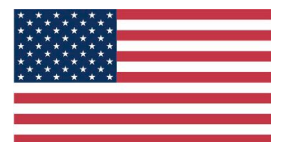


The role of agents and brokers in facilitating Ethiopian women into domestic work in the Middle East

Findings from the Meneshachin ('Our Departure') study on responsible recruitment models

September 2022

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Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Joanna Busza, Zewdneh Sabe and Cathy Zimmerman from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and is based on a qualitative research study developed by LSHTM, Population Council in Ethiopia and the Freedom Fund.

Special thanks to all who contributed to this report, especially the interviewees who participated in the research and offered us their valuable insights. We are grateful to our research partner Population Council in Ethiopia, led by Annabel Erulkar and her team members Eyasu Hailu, Lemi Negeri, Henock Markos, Tigist Solomon, Lombebo Tagesse, and Chalachew Andargie. We would also like to thank Daniel Melese, Elizabeth Anderson, Louise Hemfrey, Reimi Pieters, Sonia Martins and Yuki Lo from the Freedom Fund for their inputs.

This report was funded by a grant from the United States Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (award number SSJTIP19CA0026). The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.

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Executive summary

Large numbers of Ethiopian women seek domestic work in the “Middle East Corridor”—a significant social trend that reflects a key livelihood strategy used by Ethiopian families and communities in the face of widespread poverty (Kuschminder, Andersson and Seigel, 2018; Zewdu, 2018). Due to the large numbers, research related to this type of migration is extensive, but mainly concentrated on the “push” and “pull” factors and the potential risks of labour exploitation, trafficking and resultant threats to migrants’ physical, mental and sexual health (Ayalew and Minaye, 2017; Gezie et al., 2019; Habtamu, Minaye and Zeleke, 2017; Reda, 2018). The research presented here represents one of the few studies examining how women plan their migration experiences, whom they rely on for emotional, economic or practical assistance, and in particular, what roles are played by different formal recruiters and informal brokers in women’s journeys from Ethiopia to their destination countries, as well as their role after arrival and in cases where the women wish to return to Ethiopia.

This report brings together findings from the first two phases of the Meneshachin (‘Our Departure’) qualitative study which examines the practices of recruitment and migration facilitation for women from Ethiopia for the purpose of taking up domestic labour in the Middle East, mainly in destinations such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Lebanon and Kuwait. Building on Phase I of the study, which involved 69 interviews conducted in Addis Ababa (Busza, Shewamene and Zimmerman, 2021), Phase II of the study focused on the dynamics of migration recruitment, planning and facilitation, from the perspectives of the people most closely involved in the process and located outside of the capital city, Addis Ababa. Qualitative in-depth interviews took place in Bahir Dar Town and Hadiya zone with 87 local migration stakeholders, informal migration facilitators, returnee domestic workers from the Middle East, prospective migrants and parents of migrant women who are currently domestic workers in the Middle East. These study areas were identified in Phase I as typical “sending” communities far from the capital city in which many migrants originate.

Awareness about potential risks of migration has increased in recent years due to efforts by government and other institutions to deliver information to sending communities. Based on the interview data, communities in the study areas have a good understanding of advice to “migrate the legal way”, but have no reasonable way to do so. There were no licensed agencies in the local vicinity and travel to Addis Ababa was not realistic for most. In choosing between facilitators, the most common approach was to rely on personal contacts, often going with the first facilitator to whom they are referred. Many migrants may choose the first facilitator they have contact with in order to decrease the time between the decision to migrate and arrival in their new workplace. In addition, no prospective migrants, family members or returnees in the study described asking intermediate facilitators to provide evidence of registration. One of the reasons for this implicit trust is a widespread belief throughout the study sites that air travel, by itself, is a marker of legal migration.

In Ethiopia, the study found that facilitators use certain practices that may increase the risk of trafficking for migrants. As facilitators compete over prospective migrants for business, they become incentivised to exaggerate their claims or give potentially misleading information about risks and benefits. In addition, forging documents or circumventing formal checks can provide facilitators with an added source of income. The number of people involved in any migrant’s journey can be high, creating a “chain” of individuals that can stretch from small-scale brokers through to large-scale operators. Many facilitators do not consider themselves responsible for the well-being of migrants once their role in the “chain” is complete. These intermediary facilitators who connect community members to recruiters in Addis Ababa are themselves not able to distinguish recruiters who are licensed from those operating outside legal frameworks. This complicates efforts to hold individuals in the “chain” responsible for resulting exploitation.

There were some gender differences in the way facilitators operate. Although based on a small sample, female facilitators reported using certain practices that may reduce the risk of trafficking for migrants. Female facilitators were more likely to use their personal contacts directly to arrange migration, which lessens involvement in the long “recruitment chains.” Female facilitators emphasised they did not want to deceive prospective migrants and reported being more likely to give realistic information and advice. One female facilitator described a “payment upon success” system where fees are held with trusted community leaders until the migrant worker reports having arrived safely at the destination. Only then is the payment released to the facilitator.

In the destination countries, recruiters have little control over the migrants’ risk of trafficking. Both migrants and facilitators in Ethiopia see the agent’s responsibility ending once migrants leave Ethiopia, and believe that what happens to them subsequently relies on their employers and the local norms around treatment of domestic workers. Additionally, few agencies in Ethiopia employed staff of their own abroad, and thus most relied on local recruiters whose actions they could not influence and whose legal status they did not necessarily know. Under Ethiopian law, all registered recruiters must have USD \$100,000 held in a government-controlled account which

can be used to compensate workers (e.g., victim compensation for injury, mistreatment, or repatriation costs) that the agents have deployed. However, there currently does not appear to be a culture of accountability. With a single exception, none of the interviewees were aware of any successful claims being made, or even how such claims can be lodged.

The study findings provide support for the following recommendations for the Ethiopian government, NGOs and the overseas recruitment industry to reduce the labour exploitation and trafficking experienced by Ethiopian migrant women seeking domestic work abroad:

NGOs in Ethiopia

- Provide prospective migrants with more accurate information about working conditions and remuneration as a domestic worker in different destination countries, plus information about assistance options.
- Improve prospective migrants' understanding of and access to the legal migration process.
- Provide information on formal and informal support mechanisms at destination to all migrants, regardless of whether regular or irregular.

Government ministries in Ethiopia

- Increase the speed and ease for migrants to obtain official documents required for regular migration.
- Legalise and formalise the relationship between established recruiters and trustworthy brokers/sub-agents who operate in local communities.
- Involve recruiters in review of law and policy and engage them as positive social agents so that they help create an enabling environment for safe migration.
- Liaise with destination country governments to hold recruiters and their counterparts abroad to financial account for all parts of a migrant's journey, especially at the destination of work.
- Continue to negotiate new, and improve existing, bilateral labour agreements with destination countries, especially to expand the modes of employment available to migrant domestic workers and foreign employers.
- Develop a dialogue with destination governments to promote local laws and support mechanisms to protect foreign migrant workers.

Overseas recruitment industry

- Have proactive mechanisms to ensure the implementation of regulations and educate recruiters about the latest laws and processes so they give accurate advice to prospective migrants.
- Support agents in meeting ILO's Code of Conduct for Ethiopian Overseas Private Employment Agencies which clearly sets out their duties and service standards.
- Build capacity of recruiters and agents to enable them to function optimally in accordance with the legal framework and for the benefit of migrants.

Ethiopian Mission overseas

- Prioritise funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for adequate Labour Attaché or other diplomatic staff with relevant knowledge and training in key destination countries, in line with Overseas Employment Proclamation 923/2016 and Amendment 1246/2021.
- Improve monitoring and reporting on the status of destination agents, to ensure they are fulfilling their duties to protect deployed migrant domestic workers.
- Commission research and assessments of the current practices used by local employment placement agencies in destination countries.

NGOs in destination countries

- Create emergency funds that are accessible to all Ethiopian migrants, irrespective of their migration status.
- Support alternate mechanisms for connecting migrant domestic workers at destination.
- Consider strategic litigation as a tool for highlighting maltreatment of migrant domestic workers, as well as deterring abuse by employers and inactions by agents.

Acronyms

COC	Certificate of Competence
ESSWA	Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
MRC	Migrant Resource Centres
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USD	United States Dollar

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Background

The “Meneshachin” (our departure) qualitative study examined practices of recruitment and migration facilitation for women’s migration out of Ethiopia for the purpose of taking up domestic labour in the Middle East, mainly at destinations such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Lebanon and Kuwait (Demissie, 2017). The research was conducted from 2020 to 2022, which proved to be a time of significant global, regional and national upheavals including 1) the covid-19 pandemic and associated disruptions to livelihoods, earnings and travels, 2) the sharp economic decline in Lebanon, from which hundreds of Ethiopian migrant workers were subsequently deported, and 3) the onset of conflict and food shortages within Ethiopia. All of these factors are likely to have affected the demand for and supply of formal and informal migration facilitators, and to have shaped patterns of women’s migration in ways that are difficult to identify as economic and political events continue to unfold.

Nonetheless, the fact that large numbers of Ethiopian women seek domestic work in what is referred to as the “Middle East Corridor” remains a significant social trend, and reflects a key livelihood strategy used by Ethiopian families and communities in the face of widespread poverty (Kuschminder, Anderrson and Seigel, 2018; Zewdu, 2018). There has been extensive documentation of “push” and “pull” factors that contribute to Ethiopian women’s migration as well as a large literature on the potential risks of labour exploitation, trafficking, and resultant threats to migrants’ physical, mental, and sexual health (Ayalew and Minaye, 2017; Gezie et al., 2019; Habtamu, Minaye and Zeleke, 2017; Reda, 2018). Yet much less is known or investigated about how women plan their migration experiences, whom they rely on for emotional, economic, or practical assistance, and what roles are played by different formal recruiters and informal facilitators in actualising women’s journeys from Ethiopia to countries where they will work, as well as once they are there and when they wish to return. The Meneshachin study aimed to fill these gaps, and to identify implications for efforts to reduce risks and improve safety of Ethiopian migrant domestic workers. The research was led by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) in collaboration with the Population Council and The Freedom Fund with support from the US Department of State.

This report presents findings from the second phase of the study (Phase II), during which community-based fieldwork was conducted in two typical “sending” communities far from the capital city, Addis Ababa. The goal of Phase II was to better understand the dynamics of migration recruitment, planning and facilitation, from the perspective and experiences of the people most closely involved in the process, namely recruiters/facilitators, recently returned domestic workers, prospective migrants, and family members of women currently working as domestic workers abroad.

These findings complement the Phase I report (Busza, Shewamene and Zimmerman, 2021). Phase I was conducted in Addis Ababa and collected data from targeted policy and program stakeholders, registered recruiters and returnees who had been repatriated from Lebanon with the assistance of the Freedom Fund and were receiving care from a local rehabilitation organisation.

Phase II addresses the first two of four research questions guiding the Menashachin Study, listed below. Although the research was initially designed for community-based fieldwork to be conducted first, followed by validation and reflections by policymakers and recruiters representing the regulated side of the industry, covid-related restrictions on mobility and security concerns meant that fieldwork outside of Addis Ababa was not possible until 2022.

Meneshachin study guiding research questions:

- What are the roles of formal and informal migration facilitators engaged in recruiting women and girls for domestic labour migration along the Ethiopia to Middle East corridor? And how do their practices increase or reduce risks of human trafficking and forced labour? (Mainly Phase II)
- How do prospective and returnee migrants, their families and other community members perceive the relative benefits and risks of different types of migration facilitators, and what societal rules govern how they conduct out-migration? (Phase II)
- What government policies and programmes exist to promote responsible recruitment of low-skilled migrant workers in Ethiopia and what are the current gaps? What models could be introduced, and could they be adapted to the Ethiopian context? (Phase I)
- How do stakeholders in Ethiopia view existing and potential community-, worker- and private sector-led initiatives to promote responsible recruitment of low-skilled migrant workers? Which models or approaches are innovative and could be trialled or scaled up to improve standards for protection of workers? (Mainly Phase I)

Terminology

Presenting research results translated into a different language from the one in which data were collected always poses challenges and introduces potential misinterpretations. In this study, data were collected in two Ethiopian languages, the national language (Amharic), and a language local to Hadiya Zone, (Hadiyissa), depending on respondents' preference. It is not possible to accurately capture in English all the nuanced differences in terms applied to the many types of people who assist migrants; furthermore, even in the same language, terms were not always used consistently. As a result, we have made the decision to use the following definitions systematically throughout the text, including in translation of direct excerpts from interview transcripts. None of these terms definitively indicate the legal status of the individual or organisation, since both Phase I and Phase II data clearly indicate that most respondents do not understand or know whether or not any given person or agency has obtained a registration or licence to operate.

Facilitator: General term for any person who is engaged in assisting women migrating from Ethiopia to countries of the Middle East for domestic labour. Sometimes specified as either a formal facilitator or informal facilitator, which are terms corresponding to recruiter and broker, respectively. Facilitators usually have other forms of employment and do not rely on migration as their main source of income.

Recruiter: A person for whom arranging migration is the main form of employment, and who works alone or as part of an agency, and is responsible for the final stage of migration, which is ensuring departure from Ethiopia and placement with an employer abroad. Community members often use this term to suggest they believe the recruiter has a formal or legal role (i.e. is registered), although they usually have no way to verify this.

Broker: This term refers to someone who is considered an intermediary between potential migrants and other facilitators or recruiters. The term is most frequently used to refer to individuals operating at the local level who do not have contacts abroad or any form of registration. Their role is to find and refer women to others who take responsibility for migration logistics, although the broker may assist with some early preparations.

It is important to recognise the 'murkiness' of these terms, especially when used by migrants, because it begins to indicate the general informal, overlapping and uncontrolled nature of labour recruitment roles.

Methods

Study sites

Across the whole of the Meneshachin study, data were collected in Addis Ababa, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) and Amhara Region.

In Phase I, interviews were held with policy and programme stakeholders in Addis Ababa to understand the current migration landscape in Ethiopia, including changes to recruitment practices following the introduction of new national proclamations and laws. This was followed by interviews with female domestic workers recently returned to Ethiopia from Lebanon to understand their recent experiences of out-migration, recruitment, securing employment abroad, work conditions and the circumstances of their return.

In Phase II, the focus of the research shifted to experiences outside the capital city of Addis Ababa. As previously mentioned, this was a reversal of the original study design, where community-based fieldwork had been planned to be conducted first, but was delayed due to both covid-19 travel restrictions and security concerns. This provided an opportunity to identify remaining gaps following analysis of Phase I data, namely 1) how local facilitators operate at community level, and 2) how prospective migrants and their families determine with whom and by which route to arrange migration.

Hadiya Zone in SNNPR and Bahir Dar town and its surroundings in Amhara Region were selected based on evidence from Phase I showing that many migrants originated from these locations, and that Bahir Dar was one of the few locations in Ethiopia from which female migrants take the overland route out of Ethiopia (via Sudan or Djibouti). Bahir Dar was also selected due to its relative security stability at the time of data collection, despite previously having been affected by the conflict between Ethiopian Federal forces and the breakaway Tigray region. Other justifications for selecting Bahir Dar and Hadiya Zone include that they are major transport hubs (and therefore likely locations for facilitators), and no major “safe migration” interventions or campaigns had taken place (as far as LSHTM and the Freedom Fund are aware) reducing potential bias.

Before fieldwork started, a mapping exercise was conducted in both sites to identify “feeder towns” from which women travel to arrange onward migration. Lists of local stakeholders and key informants were compiled, and informal conversations were held to triangulate information about the origins of female migrants. In Hadiya, it was easier to identify two towns considered to be migration “hotspots”, namely Soro and Anilemo, which are known to have high numbers of women seeking domestic work in the Middle East corridor. Anilemo is primarily Muslim and located around 50 km from Hossana (the capital of Hadiya Zone) on a main road. Soro is closer to Hadiya (40 km) but without good road access. Most residents of Soro are Christians. In Bahir Dar (the capital of Amhara region), it was not possible to select “feeder towns” because demand for migration is similarly high across the different woredas (districts), according to key informants and local stakeholders. Four different urban sites (sub-cities) were thus selected for fieldwork, located in different directions from central Bahir Dar.

Study participants and data collection

Phase I of the study focused on stakeholders and recruitment agencies based in Ethiopia’s capital city, Addis Ababa. All respondents were asked about migrants’ use of different kinds of recruiters and facilitators, and their views on enablers and barriers to migrants’ safety. Thematic content analysis identified emerging themes across the migration cycle, relating to risks and protective factors experienced by migrants.

To focus on community perceptions and experiences, the following five types of respondents were recruited into Phase II: 1) local migration stakeholders (only in Hadiya), 2) migration facilitators (all informal, as no registered agents were identified in these locations), 3) returnee domestic workers from the Middle East, 4) prospective migrants, and 5) parents of migrant women who are currently domestic-workers in the Middle East. In Bahir Dar, no local stakeholders were interviewed as data obtained from Hadiya Zone stakeholders did not add new information to what had already been learned from stakeholders in Addis Ababa, suggesting data saturation had been reached for this type of respondent.

First, local stakeholders in Hadiya were identified through consultations with representatives from Ministry of Labor and Skills. Interviewees were representatives from two Ministries (Labor and Skills, Peace), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) providers, traditional community leaders, youth employment enterprises, and staff from the office of the Attorney General. They were asked to describe their involvement

in migration-related policy or programming, as well as their views on facilitators and barriers to migrants' safety.

Second, returnees, prospective migrants and parents of migrants in Hadiya were recruited through the help of local community leaders, who made the initial approach to the first few participants. Then a "snowballing" approach was used, where each respondent was asked to suggest others for interview. Staff members of the Population Council based in Bahir Dar and working at the community level were able to identify potential respondents through personal connections and their networks in the community. Community members with experience of or interest in migration were asked about migration decision-making, including perceptions of the differences associated with use of different types of facilitators, including the possible risks and benefits.

Finally, facilitators in both sites were recruited through local community networks associated with the Population Council research staff, followed by the snowballing approach. As during Phase I fieldwork in Addis Ababa, recruiting unlicensed facilitators proved challenging. As they operate outside the legal system and fear possible repercussions if identified, we experienced a 50% refusal rate in Phase II overall (28 refusals out of 56 requests for interview). Recruiting them into the study proved easier in Hadiya (26 agreed to interview out of 45) than in Bahir Dar, where only 2 out of 11 informal facilitators agreed to be interviewed. Facilitators were asked to describe how they recruit potential migrants, what support they provide to them, and their capacity to protect migrants both during departure and after their arrival in destination countries.

The study used semi-structured qualitative interview topic guides developed for each type of respondent. Well trained qualitative researchers conducted the fieldwork at both sites. Female fieldworkers conducted interviews with female participants, while both female and male fieldworkers interviewed male respondents. Interviews were conducted in local languages (Amharic and Hadiyissa). Interviews lasted approximately 60-120 minutes, and most were conducted face-to-face at locations convenient to the respondent (e.g. in their homes, shops, café or offices). Five respondents (three prospective and two returnee migrants) were interviewed over the phone. Facilitators preferred anonymous interview locations where they felt they were "hidden" from the public and legal authorities (e.g. villages further out of the town, rooftop terraces of hotels). All interviews were digitally audio-recorded except for ten facilitators who refused to be recorded. In these cases, only notes were taken. All recorded interviews and notes were transcribed for analysis.

Analysis

Two researchers from LSHTM (based in the United Kingdom and Ethiopia) led thematic analysis in collaboration with staff from Population Council. Analysis started with data familiarisation, where all the transcripts were read at least twice, followed by coding using NVivo. A coding framework developed during Phase I of the study was applied to the data, with newly emerging themes added through team discussion. The lead Ethiopian researcher conducted frequent data checking by returning to the recorded audio interviews to listen to the original Amharic to optimise accuracy of translation and provide quality control for transcriptions. A research consultant employed by the Population Council conducted the same data checking process for audio-recordings in the Hadiyissa language. All researchers held discussion meetings during the analysis process to reflect on their initial thoughts on the data set and agree on the emerging themes to help the accurate interpretation of participants' responses.

Structured comparisons were also made by type of respondent (e.g. returnees, facilitators), study site, and between Phase I and Phase II findings. Each respondent group was assigned to a member of the research team, who wrote up analytical memos and summaries, which were then compared to identify differences in perceptions and experiences across community members. During group discussions, site-specific results were identified and interpreted. Differences by respondent type and site are highlighted throughout the presentation of the Results, while reflections on emerging findings from Phase I and Phase II are included in the Discussion.

Ethical considerations

All respondents provided either written and/or verbal informed consent, consistent with the study protocol. When respondents did not want to sign a consent form, they were asked to provide verbal consent on record, using digital audio-recording. All respondents received a comprehensive study information sheet to emphasise that any information they provided would remain anonymous, that they could terminate the interview and withdraw their consent at any time, and that any data shared in reports or other research outputs would be anonymised to prevent identification of respondents or individuals they may have named. Ethical approval was obtained from LSHTM (reference number 19127) and the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists (ESSSWA) in Ethiopia (reference number ESSSWA/L/AA/0449/20). Amendments for changing fieldwork sites were approved by both ethics committees.



Results

Across all phases of the study, a total of 156 participants were interviewed.

	Phase I (Addis Ababa)	Phase II (Bahir Dar and Hadiya Zone)	Subtotal	Total
Facilitators (recruitment agents and informal brokers)	24	28	52	156
Returnees	27	23	50	
Policy and program stakeholders	18	10	28	
Prospective migrants		13	13	
Parents of current migrants		13	13	

Data from Phase I of the research consisted of 69 in-depth interviews with three types of respondents based in Addis Ababa: 27 returnees, 24 facilitators plus 18 national-level policy and program stakeholders working on issues related to migration or prevention of trafficking.

In Phase II, a total of 87 participants were interviewed from both sites across the five categories of respondents (10 local-level policy and program stakeholders, 28 facilitators, 23 returnees, 13 prospective migrants, and 13 parents/sibling of current migrants).

- All local stakeholders were male and represented diverse roles in safer migration (See Annex 1).
- Most facilitators were interviewed in Hadiya (26/28) of whom four were female.
- Returnees were all female low-skilled domestic workers, with experience in most countries of the Middle East to which Ethiopians typically migrate to (for example, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait). They had lived in these countries as domestic workers for a duration of 4 months to 10 years and their age at the time of interview ranged between 19 and 29 years old.
- Most of the prospective migrants were unemployed or had recently dropped out from school. They reported planning to migrate to the Middle East for domestic work in the near future. Their ages ranged between 18-26 years old.
- Out of the 13 relatives of migrants, seven were mothers, five were fathers and one was a brother to a current migrant.

In addition to the primary data collection described above, The Freedom Fund also consulted 24 global experts based outside of Ethiopia to validate the findings from this study. Seventeen of these semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely and seven in-person. The purpose of these interviews was to compare and contrast the findings from Ethiopia with other comparable source and destination countries, and draw lessons from responsible recruitment or safer migration initiatives that have been trialled outside of Ethiopia. All interviewees were individuals with direct knowledge of overseas labour recruitment and cross-border placement of migrants into low-wage jobs in the Middle East. Respondents were identified through purposive sampling and included representatives from eight international NGOs, eight local NGOs, two UN agencies and six universities.

In this report, findings are presented thematically, structured by the guiding research question that they help to answer. Respondents are identified by type, transcript number, and fieldwork location. The sex of interviewed facilitators is also specified, as this appeared to have a bearing on the specific role and capacity of this type of respondents, namely that female facilitators were usually returnee domestic workers themselves, and therefore a unique familiarity with both domestic work and one or more destination countries compared to other facilitators.

What are the roles of formal and informal migration facilitators engaged in recruiting women and girls for domestic labour migration to the Middle East?

Throughout the Meseshachin research, respondents tended to summarise the differences between registered recruitment agencies and facilitators operating outside the legal framework by using a simplistic “legal = safe” and “illegal = unsafe” dichotomy, reflecting their awareness of anti-trafficking campaigns. Yet when asked to describe the advantages and disadvantages of different migration routes and to provide detail about how

migration actually occurs from rural areas to the Middle East corridor, it became evident that there are no clear distinctions in reality.

First, the lack of registered recruiters outside of Addis Ababa creates a false choice; unless prospective migrants make direct contact with a licensed agency in the capital, they have to use informal intermediaries. Second, facilitators do not operate independently, but rather work in extensive networks referred to as “chains” because they link community members operating as “brokers” in rural areas through a range of small, medium and larger scale facilitators who assist migrants at different stages of their journey from deciding to leave Ethiopia through to their departure from the country. Finally, although there was widespread association of “safety” with use of registered agents, safety was not considered an important criteria by most prospective migrants; rather, they prioritised being able to arrange their departure as easily and quickly as possible, despite additional risks and costs.

Lack of registered agents outside of Addis Ababa

This study found no licensed recruitment or overseas employment agencies located at regional or zonal levels in the field sites. Phase II respondents reported that all registered agencies were in Addis Ababa, despite the fact that both Hadiya and Bahir Dar are known to be major migration “hot spot” in the country. Migrants who come from small villages through to zonal or regional towns therefore rely on the chains of facilitators at different levels, as travelling to Addis Ababa directly to identify a registered agency is too daunting.

One facilitator interviewed in Hadiya claimed to be registered, although he did not provide any documentation to this effect, and other respondents suggested this was unlikely. Later in the interview, he described how he processes migration as far as Addis Ababa, after which a separate agency takes responsibility for sending women abroad and placing them into domestic work; it is possible (but impossible to verify) that this agency has a license, and thus the local facilitator believes that he is also registered. Obtaining a license was described by facilitators as prohibitively difficult.



From highest to lowest levels of government there are challenges to get a license to engage in this facilitation process. ...They [government] make the process to get a license complicated and difficult to complete. The bureaucracy is very tedious ... and they are not happy to give the license for facilitators in a short period of time [quickly] even though we fulfill the requirements.
(Facilitator 2, Hadiya, Female)

Other facilitators stated that they were passing migrants on to registered recruitment agencies in Addis Ababa, but have to do so informally because there is no way for them to obtain legal recognition for an intermediary role. These facilitators explained that community members think they are part of the regulated system.



I am in informal facilitator, but people in this community consider me as a formal facilitator.
(Facilitator 22, Hadiya, male)



My role is supplying women to a certified person in Addis Ababa. ... I call a legal person who works in Addis Ababa, he arranges everything including food and a place to stay [prior to flight]. ... There should be agencies locally. For example, we don't have legal agencies in Hosanna; if there were legal agencies locally no one would use facilitators or illegal brokers to migrate. I can do nothing different. It is a chance [that I take]. (Facilitator 3, Hadiya, male)

In reality, it is probably very difficult for either prospective migrants or facilitators to be sure of the legal status of any agency located in Addis Ababa with which they work, and they are likely to trust what they are told by the agency staff.

Some community members felt that registered agencies are unsuitable for the rural poor. Although most respondents said informal migration usually costs more, this was not always the case. For example, a prospective migrant from Bahir Dar is quoted below, who reported that price and the bureaucratic process of going through a licensed agency dissuaded her and her peers.



The better way [of migrating] is using informal facilitation because the price is cheaper than that of agencies. Informal way is better for the poor. I think agencies require more prolonged process than informal facilitators. (Prospective migrant 10, Bahir Dar)

Implications

Migrants seek assistance for their journeys from within their communities and the local environment. If there are no registered agents available, they have no realistic choice but to work outside the regulated system, at least in the first instance. Current law prohibits registered agencies from hiring “outreach staff” in rural areas (the ban aims to prevent aggressive recruitment of community members); instead migrants and their families are expected to contact agencies directly. This is totally untenable as rural families are unlikely to know how or be able to afford independent travel to Addis Ababa to find a registered agency. Therefore, even if migrants have been exposed to awareness raising campaigns telling them to arrange migration solely with licensed employment agencies, they will not be able to act on this knowledge easily.

Operating “recruitment chains” from kebele to Addis Ababa

This study identified a complex web of social and professional networks engaged in moving women from their local communities to their eventual destination. There appeared to be many different kinds of actors with whom prospective migrants communicate and interact. First, there is someone local who is the first point of contact. These are usually referred to as brokers, which indicates that they are community members with other main occupations, but serve to identify prospective migrants and talk to them about the migration process. Brokers have limited capacity to organise logistics or travel, rather they link prospective migrants to others higher up the “chain”. A prospective migrant will come across a local broker through word-of-mouth and the knowledge of her family members, neighbours, or friends who have already migrated or are planning to.



He facilitated everything. He is my relative and he fixed everything and took me to Addis Ababa. (Returnee 6, Hadiya)



I heard that he [broker] helped a woman from my neighborhood and I took his phone number from them and called him. He told me to bring my passport to him and we met. Then he told me the cost of migration and said I should prepare the money. (Prospective migrant 5, Hadiya)

Some brokers proactively recruit potential migrants by approaching young women known to be out of work and school, or simply considered receptive to the possibility of domestic work. One woman went to the Immigration Office in Bahir Dar to apply for her passport and was casually approached by a broker there:



He asked me why I was getting a passport and I told him why. He told me that the legal route takes time, especially because plane tickets are expensive and suggested that I take the illegal route because it is faster. (Prospective migrant 12, Bahir Dar)



We directly approach them [potential migrants] based on information from different sources. We get information from her friends, families or others, for example that a particular woman has a passport and is searching for a facilitator to help her. (Facilitator 8, Hadiya, male)

Often, local brokers are the only individuals with whom migrants have direct contact. Their subsequent links are to facilitators with whom they communicate by phone or online through platforms such as Facebook. Facilitators reported wanting to avoid detection and thus operating “behind the scenes” and relying on local brokers to make the initial introduction.



Most of the time migrant women can't find me face to face . . . most of the time our contact is by phone. . . because police officials may follow us to arrest or jail us. (Facilitator 24, Hadiya, male)

Once a woman has found an “entry point” into the migration process, she will then be passed on to other facilitators who take on different roles as she progresses. While the local broker may help her obtain the kebele ID and direct her to a passport office, s/he may then hand her over to someone who works more regionally and organises transport to Addis Ababa, or in the case of Bahir Dar, over the land border into Sudan.



They come to Hossana [from rural villages] and I will send them to Addis in a public bus. I will send the car's plate number and their name list via telegram for the facilitator in Addis Ababa.
(Facilitator 5, Hadiya, male)



We send migrants mainly through Metema [to Sudan] and Afar [to Djibouti] then to Yemen and then to other Arab countries. First we collect migrants from different [rural] areas through networking with other facilitators. After collecting migrants from these agents, we directly send them to another agent in Metema, then another agent from Sudan or Djibouti receives them and sends through water transportation to another Arab country. (Facilitator 27, Bahir Dar, male)

Both community members and facilitators themselves are unaware of how many people are in the “chain” that eventually gets migrants abroad. As a result, women value their first point of contact most, and put their trust in him or her, without much thought as to who will ultimately take responsibility for their travel and placement.



I don't know [the process] exactly but there we had a good relative who works in the emigration office (in Addis Ababa) during that time. ...That guy and my niece supported her [migrant daughter] a lot.
(Parent 9, Bahir Dar)



They put their trust in the beginning with ... a relative or a family or a friend, that's how trust is built, with a person that connects with a broker or agency. (Facilitator 11, Hadiya, male)

The facilitators interviewed for this study represented different links in these long facilitation chains. They described networks of facilitators that included cooperation with local authorities who support their practice and share financial benefits. The length and density of migration “chains” mean that migrants and their families are entirely unaware of how migration is being arranged, and thus making any given individual accountable for subsequent difficulties becomes impossible.



Because the overall process is made in a chain and money shared among all [facilitators in the network], it is unrealistic to track and make someone responsible. (Stakeholder 6, Hadiya)

Some facilitators mentioned cooperating with religious leaders, health extension workers, all the way up the system through to employees of government and business offices. In some cases, bribes are used to avoid legal repercussions. Others described authorities actively participating in the facilitation process and earning a proportion of the transaction fees.



There is a strong chain of migration, officers in government offices like immigration office, embassies, airlines, police, foreign minister and other offices violate rules and work with informal facilitators.
(Facilitator 5, Hadiya, male)

Collaboration with authorities is particularly important for overland travel, as borders remain heavily monitored.



We are working very close with police force and local administrators. You know, if you don't have very close person in local and lower administrative hierarchy you cannot travel an inch with 20 migrants at your hand aiming to cross borders. Likewise, friends in Sudan have their own close contacts to make travels fast and support migrants to reach their destination countries. (Facilitator 27, Bahir Dar, male)



I have colleagues [government officials] who work with me by involving in different activities. For example, I deal with police officials who were assisting during border crossing for easily passing of the migrants. (Facilitator 23, Hadiya, male)

Implications

As has been found in previous research in Ethiopia (Adugna, Deshingkar and Ayalew, 2019), migration is a process facilitated across whole communities, including different types of respected and trusted authorities or traditional leaders. The number of people involved in any migrant's journey can be high and can stretch from small-scale brokers through to large-scale operators. This means that neither migrants nor many of the lower-level facilitators actually know how the whole "chain" fits together, again making the distinction between "legal" and "illegal" migration meaningless in practice. This also complicates efforts to take legal measures against "illegal" facilitators. Arresting local community members will simply create space for new individuals to fill the role given the high demand for locally-based facilitators. It is also unlikely to lead to identifying corruption and exploitative practices higher up the chain since the most powerful facilitators operate by phone or internet and are disguised from even other facilitators. A more useful approach could be to increase the availability of licensed and monitored agents throughout Ethiopia, perhaps concentrated in "hot spot" sending areas.

Expediting departure

The most important function of a facilitator was described as helping prospective migrants navigate each step of the journey from choosing to migrate through to departure. These steps include procuring necessary documents, arranging transport within Ethiopia (and sometimes temporary accommodation), and obtaining a ticket for the flight or space in an overland convoy for the outward journey. Local facilitators are therefore tasked with guiding migrants through the existing procedures. They do so by offering advice, direct intervention, or referral to other facilitations with whom they work.



The most significant assistance I provide to migrants is assisting them in obtaining a kebele identification card and passport. (Facilitator 1, Hadiya, male)



The broker helps the women to plan their journey by facilitating every necessary thing. When you give them a passport, they give it to the agency ... and when the visa comes you pay for the visa. (Prospective migrant 3, Hadiya)

The official pre-departure requirements have changed in recent years, including between the time that some of the returnees interviewed in this study had travelled out of Ethiopia and when data were collected. There was also confusion among community members as to what paperwork they required. All respondents knew that migrants need to apply for a passport, for which an ID card from the local kebele (village/sub-district) was needed first. Although proof of having completed 8th grade was no longer a prerequisite, this message has not filtered down to community level yet. Similarly, some returnees, but not all, reported having had to undergo pre-departure medical checks.



My passport, education certificate, training certificate on home management and COC [Certificate of Competence] were needed. Besides, a medical examination and its results were also needed, and I gave them. (Returnee 20, Bahir Dar)



I know formally registered agencies need several documents such as COC, certified educational documents and training documents. When travelling through informal means there is no need for such kind of certificates. They [migrants] need only money. Therefore, using informal facilitators is faster than the formal facilitators. (Facilitator 28, Bahir Dar, male)

As suggested by the facilitator above, migrants' primary aim is to decrease the time from taking the decision to migrate to actual arrival in their new workplace. Returnees and prospective migrants confirmed that speed was their priority and they sought out facilitators who would offer shortcuts whenever possible.



The informal [route] is faster because informal facilitators do not require you to fulfil most of the requirements. So, it is fast. Except passport and money to pay for informal facilitators, nothing is required while using the informal line. Myself and most of us prefer this line because there are no bureaucracies. (Returnee 21, Bahir Dar)

One way that facilitators are able to hasten the migration process is to forge required documents. Respondents described how training certificates, proof of educational attainment, and medical checks could be provided by facilitators. In addition to meeting migrants' desire for speed, forging documents or circumventing formal checks provides facilitators with an additional source of income.



If she wants to train and earn the COC she pays 2500 birr, but if she doesn't want to do so, we will prepare a COC and she pays 3500 birr. (Facilitator 20, Hadiya, male)



The informal facilitators bring forged certificates for the migrant women, and this becomes another source of income for the facilitators by imposing additional payment on the migrants other than a passport and traveling costs. (Hadiya stakeholder 7)

The reasons for migrants' haste to depart are not clear, but the desire for rapidity was widespread across both study sites. This may reflect normative expectations that young women not otherwise engaged in employment or education have a duty to seek a livelihood elsewhere. One prospective migrant said the reason she didn't discuss her plans to migrate with others was that once people knew someone was planning to leave, they would harass them until they left, constantly asking "why is it taking so long?" (Prospective migrant 12, Hadiya).

On the other hand, there were a few prospective migrants who reported that leaving quickly was not their main concern, and they plan to complete the formal process, even though it is likely to be more arduous.



Legal ones [agencies] who have got a license from the government will make migrants' experiences better because they give you their phone numbers, they respond as soon as possible whenever you call them, and mediate during conflicts with employers. Then they will change [my employment] or send me back. (Prospective migrant 6, Hadiya)



I choose the legal [means] because they [recruiters] stay with us until the end and won't abandon us, since they are responsible for the things that happen to us ... If you choose the legal way, it is harder, it will take you a longer time, you'll just sit around and you must pay more, and that is hard for us. (Prospective migrant 4, Hadiya)

Implications

In recent years, eligibility requirements for migration have been eased, particularly with the removal of the need for a woman to have achieved a certain level of education. The exact requirements, and what paperwork is needed to demonstrate eligibility, should be clearly communicated to reduce existing confusion. Furthermore, given the importance of speed of departure to prospective migrants, all remaining procedures should be made as efficient and streamlined as possible to avoid delays in women receiving pre-departure training and undergoing any medical checks to avoid them seeking forgeries in order to hasten the process.

How do recruitment practices increase or reduce risks of human trafficking and forced labour?

This study did not prospectively follow women from planning to migrate through to their work experiences abroad, and thus no causal associations can be made between use of different types of facilitators or migration routes with specific outcomes. Nevertheless, respondents described ways that the current system of facilitation shaped potential for labour exploitation, trafficking or abuse.

First, facilitators compete over prospective migrants for business, and thus are incentivised to exaggerate their claims of being able to place women in high-paying jobs or give potentially misleading information about risks and benefits. Second, as alluded to previously, facilitators located in rural areas have no way of determining the legal status of recruiters to whom they refer migrants in Addis Ababa. They appear to believe, or at least claim to believe, that they work solely with licensed agencies and therefore migrants' safety will be protected once they leave Ethiopia; this optimism is also related to the prevailing view that travelling out of Ethiopia by air is a legal route with full knowledge of the government. Finally, most facilitators do not consider themselves to be responsible for the well-being of migrants once their role in the "chain" is complete; again, this reflects their hope that the final facilitator in the process will take responsibility for safeguarding migrants as well as lack of confidence that any protections can be provided to Ethiopians once they have left the country.

Competition over prospective migrants increases deception about work conditions

Many respondents highlighted that migration remains big business and provides significant income to facilitators. As a result, there is fierce competition over prospective migrants.



Another thing that puts the migrants in misery is the competition among the brokers because brokers are competing with each other in order to take advantage of the other brokers.
(Facilitator 12, Hadiya, male)

Migrants usually look for recommendations of facilitators with a good "track record" of sending others who have had successful experiences. If they know returnees whom they consider to have been successful, they may turn to them for advice, but often women looking to go abroad may not have a personal contact to whom to turn, and thus may rely on the testimonies of the facilitators themselves. For example, a prospective migrant from Bahir Dar had heard rumors about Ethiopian domestic workers being thrown down stairs or off balconies, but seemed to take the facilitator's assurances at face value:



I said, "people here in Ethiopia sometimes say the employers of Arab countries threw the workers from building is that true"? I was eager to know about it. ...He replied that all the talk about throwing from buildings is false. (Prospective migrant 11, Bahir Dar)

Sometimes, the facilitators offer to introduce prospective migrants to current domestic workers abroad or returnees whom they had placed; several prospective migrants said they had spoken to such "satisfied customers" prior to agreeing to use a specific facilitator. They would not be able to verify the authenticity of the person's identity or experiences, however, making them potentially more vulnerable to deception.



They also preach the chance of the best job opportunity, by referring [prospective migrants] to some successful migrant's family. (Facilitator 15, Hadiya, male)



I highly encourage them to migrate, by giving some examples about successful migrants' life situations. (Facilitator 23, Hadiya, male)

Numerous returnees described finding conditions abroad to be significantly worse than they had been led to believe, confirming that in order to convince migrants to take up their services, facilitators use false claims about work conditions, salary rates, and potential risks.



The [difference] between [my] expectations and reality is far, like between the sky and the earth.
(Returnee 9, Hadiya)



The brokers tell you a different story from reality. (Returnee 10, Hadiya)



They [the brokers] just tell you that everything is good and fill you up with rumours.
(Returnee 23, Bahir Dar)



Implications

The enormous challenge in addressing recruitment-related practices that puts people at risk of trafficking is the inability to predict what happens on the destination side. To date, most of the advice and interventions to improve recruitment have focused on the origin side or pre-departure labour intermediaries. Yet, most of the most egregious, harmful abuses and trafficking-related acts occur once a woman arrives and begins working at the destination. As noted in previous sections, labour intermediation is comprised of a network of actors, many, if not most, of whom have little to no control over what happens to the woman once she arrives at the destination. For instance, facilitators in Ethiopia have little ability to vet prospective employers, limited capacity to negotiate working conditions between the employing household and the worker (e.g., hours, breaks, tasks, pay schedule, etc.) and almost no means of helping women leave unsafe, exploitative or abusive situations.

Previous research indicates that the three most predictive features of the risk of human trafficking relate to the destination location, work sector and the recruiter—who is generally the one who determines the former two (Kiss et al., 2020). Few recruiters at origin believe they are responsible for what happens once their client leaves the country, and it is likely to be very difficult to hold them responsible for subsequent events, especially in nations with the Kafala system or similar laws and endemic discrimination against migrant workers. In reality, little improvement in women's working conditions can be expected until policies and programmes are implemented in destination locations. While there may be practical and political challenges to working in destination countries, especially in the Middle East, these are efforts that must be made if funders and implementing organisations are serious about improving recruitment and reducing human trafficking.

Informal facilitators don't know or assume all sending agents are registered

Facilitators based in Hadiya Zone and Bahir Dar reported that safety of migrants was ensured by using legally registered recruitment agencies for the final step of the journey, i.e. sending women out of the country. Overall, community-based facilitators who referred prospective migrants to someone in Addis Ababa said that these facilitators would protect migrants at destination because they believed the agencies operated according to legal requirements.



I hand them to the licensed person . . . I do believe they will [protect migrants] because I work with a licensed facilitator. (Facilitator 18, Hadiya, male)



Agencies that are registered are better for everything. They take responsibility to keep the migrants safe and to return them in case of accident or danger. (Facilitator 3, Hadiya, male)

Whether these facilitators genuinely believe (or know) that they are referring migrants to licensed agencies is impossible to verify. It may simply be an expedient way to deflect responsibility for migrants' well-being once they are no longer under the respondent's responsibility. Only one facilitator described going through a process of verification about the status of the recruitment agency to which he sends local migrants:



My role is to go and check that agency, I see in which office it is based, if it's real, I check if it is legal, ... if it is licensed by the government and if it has no problems, otherwise I wouldn't recommend our sisters to a random agent, just for the sake of money. (Facilitator 11, Hadiya, male)

It is unlikely that community members will request this verification, and no prospective migrants, family members or returnees interviewed for this study described asking intermediate facilitators to provide evidence of registration for the person(s) who would send them abroad. One of the reasons for implicit trust is that there is a widespread belief throughout Ethiopia that air travel, by definition, represents legal migration. The fact that an immigration official stamps the migrant's passport appears to be universally interpreted as evidence that there is formal acknowledgement of that individual's legal departure, and that the mode of travel itself will guarantee safety at destination. Despite many years of awareness raising about risks of migration, the association of air travel with both legality and safety has seemingly not changed, as evidenced by the following excerpts from interviews with migrants' relatives and a prospective migrant:



They [daughter and facilitator] first started contact via phone. Then he asked her to give him the money because her plane ticket came; so, they met up and she gave him the money and he gave her the plane ticket. ... We assume he is legally recognized. We do not exactly know. (Parent 12, Bahir Dar)



I assumed the process was legal just because they were requesting her to have a passport. (Parent 4 (Brother), Hadiya)



It was official, with air travel. (Parent 5, Hadiya)



Well since the legal way is through flight, then it will be on flight. There will not be any problem if I choose to go by airplane. (Prospective migrant 1, Hadiya)

Implications

Information campaigns about the risks of land border crossing versus air travel have been very successful. However, this has also led to interpretation that air travel is safe by definition, and that because a woman has obtained a passport and had it stamped by immigration officials, she must be “known” to the government and somehow under their protection. This misunderstanding requires targeted communication so that it is clearer that while travelling to the Middle East corridor from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport is a safer means of departure it does not guarantee any subsequent protections once at destination.

Lack of interest and capacity to protect migrants

Beyond assuming that sending agents will protect migrants, the facilitators interviewed in this study did not consider themselves to be responsible for securing the safety of migrants once they had been passed further up the “chain” towards departure.



My responsibility will end after migrants reach to another facilitator. . . . Frankly speaking almost all informal agents do not think about responsible recruitment. Rather they are focusing on making money. (Facilitator 28, Bahir Dar, male)

Furthermore, community-based facilitators do not believe they can assist migrants abroad. This is partly for practical reasons, as most of the interviewed facilitators work at the local level, and either have no links in the destination countries or are not necessarily able to exert any influence over them. Facilitators were unable to identify ways that they would be able to access a migrant who experiences difficulties in another country.



It depends on her luck, and if we meet a good person, we will help, but we don't have the confidence and the ability to take her out of the situation. (Facilitator 16, Hadiya, male)



Yes, [I can protect them] until they reach Sudan, I can deliver any protection but sometimes there are uncertain situations especially from security personnel. But to speak honestly, I am afraid I cannot deliver any protection once they are out of Ethiopia. You know things are out of our control and it depends upon the strength of our colleagues working in Sudan and Saudi Arabia. (Facilitator 27, Bahir Dar, male).

Moreover, facilitators are themselves operating illegally and fear being arrested, so are therefore unwilling to draw attention to themselves by trying to intervene or alert the authorities.



Leave alone protecting the migrants, I am not able to protect myself as I am in an illegal line of business. Only the migrants themselves are responsible for protecting themselves. (Facilitator 5, Hadiya, male)

Implications

As stated earlier, the inability of Ethiopian-based facilitators, particularly those operating at community level, to intervene once a woman has left the country and is working in domestic work abroad is among the most important challenges to improving labour recruitment. Without trustworthy, well-vetted labour intermediary agencies and a supportive legal framework in destination countries, migrants are very unlikely to be able to access assistance. Those working to improve recruitment practices will have to develop strategies to work with recruiters in destination locations. Unless agencies at destination prioritise workers' well-being at least as highly as they care for the employers' concerns, little change will occur in women's work conditions.

Similarly, efforts to improve the behaviour of job placement agencies in destination locations must be accompanied by efforts to improve government responses to abuses by employers and placement agencies. Other studies have also highlighted the importance of strengthening the rights of migrant workers where they work rather than pre-departure, focusing on diplomatic agreements, help lines, local support organisations, prosecutions, compensation and soft support via networks of migrants from their home countries (Kiss et al., 2020; Zimmerman et al., 2021). For example, women repatriated to Ethiopia from Lebanon during its financial crisis were first assisted by a Beirut-based Ethiopian assistance programme, which established a partnership with a rehabilitation NGO in Ethiopia. Some had also received help from the Labour Attaché at the Ethiopian embassy. These types of formal support services should be a central investment alongside initiatives to improve ethical job placement in destination locations. There is little reason to believe that improvements in work conditions will be achieved simply via promoting better links between licensed Ethiopian agencies and in-country counterparts, who are very difficult to monitor or influence from abroad.

How do prospective and returnee migrants (including survivors of trafficking), their families and other community members perceive the relative benefits and risks of different types of migration facilitators?

As presented in the preceding sections, most prospective migrants and their families did not give much thought to how they arranged their migration beyond trying to expedite the process. This meant that although there was universal acknowledgment that using licensed agencies in Addis Ababa would reduce known risks, few families found this to be feasible or desirable given the lack of registered agents locally, and the perception that complying with regulatory requirements would delay departure.

When asked about criteria used to select a facilitator and mode of migration, the most common approach was to rely on personal contacts. No other determinants were particularly highlighted throughout data collection. The only other factor was whether or not departure occurred by air or overland, with the former considered safer and generally preferable. However, although perceived as dangerous, land-travel is considered feasible by many migrants and their families if it is more convenient or cheaper, with particular relevance in Bahir Dar, which is located closer to routes via Sudan and Djibouti.

Importance of personal networks

Prospective migrants are most likely to contact a facilitator who is a relative or trusted community member, or has been recommended by a friend, peer or successful returnee. Often little research or further investigation follows, with implicit confidence that family members and other close contacts or respected community members have migrants' best interests at heart.



If a broker is a well-known person, there is no need to be afraid. (Prospective migrant 8, Hadiya)



I first discussed with my brother and got his advice. My sisters were already in the Middle East so I also asked them and then I decided to migrate ... firstly my sister sent me a visa. And secondly my brother helped me, he was the one who helped me get a passport. (Returnee 18, Bahir Dar)

Increasing use of social media means that prospective migrants are able to communicate directly with women currently in domestic work abroad. Current migrants can provide up-to-date information and may have obtained additional contacts since arriving in their country of employment through networking with other domestic workers and/or the local Ethiopian community. One prospective migrant in Bahir Dar explained how she had considered several facilitators suggested to her by Ethiopian women working abroad and relied on their advice for selection:



Prospective migrants and women who are already working there [Middle East] call each other via phone and exchange ideas about migration. ... I have consulted two informal facilitators. I preferred one of the facilitators based on my friend's suggestion. I decided to use the informal facilitator who sent her. She said he is better than other facilitators. (Prospective migrant 10, Bahir Dar)

Personal contacts can also help communities circumvent the "chain" of facilitators altogether, although this usually requires a close personal contact within a government agency. One parent of a current migrant described how in her family, a combination of having family members based in Saudi Arabia as well as in Addis Ababa allowed her daughter to organise all her travel and employment without engaging services of any facilitators or agencies.



We didn't use paid facilitators. Rather my niece who is living in Addis Ababa, a close relative who works in the emigration office, and a close relative who is living in Jeddah supported the entire process. ... It is with the great kindness and support of her [migrant daughter's] relatives (both in Addis Ababa and Jeddah) that my daughter didn't face difficulties like I heard in the history of other girls. These relatives made her travel easy, and they supported her to find accommodation until she started her own job. (Parent of migrant 9, Bahir Dar)

Personal contacts also appear to be important if a migrant experiences hardship. They can advocate on behalf of the migrant with the facilitators in Ethiopia and put pressure on them to take action to help. For example, a returnee from Bahir Dar reported having used a registered agency in Addis Ababa. Nonetheless, she experienced a work-related accident, which she implied was due to violence from her employer. It was only after her aunt intervened and put pressure on the recruitment agency to respond that they agreed to pay out insurance, although the returnee did not consider it adequate compensation for her injuries.



When I fell, [my aunt] went [to the agency] and threatened to sue and that's why they brought me back [from Saudi Arabia]. [The agent] saw me and saw my injury and paid me life insurance. But the amount of money and the injury they [employers] caused me is not the same. (Returnee 22, Bahir Dar)

One interesting finding relates to gender differences in the way that facilitators operate, with female facilitators more likely to use their personal contacts directly to arrange migration. They also reported being less involved in long "recruitment chains". Only four female facilitators were identified and recruited into this study, however, all of them based in Hadiya Zone. Three described being returnees themselves. Some maintained contact with former employers in the countries where they had worked, using these families to identify others who required Ethiopian domestic workers. They also relied on word-of-mouth recommendations within their own communities to fill positions with prospective migrants from their own community networks.



Whenever my former employers that I previously worked for asked me to bring domestic workers for them, I used to tell them that I have got relatives and neighbors that I know and who are in need. They tell me to bring them a housemaid and I will ask them to cover for their visa, ticket, and transportation expenses as well as their cloth expense and they will take them. (Facilitator 4, Hadiya, Female)

One woman referred to an "office" in the (unspecified) destination country with which she is affiliated, and that "friends" there are responsible for picking up newly arrived Ethiopian migrants and taking them to their employers and assisting with requests for a change in contract/post from either the domestic worker or employer; these colleagues are later described to be Arabic-speaking Ethiopian nationals.



My friends are in the office, so when the women arrive, they will pick them up, hire them, change their house if they are not comfortable, and arrange some money [salary payment] with the Arabs and send us some money. (Facilitator 21, Hadiya, female)

Among this small sample, female facilitators were more likely to give details of the information and advice they provide to prospective migrants, emphasising that they do not want to deceive them by exaggerating the benefits or minimising the risks of migration. Whether or not they portrayed an accurate depiction of

the support they provide is unknown, as are the outcomes for the women they place into employment. Nonetheless, it is notable that the female facilitators gave examples of measures they put in place to reduce potential exploitation. For example, one described a system where fees are held with trusted community leaders until the migrant worker reports having arrived safely at destination, at which point payment is released to the facilitator:



I am a religious woman and I don't want to collect money from suffering migrants. ... I will not collect the total payment at once, but some amount of payment is kept with locally trusted elders. The remaining amount of money is given to me if and only if the women arrived ... when the community can really trust you ...[then] your image builds positively. (Facilitator 2, Hadiya, Female)

Another had worked as a facilitator while she was based abroad, and therefore was able to check on domestic workers once they had been placed into households. She had developed a relationship with diplomatic staff and called the Ethiopian embassy when she felt migrants required assistance. Now that she was back in Ethiopia, she had given up facilitating migration, as she did not feel she could provide any assistance from a distance.



I can't do anything here in Ethiopia, and that is why...I stopped work. ...I can't help her [migrant] if I am here. When I was there, I would go directly and take her out of the house. (Facilitator 13, Hadiya, female)

Implications

As noted by the last participant, the most effective way to ensure a woman's safety is for responses to be available in the destination location. At the same time, reports suggest that personal networks and individual responsibility appear to lead to better work conditions and assistance when needed. It may be worth exploring how personal networks can be used to improve protection for migrants, particularly once they are at destination. In other contexts, such as Southeast Asia, informal facilitators who were community members of the migrants they placed into work were found to be better able to avoid migrants' exploitation (Bylander, 2019; Harkins, Lindgren and Suravoranon, 2017). Similarly, support among migrant workers has been shown to be instrumental in increasing migrants' access to health care and other services (Tucker et al., 2011). It is interesting to note the different approach to facilitation described by former returnees. At the same time, the sample of just four women, only three of whom reported having worked as domestic workers themselves, is too small to make generalisations about gender differences in facilitation. Nonetheless, women who organised migration for their relatives and other social contacts while they were still in the Middle East or soon after their return were better able to specify what measures they took to select employers for Ethiopian domestic workers and how they intervened if a problem was reported.

Overland route considered risky but convenient

In Phase II, respondents described how female migrants travel overland to Sudan or Djibouti and then reach their destination by boat, via Yemen. From Yemen, migrants continue on foot or by vehicle. The overland route is less common for female migrants seeking domestic work, but may have increased due to covid-19 travel restrictions having limited international air travel. The selection of Bahir Dar for fieldwork is also likely to have increased chances of hearing about overland transport due to proximity to roads to the relevant borders.



Almost all of them travel by bus until Sudan and they use sea transport to reach Saudi and Yemen and again from Yemen they use Bus and sometimes on foot to reach to Oman and Dubai. (Facilitator 27, Bahir Dar)

All types of respondents identified overland migration as dangerous and undesirable. Physical hardships including inadequate food and water, the risk of sexual assault and other forms of abuse, and tiring, long journeys on foot were reasons for the overland route having a very negative reputation.



The [overland] travelling/journey is very harsh. They [migrants] cross different borders, there is thirst and hunger. There were individuals who didn't survive the difficulties of the journey. Some of them were attacked by animals. There is high probability of being sexually abused and harassed. (Returnee 21, Bahir Dar)

Nonetheless, many community members said that they and others would be willing to risk travelling over land borders to reduce costs and delays. Furthermore, for migrants unable to obtain passports (i.e. because they are underage), crossing land borders is seen to be easier as migrants are often hidden in the back of vehicles and/or border patrols are avoided altogether or crossed through the use of bribes.



When they [migrants] have missing documents or don't have enough money, they use the Metema route to migrate. The first reason is that Metema does not require much money and the route is fast. Also, there is no age or gender requirement so you enter directly. (Returnee 19, Bahir Dar)

Even in Hadiya, some respondents mentioned overland travel as an increasingly popular route, with migrants travelling via Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar, and then onwards to Sudan. A returnee described taking a flight from Sudan to Beirut, thus combining overland migration out of Ethiopia with air travel later.



I went from Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar, from Bahir Dar to Metema, from Metema to Sudan, from Sudan to Beirut. (Returnee 2, Hadiya)

Implications

Unfortunately, there will always be desperate migrants willing to undertake the most risky forms of migration if that is all they can afford or arrange due to, for example, wishing to circumvent age restrictions or the need to obtain an ID card or passport. This study made clear, however, that people are well aware that routes through Sudan and Djibouti are more dangerous, and that the preference is for departing by air out of Addis Ababa. It is possible that some of the perceived increase in overland travel relates to the effects of covid-19. During the pandemic, there were almost no international flights and the common destinations for domestic work closed their borders and, in some cases, deported Ethiopian migrants, using the pandemic as justification. Some of the pent-up demand for migration is therefore being met through land routes and may reduce again if air travel continues to increase to pre-pandemic levels. These difficult decisions made by some migrants further indicate the potential value of increasing reliable migrant networks for women to seek advice from actual migrants, especially those who have recently completed the journey. It raises questions about strategies to link women at destination locations with prospective migrant women in origin locations.

What societal rules and norms govern how they conduct out-migration?

Demand for migration increasing

When asked about current trends in migration to the Middle East for domestic work, there were competing patterns noted by respondents. First, migration was seen to have become more difficult as covid-19 travel restrictions reduced both flights out of Ethiopia and visas issued to Ethiopians from destination countries. Although travel was returning to pre-pandemic levels, it is still considered more difficult, and therefore costlier, to arrange. Similarly, the conflict within Ethiopia periodically closed land routes such as roads out of Bahir Dar, although again, these appear to be operating as normal again.

At the same time, both the pandemic and the conflict have increased the supply of potential migrants, as Ethiopians have experienced pandemic-related economic downturn, followed by uncertainties in the labour market and depreciation of the Ethiopian currency as a result of the conflict. An increase in the number of internally displaced persons will also increase interest in out-migration. Respondents highlighted that the combination of factors would likely increase informal migration over regular routes as there was unlikely to be adequate capacity in the formal system to cope with growing numbers.



The pandemic and the conflict have prepared the ground for illegal travel. (Stakeholder 5, Hadiya)



Conflict in the country has its own impact on our work, even though there is high interest for migration and many women ready to migrate, but yet the security issue is being obstacle. (Facilitator 24, Hadiya, male)

Pessimism about the situation in Ethiopia further gives impetus to potential migrants, particularly in a context of a strong belief in the value of testing one's own "luck" and working to "change one's life". A widespread sentiment expressed by all types of study respondents was that despite the potential dangers, migration was a better option than staying in Ethiopia. There was no evidence of poor awareness about risk; on the contrary, most respondents were able to detail terrible things they had heard happen to Ethiopian domestic workers in the Middle East.



I have heard negative information such as that if your employers are not good, they may send you home without payment after you worked for them a long time. I have also heard that some employers make the migrants disabled. ... still I am ready to go because I want to change my life and support my family. ... Honestly speaking, I haven't seen a [returnee] woman who has shown marvellous change, but it is better than the life I am living here. (Prospective migrant 10, Bahir Dar)



I know a woman who used to be working in an Arab country. I talked to her, and she told me that the conditions there are not favourable. But I want to go and face it. She said that all things are difficult for new ones. The job itself, language, the people and all is difficult for beginners as she said. As she said, someone must be lucky to get good employers. As she said, the very important thing is luck not knowledge. I am on the way to try and see how much I am lucky. (Prospective migrant 11, Bahir Dar)

Implications

These last two quotes could have saved the international community substantial sums invested in 'awareness-raising' campaigns over the past decade warning migrants about human trafficking. There is little doubt that most migrants understand there are substantial risks associated with migrating for work, especially in domestic work jobs that are well-known to fit into the '3Ds': Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning. It is clear that women are making the choice between certain poverty and potential to improve their lives and the lives of their family. They are willing to 'try their luck', and few warnings, even from local acquaintances, let alone government entities, will deter them from taking a chance. Interventions to prevent trafficking will be more effective if they lift the burden from the workers themselves to make the 'right' decisions in a sea of bad options and 3D work conditions, and instead identify strategies to increase the available, safe, well-paid employment.

Low expectations for assistance outside of Ethiopia

Few respondents believed it was realistic to expect facilitators to guarantee their safety once they left Ethiopia. They assumed facilitators have the capacity to find them domestic work, ideally with a high salary, but believe that once they arrive in their destination country, their fate lies in the hands of employers. Returnees, parents of women abroad and prospective migrants all referred to "luck" as the determinant of the migration experience.



It is not the facilitator who determines your success. It is your luck of finding good employers that determines whether you achieve your goals. (Returnee 15, Hadiya)



I was lucky and had a good experience. However, there are people who die by drowning and other things. Even after getting in [to the country], there are people who get detained even before getting a job. There are people who face different risks, but luckily, I did not face any. (Returnee 23, Bahir Dar)



They can do nothing, especially the facilitators who are living here in Ethiopia. (Parent 8, Hadiya)

Returnees in particular expressed gratitude for their facilitators, even when they had poor outcomes, as they believe the facilitators' role ends once migrants leave Ethiopia.



The broker did well. Since he is a broker, he takes money. He tried to make things good, assuming that there wouldn't be any problem, and that we would go there and change our lives. (Returnee 3, Hadiya)



When I think of them [facilitators], they did a good job in supporting me. When someone wants to work and live a better life, it is a good thing for people to support this person [migrant]. ... Although I didn't succeed, they [facilitators] have helped me. (Returnee 4, Hadiya)

These attitudes mirror those of facilitators themselves, who feel it is not their responsibility or in their capability to assist migrants outside of Ethiopia. There currently does not appear to be a culture of accountability. One of the measures put into place in Ethiopian law is that all registered recruiters must have a fund established for use when migrants do not receive their contracted salaries or come to harm. With the exception of one returnee who described having received a payment following an accident (and only when her aunt put pressure on the agency) no respondent throughout the Meneshachin study was able to explain how the fund was used, whether or not any successful claims had been made, and by what process a migrant or family member might access these funds.

Implications

In the same way that facilitators in sending communities do not think it is their responsibility to follow the well-being of migrants once they have been handed over to the next "link in the chain," community members also do not see facilitators to have a long-term role. Again, this reflects the reality of the current migration landscape, where most community members only get to know a small handful of facilitators, many of whom are trusted personal contacts. They therefore generally value the efforts of local people who have helped them, even if they did not have positive migration experiences. Community members are more likely to blame the faceless facilitators with whom they do not have direct contact, who take responsibility for them at the final stages of their journeys i.e. transport to Addis Ababa or Metema, local accommodation followed by air ticket or overnight drive over the border.

It would be useful to separate migrants' access to assistance from their route of migration, and provide them with practical information about how to obtain assistance in each of the countries to which they might migrate. For example, instructions on how to contact the Labour Attaché or other Ethiopian Embassy officials, information on migrants' rights or social protections services, lists and contact details of Ethiopians living in the Middle East who are willing to be "resource persons" or ways that they or their family members could alert officials within Ethiopia who could follow up through diplomatic channels. However, even these efforts depend on strengthening the resources in destination locations and making sure the designated resources are reliable, sustainable and accountable. The current reliance on employment agencies in either the destination or Ethiopia does not appear to function sufficiently to ensure a migrants' safety and respond when they need assistance. This weakness is further complicated by a migrant's inability to distinguish between regular and informal migration or be sure that facilitators will act according to even the limited policies and laws that are on paper. For those migrants who do use licensed recruiters, better information on how to access the reserved "emergency funds" and assistance in doing so is clearly warranted. The involvement of legal aid offices may be of use to help women request compensation funds they are due.

A white microwave oven is stacked on top of a grey Xsinex refrigerator. On top of the microwave, there is a blue vase, a small container of snacks, and a power strip with several outlets. The refrigerator has a small sticker on the door that says "Xsinex".

A black television set is placed on a three-tier stainless steel metal stand. The TV has "GENERAL" printed on its back. The middle shelf of the stand holds a red plastic bag. The bottom shelf holds a black bowl filled with fruit, including bananas and tomatoes, and a clear plastic bottle with a yellow cap. A power strip is visible on the floor in front of the stand.

GENERAL
MODEL: 2002-01
SERIAL: 2002-01
MADE IN CHINA
POWER SUPPLY: AC 220V 50Hz
POWER CONSUMPTION: 100W
NET WEIGHT: 1.5kg
GROSS WEIGHT: 1.8kg
PACKAGE SIZE: 40x30x20cm

Xsinex

YAYA

Discussion: Main findings and implications from the Meneshachin study

This section brings together findings from Phase I and Phase II data collection to present a more comprehensive picture of how migration facilitation is currently structured and functions in Ethiopia. It offers a summary of key findings across all three research sites, with comments on where there were differences of opinion or recommendations by respondent type.

Increased community awareness of migration risks does not influence practice

Many programmes and interventions that aim to reduce human trafficking and exploitative labour focus on increasing community awareness of risks and dangers of migration in general, or specific routes and destinations. In Ethiopia, following a ban on out-migration between 2013 and 2015, campaigns have centred on the message that legal migration—defined as using the services of licensed overseas employment agencies—is safe, while any irregular migration outside of this system is not. This message has been well understood and absorbed, even though it does not appear to be believed or adhered to by many people in this study.

In Phase I, government stakeholders were most strongly supportive of the current legal framework including a range of Proclamations addressing overseas employment and anti-trafficking measures introduced in 2016, 2020 and 2021. Nonetheless, they also felt that the promise of the new legislation was not being met, and that what was good policy “on paper” was difficult to implement.

There were also concerns that it was difficult for any government authority to monitor registered agencies, possibly because there were too many, but also because existing capacity to regularly check on recruitment agencies was low. The researchers in this study themselves found it difficult to obtain a reliable list of operating recruiters, and found only 45 out of over 400 agencies publicly displayed at the then Ministry of Labor Affairs (renamed Ministry of Labor and Skills) had functioning phone numbers.

Twenty-one licensed recruiters were interviewed in Part I, and they also broadly supported existing legislation, but gave numerous examples of how it was difficult to respond to migrants’ needs while they were in destination countries. Few agencies employed staff of their own abroad, and thus most relied on local recruiters whose legal status they did not always know and whose actions they could not influence.

Even when licensed agencies sent migrants, migration “pathways” often diverted from the formal process. For example, through the formal process a local agent is responsible for collecting arriving migrants at the airport and hosting them until a contract is agreed upon with their potential employer and the placement is approved by the migrant. However, in practice, employers often met the arrivals directly. In extreme cases, licensed recruiters used their license as a cover, and operated in the same ways as informal facilitators by circumventing required processes (e.g. checking eligibility or ensuring pre-departure training) to save time and costs.

At the community level, Phase II fieldwork highlights that communities have good awareness of advice to “migrate the legal way” but do not necessarily have a realistic or reasonable way to do so. First, it is almost impossible for prospective migrants in Hadiya and Bahir Dar to independently contact a licensed agency, as there are none in the local vicinity and travel to Addis Ababa is not realistic for most. Second, prospective migrants do not know how to verify whether or not they are linked to a legal entity, as they rely on intermediaries who may also not know, or may mislead them, about the registration status of the agency in Addis Ababa. Instead, migrants apply the proxy assurance of “departure by air” to determine what is regularised migration. Finally, in the absence of formal sources of information about work conditions and assistance measures in different countries, prospective migrants gain their knowledge from trusted community sources, including returnees, current migrants and facilitators, all of whom might have a biased view and potential incentives to deceive them, especially if they are competing with others to offer facilitation services.

Although Migrant Resource Centres (MRC) have been established in Ethiopia, no respondent in this study outside of Addis Ababa knew of any in operation. It is also not clear whether prospective migrants would seek out an MRC given that they choose to depart as quickly as possible, often without doing preliminary research. However, there could be greater efforts made to disseminate information about which countries offer the

most legal protections, where there are associations of domestic workers and/or Ethiopian migrant workers, and details about accessing Ethiopian embassies and applying for compensation from governmental or insurance funds. Increased use of social media might make such dissemination of information easier.

Facilitators and recruiters are part of a large web without distinct roles

In Phase I, recruiters mentioned that some agencies use local community members in rural areas for “outreach” to refer prospective migrants to them. Although this is not a legal practice, licensed recruiters admitted it is widespread.

In Phase II, the depth and breadth of referrals and outreach become much more apparent. There are long “chains” of facilitators at every level of the migration journey, starting in local kebele (villages) and linking upwards to woreda (district), and along transport lines through towns of increasing size all the way to Addis Ababa (for departure by air) or Bahir Dar and Metema (for departure by land). Migrants usually have contact with only the lowest and most local levels of facilitators who are often friends, relatives and trusted community members. The more powerful facilitators who operate at larger scale often remain hidden, and communicate with migrants by phone or Facebook to avoid detection, as do the brokers who work for them.

Different kinds of facilitators take on different roles and it is difficult to categorise them given their diversity, overlap and often-undefined roles. Some pass migrants to the next facilitator very quickly, and are only responsible for ensuring the basic requirements for migration have been met (i.e. ID card/passport and sources of funding). Others work alongside migrants and their families for longer periods, accompanying them to the next stage of their journey and finding temporary accommodation. At the end of the “chain” are the facilitators who are able to get the migrant out of the country. Those that arrange air travel may be licensed; all those who facilitate land border crossings are not. Most of the interviewed facilitators who worked within chains ending in Addis Ababa said that they believed they were working with a licensed agency, although this could be to absolve themselves of any subsequent responsibility or that they actually did not know.

Neither the facilitators nor migrants were clear on how many different facilitators were involved, and stakeholders in Hadiya confirmed that “tracking” the process was extremely difficult. Furthermore, different kinds of authorities and government employees also make up parts of the facilitation chains. Examples were given of religious leaders, health extension workers, and civil service staff contributing to the facilitation process. Further mention was made of bribes paid to police and border patrol (for land crossing), immigration authorities, and diplomatic staff of embassies arranging work visas. Personal favours are also granted, for example in a case where a parent of a migrant reported having a relative in a migration-related office in Addis Ababa (possibly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) who was able to ensure that her daughter received a placement abroad without engaging the services of any employment agency.

The complex web of actors who move migrants through Ethiopia and abroad further strengthens the argument against a simplistic delineation between “legal” and “illegal” routes. It suggests that efforts to protect migrants may need to rely more on sources of support outside the Ethiopian migration system. For example, women currently do not know how they can benefit from joint liability and or compensation funds. No respondent in this study was able to cite a single case of a migrant or her family applying for or receiving compensation through a formal joint liability or emergency fund mechanism; the one exception was a returnee whose family had successfully lobbied on her behalf to recoup some of the costs of her hospital treatment following an injury. Even among stakeholders in Addis Ababa, few respondents knew about these support resources for returnees.

Emergency assistance funds may be more effective if they are offered by an independent body, and made available to all migrants experiencing difficulties abroad, regardless of their means of migration. Additionally, new strategies must consider ways of increasing responses in destination locations, including compensation by job placement agencies, and perhaps even prosecution by the government or civil action for violations against migrant workers. In any case, better information needs to be provided to migrant communities of origin and to migrants in destination locations about how the compensation system works, who is eligible to access funds, and how these can be requested.

Perceived bureaucracy and inefficiencies disincentivise regular migration

Migrants perceive formal channels of migration to be more time-consuming and bureaucratic. As a result, many do not even consider it as an option, preferring the convenience of circumventing formal procedures even at greater acknowledged risk and cost. In Phase II, community members talked about migrants’ rush to leave Ethiopia as soon as they decide to migrate, suggesting that social norms frown on young women

who appear to be wasting their opportunity to “try their luck” abroad once they are out of school. Similarly, facilitators described how their most important function is to expedite the migration process, which includes forging documents that were considered difficult to obtain or meant that certain requirements could be skipped, such as TVET training.

Phase I respondents also raised the problem of inefficiencies in the system as a key barrier to a safer migration environment. Licensed agencies complained about the difficulties of obtaining registration, and how the associated costs of operating legally meant they were out-competed by informal facilitators. Stakeholders highlighted that once recruitment agencies were registered, there was no coordinated approach to monitoring their compliance. Stakeholders recommended creation of an intersectoral government body that could bring together the different ministries and agencies relevant to migration.

Many of the initiatives to improve migrant safety appear concentrated in the capital city, where stakeholders are more closely linked to policymakers and more aware of new legal proclamations and requirements. However, this narrow focus does not respond to the reality of migration in Ethiopia, which involves a wide array of disconnected actors. However, outside of Addis Ababa there was confusion over eligibility (age, education, medical checks) and a greater willingness to describe the advantages of operating outside the law. At present, distance from Addis Ababa clearly complicates the possibility of regularised migration.

To incentivise any change requires a significant overhaul of the current system, including increasing availability of licensed agencies in rural areas, removing restrictions on the use of local “brokers” as paid outreach workers for Addis Ababa based recruiters, and reducing the time it takes for migrants to complete all the necessary pre-departure processes and trainings expected of them. Regional and local authorities would need to be both empowered and up-skilled to be able to introduce decentralised licensing and oversight functions.

Poor evidence of any recruitment measures protecting migrants once out of Ethiopia

As many returnees and migrants’ family members reported during interviews, the fate of migrants does not lie in the hands of the facilitators who assist them in leaving Ethiopia, but depends on the circumstances in which they find themselves abroad. The difference between “good” and “bad” employers is paramount, and this study was not able to identify any relationship between the type of migration and employer characteristics, confirming previous research in Ethiopia among recent returnees (Busza et al., 2017; Dessiye and Emirie, 2018). Some returnees, particularly those interviewed as part of the assistance programme following repatriation from Lebanon, identified cases where migrants were able to obtain assistance from in-country agencies. Where local facilitators complied with Ethiopian requirements for collaboration with registered agencies in Ethiopia, they did intervene when migrants alerted them to a dispute with their employer and/or helped migrants change employers. There were also many cases where local agencies did not do so, ignored requests for assistance or added to the abuse experienced by Ethiopian domestic workers. Again, the legality of agencies or facilitators in destination countries is difficult for both migrants and Ethiopian facilitators to ascertain. On the other hand, examples were given of assistance from informal facilitators, particularly other migrants or recent returnees who knew the households where they placed migrants.

Thus, the common belief of “luck” or “fate” as a determining factor of the experience abroad seems quite accurate under the current conditions. Migrants correctly assume that facilitators will not be able to do anything once they have left Ethiopia to influence their work conditions or help them if they need assistance, nor do they expect them to. In parallel, the community-based facilitators interviewed in Phase II of the study did not feel capable or motivated to remain involved with migrants once they had handed them over to someone else. Outside of Ethiopia, the laws, norms, and availability of direct interventions will shape a migrant’s safety—or more commonly, the absence of legal measures or assistance resources may leave them to their own devices. However, returnees from Lebanon gave positive reports of how support from an Ethiopian Labour Attaché in the embassy/consulate had improved in recent years, suggesting that diplomatic efforts can make a difference over time.

Migrant-led organisations and networks of Ethiopians living abroad could also be funded and skilled to offer in-country assistance and referrals. Detailed information on how to contact embassies or helplines, names and contact details of Ethiopian resource persons or organisations, and social media access to Ethiopian organisations with good links in the Middle East could create structures of support outside of the employment agencies, and be available to all migrants regardless of how they reached destination. As there are likely to be some countries where such measures prove difficult to establish, migrants could be explicitly warned against choosing to work there.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Meneshachin ('Our Departure') study examined the role of different actors in arranging Ethiopian women's migration to the Middle East for the purpose of domestic labour and how these actors' activities exacerbate or mitigate risk of harm. Interviews with national and sub-national migration stakeholders, migration facilitators and prospective and returnee migrant workers, both within and outside of the capital city, identified trends in the practices and dynamics of migration recruitment, planning and facilitation.

Though campaign messages on safe migration are well understood, increased community awareness of migration risks does not influence practice as many prospective migrants do not have an easy way to 'migrate the legal way.' Regular migration is also disincentivised as migrants perceive formal channels of migration to be more time-consuming and bureaucratic, and recruiters perceive the inefficiencies of obtaining registration and paying the associated costs of operating legally to be reasons for being out-competed by informal facilitators. Neither facilitators nor migrants were clear on how many different facilitators were involved in their migration as the journey consists of a large and complex web of actors without distinct roles. Once they have left Ethiopia, migrants often assume that facilitators will not be able to do anything to influence their work conditions or help them if they need assistance, and there is poor evidence of any recruitment measures to protect migrants in the destination countries.

In examining the role of different actors, the study aims to inform the development of feasible responsible recruitment measures that could reduce the risk of labour exploitation and trafficking experienced by Ethiopian migrant women seeking domestic work abroad.

Dissemination of findings and validation of recommendations

The Freedom Fund, Population Council and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine held a workshop in Addis Ababa on August 30, 2022 to present findings from the Meneshachin study and invite comment and discussion of implications and recommendations. Over 60 stakeholders representing relevant Ethiopian governmental ministries, international and national organisations, civil society associations, and university academics participated in the meeting. Opening and keynote speeches were given by senior staff from the Ministry of Labor and Skills, Ministry of Justice, and the U.S. Embassy.

Following presentations of the key findings, in-depth discussion about implications for policy and practice focused on what measures might realistically be introduced into the current migration landscape in order to narrow the gap between the existing legal framework and its implementation. Participants highlighted that much progress had been made in the past decade, and that significant investment and efforts by the Government of Ethiopia and its partners had led to increased attention to safe migration across the country. Analysis of migration-related issues is acknowledged to have become more nuanced and key policy stakeholders, national media, and community members increasingly recognise the importance of distinguishing between decreasing unsafe migration as opposed to working to stop all labour migration. This significant progress should be applauded, even as remaining gaps are highlighted.

Findings and recommendations were also shared with 10 global experts and stakeholders (academics, NGO leaders, and ILO representatives) with knowledge of innovative, government-administered recruitment models from Ethiopia and other high-prevalence source countries. Informational interviews were used to corroborate the recommendations developed from the research.

The recommendations included in this report aligned with those made by workshop attendees, and several were added or amended during the event. There was also consideration of how to better manage coordination of actions for safe migration, with some suggestions for the need to identify a national body mandated to oversee all activities. It was further suggested that research should remain a priority to track changing dynamics and patterns of migration over time and to provide geographically-informed evidence to policymakers to reflect the fact that local circumstances evolve and migration "hotspots" change.

Recommendations

NGOs in Ethiopia

Provide prospective migrants with more accurate information about working conditions and remuneration for domestic workers in different destination countries, as well as information about assistance options.

Competition over prospective migrants increases the likelihood of facilitators offering deceptive information on working conditions and wage levels. To counter this, NGOs and community-based groups could play a more active role in disseminating more accurate information about domestic work in the Middle East, especially through lower-cost, interactive methods such as social media and phone helplines, as well as promoting the YeGuzo Sink app.¹

Improve prospective migrants' understanding of and access to the legal migration process, as well as the requirements, costs and time that the process typically takes. While migrating legally does not 'guarantee' that a migrant will not be exploited, it does offer an extra layer of protection and recourse for migrants who do face abuse. This study found frequent misconceptions around 1) what 'migrating legally' means—often conflated with air travel—and the extra protection it offers, 2) the requirements for legal migration, especially the recent changes removing the requirement of an eighth grade certificate, and 3) the required documentation and approximate processing time. These topics should be a priority for future informational campaigns. The lack of registered agencies at the zonal level, and the difficulty in distinguishing which recruiters are licensed, should also be addressed.

Provide migrants, both regular and irregular, with information on formal and informal support mechanisms at destination, as well as centering survivors in prevention and training to ensure that priorities reflect survivors' experiences. Working in conjunction with government ministries, UN agencies and recruitment industry bodies, NGOs can serve a vital role in distributing materials such as info cards that contain practical details to access impartial advice in Ethiopia as well as assistance in destination countries.

Government ministries in Ethiopia

Increase the speed and ease of obtaining the official documents required for regular migration. At present, at least four documents are required—passport, medical certificate, certificate of competency and police report—which typically takes two to three months to obtain. The government should consider streamlining these processes, as well as set standards for maximum processing times. Further, these processes should be decentralised so that documentations can be obtained at the zonal level, particularly for the medical certificate which is currently only available in government-approved medical centres in Addis Ababa.

Legalise and formalise the relationship between established recruiters and trustworthy brokers/sub-agents who operate in local communities. Brokers already operate in remote communities and fill a pragmatic gap in linking prospective migrants to agents in larger cities. Rather than forcing these brokers to operate informally as freelancers, formal recognition and connection to known recruiters would help strengthen accountability across the 'chain' of facilitators. In some cases, returnees now acting as brokers have served a vital role in helping to set realistic expectations pre-migration, as well as resolving problems such as when migrants have suddenly lost contact with their families.

Involve recruiters in review of law and policy and engage them as positive social agents so that they help create an enabling environment for safe migration. To ensure policies are feasible to implement, including recruiters as active participants in the review and adaptation of existing laws and practices might empower them to comply with regulations rather than seek ways to circumvent legal requirements.

Liaise with governments in destination countries to hold recruiters and their counterparts to financial account for all parts of a migrant's journey, especially at the destination of work. Proclamation 923/2016 and 1246/2021 requires all registered agents in Ethiopia to deposit a financial guarantee of USD 100,000 and for foreign employers to contribute USD 100 per worker. However, this mechanism is relatively new and almost

1. The 'YeGuzo Sink' Mobile Application, developed by the ILO's Labour Migration project in partnership with the Ethiopian government, aims to provide information and increase awareness around migrating for potential migrant workers and returnees. The App provides information on the process of overseas employment including pre-departure, departure, employment, and return and reintegration.

none of the stakeholders (except one) were aware of any claims made or compensations paid to exploited migrants using the guarantees. There is an urgent need for the Ministry of Labor and Skills to clarify and advertise the mechanisms for lodging claims, which would help deter agents and employers from unlawful and abusive behaviours, as well as enable victims to receive due compensation.

Continue to negotiate new, and improve existing, bilateral labour agreements with destination countries, especially to expand the modes of employment available to migrant domestic workers and foreign employers. The unique and direct relationship between a domestic worker and a private employer requires thoughtful matching and room for flexibility, especially as the needs of the worker and the host employer are likely to change over the course of two to three years, the typical duration of a migrant domestic worker contract. The restrictive visa sponsorship system that is typical in many Middle East countries, often referred to as the Kafala system, is detrimental to the evolving needs of both employers and migrant workers. Alternative models of visa sponsorship are urgently needed, including the flexibility for migrant domestic workers to switch employers (a practice allowed in Qatar since 2021), being employed through worker-owned cooperatives (a mechanism that exists in Lebanon and Kuwait) or through a placement agency (such as the Tadbeer Centres in the UAE) are potential models that need further attention and trials in the domestic work sector.

Develop a dialogue with destination governments to promote local laws and support mechanisms to protect foreign migrant workers. There is little to no evidence of legal or regulatory mechanisms to oversee and regulate the behaviours and responsibility of local recruitment or job placement agencies. To see any substantial progress on the protection of Ethiopian migrant workers abroad, the Ethiopian government will have to push for foreign governments to take action on the behaviour of local job placement organisations and hold them accountable for the safety and financial remuneration of their migrant clients, not only their employer clients.

Overseas recruitment industry

Have proactive mechanisms to ensure the implementation of regulations and to educate recruiters about the latest laws and processes so they give accurate advice to prospective migrants. This study uncovered common misunderstanding among both migrants and facilitators about the requirements for regular migration, leading to misbeliefs that the legal process is more onerous than it is. Industry bodies such as the Ethiopian Overseas Employment Agencies Federation should play a more active role—including through seminars, e-newsletters, and standardised info cards distributed freely via its members—to help combat misinformation and improve the professional standards of registered recruiters.

Support agents in meeting ILO's Code of Conduct for Ethiopian Overseas Private Employment Agencies which clearly sets out their duties and service standards. Agents should be offered practical advice on adhering to critical processes such as maintaining an active contact list of deployed migrants and documenting the quarterly welfare checks that have been conducted. The Code could also have specific stipulations around agents' duty to remain contactable and responsive to deployed migrants as well as the migrants' family in Ethiopia. In addition, the Code could encourage better tracking and reporting of basic statistics such as the number of migrants deployed and the rate of successful returns/onwards migration that could be used to differentiate responsible agents from others.

Build capacity of agents to enable them to function optimally in accordance with the legal framework and for the benefit of migrants. Recruiters are often viewed positively by migrants and their communities, as they provide an essential service to those seeking opportunities abroad. Currently, licensed private employment agencies face competition for those operating outside legal requirements, which incentivises them to try to cut costs through irregular practices, or makes their business model untenable. A supportive environment for licensed agents can strengthen their role and potential to act on behalf of migrants.

Ethiopian Mission overseas

Prioritise funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for adequate Labour Attaché or other diplomatic staff with relevant knowledge and training in key destination countries, in line with Overseas Employment Proclamation 923/2016 and Amendment 1246/2021. The returnees that were interviewed for this study, albeit a selective sample, spoke about the importance of having an official who they can contact at the Ethiopian Mission overseas. While this by itself cannot 'stop' migrants from being exploited, it does offer an extra layer of protection and recourse for those who face abuse. As a result of covid-19, several Ethiopian Missions in key destinations, such as Kuwait, were suddenly closed or drastically limited their services. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should make it a priority to reinstate consular services and fund Labour Attaché posts or teams of other, appropriately trained, diplomatic staff to support Ethiopian workers currently

overseas, especially those at high risk of exploitation.

Improve monitoring and reporting on the status of destination agents, to ensure they are fulfilling their duties to protect deployed migrant domestic workers. While the responsibilities of destination agents are clearly set out in Proclamation 923/2016 and 1246/2021, in reality, most of the returnees in this study reported these agents being largely absent and failing the most basic tasks such as meeting newly arrived migrants at the airport. Overseas Ethiopian Missions, ideally through the Labour Attaché, could help reinforce accountability across the 'chain' of facilitators by conducting more inspections and issuing financial penalties for non-compliance, drawing on the financial guarantee deposited by the registered agent in Ethiopia. This monitoring can also be done in conjunction with civil society groups at destination, who could refer unresponsive or unethical agents to the Labour Attaché for further review.

Commission research and assessments of current practices by local employment placement agencies in destination countries. Ultimately, migrants' safety and well-being are in the hands of the local placement agencies, as they are the direct intermediary between the migrant and the employer. Serious mapping and assessment are needed to determine ethical and unethical practices as well as to differentiate reliable from unreliable actors in destination locations. Findings from destination-side research can help destination governments to learn about the behaviours in their own country, to better inform Labour Attaché about bad actors and to help agencies in Ethiopia gain a sense of who they can trust to place their migrants in safe situations and assist them if things go wrong.

NGOs in destination countries

Create emergency funds that are accessible to all Ethiopian migrants, irrespective of their migration status. Considering the large population of Ethiopians who have already migrated informally to the Middle East—partly a legacy of the migration ban that was in place until 2015—life-critical assistance must be made available to irregular migrants. The Ethiopian government and other donor agencies should consider providing emergency funds that are maintained and disbursed through registered NGOs such as the Ethiopian Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon or the Ethiopian Women's Association in the UAE.

Support alternate mechanisms for connecting migrant domestic workers at destination. In many of the key destination countries, such as in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, migrants are banned from joining or forming unions. Nonetheless, the returnees in this study reportedly relied on informal mechanisms such as religious networks, cultural associations and drop-in centres. These models should be further explored as ways to help migrant domestic workers connect with people outside of their employer's home, seek support to deal with challenging situations and be referred to specialist support where needed.

Consider strategic litigation as a tool for highlighting maltreatment of migrant domestic workers, as well as deterring abuse by employers and inactions by agents. In 2021, a landmark case was filed in the Lebanon courts on behalf of an Ethiopian domestic worker who sued her employer of eight years for human trafficking and other violations. While legal cases can be costly, slow and with uncertain outcomes, careful investments into selected cases can help set legal precedents, attract media coverage and shape public opinions. As such, strategic litigation should be viewed as a complementary intervention alongside direct services to victims and advocacy to strengthen policies.



Annex 1: Study participants

A. Key program and policy stakeholders

Phase I data collection

File Code	Sex	Location	Organisation
Stakeholder #1	F	Addis Ababa	Local NGO
Stakeholder #2	M	Addis Ababa	Local NGO
Stakeholder #3	M	Addis Ababa	Local NGO
Stakeholder #4	M	Jimma	Regional level government organisation
Stakeholder #5	M	Addis Ababa	Federal level government organisation
Stakeholder #6	M	Addis Ababa	Federal level government organisation
Stakeholder #7	M	Dire Dawa	Regional level government organisation
Stakeholder #8	F	Dire Dawa	Regional level government organisation
Stakeholder #9	M	Addis Ababa	Federal level government organisation
Stakeholder #10	M	Addis Ababa	Federal level government organisation
Stakeholder #11	F	Addis Ababa	Federal level government organisation
Stakeholder #12	M	Addis Ababa	Federal level government organisation
Stakeholder #13	M	Addis Ababa	Federal level government office
Stakeholder #14	M	Addis Ababa	Workers' association
Stakeholder #15	M	Dire Dawa	Regional level government organisation
Stakeholder #16	F	Addis Ababa	International organisation
Stakeholder #17	F	Addis Ababa	Community-based organisation
Stakeholder #18	M	Addis Ababa	Local NGO

Phase II data collection

File Code	Sex	Location	Organisation
Stakeholder #1	M	Hadiya	Government Office
Stakeholder #2	M	Hadiya	Government Office
Stakeholder #3	M	Hadiya	Traditional Judiciary at Woreda Level
Stakeholder #4	M	Hadiya	Government Office
Stakeholder #5	M	Hadiya	Government Office
Stakeholder #6	M	Hadiya	Training College
Stakeholder #7	M	Hadiya	University
Stakeholder #8	M	Hadiya	Government Office
Stakeholder #9	M	Hadiya	Attorney Office at Zone Level
Stakeholder #10	M	Hadiya	Government Office

B. Facilitators (formal recruiters and informal brokers)

Phase I data collection

File code	Sex	Location
Recruiter #1	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #2	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #3	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #4	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #5	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #6	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #7	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #8	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #9	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #10	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #11	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #12	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #13	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #14	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #15	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #16	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #17	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #18	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #19	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #20	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #21	F	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #22	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #23	M	Addis Ababa
Recruiter #24	M	Addis Ababa

Phase II data collection

File code	Sex	Location
Facilitator #1	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #2	F	Hadiya
Facilitator # 3	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #4	F	Hadiya
Facilitator #5	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #6	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #7	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #8	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #9	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #10	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #11	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #12	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #13	F	Hadiya
Facilitator #14	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #15	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #16	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #17	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #18	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #19	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #20	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #21	F	Hadiya
Facilitator #22	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #23	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #24	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #25	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #26	M	Hadiya
Facilitator #27	M	Bahir Dar
Facilitator #28	M	Bahir Dar

C. Returnee migrants

Phase I data collection

File code	Sex	Age	Number of destination countries where they have worked	Length of time
Returnee #1	F	25	3	9
Returnee #2	F	28	1	4
Returnee #3	F	45	3	13
Returnee #4	F	not known	2	4
Returnee #5	F	20	1	2
Returnee #6	F	23	1	2
Returnee #7	F	29	1	13
Returnee #8	F	30	3	8
Returnee #9	F	28	1	7
Returnee #10	F	28	2	11
Returnee #11	F	24	1	2
Returnee #12	F	31	1	10
Returnee #13	F	30	1	8
Returnee #14	F	20	1	2
Returnee #15	F	20	1	1
Returnee #16	F	27	2	9
Returnee #17	F	22	1	4
Returnee #18	F	24	1	4
Returnee #19	F	22	2	3
Returnee #20	F	24	1	2
Returnee #21	F	20	1	9
Returnee #22	F	Not known	1	9 months
Returnee #23	F	25	1	2
Returnee #24	F	21	1	3
Returnee #25	F	Not known	1	2
Returnee #26	F	24	1	3
Returnee #27	F	21	1	3

Phase II data collection

File code	Sex	Age	Country of migration	Number of migration country	Length of time working abroad (in years)
Returnee #1	F	29	Saudi Arabia	1	2
Returnee #2	F	25	Lebanon	1	7
Returnee #3	F	30	Lebanon	1	2
Returnee # 4	F	25	Lebanon, Saudi Arabia	2	2
Returnee #5	F	22	Lebanon	1	0.5
Returnee #6	F	24	Lebanon	1	0.4
Returnee #7	F	19	Oman	1	2
Returnee #8	F	27	Lebanon	1	5
Returnee #9	F	24	Lebanon	1	5
Returnee #10	F	28	UAE	1	4.2
Returnee #11	F	20	UAE, Lebanon	2	4
Returnee #12	F	23	Lebanon	1	3
Returnee #13	F	26	UAE	1	4
Returnee #14	F	29	Lebanon	1	7
Returnee #15	F	25	Lebanon	1	3
Returnee #16	F	25	Lebanon	1	2
Returnee #17	F	25	Lebanon	1	3
Returnee #18	F	23	UAE	1	2
Returnee #19	F	25	Saudi Arabia	1	10
Returnee #20	F	24	Saudi Arabia	1	6
Returnee #21	F	27	Kuwait	1	6
Returnee #22	F	28	Saudi Arabia	1	1
Returnee #23	F	27	Qatar	1	4

D. Prospective migrants

File code	Sex	Age	Location	Current employment status
Prospective migrant #1	F	22	Hadiya	Married and has 2 kids, currently not working
Prospective migrant #2	F	18	Hadiya	Former student but unemployed
Prospective migrant #3	F	25	Hadiya	Grade 8 student
Prospective migrant #4	F	22	Hadiya	Unemployed and school drop out
Prospective migrant #5	F	19	Hadiya	Domestic worker
Prospective migrant #6	F	19	Hadiya	Unemployed
Prospective migrant #7	F	21	Hadiya	Housewife
Prospective migrant #8	F	22	Hadiya	Student
Prospective migrant #9	M	23	Hadiya	Student
Prospective migrant #10	F	26	Bahir Dar	Employed as a waitress
Prospective migrant #11	F	25	Bahir Dar	Employed at game zone
Prospective migrant #12	F	23	Bahir Dar	Holds a diploma but not employed
Prospective migrant #13	F	25	Bahir Dar	Not employed

Annex 2: Data collection tools

A. Example information sheet used with community members

Meneshachin “Our Departure”: A Qualitative Study into the Role of Facilitators in Migration Pathways of Ethiopian Women seeking Domestic Work in the Middle East

Study background

The Freedom Fund has been working in Ethiopia to support community preparation for safe migration, to reduce the risk of harm to women migrating to the Middle East as domestic workers. In parts of Amhara and Addis Ababa, the project has supported awareness-raising, skills-building, and support for rehabilitation and employment for women who have returned from working abroad. Now, they want to learn about the people who help women migrate.

To help with safer migration, the Freedom Fund would like to better understand how local people make decisions about how they migrate for domestic work, and who is involved in helping them make decisions, plan their journeys, and arrange their travel and employment. They have therefore decided to do some research in this area to find out different people’s opinions about migration and how it is organised, especially how different local people help women to migrate.

The Freedom Fund is working together with a British public health university (the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine) and an international research organisation based in Addis Ababa called the Population Council. They are conducting a short study in the area in order to help answer some of these questions about community opinions and experiences around migration. We will be talking to different members of the community who have different experiences or views on this topic.

Approval for this study has been obtained from _____ on _____. The approval letter is available for your inspection.

Data collection

The purpose of this study is to understand how migration is organised in this area, especially now that there have been changes to the national law about migrating. The information might also help identify ways to improve policies, programmes and services for safer migration. We will present the findings here in the community so that local people have an opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions. After that, findings will be used to produce a report, presentations for meetings within Ethiopia and other countries on relevant topics related to migration, and peer reviewed publications. Overall, we will be conducting group discussions and interviews with local community members.

We will conduct between 10-15 qualitative interviews in this area with selected members of the community with different experiences and perspectives related to local women’s migration to the Middle East. In the interviews, we will ask about specific experiences of women and their family members before, during, and after migration, such as why some women choose different ways of migrating and use different kinds of facilitators or brokers. We will also select some people who have experienced migration already, or are family members of current migrants, and some people who may be thinking about migrating in future, or know a lot about the community. All interviews will be kept confidential, and no individuals will be identified in final research outputs. We will not write down anyone’s name, address or other identifying information.

Data collection is expected to occur during xxxxx - xxxx , 2020 and will be led by the Population Council. The research team is made X fieldworkers who have been trained specifically for this study.

We would like to conduct an interview with you. We will ask you questions about your knowledge of common ways that women migrate from this area, what is your opinion about them, and how women in this community decide whether to use facilitators, brokers and other kinds of recruiters, and which ones. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to and can leave the interview at any time. We will use a digital recorder to record the conversation as well as take notes to help us remember what is discussed. We will not record your name during the activity, and everything that is said will remain confidential within the study. We may select some of what you say as an example of local opinions and use direct quotes from the group discussion in reports and papers that come out of this study.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the study further, please contact: [DETAILS HERE]

B. Example consent form used with community members

Invitation for participation

You have been selected as a participant for interview as part of a study about Ethiopian women's migration to the Middle East as domestic workers, which is being conducted by the Population Council, in partnership with the Freedom Fund and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Together, these organisations are working to understand community opinions and experiences of decision-making about migration, including how women make arrangements for their departure and whom they consult and rely on for assistance. We feel that you have valuable information to contribute towards improving our understanding of this issue. The aim of this research is to learn about community members' views on different migration pathways that women take, and which are safer and which are riskier. We would like to know how decisions are made as a woman thinks about migrating, who is involved, what they do to "facilitate" the migration, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of "facilitators".

PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION SHEET ABOUT THE STUDY PROVIDED FOR YOU TO KEEP.

What is involved

We would like to conduct an interview with you that will last between 45-90 minutes. Topics that will be addressed include your experience and perceptions of decision-making and support for migration, either for yourself or a family member or friend. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to and can leave the interview at any time. We would like to audio-record the interviews and to take notes in order to ensure we capture the information you provide accurately.

Risks and discomforts

Some of the topics we discuss will relate to what happens to women who migrate for domestic work abroad. This could be distressing for you if it brings up difficult memories or experiences. We can stop the interview at any time and you do not have to answer any question that you do not want to. I can also arrange for you to talk to a counsellor afterwards if you feel it could make you feel better.

Benefits and/or compensation

The study results will help us to learn what kinds of ways women are migrating from this area, and how they can do so more safely. The information will be used to think about ways to improve migration services in Ethiopia. There are no immediate benefits to you as an individual. Taking part in the study will not cost you anything and we will not pay you to take part in the study.

Confidentiality

If you agree to take part in this study by signing this document, all information obtained will be stored using an ID number in computer files, with your name and other identifying information removed. No names of participants will be recorded, and we will treat all the information received confidentially. The only people who will hear the recording or see the notes are those who are working directly on this research project. In reports and papers about this research, we may use some of what you say in the interview as an example of local experiences, but your name will not be mentioned.

Voluntary participation

Involvement in this study is voluntary. If you decide not to take part in this study, your decision will not affect your future access to local services. You are free to withdraw your consent and assent and stop your involvement at any time, including after we complete this interview. Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you.

Authorization

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE SHOWS THAT YOU HAVE READ [OR HEARD] AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE,

HAVE HAD ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED, AND HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE PART.

- | | |
|--|--------|
| I have read the information sheet concerning this study and I understand what will be required | YES/NO |
| I understand that at any time I can withdraw from this study without giving a reason | YES/NO |
| I agree to take part in this discussion | YES/NO |
| I agree for this interview to be recorded | YES/NO |
| I agree that what I say may be included in reports and papers as anonymous quotes | YES/NO |

Option A: If the respondent is willing to sign Name of respondent (Print) _____ Date _____ Signature

OR Option B:
For illiterate respondents or those who prefer not to sign, the information sheet and informed consent forms can be read aloud and the respondent can give verbal consent, which is witnessed by the fieldworker. This part of the interaction should be audio-recorded as evidence of consent, even if the rest of the interview is subsequently not recorded

Informed consent is recorded verbally YES/NO Name of fieldworker (Print) _____ Date _____ Signature

C. Interview guide used with returnee migrant women (return from the Middle East in past 12 months)

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
Introduction/ background	Please ask the respondent to introduce herself and talk about her any migration experiences she has had (in general terms).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many times have you migrated? • Where were you employed as a domestic worker? • After your most recent work, when did you return to Ethiopia?
Deciding to migrate	<p>Now I would like to talk to you about the last time you decided to migrate and how you arranged your migration.</p> <p>Thinking back to that time, can you tell me what made you start to think about migrating for work?</p> <p>Can you tell me about the thoughts you had about migrating--both hopes and doubts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you recall why you were thinking about migrating for work? • Who did you discuss this with, if anyone? • How did you start looking for information about migrating? • What kind of information did you get about migration and from whom? • How did you decide to migrate for domestic work? • How did you choose to go to the country/countries you have worked? • Can you explain how you made your decision? • What benefits or achievements did you expect? • Was there anything that you worried about about migrating? • What did you think it would be like when you got there? • What had you heard anything from others who had migrated?
Consulting others	<p>With whom did you discuss your early thoughts about migration at the beginning?</p> <p>What did they say?</p> <p>What kind of advice did people give you as you were deciding to migrate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whom did you trust to talk to about migration? • Did you discuss migration with your family? Who exactly, and what did you talk about? • Who talked about migration in the community to you?/ who had you heard talk about migration? • What about your friends or peers? • Whom else did you consult? • Were there people from whom you kept your ideas about migration secret or didn't want to tell? Please explain • What were good things did people tell you about your decision to migrate? • What were the bad things people said to you about your decision to migrate? • What kinds of practical advice or information did you get from others? Who? Can you give examples? • what were your thoughts about people's advice? what did you agree with? what did you disagree with?
Migration planning	<p>Please describe what you did before you migrated?</p> <p>Did you have the money to pay for your migration or did you have to borrow some? Roughly how much and from whom?</p>	

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
<p>Use of facilitators</p>	<p>Many people rely on other people to help plan and then arrange their migration. I am interested to learn about the people who helped you plan your migration and who helped you get into your job. Can you describe all the people who helped arrange things, , from the time you made the decision until you actually left Ethiopia, and until you got settled in your job. Can you describe all the different steps you took. In particular, I am interested in the people who helped you at each step.</p> <p>First, can you describe in detail what happened step-by-step, from the time you decided you wanted to migrate until you arrived at the job?</p> <p>Please take your time to think about everything that happened and how you felt about it. At each step, tell me if anyone assisted you, and if so, who they were, what they did and if you paid them any money to help you (if so, how much).</p> <p>[Let the respondent tell the story in her own words. If she seems to slow down or pauses for a long time, you can encourage her to continue with the following encouraging questions:]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then what happened? • What happened next? <p>How did your experience of migration out of Ethiopia compare to what you had expected?</p> <p>Do you feel you had a good experience planning migration and leaving Ethiopia? Why or why not?</p> <p>What do you feel about the different kinds of people who helped you leave Ethiopia?</p> <p>Once you left Ethiopia and were working abroad, did you have any other contact with the migration facilitators here in Ethiopia?</p> <p>Did you think this person could assist you in any way once you left the country and were in your job? For example, if you had problems? How could they help?</p>	<p>First, can you list each of the different people who helped you get from here to your job in [country]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What arrangements were necessary, and how did you do them? • What did you find easy and what was difficult during this time? • How did you find people to help you? how did you contact them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROBE only if not mentioned: • What were the costs of arranging your migration? • How did you pay for these? • Who helped you with arranging the payment? • What paperwork did you need and how did you get it? • Who helped you obtain documents? • How did you travel to from your home? Where did you go? • Who helped with your transport? • Where did you stay between your home and leaving Ethiopia? • Who made those arrangements? • Who assisted your departure from Ethiopia? • Did you receive any help from overseas employment agencies or other official brokers? • How? • Did anything unexpected happen along the way? Please describe • Did you have to change arrangements at any point? Can you explain • What do you feel went well or poorly compared to your expectations? • Looking back, do you think the different people who helped you made your experience better? Which ones and why? • Do you feel your migration out of Ethiopia was risky in any way? How? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, what role did they play? • Do you think migration facilitators can be helpful to migrants while they are working in the Arab countries? Why or why not? Can you give examples?
<p>Sources of information</p>	<p>Have you ever heard of a Migration Resource Centre? This is a place where accurate information is made available to potential migrants about the conditions of life and work in other countries, and the legal requirements and migrants' rights when they migrate for work.</p> <p>Do you know of any services for reintegration of domestic workers when they come back to Ethiopia? Can you tell me about these?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there any migration information centre in your area and have you ever sought information from this kind of place? • If NOT AVAILABLE: If there had been a place with information for migrants in your area before you left, do you think you would have used it? • What kind of information would you have looked for there? • Is there any type of returnee migrants' association that you know? If yes, what kind of support are they providing? • Who is helping migrants who are returning to Ethiopia here?
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Looking back, what would you have liked to do differently or would do differently in future?</p> <p>What advice would you give to a friend who has decided to migrate and asks you about how to plan her departure?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exactly would you change? • Why would these changes improve your experience? • Which facilitators would you rely on again and which would you change? Why? • What kinds of facilitators would you tell her to try to use? Why? • What kinds of facilitators would you tell her to avoid? Why?
<p>Perceptions of responsible recruitment</p>	<p>In this study, we are trying to learn about how to make women's migration experiences safer. We want to know how the people who assist women in Ethiopia can protect migrants better.</p> <p>Can you think of ways that people involved in facilitating your migration protected you? (helped make your experience safer?)</p> <p>Can you think of ways that people involved in facilitating your migration endangered you? (increased the risks of your migration?)</p> <p>What do you think would help to make women's migration safer, thinking about the steps of the migration journey that take place within Ethiopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of facilitators make migration safer? • How do they do so? • What kinds of facilitators make migration unsafe? how? • What changes would you like to happen? • Do you think that any of the formal or informal facilitators and brokers and recruiters could protect migrants? • Which kinds of facilitators could help protect migrants? How? • What else could facilitators do to help make sure migrants arrive safely in the Middle East? • If a woman gets into trouble after arriving in the Middle East - for example not ending up in the job that she was promised - who do you think is best placed to help her, and how?
<p>Wrap-up</p>	<p>Thank you for sharing your personal experiences with me. Is there anything else you would like me to know?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any final questions for me about the study?

D. Interview guide used with parents of current migrant women

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
Introduction/background	Please ask the respondent to introduce himself or herself and talk about his/her child's migration experience in general terms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please can you describe your family and living situation? • How many daughters do you have? How many are currently working as domestic workers in the Middle East? • How long has she/they been working there and what do you know about their life there?
Deciding to migrate	<p>Now I would like to talk to you about the time your daughter decided to migrate [if more than 1 daughter is working overseas then the questions should address each in turn].</p> <p>Thinking back to that time, can you tell me when you became aware that she was starting to think about migrating to the Middle East for domestic work?</p> <p>What motivated her to migrate?</p> <p>What were your feelings when you first heard that she wanted to migrate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was happening in her life at that time? • How did she get the idea to migrate? • Did you or someone else in the family suggest migration to your daughter? Or maybe a friend? • When you were talking about the option of her migrating, what did you talk about? • Do you know where she or your family got the most information about migrating for domestic work? • What do you think most influenced the decision to go? • What were her or your family's hopes from her migration? • Was there anything that you or she was worried about or afraid of? • Did you support or oppose the decision to go? • What kinds of good and bad things did you hear from others about migration? • In your community, family or in your neighbourhood, who talked about migration to you or to her?
Consulting others	<p>With whom did your daughter discuss her early thoughts about migration at the beginning?</p> <p>What information did you have about migration? And, where did you get your information?</p> <p>What kinds of discussions or conversations did you have with her about the decision to migrate? Do you know who else she spoke with about migrating?</p> <p>Ultimately, what do you think made her decide to go? Do you think there was any particular person who influenced her decision?</p> <p>What kind of advice did people give your daughter during her planning?</p> <p>How were you involved in her decision and the planning of her migration? Please describe.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who did you think were the best people to talk to about migration? • Did you discuss migration within your family? • Whom else did she consult? • Ultimately, what do you think made her decide to go? Do you think there was any particular person who influenced her decision? Please explain.
Migration planning	<p>Who helped her to plan journey? What did each person do?</p> <p>Please describe what official and informal preparations she made before migrating?</p> <p>Did you have the money to pay for her migration or did you have to borrow some? Roughly how much and from whom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the positive things people said to her about deciding to migrate? • What were the negative things people said to her about deciding to migrate? • What kinds of practical advice or information did you give her? Can you give examples? • What information did she get from others? Who? Can you give examples?

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
<p>Use of facilitators</p>	<p>Many people rely on other people to help plan and then implement migration. This kind of assistance can be used at different stages of migration. I am interested in your daughter's migration experience, from the time she made the decision, until she actually left Ethiopia, and all the different steps she took. In particular, I am interested in the people who helped your daughter at each step.</p> <p>First, can you describe in detail what happened step-by-step, from the time your daughter decided that she wanted to migrate?</p> <p>Please can you also describe how you or any of your family members were involved in the planning process or discussions with the people who helped the planning?</p> <p>Please take your time to think about everything that happened and how you felt about it and anything you did to help. At each step, tell me if anyone assisted, and if so, who they were and what they did.</p> <p>[Let the respondent tell the story in his or her own words. If the story seems to slow down or pauses for a long time, you can encourage the respondent to continue with the following encouraging questions:]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then what happened? • What happened next? <p>About how often was your daughter able to contact you while she was away?</p> <p>What did your daughter tell you about her experience?</p> <p>How did your daughter's experience of migration out of Ethiopia compare to what you had expected?</p> <p>What do you think of the arrangements and the people who helped make the arrangements for your daughter? Good? Not good? Why or why not? If your daughter had problems once she was at the destination with her employer, do you know how she could get help or advice?</p> <p>What do you feel about the different kinds of people who helped your daughter leave Ethiopia?</p> <p>Once your daughter left Ethiopia and was working abroad, did you have any other contact with the migration facilitators here in Ethiopia?</p> <p>Do you know if she has any contact with facilitators--or the people who helped arrange her travel and her job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What arrangements were necessary, and how were they made? • What was easy and what was difficult for your daughter at this time? • How were you or other family members involved in preparing her for migration? • How did you find people to help her? how were they contacted? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROBE only if not mentioned: • What were the costs of arranging her migration? • How were these paid for? • Who helped with arranging the payment? • What paperwork did she need and how did she get it? • Who helped obtain documents? • How did she travel to from home? Where did she go? • Who helped with transport? • Where did she stay between leaving home and leaving Ethiopia? • Who made those arrangements? • Who assisted her departure from Ethiopia? • Did she receive any help from overseas employment agencies or other official brokers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did anything unexpected happen along the way? Please describe • Were the arrangements changed at any point during the migration? Can you explain? • What do you feel went well or poorly? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking back, do you think the different people who helped her made her experience better? Which ones and why? • Do you feel your daughter's migration out of Ethiopia was risky in any way? How? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, what role did they play? • Do you think migration facilitators can be helpful to migrants while they are working in the Arab countries? Why or why not? Can you give examples?
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Looking back, what would you have liked to do differently or would do differently in future?</p> <p>What advice would you give to a friend whose daughter has decided to migrate and asks you about how to plan her departure?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exactly would you change? • Why would these changes improve your daughter's experience? • Which facilitators would you rely on again and which would you change? Why? • What kinds of facilitators would you tell her to try to use? Why? • What kinds of facilitators would you tell her to avoid? Why?
<p>Perceptions of responsible recruitment</p>	<p>In this study, we are trying to learn about how to make women's migration experiences safer. We want to know how the people who assist women in Ethiopia can protect migrants better.</p> <p>Can you think of ways that people involved in facilitating migration protected your daughter? (helped make her experience safer?)</p> <p>Can you think of ways that people involved in facilitating your daughter's migration endangered her? (increased the risks during her migration?)</p> <p>What do you think would help to make women's migration safer, thinking about the steps of the migration journey that take place within Ethiopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of facilitators make migration safer? • How do they do so? • What kinds of facilitators make migration unsafe? how? • What changes would you like to happen? • Do you think that any of the formal or informal facilitators and brokers and recruiters could protect migrants? • Which kinds of facilitators could help protect migrants? How? • What else could facilitators do to help make sure migrants arrive safely in the Middle East? • If a woman gets into trouble after arriving in the Middle East - for example not ending up in the job that she was promised - who do you think is best placed to help her, and how?
<p>Wrap-up</p>	<p>Thank you for sharing your personal experiences with me. Is there anything else you would like me to know?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any final questions for me about the study?

E. Interview guide used with prospective migrant women

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
Introduction/ background	Please ask the respondent to introduce herself and talk about herself in general terms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please can you tell me your age and educational status? • Please can you describe your family and living situation? • What has been your experience of school or work until now? • Do you have family members and/or friends working as domestic workers in Arab countries? Tell me about them
Deciding to migrate Consulting others migration planning	<p>Now I would like to talk to you your opinions about migrating to the Middle East for domestic work.</p> <p>In your opinion, what motivates women around here to migrate for domestic work?</p> <p>How do you think they make the decision?</p> <p>Thinking about yourself, what do you think might influence you to migrate?</p> <p>When women around here start to think about migration, whom to do they talk to?</p> <p>What do people tell them?</p> <p>Has anyone ever spoken to you before deciding to go?</p> <p>What information would you want to know if you were thinking about migrating?</p> <p>What kind of advice do local people give to women who are deciding to migrate?</p> <p>Who helps women plan their journey? How?</p> <p>If you needed extra money (say 10,000 Birr) to pay for your migration, how would you get it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of women are likely to decide to migrate? • In what kinds of situations do they decide to migrate? • Where do women get information about migration? • Who suggests or influences women to migrate? • What benefits or achievements did they expect? • What are women's common fears or doubts about migrating? • What kinds of positive or negative information about migration do you have? • Who do you talk to about your thoughts related to whether you will migrate? • Whom do most women trust to talk to about migration? • Do they discuss migration with family? • What about your friends or peers? • Whom else do you think they consult? • From what kinds of people do women usually keep their plans about migration secret or don't want to tell? Please explain • What did she ask you or want to discuss? What did you say to her? • What kinds of people encourage them to migrate? • What kinds of people try to discourage them?
Use of facilitators	<p>Many people rely on other people to help plan and then implement migration. This kind of assistance can be used at different stages of migration. I am interested in what you know about these kinds of people and how they help women leave Ethiopia at every step.</p> <p>First, can you describe in detail what usually happens, step-by-step, from the time a woman decides to migrate? Think about some of the experiences you have heard about from local women in this community.</p> <p>Please take your time to think about the way different kinds of people - both formal and inform - work to facilitate women's migration to the Arab countries.</p> <p>[Let the respondent tell the story in her own words. If she seems to slow down or pauses for a long time, you can encourage her to continue with the following encouraging questions]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then what happened? • What happened next? <p>What do you feel about the different kinds of people who help women leave Ethiopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What arrangements are necessary, and how do women make these? • What is easy and what is difficult in organising migration? • How do women find people to help? how do they contact them? • PROBE only if not mentioned: • What are costs of arranging migration? • How do people pay for these? • Who helps with arranging payment? • What paperwork do women need and how do they get it? • Who helps obtain documents? • How do migrants travel to from home? Where did you go? • Who helps with transport? • Where do they stay between home and leaving Ethiopia? • Who makes those arrangements? • Who arranges departure from Ethiopia? • Did you know about the kind of help women can get from overseas employment agencies or other official brokers? • Do these kinds of facilitators make migrants' experience better? Which ones and why? • Do you feel migration out of Ethiopia can be risky in any way? How are these risks influenced by different migration facilitators?
Sources of information	<p>Have you ever heard of a Migration Resource Centre? This is a place where accurate information is made available to potential migrants about the conditions of life and work in other countries, and the legal requirements and migrants' rights when they migrate for work.</p> <p>Do you know of any services for reintegration of domestic workers when they come back to Ethiopia? Can you tell me about these?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there any migration information centre in your area and have you ever sought information from this kind of place? • If NOT AVAILABLE: If there had been a place with information for migrants in your area before you left, do you think you would have used it? • What kind of information would you have looked for there? • Is there any type of returnee migrants' association that you know? If yes, what kind of support are they providing? • Who is helping migrants who are returning to Ethiopia here?
Recommendations	If you decide to migrate, what kinds of facilitators will you use? What kinds of facilitators would you try to avoid? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? • Would it be easy to plan your migration the way you would like? Why or why not?
Perceptions of responsible recruitment	<p>In this study, we are trying to learn about how to make women's migration experiences safer. We want to know how the people who assist women in Ethiopia can protect migrants better. Can you think of ways that migration facilitators protect migrants? (help make migration safer?)</p> <p>Can you think of ways that migration facilitators endanger migrants? (increase risks of migration?)</p> <p>What do you think would help to make women's migration safer, thinking about the steps of the migration journey that take place within Ethiopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of facilitators make migration safer? • How do they do so? • What kinds of facilitators make migration unsafe? how? • What changes would you like to happen? • Do you think that any of the formal or informal facilitators and brokers and recruiters could protect migrants? • Which kinds of facilitators could help protect migrants? How? • What else could facilitators do to help make sure migrants arrive safely in the Middle East? • If a woman gets into trouble after arriving in the Middle East - for example not ending up in the job that she was promised - who do you think is best placed to help her, and how?
Wrap-up	Thank you for sharing your personal experiences with me. Is there anything else you would like me to know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any final questions for me about the study?

F. Interview guide used with informal facilitators

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
Introduction/ background	Please ask the respondent to introduce him/herself and talk about himself in general terms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To which destination countries do you support migrants to travel? Please can you give a summary of how you are helping women migrate to Arab Countries for domestic work?
Deciding to migrate	How do women generally find and contact you about migrating?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who suggests or influences women to migrate? What benefits or achievements did they expect? What are women's common fears or doubts about migrating? Please explain your role in providing information or helping women to decide? What kind of contact do you have when women are in the early stages of thinking about migration? Whom do most women trust to talk to about migration? Do they discuss migration with family? What about friends or peers? Whom else do you think they consult? What kinds of people do women usually keep their plans about migration secret or don't want to talk to Please explain What information do they request from you? Do family members contact you/ discuss migration? What kinds of people encourage them to migrate? What kinds of people try to discourage them? What is your involvement in these kinds of conversations?
Consulting others	Who generally makes referrals to you? Can you describe the first conversations you have with women who come to you to migrate? What types of questions do they generally ask? What is the first type of information you offer the women? When women start to think about migration do they directly contact agencies? Whom, besides you, do they consult for information or advice? What do they generally know when they come to see you? What they mostly did not know about the migration when they come to see you?	
Sources of information	Have you ever heard of a Migration Resource Centre? This is a place where accurate information is made available to potential migrants about the conditions of life and work in other countries, and the legal requirements and migrants' rights when they migrate for work.	
Role as a facilitator	I am interested in your role as a migration facilitator, and all your activities. I am also interested in the other kinds of people that women rely on to help them leave Ethiopia. First, can you describe in detail what you do to help women, , step-by-step, from the time a woman decides to migrate? Think about all the kinds of people she may receive assistance from at each step. Do you work with other colleagues who also help women migrate? What do they do? Do you feel migration out of Ethiopia can be risky in any way?	
Perceptions of responsible recruitment	From your experience, what does "responsible recruitment" mean for you? In your role, do you feel you are able to protect migrants? How? Do other facilitators protect migrants? (help make migration safer?) Can you think of ways that migration facilitators endanger migrants? (increase risks of migration?) What do you think would help to make women's migration safer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you describe your role? Which parts of the migration journey do you assist with? What arrangements are necessary, and how do women make these? What is easy and what is difficult in organising migration? How do prospective migrants and their families hear about you and how do they contact you? Do you have people who work with you in different places? PROBE only if not mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are costs of arranging migration? How do people pay for these? Who helps with arranging payment? What paperwork do women need and how do they get it? Who helps obtain documents? How do migrants travel to from home? Where did you go? Who helps with transport? Where do they stay between home and leaving Ethiopia? Who makes those arrangements? Who arranges departure from Ethiopia? What are the potential risks when women migrate for domestic work in the Middle East? How are these risks influenced by different migration facilitators? What kinds of facilitators are most useful in making migrants' experience better?
Current situation	How do you think migration is changing due to the current situation in Ethiopia?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has Covid affected migration? What about the conflict in the country? What do you expect will happen in future?
Wrap-up	Can you suggest whom we might be able to talk to obtain this kind of information? Thank you for sharing your personal experiences with me. Is there anything else you would like me to know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please recommend individuals or friends you think would have useful information. Do you have any final questions for me about the study?

G. Interview guide used with program and policy stakeholders

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
Introduction/ background	Please ask the respondent to introduce him/herself and describe their work and its relevance to this study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please can you describe your work, and how it relates to the issue of women's migration to the Middle East and Gulf States? • Please can you specify any work you and your organisation are doing on labour and migration recruitment?
Focus on recruitment	<p>As you know, our research is focusing on the recruitment process for Ethiopian women into domestic work abroad. We are taking a broad definition of "recruitment" that includes activities throughout the whole migration experience, from departure to return.</p> <p>"Recruiters" can be involved in advertising to prospective migrants, their families and communities; providing, information on migration; selecting migrants; transportation within Ethiopia and abroad; placement of migrants into employment; and support for return to Ethiopia.</p> <p>Thinking about the definition I read to you, I will now ask you about your views on how recruitment commonly occurs in Ethiopia at each stage of the migration journey in turn.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this definition clear? • In your work, do you use any other definition? • Do you have any questions before we proceed?
Pre-departure People who influence women's migration decisions Departure & transit Making arrangements	<p>In communities with which you work, who is involved in influencing women's decision to migrate or not?</p> <p>What do you think "recruitment" involves at the community level?</p> <p>Once a woman is getting ready to travel to the Middle East for domestic work, what kinds of people help her? Who are the facilitators of departure? I am referring to people who assist women in their journey but are not necessarily formal recruiters.</p> <p>How does the kind of facilitator(s) that a woman uses to plan her migration affect her migration outcomes?</p> <p>Are there migration resource centres at your locality which can help migrants make an informed decision?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who suggests or has the most influence on women's decision to migrate? • Are some types of people more influential than others? • Describe how a woman might be actively recruited? • How do local community determinants of women's decision to migrate differ? • How do women decide what kinds of facilitators to rely on? • What kinds of fees and costs are involved? How do these differ between kinds of facilitator/ recruiter? • What kinds of facilitators are most useful in helping women migrants have a good experience working overseas How? • What kind of facilitators are most likely to put women migrants at risk of harm? How? • In addition to facilitators, are there other sources of support, such as migration resource centres?
Destination country Finding employment Seeking assistance	<p>What roles might a recruiter have once a woman arrives at the destination country?</p> <p>In general, how do facilitators place women with an employer? Are there any common procedures or further negotiations in which the recruiter might be involved?</p> <p>What role do recruiters have if a woman experiences problems at her workplace?</p> <p>If a woman wants to change employment, what can she do and what is the role of the recruiter? What are the options for women who are experiencing exploitation or abuse?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can facilitators realistically do to help women once they are in their workplaces? • Can you give examples of how formal or informal facilitators have assisted women in these kinds of situations? (Specify which country is being discussed)
Return	<p>If a woman wants to return to Ethiopia earlier than her contract permits, what is the role of the recruiter?</p> <p>Are facilitators involved in helping with any rehabilitation or reintegration needs once a woman returns to Ethiopia?</p> <p>Can you think of any available reintegration initiatives in your area? How are they supporting returnees?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are some kinds of facilitators better able to help returning migrants than others? Why? • Do recruitment agents usually facilitate this? • Do they suffer any financial penalties if a woman leaves early? • What role do facilitators of migration play in supporting returnee migrant women? • How are these roles likely to be accepted by returnees themselves and a helping community?
Perceptions & experiences of facilitators and recruiters	<p>What is your opinion about the motivations of different kinds of facilitators and recruiters? What efforts do recruiters make to try to protect migrants?</p> <p>Can you think of ways that facilitators and recruiters could work to reduce chances of migrant women's exploitation or abuse?</p> <p>What challenges do different kinds of facilitators face throughout the migration cycle?</p> <p>What about at community level, are there some actions communities take to protect migrants? Can you think of things that communities could do themselves to improve protection?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This about different types of facilitators such as informal vs formal or registered vs unregistered recruiters? • Can you give examples of when recruiters have intervened to benefit migrants? • Where should recruiters and facilitators seek help to make migrants experience safer? • How can this be encouraged? • What are their concerns? E.g. financial, logistical, legal, social etc? • Can you give any examples?

Areas of inquiry	Specific topics	Suggested probes
<p>Legal & policy framework</p> <p>Labour proclamation</p> <p>Anti-trafficking law</p> <p>Other legislation</p>	<p>In your opinion, what laws or policies govern over recruiters? What about them works and does not work?</p> <p>In particular, what do you think has been the effect of Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2016 Have you heard about the new Ethiopian's Overseas Employment (Amendment) Proclamation No. 1246/2021? If yes, do you think this was communicated with implementers and it is in practice on the ground?</p> <p>From your experience, what has been implemented so far under these Proclamations?</p> <p>What are your thoughts about Ethiopia's new anti-trafficking law as a means to protect migrants from trafficking and exploitation? (Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Persons No. 1178/2020)</p> <p>Are there other laws or regulations that you feel are protecting migrant women throughout the migration process? (For example, the bilateral agreements with some Arab countries).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do such laws of policies help? • In your opinion, what other legal or policy measures would help protect Ethiopian domestic worker migrants? • What are its strengths and weaknesses? • What are the remaining gaps? • What is working well? • What is working less well? • What would you change? • What effects has it had so far? • What are its potential effects in future? • What are its strengths and weaknesses? • What are the remaining gaps? • What is the relevance of the examples you mention? • How effective have they been? • What are its strengths and weaknesses? • What are the remaining gaps?
<p>Perceptions of responsible recruitment</p>	<p>In this study, we are trying to learn about how to make women's migration experiences safer by addressing recruitment. In particular, we are hoping to develop approaches for more "responsible recruitment." Responsible recruitment is about putting into place governmental and/or non-government measures to engage recruiters in the protection of their client migrants at all stages of migration. The focus is on ensuring recruitment practices are protective, and facilitators act in the best interests of migrants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From your experience, what is responsible recruitment for you? • What could the government put in place to improve migrants' protection? • How might this differ for different destination countries? • What could facilitators or recruiters themselves do to practice more responsible recruitment? • What actions could be taken by communities themselves?
<p>Current situation</p>	<p>Finally, I would like to get your perspective on what is happening right now related to migration. How do you see recent changes in migration intentions and practices since there may be a lot of different influences on decision-making right now? For example, how has COVID-19 and the current conflict in Ethiopia affected people's motivation or ability to migrate at the moment?</p> <p>Can you summarise what is going on and what you think are the current priorities for policy and programmes in supporting women returnees from the Middle East?</p> <p>How do you think the migration demand and supply is changing due to the current conflict in Ethiopia and COVID pandemic?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know if women are continuing to try to leave Ethiopia for the Middle East? If so, how are they doing so? • Do you expect there to be changes in recruitment practices? • How is the current situation affecting migration? And what do you expect in the future?
<p>Wrap-up</p>	<p>Thank you for spending the time speaking with me today, I really appreciate it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything you would like to add? • Do you have any final questions for me about the study?

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(company number 08926428) and a registered UK charity (registration number 1158838).