestation and land degradation in the nearby environs of camp sites. Because of this, many refugees were not on good terms with the local community. Moreover, they used river water for drinking, cooking food and washing clothes. According to them, this river water was polluted by effluents coming from the surrounding villages, from the refugees themselves and from animals, which made it unsafe for drinking and cooking purposes as well as for washing clothes.

Lack of enough sleeping space and accommodation

Respondents mentioned that refugee camps were over congested with large numbers of refugees. The problem had become serious over time following the mass arrival of refugees into the camps. As a result, refugees could not get enough sleeping space and rooms and space for playing outside their rooms.

Psychological challenges

Once refugees were admitted to the refugee camps, they had no work, except collecting firewood and fetching water as their personal daily activities. There were no established schools, at least at the early period of refugee camp establishment. This affects the school attendance of refugees.

Some refugees did not have educational documents to enrol themselves in classes according to their level and some did not even want to attend school, as they were too old or lacked any interest. Furthermore, the refugees were not allowed to integrate themselves with the local community, as they were permitted to stay only in and around the camps. Some refugees stayed for a longer period – even up to four years – in camps, without being accepted as registered refugees and remained almost without work. This had caused them deep psychological problems, and they felt as though they were useless. According to some informants, this made them consider themselves as unnecessary and idle persons.

Delays in obtaining secure refugee status

As expressed earlier, the acceptance of migrants as refugees by the Ethiopian Government took some time. This depended on the individual case but could take up to four years. This long refugee process worried refugees since they felt uncertain regarding whether or not, and when, they would be admitted as refugees. They could not go back or at least were not interested in returning to Eritrea for the different reasons mentioned above: for example, because they would be punished and imprisoned in Eritrea if they returned. All of these constraints caused them to worry about their future as long as they were residing at camps.

Missing family and friends

For some respondents, separating and staying away from their family (for example, their parents, or spouse) was their first experience. Many refugees also lost communication with family members both in Eritrea and living elsewhere outside Eritrea. Coupled with other problems such as shortages of food, many felt alone and missed their family who they had left at home as well as elsewhere.

3. Challenges in Addis Ababa: Current destination

Once the migrants are accepted as refugees by GOE, they take permission to relocate and most of them lived in Addis Ababa. Associated with some other problems, refugees faced several, often complicated and interrelated, challenges in Addis Ababa as discussed in this section.

Language and skills barriers

Language is a key factor for any form of interaction. There were some respondents who spoke only Tigrigna (their native language) and who did not speak Amharic (Ethiopia's official language) or English. All the refugees did not have any language barrier while they were at refugee camps as they speak the same language as the local community. However, as soon as they arrived in Addis

Ababa, some refugees faced language barriers in interacting with Ethiopians or in engaging in informal business. This was explained by one key informant:

I need skills training in food preparation, hair dressing, and training both in Amharic and English languages. As my Amharic language is not good, I cannot work in anything, even as a street vendor. The well-being of migrants will be improved if we are given skills training, and support. The living conditions are expensive for all Eritrean refugees who live in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Accommodation challenges

Many of the refugees did not have any relatives or friends who could provide them with accommodation as soon as they arrived in Addis Ababa. As a result, these refugees did not have any accommodation upon their arrival. In the early period after their arrival, many of them did not have enough money to rent accommodation. As refugees are restricted to live only in Addis Ababa (where rental costs are expensive), they cannot move outside Addis Ababa (where rental costs are cheap). This restriction complicated their lives. One of our key informants explained the housing challenge as follows:

I am living with my children in a rented condominium with a single bedroom which costs 6000 Ethiopian birr per month. This is very expensive and even too small to accommodate my family as well.

As discussed by many of the interviewees, rental costs for housing were beyond their capacity to pay, particularly for the refugees who had no work or income. On the other hand, life was not difficult for the few interviewees who had some skills, for example, as a mechanic or mobile phone repairman. Some refugees lived in shared rooms, where they contributed to the monthly house rent. This reduced rental expenses for them. Thus, one male key informant explained that:

I live with four of my friends sharing a rented house which costs 5000 birr per month. We are also engaging in some works and helping ourselves. Thus, we did not face any significant economic problems.

Psychological problems

Refugees have developed some forms of social norms during their stay in refugee camps in Tigray region, northern Ethiopia. These migrants obtained refugees status at different times and continue

to move to Addis Ababa. Even if some obtained their refugee status at similar times, they travelled separately and started living in different areas in Addis Ababa, largely depending on the information they obtained from refugees who arrived previously. This made them feel alone, because they could not share ideas with fellow new arrivals and could not benefit from each other's help. The norms and social relationships developed in camps were lost once they moved to Addis Ababa.

Lack of visas for third countries

As highlighted in the in-depth interviews, many of the respondents were interested to migrate to a third country, for which they would need to have an entry visa. However, many or almost all the refugees interviewed could not obtain this entry visa as they wanted. There were some refugees who had lived in Addis Ababa since 2012, which, combined with their former residence in the camps, meant that they had lived in Ethiopia between 10 and 14 years. Thus, every refugee worried, felt sad, or felt a sense of failure as a human being in being unable to meet their objective of migrating to a third country. They were not even sure when they would be able to apply for the visa. The lack of access to a visa complicated their lives and made them more unstable than before. Some key informants had lost their previous contact and communication with their spouse, family or friends living abroad and had lost any promise from these people for help with getting the visa. As one interviewee explained:

My husband advised me to migrate to Ethiopia. He informed me that it will be easy to get an entry visa for Germany from Ethiopia. However, the application and processing of the visa has not been done yet. My husband illegally crossed the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea and he finally reached Germany. Now, I can decide for myself where to migrate. There is no proper communication with my husband. I do not want to stay in Ethiopia as there is no work, and life is expensive here and there is no support except the provision of school for my children. The current interaction with my husband is poor and I do not want to reunite with him. He has lost me and left his children almost without any help and does not have any regular communication with me or with the children either.

Moreover, some respondents did not make the required visa application and did not even know where and how to apply. One respondent confirmed that:

I still want to migrate to Canada, however, it is difficult for me to get visa due to a lack of sponsors, processing money and idea of how to apply for a visa. I have no skills training or any other development opportunities currently available to me.

For some key informants their visa request was not successful and this made them lose hope. They knew that reapplying for a visa would take a long time and require an application fee, and they cannot be sure of its success.

Absence or shortage of income

The refugees travelled with limited money to the refugee camps. Accordingly, they had almost exhausted their money during their stay in the camps. When relocating to urban life outside camps, for example in Addis Ababa, they are left with little or no money. As a result, upon their arrival, these migrants face shortages of money for food, rent, personal health care and other basic needs. As discussed above, many refugees did not have enough money for a visa application and processing fee and had lost hope due to their current poor living conditions, lack of education and skill training opportunities. This was well explained by one key informant as follows:

I want to leave Ethiopia and migrate to Canada or Australia or any other European country to get better life. In Ethiopia, life is not good and expensive. But so far I could not migrate to these countries due to a shortage of money and sponsors and due to visa acquisition problems. I have not changed my mind not to migrate and I do not want to return to Eritrea. In Eritrea, there is no better education or employment; furthermore, corruption and administration problems are common.

However, some refugees received limited remittances from relatives and friends living in Europe, North America or elsewhere. One interviewee described the rare remittance support he received:

I get occasional financial support from my colleagues who are living in the UK and the Netherlands. However, I am without any permanent income for my livelihood. Still, I have not started any legal migration process to a third country due to lack of sponsors and money for the visa application fee.

Barriers to work

The GOE did not permit refugees to participate in any type of job. This caused them to lack any reliable source of income. This further complicated their lives and made them jobless, hopeless,

and consider themselves useless people. According to some respondents, refugees had been using drugs such as cocaine and cannabis and many of them used to consume *Chat*². On the other hand, as we were secretly informed, the worst was that some female refugees had been engaged in sex work while some other refugees participated in crime activities, such as robbery. This shows that preventing refugees from any type of work will lead to dangerous and illegal activities in Ethiopia. These social problems will become severe as more refugees are coming into Ethiopia and the problems of refugees would be intensified over time. Thus, as described by one key informant: *'the lack of employment, educational and training opportunities, and the lack of finance were my main challenges as a refugee in Ethiopia'*. Another interviewee similarly stated:

Life is difficult in Ethiopia due to the high cost of living, house rent, and lack of employment. After I arrived at Addis Ababa in June 2015, I am living with my two colleagues in a shared rented studio which costs 4500 birr per month at [location] in Nifas Silk Lafto Subcity. Addis Ababa. I am a registered refugee. As a refugee, I have no safety or security problems in living in Ethiopia.

A number of refugees confirmed that their present state of life is challenging to continue. The lack of employment opportunities to generate some income and support themselves is a very serious challenge, as discussed by one respondent:

Life is difficult here as there is no work permit, no skills training. Refugees are not allowed to move out of Addis Ababa. This complicates my life and makes it so difficult to live without work and any sources of income. I feel life to be insecure.

Lack of documents

Almost all refugees had travelled to Ethiopia without any form of documents such as passports, educational credentials, birth certificates, or other forms of documents. As explained by one respondent who migrated to Israel, was forced to return, and went to Ethiopia:

My current problem is the absence of any supporting documents for a visa application - I am not a passport holder and this makes it difficult to apply. The Government of Ethiopia

² An Ethiopian plant that its leaves are chewed by some people for its alkaloid cathinone, a stimulant, which is said to cause excitement, loss of appetite, and euphoria.

does not issue us with laissez-passers. I came back to Ethiopia since I got free transport from Israel.

Some refugees could not attend school/college or register for required training as many came to Ethiopia without any educational documents, as explained by one interviewee:

I could not attend any education or training in Ethiopia as I do not have supporting educational documents. Others who have supporting educational documents can go to school and/or get training.

Delays in the issuance of refugee identification cards

The authorized institute of the Government of Ethiopia delays the issuance of refugee identification cards. Many of the migrants travelled to Addis Ababa before obtaining their refugee ID cards at the camp or travelled with temporary IDs, which expired in few days or weeks. This made the movement of many refugees difficult and feel insecure. Moreover, while walking on streets or attending some events, policemen could request them to show their IDs. As some did not have their IDs, the police would jail them for some days until the case is investigated to release them. One of our interviewees stated the problem that: *'...as a refugee, I do not feel any safety and security to live in Ethiopia'*.

Another key informant narrated his experience as follows:

In order to improve the lives of refugees, it is good to offer them skills training like tailoring, work permits, adequate refugee services (e.g., issuance of refugee IDs), and shared accommodation, for example, in a house for temporary group accommodation. It is also good to help refugees to get access to school, health and language training and other similar services. The refugee coordinating office of the Government of Ethiopia is too bureaucratic and this must be improved, and the services be facilitated. In this connection, refugees spend a lot of time in getting services like refugee status permissions and its extension.

3.5 Eritrean refugees' networks and aspirations

In addition to the different drivers of migration, the networks that the refugees have with people living in North America, western Europe and/or Australia enhance their aspirations to emigrate from Eritrea to Ethiopia and to advance their movement until they reach third countries of asylum.

Almost all the Eritrean refugees who have lived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the period of fieldwork interviews explained that they had networks which included their spouses (33.3%), brothers/sisters (33.3%), friends (16.7%), and other relatives (16.7%) such as the daughter and son of nieces or nephews living in other countries. Through their networks, some refugees accessed migration information and financial support/remittances as their main source of livelihood. One female respondent explained her network and its benefits as follows:

I have a network with my brothers living in Canada. I receive financial support from them as the main source of livelihood for my household members. In addition, I occasionally communicate by phone with my relatives in Eritrea to inform them about the health security of my family [mine and my children].

Another female respondent also described the regular network she had with her husband as follows:

I have regular contact with my husband who is living in Germany and occasionally with my family in Eritrea. I am currently living with my [three] children in a rented studio which costs 5000 birr per month at [location] in Nifas Silk Lafto Subcity in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I receive monthly financial support from my husband as the main source of livelihood for my family. My husband had applied for legal visas and family reunion for us. However, his request was rejected because the church marriage certificate was not accepted by the German government. Still, I have a strong aspiration to wait for the legal migration process that could be arranged by UNHCR to migrate to Germany as my future plan.

The study has also captured the experience of a young refugee who has a strong network with his brothers living in North America but who has not yet determined his future migration plan. He explained his networking and migration experience as follows:

I migrated directly from Eritrea to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2019 without entering the refugee camps found in Northern parts of Tigray region. I am an unregistered refugee. I have contact with my [number of] brothers living in the USA. I am receiving sufficient financial support from my brothers as a source of livelihood. Currently, I am living with my father and [other family member] [...] in a rented condominium [...]. At the present time, I am interested to live in Ethiopia but do not want to return to Eritrea and I have not decided to migrate to a third country.

Regarding their aspirations, every migrant has his/her own goals when they decided to migrate out of Eritrea. These aspirations can be closely related to the drivers of their migration decisions. As with drivers, migrants have multiple aspirations, which they simultaneously want to meet. When deciding to migrate, most refugees were in a difficult position to recognize or prioritize their aspirations. However, the aspirations of our interviewees could be generally classified as the following: 1) relief or freedom from military/political influences and other compulsory services; 2) better economic/employment opportunities and living conditions; 3) access to better social services including education and medical services; 4) to rejoin family member/fiancés; or a combination of these.

Get relief or freedom from forced national (military) service

Our study confirmed that almost all (98%) of the total 48 key informants wanted to escape from compulsory national military service of Eritrea. The refugees mentioned that they were or are not interested to serve the Eritrean military for different reasons: 1) it is forced service; 2) their salary for the national military/defence forces is not attractive; and 3) at the same time, it is also a lifetime service, while all of them did not want to be engaged in lifelong national (military) service.

Access to better economic conditions, educational and medical services

Many of our key informants confirmed that they could not access or join higher education institutes to pursue their education in Eritrea unless they pass the final secondary school examination. Eritrea has only two higher education institutes: the University of Asmara and the Eritrean Institute of Technology, which are not properly functioning their duties and responsibilities. In Eritrea, no one is permitted to join college education unless special permission is granted by the Government. Our study confirmed that, through obtaining better quality education, all refugees were also largely motivated to access better economic and social services. As one of our respondent explained:

I want to migrate to other countries... where employment and education opportunities will be available and better. I need vocational/skill training and English language communication skill (to create opportunities for international communication).

This was also confirmed by another male respondent, where he clearly narrated his aspiration as such:

My plan is to work, help myself and get better educational opportunities. I want to permanently migrate out of Ethiopia preferably to Canada. This is just my wish and God will help me in meeting my interest one day.

Another female respondent narrated her aspiration of better opportunities in a country of asylum as follows:

I am still highly aspiring to permanently migrate from Ethiopia to Canada where my brothers live and I expect to get better access to employment, living conditions, security, educational & health services. I don't want to permanently continue to live in Ethiopia or return to Eritrea.

As discussed above, most of the interviewed refugees planned to go to a predefined country, where they intended to get better education, employment and economic opportunities. Many also aspired to a better education and working environment mainly for their children and they decided to realise their aspiration by migrating to Europe, North America, or elsewhere. This is verified by a female interviewee, who wanted better living conditions and education for her children in the third country, as explained as follows:

My initial migration plan was to migrate to Canada (transiting via Ethiopia) to get a better life and education for my children. However, I could not get a sponsor and no visa application was made so far. The Ethiopian Government has offered a scholarship to my three children to attend school in Addis Ababa.

A few refugees wanted to migrate to any third country where they would access better work and get educational opportunities. These migrants did not know and did not yet decide where to migrate, but just wanted to leave Ethiopia. This is clearly expressed by one key informant as: *'I want just to migrate to any country where opportunities will be better. It is very difficult to live in Ethiopia. I want to get skills training like garment/sewing, hair dressing or any other. But it is difficult for me as I am always helping my children.'*

This was verified by another interviewee who stated his interest as follow: *I want to get training on electricity, automotive maintenance, driving, masonry, plumbing or any other similar skill and in playing musical instruments. The life of people can be improved with better education/vocational training and provision of employment.'*

On the other hand, some other refugees expected the Government of Ethiopia and international organizations such as UNHCR and IOM to facilitate training, offer them scholarships/education, as well as to facilitate their migration process. One refugee explained his aspiration in Ethiopia as follows: *'I was expecting to get employment, training, educational and financial support in Addis Ababa from national and international supporting agencies such as UNHCR and/ or IOM to improve my living standards'.*

Although some refugees get support from their family who are living in a third country, they also wanted to access education, skills training and funding for processing their visa. One respondent supported the above fact as stated here:

I receive financial support from my brothers who are living in Germany, as my main source of livelihood. Still I did not start any legal migration process to a third country. However, I have a strong aspiration to wait for the legal migration process to be arranged by UNHCR to migrate to Germany or another third country as my future plan.

However, different refugees aspire to migrate from Ethiopia to different countries. Many refugees are aware of the importance of education, knowledge, and skills training for accessing job opportunities and better economic conditions as expressed by one of our key informants:

My plan is to permanently migrate and live in Canada. I want to help myself and improve my well-being by accessing better job and educational opportunities. Securing education and training may help to improve the migrants' life.

Family reunification

From day one of their decision to migrate, some refugees planned to rejoin their family (e.g., spouse, parents, or siblings). Some of these wanted to migrate directly to places where they would achieve the intended family reunification. One female refugee explained her aspiration as follows: *'... My future priority is family reunification and I highly aspire to migrate to Norway where my husband lives.'*

Some other migrants wanted to achieve multiple goals in their migration plan. This is verified by another female refugee, who wanted to get better economic conditions, education for her children, and family reunion with her husband living in Germany. She narrated her aspiration as follows:

I want to migrate permanently to Germany or Switzerland. People told me that Switzerland is good for migrants to live in. There is better education for children and employment opportunities. If I go to Germany, I will reunite with my husband. This will also be good. However, poor communication with my husband makes it difficult for me to get his idea now. I do not change my migration plan and do not want to stay in Ethiopia unless future situations will be changed. In Ethiopia life is expensive, as there is no work permit, work opportunities or source of income.

Another female Eritrean refugee with three children explained her aspiration that:

I decided to migrate from Eritrea to Ethiopia aiming mainly to reunite with my husband. I don't want to permanently continue living in Ethiopia and return to Eritrea. Thus, I am still highly aspiring to migrate from Ethiopia to Germany where my husband lives. I expect to get better access to employment, living conditions, security, educational & health services for me and my family in Germany.

Therefore, the interest of refugees to migrate to different countries is related to their knowledge about the intended destination country, and the availability of relatives, sponsors and others who can facilitate their entry visa or invitation and other requirements. This idea was confirmed by one interviewee who stated: *'Our plan together with my other sister is to migrate, rejoin our sister living in Germany, and work there.'*

Refugees currently living with family wanted to migrate together with all family members. Although some of these migrants identified their third country of intended destination, they wanted to go to any country where opportunities would be available, as explained by one interviewee here:

I want to migrate permanently to the USA. But I may go to anywhere where I can get access to work, improve my life and get better education for my children. I do not want to move alone but with my children. I do have relatives living in the USA and they may help me with the visa. Life in the USA will be better than in Ethiopia as there will be better opportunities to get work and a better income, and education for my children. I want to avoid depending on my relatives.

3.6 Development interventions and the refugees' future plans

Development interventions are crucial to provide sustainable solutions for the socio-economic and political challenges faced by refugees. Though the magnitude of each driver varies, the Eritrean refugees are forced to emigrate from their country due to a combination of factors. The violation of human rights and forced military service, the lack of better education or health services, the lack of employment and low salaries, and prohibition of running private sectors were the main drivers that intensely push mainly the young people of Eritrea to seek opportunities in a foreign country. To escape these diverse constraints, a number of Eritreans migrate from their country into neighbouring countries (mainly Ethiopia and Sudan) and then advance into other proximate African countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Egypt to cite some examples, until they reach third countries of asylum such North America, Europe and/or Australia, which they dream of living in.

As explored by the current study, the Eritrean refugees who are living in Ethiopia have received two types of development support: basic resources/survival support in the refugee camps and limited technical training and education opportunities.

Basic resources/survival support

While the refugees are staying in the refugee camps, they only receive basic food aid and sanitation materials. Almost all the Eritrean refugees who came stayed between one month and a couple or more years in one of the four refugee camps (Mai Aini, Adi Harush, Shimelba and Hitsats of Tigray region) and confirmed that they were receiving only 10 kgs of wheat, 1 kg of lentils, 1 litre of cooking oil and one bar of soap per person/month. However, 18 -22% of the total refugees reported that they had additionally received 1 kg of wheat flour and 60-80 Ethiopian birr per person/month. As the study confirmed, the basic resources/support given to the refugees at the refugee camps was below the basic requirement of human need to fulfil their nutritional requirements. Hence, the refugees are not willing to stay longer in the refugee camps while they wait to complete their visa processing to a third country. Rather, they continue to migrate mainly to the national capital or other smaller towns outside the camps where visa processing and life is relatively better.

Provision of technical training and educational opportunities

To enhance the capability of refugees to generate income and improve their living standards, refugees are expecting to get development support from the concerned agencies. One male interviewee explained his expectation of development assistance as follows:

I was expecting to get development assistance and skills training for a driving license, language skills, computer maintenance and other types of technical training from the relevant agents such as the Government of Ethiopian, NGOs, ARA and UNHCR that can contribute to help me find employment as a source of income to improve the quality of my living standards.

The study identified the existence of a huge gap between the expectations of refugees and the actual provision of development assistance by the concerned actors. However, some development interventions such as short-term technical training and educational opportunities are given to only a limited number of Eritrean refugees, as explained by one of our respondents as follows:

I have completed my first degree in Agriculture from Keren College of Agriculture in Eritrea before migrating. However, I have not received my academic certificate due to the restricting regulation of the Eritrean Government. I have received further higher educational training in Physics at Adigrat University in Ethiopia with the arrangement of UNHCR & Ethiopian Government. Occasionally, I am getting some income as a source of livelihood while hired to teach at private schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Some Eritrean refugees living in Addis Ababa are working as technicians in computer, phone and car maintenance, or as taxi drivers or restaurant managers in hotels. However, such employment opportunities were only limited to a few of the refugees interviewed and most of them remain highly dependent on the remittances they receive from their brothers, spouses, friends and other relatives living outside Ethiopia.

Hence, due to the limitation of development interventions and the high cost of living, the lack of employment and education and the restrictions on movement outside Addis Ababa, almost the majority of the Eritrean refugees interviewed: 1) aspire to migrate to a third country if they get the opportunity; 2) are not interested to live permanently in Ethiopia; and 3) do not want to return to Eritrea as a future plan.

4. Conclusions and Policy Implications

As a primary finding, the present research has drawn the following conclusions. Most of the Eritrean refugees living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, were predominantly young, single, and with a limited level of primary, junior or secondary education. Migrants with some tertiary level education were very limited in number among the researched refugees. Most of the refugees had no or few family members. Originating both from urban and rural areas, the Eritrean refugees have diverse cultures, skills, and educational backgrounds and motivations to migrate. Most of the Eritrean refugees have multiple political and socio-economic aspirations that they hope to achieve in a third country of asylum.

The Eritrean refugees were driven from their country into Ethiopia by a combination of political factors (forced military service and human rights violation); socio-economic factors (seeking better jobs, income generating activities, living standards, educational and medical services); networking and remittances effects; the desire for family formation/reunion; and the impacts of environmental degradation which leads to low agricultural production. The decision to migrate from Eritrea was largely made by the individual refugee, except in some cases where the respondent was influenced by their fiancé/spouse and closer relatives.

The majority of the Eritrean refugees interviewed consider Ethiopia as a country of transit through which to advance their migration trajectory to a third country of asylum if they get the opportunity to migrate to North America, Western Europe and/or Australia. A very limited number of Eritrean refugees expressed the intention to return to their country if the current undemocratic government is abolished and replaced by a democratic political administration. Western Europe, North America and Oceania (Australia) are the main intended destinations for Eritrean refugees. They mainly intend to use Ethiopia either as a country of transit or for temporary stay until they secure a visa for their intended final destinations or the fulfilment of their basic rights to access work opportunities, accommodation, and education. However, almost all the refugees interviewed had no aspiration to return to Eritrea, as they feared forced military service, human rights violations and imprisonment, and the lack of employment or educational opportunities.

The refugees interviewed encountered a number of challenges during their migration experience. Travel by foot at night, attacks by robbers and wild animals, rape, a lack of water and food were some of the challenges that the interviewees faced along their migration routes. In addition,

protracted stays in the refugee camps, a lack of income and material resources, psychological challenges, the high cost of rental accommodations, and the lack of development interventions were some of the main constraints for refugees in camps and in Addis Ababa. As disclosed during these interviews, the lack of public employment opportunities was a severe challenge for Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa. However, for most Eritrean urban refugees, social assimilation into Ethiopian host communities is not a challenge due to their common culture, history, and the ability of most Eritrean refugees to learn and communicate in Amharic. The development interventions given to the refugees provided only for their survival rather than helping them obtain employment and improve their living standards. Though the refugees had encountered multiple and diverse challenges during migration, in the refugee camps and in Addis Ababa, most of them did not change their mind to return to Eritrea.

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