

# Irregular Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa: Causes and Consequences of Young Adult Migration from Southern Ethiopia to South Africa.

Teshome D. Kanko<sup>1</sup>, Charles H. Teller<sup>2</sup>

## **1. Introduction**

This study investigates the socio-economic and demographic causes and consequences of the irregular migration of young adults from selected areas in southern Ethiopia—*Kembata-Tembaro* and *Hadiya Zones*—to the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Emphasis in the paper has been given to the area of departure and the migrant themselves and little has been done so far on the area of destination (RSA) and transit countries. Further data will be collected on the pull factors from South Africa. In doing so, the key research questions set to be answered were: (i) Is there a difference in the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics between out-migrants, returnees and non-migrants? (ii) What factors influence young adults to migrate irregularly? (iii) What is the role of smuggling and finances in the irregular movement of the young adults? (iv) What are the socioeconomic and demographic consequences of such migration on the migrants and their families?

## **2. Theory**

Two theories are discussed to support the understanding of the problem under investigation: three stylized levels of migration analysis (which is a theory adapted to migration in general) and differentiation theory (explains about irregular migration).

In the three stylized levels of migration analysis, there are *micro*, *macro* and *meso* levels (Faist, 2010). Level one is about the degree of freedom or autonomy of a potential migrant, the individual or micro-level. This is the degree to which an individual has the ability to decide on moving or staying. In level two, the political-economic-cultural structures on the level of the nation-states, the country of origin and the country of destination, and the world system constitute the macro-level. Here the discussion turns to the inter- and transnational structures and the relations between nation-states. The set of social and symbolic ties (the structure, strength and density of social ties on the one hand and their content on the other) among movers and groups and the resources inherent constitute the meso (third) level.

The second model used is differentiation theory where Cvajner and Sciortino (2008) have tried to theorize irregular migration mainly from the broader political aspects. They explain it through

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Dept. of Geography Wolaita Sodo University. P.O.Box 138 Wolaita Sodo, Ethiopia E-mail: [teshdes@yahoo.com](mailto:teshdes@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Adjunct Professor, George Washington University (USA) and Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia). E-mail: [profcharlesteller@gmail.com](mailto:profcharlesteller@gmail.com)

discussing differentiation theory, though they argue it has very limited recognition in migration studies. The basic idea of differentiation approach is that contemporary society has no head, no base and no center, but is articulated in a plurality of specialized subsystems and regulative means (Cvajner and Sciortino, 2008). They used this theory with two key topics in the study of irregular migration: the structural origins of irregular migration systems, rooted in the mismatch between the international system of states and the complex set of factors governing human spatial mobility; and the micro analysis of irregular migrants. Accordingly, the development of irregular migration is rooted in the structural mismatch between the social and political conditions for migration. For an irregular migration flow to develop there must be a mismatch between the demand for entry, embedded in the international labor market, and the supply of entry slots, determined by the political systems. They argue that in the sending country context, there must be a mismatch between widespread social expectations (usually called ‘push’ factors) and the capacity of local government to satisfy or repress them. In the receiving context on the other hand, there must be a mismatch between the internal preconditions for migration (usually called ‘pull’ factors) and their interpretation within the political system. Trans-nationally, there must be a mismatch between the carrying capacity of the migration infrastructure and the monitoring and repressive capacity of states. To the end, they underline that irregular migration systems may be in fact defined as an adaptive answer to these mismatches.

### **3. Data and Methods**

This study encompasses both urban and rural areas of two zones from the southern parts of Ethiopia, namely *Kembata-Tembaro*, and *Hadiya* zones. The target populations were young adults of both sexes aged 15-54. The investigation was done mainly based on the quantitative data collected via questionnaires from 658 randomly selected migrants (226 out-migrants, 193 returnees and 239 non-migrants) between February and May 2010. Information about out-migrants is gained from their families at homeland (proxy respondents). Additional data are also collected using key informant interviews ( $n=6$ ) and focused group discussions ( $n=4$ ). The data from questionnaires are entered and then analyzed using SPSS 19 and qualitative data are analyzed using *NUD\*IST* (nonnumeric unstructured data, index searching & theorizing) computer software. A binomial logistic regression model was applied to assess the association between the dependent variable (migration status: migration and non-migration) and several independent variables in searching for the causes of migration. In the logistic regression, both out-migrants and returnees are combined under *migrants*, while non-migrants and returnees are treated as *non-migrant* because the causes of migration are assumed to be similar (based mainly from qualitative data) both for out-migrants and returnees.

### **4. Results and Discussions**

The analysis of respondents’ demographic characteristics indicate the majority of them are male (over 82%). This sex selectivity of migration of youth is mainly attributable to the type of work available in RSA as well as the difficulty of the journey, which on the average takes over two months. Moreover, the migration of youth to South Africa is age selective where the age group with the highest number were found in 25-29 age group, and over 57% of them lie between ages 20 to 34. The volume of migrants is lowest below age 20 and above 45. The study also indicated that the irregular movement of young adults to RSA is marital status selective: the majority of the sample migrants (over 54%) were found to be single during the survey period and only a

little over a third of them (36.9%) were married. The presence of family burden was attributable to the marital selectivity of migration.

The majority (72%) of the respondents' childhood residence is found largely to be rural, and this is true for both zones. Substantial percentages of respondents (37%) are first born child and over half (52%) of them are either first or second born. Most of the non-migrants are higher parity children (64% of them are six and above birth order). The majority of the respondents belong to households of size between 5 and 9. Fifty-two percent of the sample respondents are from *Hadiya* ethnic groups followed by *Kembata-Tembaro* (41%).

When education is analyzed as one of the socio-economic characteristics of respondents, the vast majority of them (95%) are literate, and among these, 51.4% had completed secondary education followed by primary education (29.3%) during the survey period. The respondents' age, as stated earlier, is largely found in early to mid 20s, a time when they could finish secondary education. This could be one explanation why youth who completed secondary educations dominate among others.

Employment status, occupation type and income of both household heads' and that of the respondents are also assessed in this study. Nearly half (48.3%) of the non-migrant respondents were unemployed during the survey period whereas among out-migrants only 33.6% of them are unemployed at the time of the survey. At the beginning of the migration of youth from south Ethiopia to South Africa a decade ago, most of the migrants were unemployed youths. These days, the intention to migration down to South Africa among the non-migrants is found to be high both for employed and unemployed adults. Regarding occupation, the majority of the sample respondents (59%) were engaged in trading activities followed by agriculture (15%) during the survey period. The distribution of income for the employed sample respondents gives varied figures among the three migrant types.

The multivariate analysis showed that age, residence and employment status are found to have a significant positive association with the outcome variable (migration status) while sex, marital status, education status, duration of continuous residence in the current place, and birth order have a significant negative association. More specifically, the risk of migration for females is 0.332 times lower than males and this is also supported by the descriptive analysis where the risks and challenges of the migration account for the male dominancy. The odds of migration for those with secondary education are 0.370 times lower as compared to illiterates (reference category). Literates will have better information about both the opportunities and challenges of irregular migration than the illiterates and as it is discussed below, the migration process is full of challenges and risks. For this reason, literates are found to have less intensity of migration than illiterates. In other words, literates are less likely to prefer involvement in the irregular migration than illiterates.

Regarding birth order of respondents, a unit increase in birth order decreases the log odds of migration by 0.962 units. This is true since most of the first order children are either out-migrants or returnees as explained in the descriptive analysis above. This will possibly change in the future as the intention of migration among non migrants—where the majority of them are late born children—is so high. The association between ethnic group and migration is significant but for only some ethnic groups found in the study area. *Amhara* and *Guraghe* ethnic groups have a significant negative association with the outcome variable (migration) as compared to *Hadiya*.

Overall, the risk of migration is high among the two major ethnic groups in the study area (*Hadiya* and *Kembata-Tembaro*) than all others. Unlike the above independents, household size is found to be insignificantly related with migration, implying that family-level population pressure not to be associated with out-migration.

On the other hand the descriptive analysis further found that over 44% of the respondents view that the main cause for the irregular migration of young adults to be *perceived better opportunities* in South Africa, and only 8% of them claimed poverty as the main cause. This substantiates that what drives migration of young adults from southern Ethiopia to RSA is not absolute deprivation or poverty, but relative deprivation—the sense that one could be better off there. The role of an Ethiopian Ambassador to South Africa is assumed to be a trigger for the current vast migration of young adults, as noted by many people in the study area and to some extent by the ambassador himself (interviewed for this study.)

The study found that the movement of young adults from southern Ethiopia to RSA is facilitated by a network of human smugglers found in *Addis Ababa*, *Hossana*, *Dilla* or other major capitals here in Central and Southern Ethiopia, and they work in association with smugglers from Kenya and Somalia. Concerning the documents required for international travel, the overwhelming percentages of the smuggled migrants (over 83%) reported they had a legal passport but no valid/legal visa, and nearly 9% of them had neither legal passport nor visa. They pointed out that forged forms of such documents are arranged by smugglers or other facilitators in *Addis Ababa* and/or *Nairobi*. This indicates the intensity of illegal documentation/forgery and how it facilitates more irregular migrations. The movement is typically organized directly from Ethiopia or Nairobi. It is also noticed by return migrants that the mode of transport and routes used can be altered on short notice, depending on circumstances.

Several smuggled migrants (out-migrants and returnees) spoke of different amounts paid for the main smuggler and this varied from €565 to €2609 with an average of €1436. Recent literature put the highest amount at over €5217. The money is paid usually in advance. They also pay other unexpected money as well as different charges demanded during their journey. Nearly half of the smuggled migrants funded their journey through the sale of private assets or borrowed from others. A fifth of them said that their journey was financed by relatives abroad (the majority living in RSA). The study also found that nowadays more people participate in financing the movement than in earlier times, implying that migration is becoming more of a family business rather than a personal decision.

As to the socioeconomic effects of the irregular migration—where the main data is based on the information gained from the returnees—the study has the following findings. Occupation: trading is still found to be dominant and the percentage increased from 54.3 while in Ethiopia to nearly 90% in RSA. Employment: returnees are found to have better employed during the survey period than before their move to RSA. More returnees earn better at survey time than before: 40% of them earn above €2173 per month during the survey while 44.4% of them earn between €23 and €44 per month before their move. Marital status of returnees also changed significantly: most of them (64%). The risk of marriage increases among the returnees than non-migrants since most returnees showed an improvement their living standard and also was older.

Remittances have been assessed in this study, and accordingly over 61% of the smuggled migrants regularly send money to their relatives at home. The average amount of remittances

sent by these migrants was found to be €109. The vast majority (87%) of returnees reported that their present living standard is much better than before moving to RSA. All of the deported returnees said that their present life in Ethiopia is worse than the previous one in RSA. On the other hand, return migrants have showed little or no improvement in their education status before move and at the survey. The inconvenience of the type of job they are doing in RSA to attend school is cited by most of them as the main reason followed by having no interest to education at all.

The highest proportion of the smuggled migrants said that their journeys were harsh with unexpected negative consequences. Thirty eight percent of them reported that they were beaten or physically robbed at least once and thirty percent of them spoke of death during the journey. Most of them (45%) noted that they did not reached RSA on time and it usually took weeks or even months/years to reach RSA. Those that reported to reach on time are mainly those that used airplane as their major transport. A substantial percentage of smuggled migrants were transported inside a closed container, which are easy for officials to turn a blind eye; however, it was much disastrous as reported by the majority of returnees.

## **5. Final Remarks**

The youth, not only in *Kembata-Tembaro* and *Hadiya* areas, but also in other parts of Ethiopia, are progressively seeing the merits of the rest of the world as exposed to film/TV, mobile phones and the internet, in addition to knowing the earnings probable in a culture of remittance that has developed in recent periods. With today's simplicity of communication and returning migrants that are aspirational in the source communities at homeland, it is likely that the vibrant of departing Ethiopia to get work and chance will continue, despite the probable brutality they may encounter during the journey and/or in RSA. As South Africa continues to present better survival chances, it will keep on attracting thousands of young Ethiopians. Smuggling these Ethiopians to South Africa will similarly persist provided that the demand is soaring even if it could modify its structure. More recently the Ethiopian government is conducting a huge campaign to stop any irregular out-migration of the youth. In doing so, great care is needed since trying to stop it may result in another form of irregularity as suggested by most theories and literatures on irregular migration.

## **References**

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