

mixed migration research series
explaining people on the move

Blinded by Hope

Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
of Ethiopian migrants



RMIMS

Regional
Mixed Migration
Secretariat



6

Study

June 2014

Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethiopian migrants

This is the sixth of a series of studies focusing on different aspects of mixed migration associated with the Horn of Africa and Yemen region.

Acknowledgements

The research was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) while writing, editing and publishing was funded by the European Union. The study, commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council in Yemen, was carried out by Rakeb Messele and Mebratu Gebeyehu. The writer of the report was Mr. Bram Frouws (an independent consultant and senior research associate with RMMS in Nairobi) and the final editor was Ms Noni Munge. The text was developed using statistical data collected by Rakeb Messele and Mebratu Gebeyehu, data and information developed by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS) and other listed references. The views and opinions of this report are entirely those of the RMMS, unless otherwise referenced.

We would like to sincerely thank all respondents, in particular the migrants who talked openly about their migration aspirations, decisions and experiences.

Published: June 2014

The Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS).

Formed in 2011 and based in Nairobi, the overall objective of the RMMS is to support agencies, institutions and fora in the Horn of Africa and Yemen sub-region to improve the management of protection and assistance to people in mixed migration flows in the Horn of Africa and across the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea in Yemen. The co-founders and Steering Committee members for the RMMS include UNHCR, IOM, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), INTERSOS and the Yemen Mixed Migration Task Force. The RMMS is therefore a regional hub aiming to provide support and coordination, analysis and research, information, data management and advocacy. It acts as an independent agency, hosted by the DRC, to stimulate forward thinking and policy development in relation to mixed migration. Its overarching focus and emphasis is on human rights, protection and assistance.

www.regionalmms.org

RMMS is located at:
The DRC Regional Office for the Horn of Africa and Yemen,
Lower Kabete Road (Ngecha Junction),
P.O.Box 14762, 00800,
Westlands, Nairobi,
Kenya.
Office: +254 20 418 0403/4/5
info@regionalmms.org



Contents:

Map	2
Summary of key findings.....	4
1. Introduction	9
1.1 Research background: setting the scene	9
1.2 Objectives and research questions	15
1.3 Methodology	15
2 Before the Journey	19
2.1 Characterization of Ethiopian migrants	19
2.2 Migration drivers	21
2.3 Migration decisions	26
2.4 Migration goals and expectations	27
2.5 Knowledge and information about migration	27
3 Migration to Yemen	35
3.1 Means of migration	35
3.2 Migration routes and destinations	38
3.3 Migration costs	42
3.4 Migration experiences and protection risks	44
4 Return and reintegration.....	53
4.1 Saudi crackdown on irregular migration	53
4.2 Thoughts about return (current migrants)	53
4.3 Return and reintegration experiences	54
5 Bibliography.....	57

Summary of key findings

In the sector of mixed migration and irregular migration there are few if any studies of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of migrants. In the Horn of Africa and Yemen region there are none which serves to highlight the importance of this research.

The findings reinforce and authenticate various accepted aspects around migration of Ethiopians but they also reveal new and surprising information that offer important insights into the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the largest group of mixed flow migrants in the region. In fact, the US Department of State reports that the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs estimates that the 200,000 regular labour migrants who travelled in 2012 represent just 30-40% of all Ethiopians migrating to the Gulf States and Middle East, implying that the remaining 60-70% (between 300,000-350,000) are either trafficked or smuggled with the facilitation of illegal brokers. It is this group that face the most egregious risks.

The following list represents some of the most noteworthy findings that emerged from this KAP study. They are extractions from the study, so elaboration and further details are naturally found in the subsequent chapters of this report. As explained in the methodology section, three groups of migrants were interviewed – those thinking of or planning to migrate (**potential migrants**), those who have already migrated and are *ex-patria* as migrants (**current migrants**) and those who have voluntarily or been forced to return (**returnee migrants**):

Migration drivers

Economic factors are the most common migration drivers for all Ethiopian migrants. The next stated reason, and linked, is a sense of responsibility to their family. For **current migrants** (those outside Ethiopia) this sense of responsibility, combined with positive perceptions of migration, is the most important migration driver.

A mix of misinformation by brokers and smugglers, as well as migration success stories and political reasons were also significant for all migrants but not the leading drivers. Ethiopian community members also view migration as the only viable option for escaping poverty.

Culture of migration

There is a strong positive perception towards (irregular) migration in each of the areas where the research was conducted. However, there are strong familial pressures to migrate put on young Ethiopians by their family, peers and the community. In some instances parents tell their children to migrate.

Length of journey

Migrants underestimate how long their journeys will take. For some groups interviewed, 80% claimed they had little or no information about the time it would take to cross the Ethiopian border or to travel across Yemen and reach Saudi Arabia.

Sources of information

Migrants use different sources of information. Friends and relatives in transit and destination countries and friends and relatives in Ethiopia are the most

widely used and reliable sources. Other sources mentioned are mass media, local brokers, and **returnees**. Family and friends thus play a major role in spreading information about migration. Contrary to what is widely believed local brokers are not the main source of information about migration.

The risks they face

A strikingly large proportion of migrants have knowledge about serious protection risks they may face, with over 80% of **potential migrants** (those hoping to or planning to migrate) reporting that they have heard about extortion and robbery, exhaustion, dehydration, starvation and deprivation of sleep, mild to moderate or extreme physical violence, criminal kidnapping for ransom and degrading treatment and verbal and sexual abuse.

Potential migrants interviewed showed a high awareness of the specific protection risks of seizure, detention and deportation (92%). Perhaps not surprising (because the survey took place during the deportations of 160,000 Ethiopian migrants from Saudi Arabia in late 2013), many of those interviewed encountered evidence of and heard the stories of the ‘victims’ of the mass deportations.

Rising risks?

In terms of perception of the escalation of risks, 80% of **potential migrants** interviewed believe that the risks have increased in prevalence and severity over the past few years. Nevertheless, 42% of the same group state the benefits of migration are worth the protection risks faced during the journey and upon arrival in transit and destination countries. Consistent with findings in most reports, which indicate the level of abuse against irregular migrants in the region is rising, almost all **returnees** (92%) believe the risks of irregular migration have increased over the past few years.

Knowing about the risks, 45% of the **current migrants** in Yemen and 68% of **returnees** believe that the benefits of irregular migration are not worth the protection risks faced during the journey and upon arrival in the transit and destination countries.

Tolerating risk and actual violations

Migration drivers and the culture of migration in Ethiopia are strong. One explanation for continued migration and continued desire to migrate is that the drivers are simply stronger than the fear these risks might evoke. The results of the KAP study reveal that many seem to be prepared to endure these risks.

Potential migrants in the survey have been asked which protection risks they would tolerate if it would happen to them. The results show the extent migrants seem to be prepared to endure harsh circumstances in order to attain their migration goals:

- 44% would tolerate degrading treatment and verbal abuse
- 37% declared they would tolerate exhaustion, dehydration, starvation and deprivation of sleep
- 35% would tolerate mild to moderate physical abuse
- 33% would tolerate extortion and robbery
- 7% declared they would tolerate criminal kidnapping for ransom
- 1% of the **potential migrants** stated they would tolerate sexual abuse

The protection risks they would not tolerate include murder or threat of it, being overthrown from a boat, or shot at or tortured; extreme physical abuse; forced prostitution and forced labour and slavery-like practices (i.e. only extreme and life-threatening abuses).

Actual experience of violations

Surveying **returnee migrants** about the risks and violations they faced in their migration story offers sobering and shocking evidence of the scale of the human rights abuses and vulnerabilities facing migrants on the Ethiopia – Yemen – Saudi Arabia route: Here are some extracted findings from the survey:

- Exhaustion, dehydration, starvation and deprivation of sleep was experienced and/or witnessed by the majority in both Ethiopia (65%) and Yemen (93%).
- Mild to moderate physical abuse like slapping, beating, punching, whipping by brokers, smugglers and traffickers was experienced and/or witnessed by many in Ethiopia en route (37%) and Yemen (80%).
- Extreme physical abuse, including burning, gunshot wounds, suspension by feet for days by brokers, smugglers and traffickers was experienced and/or witnessed by few in Ethiopia (10%) but many in Yemen (70%). There was minimal criminal kidnapping for ransom in Ethiopia (15%) but this was experienced and/or witnessed in Yemen by a very high number (75%).
- Extortion and robbery was present in Ethiopia (34%), but far more common in Yemen (74%).
- Sexual abuse including rape was witnessed and/or experienced in Ethiopia by an alarmingly high number of migrants (19%) but by a much higher number in Yemen (49%).
- Additionally, **returnees** claimed to have witnessed and/or experienced forced prostitution or commercial sexual exploitation in both Ethiopia (10%) and Yemen (38%).
- In terms of the authorities in both countries, **returnees** claimed to have experienced and/or witnessed seizure, detention and deportation by border officials in Ethiopia (31%) and Yemen (and/or Saudi Arabia) (62%) while also experiencing and/or witnessing what they understood to be unlawful arrest and detention to a level of 19% in Ethiopia and 66% in Yemen.

Better information or more convincing information?

Two-thirds of the **potential migrants** claimed that they would change their mind about using the irregular route (and try to use regular routes instead, although for males the options for regular migration may be very slim), if they received thorough and reliable information about protection issues. This implies that **potential migrants** have doubts about the accuracy and reliability of their information sources, or that they need further convincing to believe that they themselves may end up as actual victims of violations, which statistics from **returnees** show many will.

Why do so many choose irregular means of migration?

Of **potential migrants** who were surveyed almost half (49%) prefer the option of irregular migration compared to regular migration. The reasons for preferring irregular migration were:

- **Potential migrants** think the cost of irregular migration will be lower (89%);
- The availability of the services of local brokers who facilitate irregular migration (74%);
- Low accessibility of the regular channel (54%);

- It is the most commonly used channel in their community (54%);
- The regular channel is more bureaucratic (52%);
- It would enable them to find better jobs and payment (44%);
- The risks and obstacles are similar whether they use irregular or regular channels (26%).

Regular vs. irregular

Current migrants state almost similar reasons for choosing the option of irregular migration. Interestingly, among **current migrants** – who actually experienced irregular migration – only 29% think the success rate of migrants who travel the irregular route is higher. Irregular migration was frequently found to be perceived as less bureaucratic and time consuming, cheaper and more rewarding.

However, interestingly, a substantial proportion of **current migrants** and **returnee migrants** (31% and 40% respectively) say they would opt for the regular route next time after having experienced the risks. However, as mentioned earlier, there are a few options for male migrants using regular (labour migration) channels so their hopes of migrating regularly 'next time' may be unrealistic.

The perceived cost of migration is an important factor that pushes migrants towards choosing irregular migration over regular migration. Most of those surveyed expressed the belief that irregular migration is cheaper than regular migration even if the facts tell a different story. The impression that irregular migration is cheaper is propagated by the brokers and smugglers.

Chosen destinations

Among **current migrants**, Yemen is the preferred country of destination (51%; note that **current migrants** were surveyed in Yemen). For those who do not consider Yemen their preferred country of destination, Saudi Arabia is the preferred destination (73%), while 10% claimed to want to reach European countries.

Financing irregular migration

For each respondent group, personal savings are most commonly mentioned to cover the cost of migration: 45% of **potential migrants** plan to use personal savings, while 51% of **current migrants** and 50% of **returnees** actually used personal savings.

Achieving migration goals

Among **returnees** 70% did not achieve any of their goals by migrating, while 27% achieved some of their goals, and only 4 per cent achieved most of their goals of migration. This finding may be affected by the fact that many of the **returnee** category of migrant were recent deportees from Saudi Arabia, but nevertheless, 4% 'success' suggests a remarkably low success rate.

None of the **returnees** interviewed said that they got a better job than expected. In fact, three quarters of those interviewed said the job they got was much worse than anticipated. Expectations were already low with most migrants expecting to get menial and non-skilled work. However, approximately 9% stated that their experience was better than they expected.

Final words

It is known that a high percentage of new arrivals on the shores of Yemen from Ethiopia every month are repeat migrants. Approximately 25% are estimated to have tried (and even succeeded) to make the journey to live and work in Yemen or to move through to Saudi Arabia) before. Consequently, not only are first time migrants filling the boats crossing the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, but those who have journeyed once, twice or three times before – facing the same or increased risks – continue to migrate undeterred.

Inter alia, these findings suggest that informing migrants about the risks in awareness raising campaigns does not seem to act as a deterrent, as they still travel and are already aware of most risks. Mere awareness raising campaigns on the protection risks of irregular migration may instil fear and apprehension, but for most, these misgivings are not strong enough to make them stay at home.

Perhaps the most dramatic findings of this survey are those that illustrate the scale of abuse experienced and/or witnessed by migrants as they pass through Ethiopia, other parts of the Horn of Africa, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Governments of the countries involved may also be shocked by the fact that so many criminal violations against undocumented foreigners / irregular migrants repeatedly take place within their territory with virtual impunity.

Equally dramatic is the level of awareness and knowledge migrants have of the risks and violations they will almost certainly face in their journeys as they leave Ethiopia and move through Yemen. As this report goes to print, new data suggests that after a sudden fall in numbers of Ethiopians going to Yemen and Saudi Arabia at the end of 2013 (coinciding with the Saudi crackdown and immediate expulsion of up to 160,000 irregular Ethiopian migrants and over a million others), Ethiopians are once again arriving in significant and increasing numbers along this route.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background: setting the scene

research back-
ground: setting
the scene

This report presents the findings of a survey into the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of Ethiopian migrants who intend to travel, have travelled to, or have returned from Yemen or Saudi Arabia.¹ Ethiopian migrants are found on the move in all compass directions out of the Horn of Africa but most, it appears, go east into Yemen. Others may be found going north into Egypt (some to cross the Mediterranean), west into Sudan and possibly on to Libya and beyond and others go south, into Kenya where they may remain and / or move on towards South Africa (and beyond). This research and analysis deliberately interrogates migration knowledge, attitudes and practices around the eastern route by Ethiopians into Yemen and the Gulf States.

Despite numerous reports of the abuse of Ethiopian migrants in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, Ethiopians have continued to migrate to the Gulf States in large numbers in recent years.² 2012 showed an unprecedented exodus of Ethiopians migrating to Yemen. Out of 107,532 Horn of Africa migrants crossing the Arabian and Red Sea to Yemen in 2012, 78% (84,446) were Ethiopians. Estimates indicate since 2006 over 500,000 migrants have made this crossing, almost all of whom are of Somali and Ethiopian origin.³ The cumulative volume of Ethiopians arriving in Yemen since 2006 is, as of January 2014, at least 334,000.⁴ Actual figures might be even higher considering the limitations in the monitoring of new arrivals and because most Ethiopian arrivals do not register since they immediately travel north towards Saudi Arabia.

1 The survey is conducted among three migrants groups: potential migrants in Ethiopia, current migrants in Yemen and returnees in Ethiopia. The focus is mostly on irregular migration. With regard to current migrants (who are in Yemen), the study is entirely focused on irregular migrants. With regard to returnees, as will be discussed, the study is almost exclusively focused on irregular migrants, as 96% of the surveyed returnees travelled irregularly to Saudi Arabia, through Yemen.

2 RMMS, 2014a, p; A full account of the exodus from the Horn of Africa to Yemen is detailed and elaborated in other reports in this RMMS research series, most notably in: Study 1: *"Migrant Smuggling in the Horn of Africa & Yemen: the political economy and protection risks"* and Study 3: *"Responses to mixed migration in the Horn of Africa & Yemen: policies and assistance responses in a fast changing context."*

3 RMMS, 2013d, p. 11; UNHCR, 2013.

4 UNHCR, 2013.

Table 1:
Estimated number of Ethiopian arrivals at Yemen's coast ⁵

Year	Estimated number of Ethiopian arrivals at Yemen's coast
2006	11,747
2007	11,575
2008	17,072
2009	44,814
2010	34,527
2011	75,804
2012	84,446
2013	54,274

During 2013, however, the number of Ethiopians arriving in Yemen decreased significantly (approximately 30% lower than in 2012), with October, November and December 2013 showing the lowest numbers using the 'eastern route' out of the Horn for the last 4 years. For the first time in six years the numbers have significantly decreased. As of December 2013, 65,319 migrants arrived in Yemen, amongst which 54,213 were Ethiopians and 11,045 Somalis.⁶ As an illustration of the dynamic changes in movement trends it is worth noting that in early 2014 the figures of new arrivals are already bouncing back from the dramatic 2013 decline: the estimated arrival figures in Yemen of Ethiopians in January, February and March in 2014 were (approximately) 800, 2,000 and 5,431 respectively.

Djibouti is the major transit country for Ethiopians travelling irregularly to Yemen and further to Saudi Arabia. In 2012, over 80,000 migrants (78% of all arrivals in Yemen) transited via Djibouti, the others transited mostly through Bossaso in Puntland. The number of arrivals from Djibouti represented a sharp increase compared to 2010 when 34,894 migrants entered Yemen from Djibouti.⁷

In 2013, in line with the generally declining numbers, the number of new arrivals from Djibouti also decreased; 48,102 migrants (74% of all arrivals in Yemen) crossed the Red Sea via Djibouti (42,168 Ethiopians and 5,934 Somalis).⁸ In December 2013 for example, an estimated 244 migrants/refugees arrived on Yemen's shores via Djibouti, an 82% decrease from arrivals in November 2013, and a 96% decrease from the migrants/refugees that arrived in December 2012 and 2011.⁹

The decrease may be temporary. En-route migrants contacted in the Dire Dawa area during the course of this research stated that – following efforts made by the Ethiopian and Djiboutian authorities to reduce irregular migration and the Saudi crackdown on irregular migration – they are 'lying low' for the time

5 UNHCR, 2013.

6 Ibid.

7 RMMS, 2013d, p. 33.

8 UNHCR, 2013.

9 RMMS Monthly Summary, December 2013.

being. They see it as only a matter of time before numbers of irregular migrants pick up, as they believe the network of brokers on both sides of the border will find solutions for their own benefit. They further believe that **potential migrants** are waiting for the controls to be loosened before they start their journey.

Most transit migrants depart from the vicinity of the small portal town of Obock or, in order to avoid patrols by Djiboutian authorities, from remote coastal locations.¹⁰ Recently, migrants/refugees indicated the use of a new departure point, two hours away from the traditional departure points in Obock.¹¹

The overland routes mostly involve a network of brokers, smugglers and traffickers from the local, village or district level to Djibouti/Somaliland/Puntland and Yemen. The distinction between smuggling and trafficking is at times difficult to make as migrants' status may change during the course of the journey. For instance, a smuggled migrant may in the course of the migration journey fall prey to the false promises of traffickers and end up being exploited. The excessive violence and abuse against Ethiopian migrants within and on their way to Yemen has been, reportedly, rapidly increasing in frequency and brutality in recent years.

Many studies have documented the fact that the irregular migrants' journey to Yemen is dangerous. Migrants face many risks while transiting through Ethiopia, Djibouti, Puntland and/or Somaliland, including dehydration, physical abuse by smugglers and brokers, sexual abuse and arbitrary arrest, detention and deportation by authorities in the transit countries.

The sea crossing has been particularly dangerous. Since 2008 an estimated 2,000 people have died while crossing the seas to Yemen. However, lower numbers of migrant deaths or disappearances at sea were recorded between 2011 and 2014 when compared with earlier years. Nevertheless, in 2012 for example, a major accident was recorded in the Gulf of Aden on 26 December in which 55 migrants perished.¹² UNHCR reported 5 persons dead or missing in 2013, compared to 131 in 2011 and 43 in 2012.¹³ A major difference in recent sea deaths is that the cause now tends to be as a result of overcrowding and bad weather whereas in earlier years a substantial number of deaths were directly caused by extreme negligence, brutality or outright murder by unscrupulous smuggler crews.

However, in the first three months of 2014 there were two major fatal incidents. On 26 February 2014, at least nine Ethiopian migrants drowned after their boat capsized in the Gulf of Aden, just north of Obock in Djibouti. Seventeen people were in the boat and eight are missing.¹⁴ On 7 March 2014, a boat carrying 77 Somali and Ethiopian men, women and children left Bossaso in Puntland. The boat ran into strong winds and high waves off the coast of southern Yemen; 44 people died and 33 were rescued by the Yemeni coastguard.¹⁵

10 RMMS, 2013d, p. 33.

11 RMMS Monthly Summary, January 2014.

12 IOM, 2014.

13 UNHCR, 2013.

14 IOM, 2014b.

15 UNHCR, 2014.

One explanation for the reduction of migrant deaths in 2012 and 2013, suggested by RMMS, is that a migrant's life has increased in value ('commoditization'), due to the evolving practice of kidnapping migrants for ransom, as well as subjecting them to extortion.¹⁶ Reports from migrants themselves suggest that significant numbers of (mainly Ethiopian) female 'new arrivals' in mixed migration flows are separated, abducted and often sold on to other criminals or directly to private 'buyers'. Some of these women are never heard of again, according to those who crossed to Yemen with them.¹⁷

However, it is not possible to say whether there is any causality between the decrease in the number of deaths in those years and the increase in kidnappings. It should also be noted that the number of deaths reported in 2012 and 2013 might be an underestimation. Migrants interviewed in the context of another recent RMMS study confirmed that migrants in Yemen know of many others who left Ethiopia but never arrived in Yemen.¹⁸ Moreover, there are no indications that the kidnapping practices recently decreased, while the number of deaths clearly increased again in 2014.

The conditions migrants are exposed to in Yemen itself are harsh as well. Reports of torture and sexual abuse of migrants at the hands of traffickers and smugglers have increased in recent years. While Yemen was found to be the preferred country of destination among **current migrants** (a possible reason may be that after spending a long time in the country they have given up on their dream of reaching Saudi Arabia and other countries), few Ethiopians initially aim to stay in Yemen and many travel north on foot towards the Saudi Arabian border.

This trek leaves many malnourished, dehydrated, physically exhausted and in need of medical assistance.¹⁹ Violent criminal gangs that smuggle, traffic and kidnap migrants for ransom seem to operate with impunity that has led to a massive escalation of abuse since the beginning of 2012. A large number of migrants who became victims of these gangs suffer from broken bones, burns, gunshot wounds, injuries related to sexual violence, malnutrition and trauma. Moreover, there are serious concerns about the low number of women and girls encountered in Yemen, compared to the number thought to depart the Horn of Africa. In 2012, one analysis estimated (but was unable to verify) that in recent years the number of "missing" women could hypothetically be as high as 19,000.²⁰ Some of these women may have successfully found work in Yemen or crossed into Saudi Arabia. However, this is unlikely to adequately account for the magnitude of this figure which indicates sinister, and severe, human rights abuses faced by hundreds, if not thousands, of female migrants coming to Yemen.²¹

16 RMMS, 2013d, p. 14.

17 Ibid, p. 75; The investigation and analysis of this alarming phenomena is the subject of a further report (Study Number 7) by RMMS (2014). *Disappearing Girls: Protection risks faced by female migrants from the Horn of Africa while travelling to or through Yemen*.

18 RMMS, 2014a.

19 RMMS, 2013a.

20 See the previous reference to *Disappearing Girls* (RMMS 2014) for a discussion and analysis of estimates.

21 RMMS, 2013e.

Yemen is the only country in the Arabian Peninsula which is a party to the 1951 *Refugee Convention*. However, in 2009 Human Rights Watch reported that the Yemeni Government openly contravenes the core provisions of the 1951 *Refugee Convention* and its 1967 *Protocol*, with regard to asylum applications by Ethiopian asylum seekers. While Somalis are considered as *prima facie* refugees, asylum seekers from Ethiopia were treated as illegal migrants.²² Prior to March 2010, all Ethiopians caught by Yemeni authorities were deported to Ethiopia. After that, UNHCR was allowed to offer Ethiopians a chance to apply for asylum and fewer were detained and deported. However, there are recent reports of deportations of detained Ethiopians since mid-2013.

Migrants coming to Yemen from Bossaso arrive along the Arabian Sea Coast and can receive basic assistance from the two reception centers run by UNHCR at Mayfa'a and Ahwar. Those who come from Obock in Djibouti arrive on the Red Sea Coast where DRC (with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC and UNHCR) runs a transit centre at Bab-el-Mandeb. At registration centres (for example at Kharaz, inland from Bab-el-Mandeb) UNHCR issues a 20 day slip for non-Somalis and 90 day slip for Somalis, for those who request to seek asylum in Yemen. This allows migrants who wish to seek asylum to reach either Aden or Sana'a to register and make an appointment to undergo Refugee Status Determination (RSD), which may occur weeks or months later. In the meantime, Ethiopian migrants (who receive a 20-day slip) risk being arrested by Yemeni security forces.

The large numbers of migrants in mixed migration flows pose a major challenge for Yemen – a country that already suffers from unemployment, rapid population growth, dwindling water resources and the highest poverty levels in the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, Yemen is under strong pressure from Saudi Arabia and other neighbouring countries to stop these flows.²³ Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states view Yemen as the gateway for irregular migrants from the Horn of Africa, mostly from Ethiopia, into their territories. In the *Sana'a Declaration*,²⁴ adopted at a major regional conference on asylum and migration from the Horn of Africa to Yemen²⁵, countries in the region agreed on the need for action to better manage mixed migration while boosting support for countries of origin and host nations.

Most Ethiopians arriving in Yemen intend to move on to Saudi Arabia. Within the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia is the major source country for labour migration to Saudi Arabia. Over the last three years, between 100,000 -

22 Human Rights Watch, 2009.

23 RMMS, 2014a.

24 Available on the RMMS website: <http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php?id=28>

25 The conference (11-13 November 2013) was hosted by the Yemeni government in Sana'a, with the participation of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Republic of Djibouti, the State of Eritrea, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the United Arab Emirates, in addition to the Arab League, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); see also RMMS, 2014a.

200,000 Ethiopian migrants migrated to Saudi Arabia annually through regular labour migration. Irregular Ethiopian labour migration to Saudi Arabia is estimated to be double that size.²⁶

In 2013, however, Saudi Arabia implemented some strong measures to protect its labour market and curb irregular migration. Saudi authorities continued the construction of a barrier along the Saudi-Yemeni border, established observation posts and regularly carry out patrols in search of illegal migrants.²⁷ As a result, in early 2013 thousands of destitute Horn of Africa migrants found themselves stranded in the Yemeni border town of Haradh and surrounding areas.²⁸ However, as of early 2014 this figure had reportedly dropped to around 500 or less from an estimated peak of up to 25,000 during 2013.

Furthermore, the Saudi authorities announced an amnesty period during which irregular migrants in Saudi Arabia had to either regularize their stay or leave the country. The amnesty period ended on 4 November 2013. By that time hundreds of thousands of migrants had already left Saudi Arabia 'voluntarily'. Soon after the end of the amnesty period, Saudi authorities started to carry out raids to arrest and deport irregular labour migrants. As of February 2014, Saudi authorities had deported approximately 160,000 Ethiopians.²⁹

It can be assumed that the decreasing arrivals on Yemen's shores are to a large extent related to the Saudi Arabian crackdown on irregular migrants that started in November 2013 because most Ethiopians arriving in Yemen intend to move on to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the governments of Ethiopia and Djibouti are reported to have increased surveillance along migration routes and departure points in the last months of 2013 to deter migration flows and Djiboutian authorities are reported to have mounted checkpoints along the Djiboutian/Somaliland border.³⁰ Additionally, the Ethiopian media (TV and radio) were carrying multiple (government sponsored) anti-migration messages during 2013. The combined impact of these different activities on flows of Ethiopians into Yemen was considerable.

Despite the serious protection risks and increased difficulty of reaching Saudi Arabia, large numbers of Ethiopians continue to migrate in recent years. The findings of this survey show that the dream to migrate is still strong. A high majority (90%) of survey participants in Ethiopia (**potential migrants**) declared that they were seriously thinking about migrating to the Gulf/Arab countries, with 78%, stating that they intended to migrate within the coming two years.³¹

With very high proportions of people indicating that they intend to migrate, it is important to gain a better understanding of: why Ethiopian migrants

26 RMMS, 2014a.

27 Ibid.

28 COMPAS, 2013.

29 RMMS, 2014a, p.

30 RMMS Monthly Summary, December 2013.

31 It should be noted that potential migrants were selected from regions and with characteristics that make it likely they will migrate. Therefore, these figures are not representative for the general Ethiopian population.

hope to reach Saudi Arabia; the extent that they are aware of the risks that might await them along the journey and in the destination countries and how this influences their migration decisions; the actual migration experiences of **current** Ethiopian migrants and **returnees** and how these compare to their expectations; and whether or not they attained their migration goals and if they would migrate again.

This report describes the results of a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey that answers these and other questions and thereby contributes to a growing understanding of why Ethiopian migrants continue to leave, despite the many protection risks associated with migration to Yemen and the Gulf States.

1.2 Objectives and research questions

The primary purpose of this research is to improve the sector's understanding of the intentions and motivations of migrants, and also the protection risks that they encounter, both during their journey to Yemen, and upon return to Ethiopia. The results of this research can be used to support the sector's advocacy and response strategy on mixed migration in the Horn of Africa, in addition to providing a solid foundation for the development of programs relating to regional mixed migration flows.

The objectives of the Survey were:

- 1 To provide in-depth and disaggregated data on migrants' knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to migration, its drivers and its associated protection risks in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Yemen and Saudi Arabia;
- 2 To provide a baseline set of data for targeted and informed programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluating progress in the coming years.

These objectives are translated into the following research questions:

- What are the specific drivers and triggers in the decision to migrate?
- What are migrants' end destinations and end goals in migrating?
- What do **potential migrants** know of the logistics of the journey before leaving?
- What do **potential migrants** know of the protection risks and obstacles they will face en route and within Ethiopia, Djibouti, Yemen and Saudi Arabia?
- What protection risks did migrants experience?
- How do migrants compare their actual migration experiences to their expectations?
- Would migrants still have undertaken the journey if they had known what they know now about the protection risks?

1.3 Methodology

This KAP study is carried out by combining different research methods. The core of the research consists of a survey (using pre-defined questionnaires) among three respondent groups: **potential migrants**, **current migrants** in Yemen and **returnees** currently in Ethiopia. Additionally, the study is based on literature review and focus group discussions (FDGs).

BOX 1 The three respondent groups defined: current, potential and returnee migrants

- **Potential migrants** are Ethiopians who are still in Ethiopia and are from areas and ethnic groups that comprise of people who are known to migrate to Yemen;
- **Current migrants** are Ethiopian migrants en route within Yemen or for whom Yemen is the destination country and who are now living in Yemen;
- **Returnees** are Ethiopian migrants previously resident in or transiting through Djibouti, Somaliland, Puntland, Yemen or Saudi Arabia who have returned to Ethiopia (voluntarily or because of deportation) and are back in their place of origin or the place where they wished to return to.

The sample for the KAP survey consisted of 148 **potential migrants**, 100 **current migrants** and 143 **returnees**. **Potential migrants** were approached at the household level in selected sites by following a multi-staged sampling process:

- First, the administrative regions (zones, *woreda*) and urban/rural areas in Ethiopia, which are widely known to be sources of migration, were intentionally selected for the research.³²
- Secondly, equal numbers of enumeration areas (EAs) were randomly selected from each of the selected *woredas*.
- Next, households were randomly selected using a random “walk pattern” to draw a fairly random sample of households (HHs) in the enumeration areas.³³

Finally, once a HH is randomly selected at the previous stage, two (one male and one female) members of the HH aged 15-29 years were randomly selected and interviewed using the pre-defined questionnaire for **potential migrants**.

32 11 *woredas* were selected in 8 different zones and 5 districts. In Tigray region, Raya Azebo Debub Mekelle *woredas* were selected in Mekelle zone. In Amhara region, Kobo *woreda* was selected in South Wollo zone and Bati and Jile Timuga *woredas* were selected in Amhara-Oromia zone. In Oromia region, Kersa and Omonada *woredas* were selected in Jimma zone, Babile *woreda* in Eastern Hararghe zone, Gasera *woreda* in Bale zone and Dodola *woreda* in Arsi zone. On Federal level, Dire Dawa was selected.

33 This method is believed to be more appropriate for the selection of HHs than simple random sampling because, on the one hand, it is very difficult to find a reliable sampling frame to apply simple random sampling (i.e. in most cases there is no complete and current list of all households in most EAs) and, on the other hand, it is usually costly and time consuming to produce a fresh listing of HHs for each EA.

Of the 148 **potential migrants**, 39% were from Oromia Region, 30% from Amhara Region, 16% from Tigray Region and 15% from Dire Dawa City Administration. Regarding ethnicity, 48% of **potential migrants** were Oromos, 33% Amharas, 14% Tigres, 4% from Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNPR) and 1% Somali.

The identification of **returnees** and **current migrants** also followed a pre-defined process mainly consisting of snowball sampling.³⁴ The **current migrants** were surveyed at the Ahwar Reception Centre in Abyan (26), which is on Yemen's south coast opposite Bossaso (Puntland), in Haradh (20), in northern Yemen close to the Saudi Arabian border, at the Kharaz Reception Centre (9) in the South-West of Yemen and at different locations in Sana'a, the capital city.

In addition to the survey, qualitative data was collected through 18 FGDs held in Ethiopia, targeting two major groups in each of the selected *woredas*:

- Young men and women (in school, out of school, who are **potential migrants** or **returnees**);
- Parents/family of **current migrants**, community and religious leaders, teachers, opinion leaders, relevant government officials.

One issue affecting the data collection was the deportation of almost 160,000 Ethiopian migrants from Saudi Arabia. Although the researchers tried to identify **returnees** who had spent a longer time in Ethiopia since their return, this turned out to be difficult due to the large number of new **returnees**. This resulted in an overrepresentation of newly arrived **returnees** among the returnee sample: 75 per cent of the **returnees** who participated in the survey returned to their country within the last three months; 25 per cent of the **returnees** have already been in the country for more than six months. All **returnees** were interviewed in their place of origin or the place where they wished to return to.

³⁴ A technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball.

2 Before the Journey

2.1 Characterization of Ethiopian migrants

Ethnicity, religion and region

In terms of ethnicity, **current migrants** and **returnees** are more or less similar, with a few minor differences:³⁵

- Oromos constitute the biggest group; 50% of **current migrants** are Oromos and 57% of the **returnees** are Oromos.
- The proportion of Amharas is also almost equal, with 17% (**current migrants**) and 24% (**returnees**) respectively.
- Among **returnees** a higher proportion are Tigre (17%), compared to **current migrants** (4% Tigre).
- Among **current migrants**, higher percentages of migrants are from the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR; 15%), compared to Ogadeni (7%) and Somali (2%) and as compared to **returnees** (only 2% belongs to one of these groups).

Within all groups, the majority of migrants are Muslims: 58% of **potential migrants**, 87% of **current migrants** and 72% **returnees**. However, in line with the lower number of Muslims among **potential migrants**, a significantly larger proportion of them are Christians (42%) compared to **current migrants** (11%) and **returnees** (28%).

That more **current migrants** and **returnees** are Muslim, compared to **potential migrants** may be due to several factors. With regard to **current migrants** and **returnees**, the survey focused on the 'eastern route', towards Yemen, Saudi Arabia or other Middle East / Gulf State countries, which are all Muslim countries. **Potential migrants**, however, could decide to migrate to other destinations.³⁶

Muslim Ethiopians believe they have religious and cultural links with these countries and migrate to them in bigger numbers than Christian Ethiopians. People from areas that are predominately Muslim, such as Omonada, Bale in the Oromiya Region, and Bati and Kombolcha in the Amhara Region, mostly migrate irregularly to and through Yemen.

35 Potential migrants are left out of this analysis, as they were sampled based on regions which are known to be regions of origin for migrants. These regions were assigned more weight in the sample. As such, their regional and ethnic distribution is not a research finding, but a result of the methodology.

36 Some of these other initial destinations, such as Sudan, Libya and Egypt, are Muslim countries as well. However, many migrants do not consider these counties as the final destination as many of those transiting through Sudan and Libya aim to reach Europe.

Many migrants might also actually convert to, or pretend to have converted to, Islam when their destination country is a Muslim country, believing they have a better chance in securing employment and better living conditions if they are Muslims.

The survey identifies the regions of Jimma, Arsi, Bale, Eastern Hararghe of Oromia; Mekele and Raya Azebo of Tigray; Amhara-Oromia (Kemise) and Northern Wollo of Amhara Region; and Dire Dawa as the main locations from which many Ethiopians have migrated.

Age and sex

There are a few similarities and differences in the age and sex distribution among the three respondent groups. In each of the groups, the majority of migrants are between 18 and 25 years old, with the next largest group made up of those between 25 and 35 years. Among **potential** and **current migrants**, however, there were more under-aged (below 18) migrants (7% and 12% respectively) compared to **returnees** (1%).

Among **current migrants** and **returnees** the sex distribution is exactly the same: 64% male, 36% female. Among **potential migrants** a small majority is female.

Education and occupation

With regard to educational levels, the most significant difference is the educational level between **potential migrants** and **returnees** on the one hand and **current migrants** on the other hand.

- Among **potential migrants** and **returnees**, 9% and 11% respectively were non-literate; 29% and 23% respectively reached grades 9 and 10 of secondary education.
- Among **current migrants**, 41% were non-literate, while only 7% reached grades 9 and 10 of secondary education.

One explanation for this difference could be that migrants who travelled irregularly to Yemen are generally from less advantaged backgrounds compared to the other two groups. For example, 40% of the **current migrants** were farmers before they left Ethiopia, compared to 10% of **potential migrants**. It could also be that **current migrants** – who stayed in Yemen – had a higher tolerance for staying in Yemen because they had lower expectations of success if they returned home. Those with some education might have returned to Ethiopia when their dreams did not materialize, whereas those without education remained in Yemen to make the best of what they could, recognizing they had limited options at home.

Many **potential migrants** were either unemployed (41%) or engaged in the informal sector (34%). Only 10% were farmers and 8% students. **Current migrants** seem to have a different background, with 40% being farmers or cattle herders.

Marital status and household size

The three groups show similar profiles in terms of marital status and household size. The only differences being that:

- More **potential migrants** have never been married (70%) compared to **current migrants** (52%) and **returnees** (47%);

- Fewer **current migrants** come from small households³⁷ with only 1-2 members (2%) compared to **potential migrants** (11%) and **returnees** (15%). Most migrants within all three groups come from households of between 3-5 or 6-10 persons.

Among **current migrants** who have children (51%), 33% had their children born in Yemen. Among those who already had children before they left Ethiopia, 58% left them with their parents, 12% with their spouse and 4% with friends; 27% took their children to Yemen with them.

2.2 Migration drivers

Culture of migration

There is a strong positive perception towards (irregular) migration in each of the areas where the research was conducted. Several NGOs interviewed in Addis Ababa in the context of another recent RMMS research³⁸, referred to the pressure to migrate put on young Ethiopians by their family, peers and the community. In some instances parents tell their children to migrate; they see successes of other families, who – for example – sent their daughters abroad and were able to build a new house. Participants in focus group discussions (FGDs) in Oromia and Amhara pointed out that a substantial majority of community members have one or more family member with a migration history.

This peer and family pressure to migrate may be called a ‘culture of migration’. Whereby migration is associated with personal, social and material success, and where migrating has become the norm rather than the exception. In this vein staying at home is associated with failure.³⁹ In societies and communities where a culture of migration has developed, the pressure to migrate is intensified irrespective of the risks.⁴⁰

Participants in FDGs in Senbete stated that many youth in Ethiopia abandon their education in order to bring about their migration aspirations. Education is not considered to bring about the same immediate gains as migration and is therefore not prioritised.

The migration of friends or family members is a key driving factor for migration and contributes to the development of a culture of migration. The migration of one member of a group of friends or family often leads to the migration of other members from that group. The first migrant puts pressure on others by sending money to parents and recounting the good things he/she encountered. One girl in Dire Dawa told the researchers a story where six of her friends went to Saudi Arabia, one after the other, because of the migration success of one of the group members.

“Migration by itself is not bad, all the changes we have seen is because of the money we get from our children abroad. If the process is more legalized and they are protected from violations, migration is beneficial.”

Community member in Senbete

“The youth go to the extent of borrowing money from the Government, as beneficiaries of youth development schemes and then use the money for migration.”

Community member during a FGD in Mekele

“One successful migrant can result in initiating 100 more other migrants”.

Community member in Mekele

37 These are the households they belonged to before their migration.

38 See RMMS (2014). *“The Letter of the Law: regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change.”*

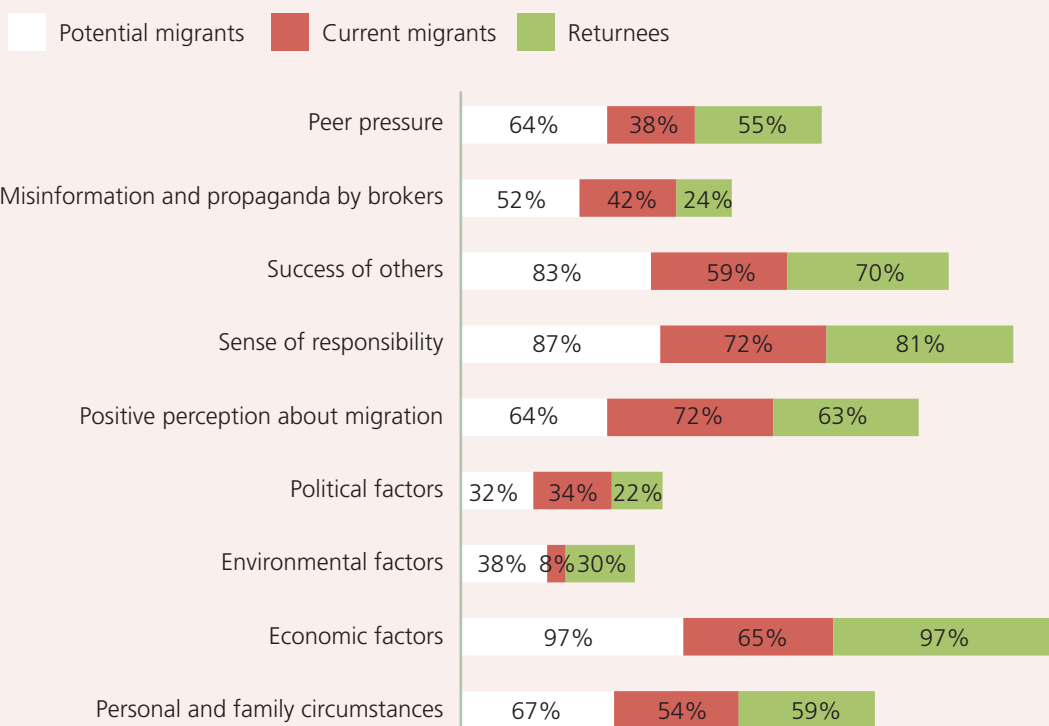
39 De Haas, 2006, p. 5-6.

40 ILO, 2011b, p. 8/12.

Migration drivers

The chart below summarizes the most common migration drivers for each of the migrant groups in the survey.

Graphic 1:
Migration drivers between the different migrant categories



"We don't migrate for vacation; it's the level of poverty and other problems that pushes us. We are not happy when we leave our country but there is no other option. I have finished 12th grade but there is no job opportunity here that will make me stay and work."

Returnee in Kobo

Economic factors are the most common migration drivers for **potential migrants** and **returnees**, followed by a sense of responsibility. For **current migrants** this sense of responsibility, combined with positive perceptions of migration are the most important migration drivers. For **current migrants**, economic factors rank third.

Results from FGDs in all the study sites show that members of the community consider migration to be the only viable option for escaping poverty. Youth in Senbete (Amhara Oromia) and Dire Dawa recount that not a day passes without discussing migration. Even a 60-year old man in Senbete added that he would have migrated if circumstances permitted.

Environmental factors

Region-disaggregated data shows that for **potential migrants** environmental factors are a more prominent migration driver in Tigray (61%) and Amhara (46%) than in Oromia (33%) and Dire Dawa (14%). These results are not surprising, as Tigray and Amhara regions regularly suffer from drought and famine. Additionally, Amhara Region suffers from land erosion, overpopulation

and lack of arable land. Oromia does not and is less prone to natural disasters. Closely related to environmental factors is the demography. With a fast-growing population, it is more difficult to secure sustainable livelihoods for all, particularly in those rural households which are dependent on limited plots of arable land and other resources. In regions such as Raya Azebo of Tigray and Northern Wollo of Amhara region the problem of overpopulation is exacerbated by environmental factors.

Participants in FDGs in Raya Azebo stated that their area is prone to dry weather and that they regularly fail to produce crops due to the scarcity of rain. They further added that as a consequence farmers are migrating in large numbers “selling their cattle and borrowing money from private creditors, public institutions and locally available credit institutions.”

**BOX 2 Jemal’s case from Mersa;
Habru, North Wollo Amhara**

I have been living in Saudi Arabia for two years and six months. I migrated with my friends by sea. I used to help my family at the farm and herd cattle prior to my migration. I got my motivation to migrate from what I saw in our village. There were many peers who were migrating and sending money to their parents. My friends and I decided to migrate to be like them and be rich.

We went through the Djibouti route. The journey was very challenging because it involved walking for long hours and then travelling by boat to Yemen, which is very scary for someone like me who cannot swim. There was a lot of beating and swearing from the people who transported us on the boat journey. They usually targeted those who complained a lot about the overcrowding in the boat and scared the rest of us who travelled without complaining. It was a new experience for me and my friends. We were very terrified.

After reaching Yemen we were lucky enough to only pay a small amount of money. My parents sent me around 8,000 Birr [USD 412] and I was able to reach Saudi Arabia. I have friends who suffered a lot. Especially those who migrated recently and were forced to pay a lot of money. Their hands were also burned with plastics.

After reaching Saudi I first worked as shepherd. The work was very difficult and most of the time tiring. I moved to the city with my friends after collecting my wages for three months. I was working in a construction site before I was deported to Ethiopia eight days ago [November 2014]. Our life in Saudi was very good and I had enough money to send some to my family in the countryside. I was imprisoned for a month when the process of deportation started. I am one of the first to come to Ethiopia from the prison.

“I work as hard as I can, but my salary is not making my life any easier. I am living with my family at the same time supporting them with all I can. However, I am planning to start my own family soon and that is impossible without having assets. So the only way I can be financially strong is to go there and work hard for three or four years.”

Potential migrant in Mekelle

“There was no rain for the last four years which resulted in mass exodus of the agrarian community members.”

FGD participants in Raya Azebo

Now we are scared about what would happen to us. I personally can't stay here and start life as new. I also have a girlfriend that just got deported. I don't know how we can continue to be together; that also scares me and everything at this point is uncertain for us. I don't think I can get a job or work on my family farm.

"Migration might be driven by the decision of the youth but it is mostly a parental venture involving selling of crops, cattle and leasing land by parents. Parents participate in the decision by raising money as well as by establishing communication links with the brokers locally and in destination counties to send their children, who are considered investments for the future."

Drawn from FGDs in Northern Wollo, Tigray and Amhara-Oromia

"Parents of recently returned migrants from Saudi are assessing where to send their children again, whether the situation in Qatar, Bahrain and other Gulf/Arab countries is good enough for them to re-send their returned children and those who haven't yet reached their homeland."

Returnee during a FGD in Kobo

Political factors

Specific political factors mentioned include inability to exercise rights and freedoms, violation of democratic rights, corruption, unlawful arrest and detention, biased and partisan administrative officials, lack of transparency and fairness, lack of accountability, discriminatory service provision and administration, bureaucratic and corrupt governance and an unfair judicial system.

Region-disaggregated data show that for **potential migrants** political factors are most often considered as driving factors in Tigray (55%), followed by Amhara (36%), Oromia (29 %) and Dire Dawa (5%). This finding is surprising because the current regime in Ethiopia is dominated by Tigrayans and it is generally thought that Oromos suffer the most from persecution. However, the authoritarian nature of the regime, reportedly, does not encourage opposition, even from within the dominant ethnic group and, as a result, it is therefore possible for Tigrayans and Amharas to claim that they suffer persecution or political marginalisation. Moreover, there are several opposition groups in the Tigray region that are subject to government oppression.

Sense of responsibility

As Graphic 1 above shows, a 'sense of responsibility' plays an important role in encouraging migration. This sense of responsibility comes from the cultural expectations or social norms that emphasize the role of the young in supporting the family. Many FGD participants identified this as one of the major drivers of migration.

Sex-disaggregated data shows that for **potential migrants** the sense of responsibility is more pronounced among women than men. For **returnees** the figures are similar. Research participants argue that there is additional pressure on girls.

Males and females do not agree on the extent to which women have an increased sense of responsibility to support their family. While women feel they are under a disproportionate level of pressure to support their family, men do not think there is any additional pressure on women in this regard.

BOX 3 15 year old girl in Addis Ababa

I went to Saudi Arabia in November 2012, when I was only 14 years old. Almost all my friends went. I got married but I told my husband I wanted to go to Saudi Arabia, we then got divorced. He also went to Saudi Arabia. I wanted to send back money, so that my family can build a house and open a shop.

When I was in Ethiopia, my father died and my mother was very poor. A Muslim organization in Saudi Arabia helped me by sending me money. We collected the money and used it for me to go to Saudi Arabia. I also have an uncle living in Saudi Arabia who sent money as well. In Saudi Arabia I worked as a domestic worker for a Saudi family.

The owner of the house, a woman, was very mean, she beat me, gave me electric shocks, abused me. But when my family called, I said everything was fine. I thought I could endure and finish my two-year contract to earn the money for my family. The man of the house did not know. He asked if there was a problem, but I denied it. When I got sick, this man took me to my uncle, who tried to take me to hospital. But I also told my uncle that I was fine. He still does not know about the abuse.

The police arrested me because I was illegal. They brought me to prison and I spent 8 days in prison. My sponsor came and tried to get me to hospital. They wanted to give me tablets but I refused to take those. Then they gave me an injection and I was put on a plane to Addis. The sponsor paid for the flight. I sent about 7,000 Birr [USD 360] to my family. In prison they tied me because I was very sick. But people were allowed to visit me, give me food. After three months in the shelter in Addis Ababa, I feel much better now. I want to go back to my family and see my mother, spend time with her, finish my education and study the Koran at night.⁴¹

“Girls largely consider themselves responsible to take care of the family. They work hard in household chores until they reach 15. From that age onwards they start to think about migration to take the support they provide to the family to another level; to a level where they are to be seen as key players for the upkeep and progress of the family. Parents also start to think that their daughter might be the last hope they have to get out of poverty.”

Female high school student during a FGD in Dire Dawa

Personal factors

Returnees also rated some personal drivers for migration. These included failure in education (52%); death of parents or close family members (22%); divorce/separation of parents (16%) and wishing to join family members who have already migrated (10%). A 2011 ILO study also found that young people who have failed in their education (such as drop-outs or those with unsatisfying grades) opt for migration to change their life. Local brokers target them, knowing they want to change the course of their life.⁴²

“The moment they see the challenges of the family, they make abrupt decisions to migrate.”

Female high school student during a FGD in Dire Dawa

⁴¹ Based on interviews conducted in Addis Ababa at the shelter for returnee women run by AGAR Ethiopia. The interviews were conducted by RMMS in the context of another recent (2014) RMMS study: *The Letter of the Law: regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change*.

⁴² ILO, 2011, p. 26 and 42.

Some **potential migrants** also mentioned domestic violence or the imminence of early or forced marriage. During FGDs similar personal factors were mentioned, such as:

- Failing in education at the 10th grade: girls and boys who fail to achieve their hoped for results at this stage see migration as a solution.
- Lack of patience with the current opportunities on offer: Most youth do not have the patience to remain unemployed, or seek local jobs with limited opportunities for progression
- Feeling of being a burden to the family (when unemployed and uneducated).
- Tendency of the youth to look down at jobs and opportunities at the local level.
- Success of others.

2.3 Migration decisions

Influence

Potential migrants most often mention their parents as having the most influence on their migration decision, followed by spouses and siblings. For **current migrants** friends (both in Ethiopia and abroad) are most frequently mentioned as having influenced the migration decision, followed by parents and brokers.

For **potential migrants**, the influence of local brokers in triggering migration is markedly present in rural areas compared to urban areas. This is affirmed by 55% of **potential migrants** living in rural areas, compared to only 30% of **potential migrants** living in urban areas. Finally peer pressure is an important factor influencing the migration decision for 51% of **potential migrants** in urban areas and 78% of migrants in rural areas.

34% of **current migrants** and 21% of **returnees** think they were deceived into migrating irregularly. Among **returnees**, more males than females think they were deceived into migration.

“It is the problems at home that push us to the broker. The brokers do not come to our door for recruitment. We track them through friends, returnees and those whose children have migrated. Their role is limited to facilitating the migration journey we so much desire to execute.”

Female FGD participant in Dire Dawa

Interestingly, only 2% of **current migrants** said brokers put the idea of migration in their mind, while 34% said the idea of migration was initiated by others (including peers and family). This means that even migrants who say the idea was initiated by peers and family (and not by brokers), feel deceived into irregular migration. As discussed, there is a tendency for peers, families and communities in migration-prone areas to depict migration as the only viable option to escape poverty. When the family and peers initiate the idea of migration, they tend to promote the positive side of migration. However, once migrants start their journey, they come to realize that the real picture is less positive and thus feel deceived.

Many observers point to the role of brokers in triggering migration. Although the findings of the survey also point out that misinformation and propaganda provided by brokers does have an influence, it is not the most influential factor. FGD participants argue that the role of brokers is not that fundamental.

2.4 Migration goals and expectations ⁴³

The most common migration goal for each of the three groups is/was to get employment and make money (66% of **potential migrants**; 61% of **current migrants**; 62% of **returnees**).

Other goals mentioned by **potential migrants** are to look for opportunities to support the family from earned income (68%), and to acquire start-up or working capital (finance and assets) that would help start or expand their own or family business (53%). A significant number of **returnees** (36%) also said they migrated because they wanted a better education and training opportunities.

Interestingly, only 2% of **potential migrants** claim to have the motive of seeking asylum (compared to 20% of **current migrants**). 6% of **potential migrants** aim to move on to Europe or other countries (compared to 4% of **current migrants**). A small number (3%) of **potential migrants** said they want to migrate to escape forced marriage.

Job expectations

Most migrants expect(ed) to get employed in informal jobs and domestic work (including housemaid, driver, gardener, security guard, etc.) and unskilled labour in construction, agriculture, factories and shops. 49% of **potential migrants**, 68% of **current migrants** and 40% of **returnees** expected domestic work; 21% of **potential migrants**, 22% of **current migrants** and 43% of **returnees** expected unskilled labour. Others expect(ed) to get engaged in (semi-)skilled construction work, professional work or office work.

2.5 Knowledge and information about migration

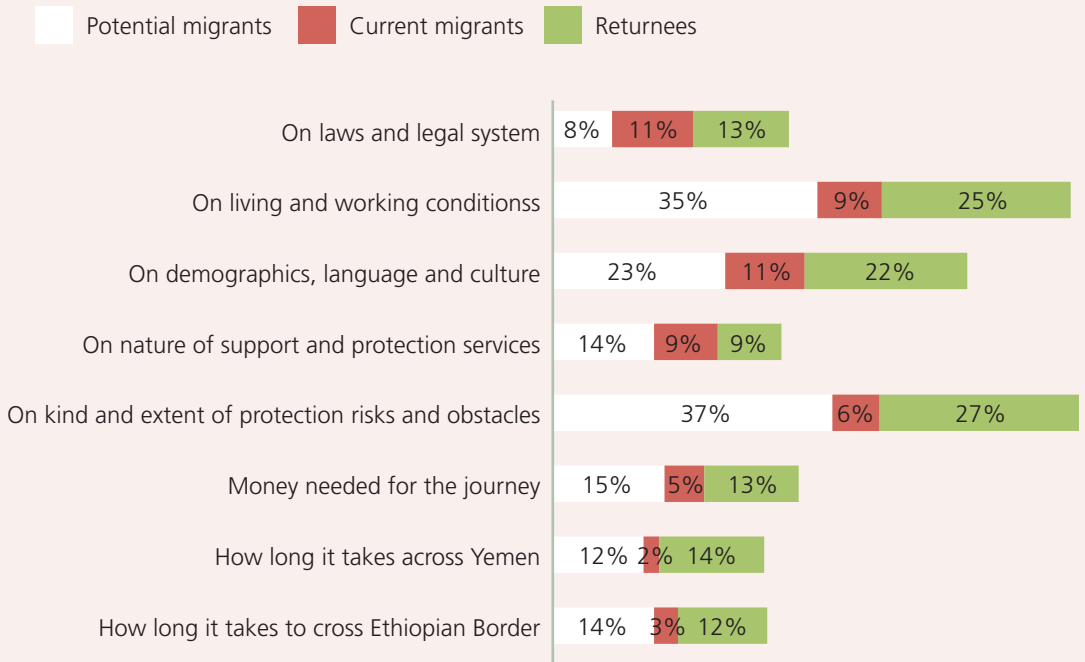
As discussed, Ethiopians continue to leave Ethiopia and travel via the 'eastern route' in large numbers despite numerous reports of abuse while migrating to and through Yemen and upon arrival in Saudi Arabia – the preferred country of destination for most. An important part of the rationale for undertaking this study, therefore, is to: assess the level of knowledge and information migrants have about migration; to determine the extent that they are aware of the risks; and – as will be discussed in the next chapter – to assess how their actual migration experiences compare to their prior expectations.

General information

The graphic below (Graphic 2) shows the extent **potential** and **current migrants** as well as **returnees** believe they have adequate information about a range of migration issues.

43 Section 3.5 discusses whether current migrants and returnees have achieved their migration goals.

Graphic 2:
Issues on which migrants consider they have adequate information



The type and degree of risks and obstacles they might face during their migration to the Gulf countries and the living and working conditions in destination countries are the two issues most often selected by **potential migrants** as issues they consider they have adequate information on. Some of the issues **potential migrants** consider to have little or no knowledge on are laws, rights and obligations, support and protection services, and the time it takes to travel to Yemen and reach Saudi Arabia.

Interestingly **current migrants**, who had actually undergone the journey and could therefore assess the adequacy of the information they received prior to departure with the benefit of hindsight, reported that they had least information on the types of protection risks and obstacles they would encounter. Only 6% now consider they had adequate knowledge of these factors, compared to 37% of **potential migrants**. **Returnees** fall in the middle, with 27% of them considering that they had adequate knowledge about the risks. Nevertheless, compared to **potential migrants**, many more **returnees** admit they had little or no knowledge about the risks (48% versus 29%).

Another point of divergence between **potential migrants** on the one hand and **current migrants** and **returnees** on the other, is the extent to which they judge their level of information about the demographics, language and culture (of the destination country) to be adequate. Among **potential migrants**, 54% judge their level of information either to be adequate or basic/average; 46% think they have little or no information about this. Among **current migrants** only 26% say they had adequate or

basic information, while 74% now judge their level of information to be inadequate. For **returnees**, these figures are almost the same with 22% versus 77%.

Finally, the time it takes to travel within Ethiopia and within Yemen towards Saudi Arabia is another issue in which **potential migrants** think they have enough information, and which **current migrants** think is inadequate. Among **potential migrants**, 51% think they have adequate or basic information about the time it takes to cross the Ethiopian border and 42% think they have adequate or basic information about the time it takes to travel across Yemen and reach Saudi Arabia. For **current migrants**, the percentages are 17% and 20%, while 83% and 80% say they had little or no information about the time it would take to cross the Ethiopian border or to travel across Yemen and reach Saudi Arabia. This implies that **potential migrants** underestimate the time their migration journey will take.

The results discussed above show that on several issues those who are contemplating migrating think that they know what to expect. However, those who have actually migrated (**current migrants**) say they were underprepared because they judged their level of information as far less adequate compared to **potential migrants**.

Information about the risks

As briefly described in chapter 1, migrants face many risks at every stage of their journey.⁴⁴ The hot deserts in Ethiopia and Djibouti are extremely harsh and can cause death by dehydration. Once they reach the Djiboutian coast, Ethiopian migrants risk being physically and sexually abused by smugglers, the Djibouti military, or gangs of villagers. Upon arrival in Obock, Ethiopian migrants face further abuse and violence by smugglers. They may be kept in smugglers' houses or on the beaches without shelter. They are not always provided with food and water, leading to several deaths due to dehydration and starvation.⁴⁵

Ethiopian migrants may also pass through Somaliland in transit to Puntland or Djibouti. Traveling through Somaliland is also hazardous, with risks of robbery, harassment by authorities, sexual abuse and even murder. The Somaliland authorities reportedly arrest and deport undocumented Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers in Loya'ade (on the border between Djibouti and Somaliland).⁴⁶

Female migrants in particular face the threat of sexual exploitation by smugglers and brokers while awaiting departure in Obock. The Migration Response Center in Obock reported that female migrants are now requesting birth control pills in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies because of the risks of sexual assault and rape during the journey.⁴⁷

There are frequent reports of physical and sexual abuse by the smugglers who man the boats that leave Djibouti or Puntland and transport smuggled

44 For a full account of the risks in each of the countries in the region, refer to RMMS (2013). *"Migrant Smuggling in the Horn of Africa and Yemen: the political economy and protection risks."*

45 RMMS, 2013b, p. 20-21; Soucy, 2011.

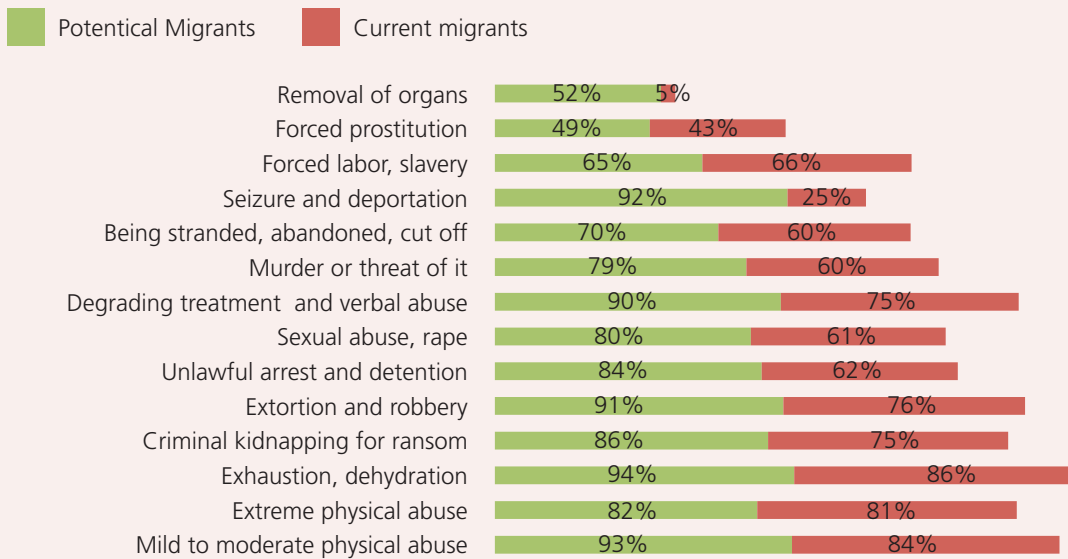
46 RMMS, 2013b, p. 57.

47 Ibid, p. 22.

migrants.⁴⁸ The boats are often overcrowded, with as many as 150 people on board boats that can safely carry no more than 70 or 80.⁴⁹ Conditions below deck are toxic, with petrol fumes and fuel mixed in water, along with faeces and urine from passengers.⁵⁰ Many of the boats are overcrowded to the extent that they risk overturning once at sea if passengers move about too suddenly.

Upon arrival in Yemen, Ethiopian migrants are at risk of abduction and criminal kidnapping for ransom. It is reported that well-organized and coordinated networks of criminal gangs operate between Djibouti and Yemen and exchange information about the arrival of boats bearing smuggled Ethiopian migrants to Yemeni shores in order to abduct the passengers upon arrival. Migrants held hostage in Yemen report coercion, rape, murder, extortion and physical assault.⁵¹ Migrants who are held hostage may die as a result of the treatment they receive. DRC/RMMS research in 2012 reported that kidnapping for ransom has become more common since 2012. Reports of women and girls who have not been heard of since their abduction are also documented.⁵²

Graphic 3:
Extent to which migrants had knowledge of specific risks



48 RMMS, 2013b, p. 54.

49 Human Rights Watch, 2009.

50 DRC and RMMS, 2012.

51 RMMS, 2013b, p. 74.

52 DRC and RMMS, 2012.

As the survey assessed the extent that migrants are aware of all these risks, the figure on the previous page shows the degree of **potential** and **current migrants'** knowledge about the different kind of risks and obstacles they might face during migration and upon arrival in transit and destination countries⁵³.

First of all, the figure shows that large proportions of the migrants surveyed have knowledge about the serious protection risks. Over 80% of **potential migrants** report that they have heard about extortion and robbery, exhaustion, dehydration, starvation and deprivation of sleep, mild to moderate or extreme physical violence, criminal kidnapping for ransom and degrading treatment and verbal abuse. Both **potential** and **current migrants** are most aware of dehydration and starvation, sleep deprivation, and mild to moderate physical violence.

A striking 78% of female **potential migrants** have heard about the risk of sexual abuse, including rape. Female **potential migrants** were further asked if they are willing to take contraceptives as a preventive measure before migration. About 63% of the female **potential migrants** stated that they would definitely take contraceptives in preparation for the migration journey, 30% are undecided, while 8% have no such plan.

Overall, similar numbers of **potential** and **current migrants** report having heard of most risks, with **potential migrants** generally reporting slightly higher numbers. The most striking difference between the two groups relates to the risk of organ removal, with 52% of **potential migrants** reporting that they are aware of the risk, against 5% of **current migrants**. This might indicate that the risk of organ removal is somewhat exaggerated. This could be due to recent media coverage in Ethiopia about the risk of organ removal on the Metema route (into Sudan). Consequently, a greater percentage of **potential migrants** in Ethiopia have heard about the risk of organ removal as they have access to local media, while fewer **current migrants** in Yemen have heard about it. However, the point remains that migrants are mostly aware of the range of abuses many fellow migrants face and still they continue to migrate.

The protection risks of seizure, detention and deportation shows another large difference between **potential** (92%) and **current migrants** (25%). The high percentage among **potential migrants** is not surprising in light of the mass deportation of 160,000 Ethiopian migrants from Saudi Arabia during the implementation of the survey. The low percentage among **current migrants** is surprising though and the reason for this difference is not clear. It could possibly be that for a significant proportion of **current migrants** who spend a longer time in Yemen, the acute risk of detention and deportation has somewhat evaporated, causing them to be less aware of this potential risk. It could also be that **current migrants** in Yemen do not have access to media because they cannot understand Arabic, and hence did not pick up on the fact that people are being deported from Saudi Arabia.

53 For returnees, it will be discussed to what extent they actually experienced these risks in section 3.4

“Every girl who travels on foot knows that she would be raped en-route, including by fellow travellers and brokers leading the way, by smugglers or border patrolling officials. They wish they would not face the problem, but in case that happens, they want at least to prevent pregnancy. They plan to mitigate the consequence of the rape by taking such measures.”

Female participant during a FGD with community leaders and parents of migrant workers in Dire Dawa.

“Most also think that it is certain that male Arabs would ask for sexual favours from Ethiopian domestic workers they hired. These could be heads of households or male family members such as sons, brothers, who live as family members or come for a visit. There are city girls who plan to financially benefit from that.”

Female participant during a FGD with community leaders and parents of migrant workers in Dire Dawa.

It is often assumed that migrants, while aware of all these risks, downplay the chance it might actually happen to them. However, when asked whether they thought they might encounter the risks described above 41% stated that they expected to experience them, while another 42% said the risks might happen to them. Only 18% stated that they do not think they would be subjected to the risks. Of these 18%, most believe that they can avoid the risks by opting for regular migration. Few think they can avoid the risks by travelling irregularly in groups and by using facilitators and smugglers with a good reputation.

Regarding the protection risks, 80% of the **potential migrants** believe that the risks have increased in prevalence and severity over the past few years. Nevertheless, 42% are of the view that the benefits of migration are worth the protection risks faced during the journey and upon arrival in transit and destination countries.

FGDs confirm the extent to which the communities in Ethiopia are aware of the risks. Participants say many households in small towns such as Mersa, Kobo, Bati and Senbete are affected by the death of their loved ones. Migrants are said to die en route and at destination. There are also many migrants who left their communities, but whose whereabouts are unknown. As mentioned above, sexual abuse, including rape, is a well-known protection risk. As a consequence, many girls indicated they take contraceptives as part of the preparation for migration. This is on top of the general knowledge that working in private homes in Saudi Arabia and other locations may also expose them to sexual abuse and exploitation, and suggests a certain level of resignation amongst female migrants that sexual violations are part of the migration and overseas working life.

Potential migrants in the survey have been asked which protection risks they would tolerate if they were to happen to them. The results demonstrate the extent migrants seem to be prepared to endure harsh circumstances in order to attain their migration goals:

- 44% would tolerate degrading treatment and verbal abuse
- 37% declared they would tolerate exhaustion, dehydration, starvation and deprivation of sleep
- 35% would tolerate mild to moderate physical abuse
- 33% would tolerate extortion and robbery
- 7% declared they would tolerate criminal kidnapping for ransom
- 1% of the **potential migrants** stated they would tolerate sexual abuse

The protection risks they would not tolerate include: murder or the threat of it; being thrown overboard from the boat; being shot at or tortured; extreme physical abuse; forced prostitution and forced labour and slavery-like practices (i.e. only extreme and life-threatening abuses).

Taking the results described in this section into account, the question is: if so many migrants have heard about extremely serious protection risks and a substantial proportion of migrants think these risks could actually happen to them, why are they still going? Particularly as there are several risks that they state they would not be prepared to tolerate.

Obviously, the migration drivers and the culture of migration in Ethiopia are strong. One explanation could therefore be that the drivers are simply

stronger than the fear these risks might evoke. Moreover, as the results above showed, many seem to be prepared to endure these risks.

However, the results also show that **potential migrants** are more likely to believe that their advance knowledge of these risks is adequate than **current migrants** who benefit of hindsight. This means that, having experienced migration, migrants no longer consider their knowledge of the risks as adequate. This offers an interesting implication: telling migrants about the risks in awareness raising campaigns does not seem to act as a deterrent because they still travel. Mere awareness raising campaigns on the protection risks of irregular migration will only instil fear, but that fear is generally not strong enough to make them stay at home.

On the other hand, after migration, they judge their level of information about risks as not very good. This seems to imply that although they heard about the risks and some seem to be prepared to take the chance, there are also those who might not believe it, or underestimate the severity of the treatment described.

Indeed, two-thirds of the **potential migrants** say they would change their mind about using the irregular route, if they received thorough and reliable information about protection issues. This implies that **potential migrants** have doubts about the accuracy and reliability of their information sources, or even that they require more convincing that the abusive stories they commonly heard might in reality also affect them.

Sources of information

Migrants use different sources of information. Friends and relatives in transit and destination countries, as well as friends and relatives in Ethiopia are the most widely used and reliable sources. Other sources mentioned are mass media, local brokers, and **returnees**. Family and friends thus play a major role in spreading information about migration. Contrary to what is widely believed, local brokers are not the main source of information about migration.

Interestingly, 76% of **returnees** think that there is more information about successful migrants available at the community level than information about unsuccessful migrants, while 51% of the **current migrants** think this is the case.

More than half of the **potential migrants** believe that irregular migrants gather more and better information on mechanisms that will help them evade law enforcement and security officials, than on protection risks and obstacles.

The usual practice is that migrants collect information through close friends, relatives, or local brokers who assist in planning the journey, including facilitating the journey by networking with the right people and providing all the necessary information at every stage of the migration journey. However, there are also migrants who start the journey on their own, without consulting friends/relatives, without having contact details of key individuals in transit towns, and with little knowledge of transit points, hideouts and distances from one point to the other along the irregular migration route.

“Most girls do not want to further complicate their lives by getting pregnant. They may not be able to prevent the rape or sexual assault that may follow from their migration journey or employment overseas. They are, however, sure that the prevention of pregnancy is under their control.”

Female participant during a FGD with young adults in Dire Dawa

“[Taking contraception] is not accepting rape but it is a measure that prevents further complications in case the rape happens.”

Female participant during a FGD with young adults in Dire Dawa

For example, migrants may come to Dire Dawa without knowing how long it takes to travel from there to Djibouti, how far the city is from the border, and how and where to cross the border. Migrants who leave without any information and advance planning are often worse off, as they might fall victim to fraud and misrepresentations by people in Dire Dawa. Cases of individuals taking money from migrants with the promise of helping them cross into Djibouti and then leaving them stranded in the desert have been reported.⁵⁴ Besides Dire Dawa, such fraudulent practices are common in Jijiga, which is a transit point in the Ethiopian Somali Region as well as in Assayita and Semera in the Afar Region and in Bati in the Amhara Region. Other testimonies also reveal that some migrants have been unaware about which country they are in after being taken to Yemen, or, are abandoned in parts of Yemen by smugglers after being deceived into believing that they are already in Saudi Arabia.

54 There have been several of these cases in recent years such as Criminal case number 06954, Federal High Court, Dire Daw, in which the accused collected a number of victims in Dire Dawa and promised to take them to Djibouti. He travelled with them for three days and four nights, after which he disappeared and left them in the desert, from where they were unable to return or continue their journey.

3 Migration to Yemen

3.1 Means of migration

Regular versus irregular migration

Ethiopians use three channels for migration to Saudi Arabia. The first one is so-called 'public migration.' This occurs when individuals are first officially registered as migrant workers with the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and then later arrange their employment themselves through personal contacts in the destination countries.

The second channel is through one of the legally registered Private Employment Agencies (PEAs), which secure contracts for domestic workers with employers in the Middle East, either directly or indirectly through recruiting agencies in the destination countries. The number of registered PEAs in Ethiopia is estimated at 400 as of late 2013. However, according to the Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) out of the 400, only 20 are fully bona fide. All of the others are involved in irregular migration activities. Many observers suspect some PEAs are **de facto** engaged in trafficking their 'clients'.⁵⁵

The third channel is irregular migration using the services of illegal agents, which may be illegal brokers, individual operators, or legally-registered companies that illegally provide employment brokerage services to migrants.⁵⁶

The number of regular labour migrants – according to official statistics from the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA)⁵⁷ – is provided in the table on the following page.

55 RMMS, 2014a.

56 Ibid; Fernandez 2010, p. 251-252.

57 Official statistics only include workers above the age of 18 years who have migrated using the legal channels of employment services as per *Employment Exchange Services Proclamation No. 632/2009*; Official statistics of labour migration only exist for workers who migrate to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE.

Table 2:
Regular labour migration Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates

Country of destination	Jul 2009 - Jul 2010			Jul 2010 – Jul 2011			Jul 2011 - Jul 2012			Jul 2012 - Jul 2013		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Saudi Arabia	1082	2396	3478	2030	13446	15476	10341	158959	169300	7127	154660	161787
Kuwait	321	10837	11158	663	25457	26120	270	28476	28746	130	20659	20789
U.A.E.	1	142	143	0	510	510	109	321	430	0	0	0
Other countries	148	19	167	12	115	127	16	175	191	12	108	120
Total	1552	13394	14946	2705	39528	42233	10736	187931	198667	7269	175427	182696

Following an agreement between the government of Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,⁵⁸ the number of Ethiopian migrant workers that legally migrated to Saudi Arabia increased enormously, from 3,478 between July 2009 and July 2010, to 161,787 between July 2012 and July 2013. This last period however, showed a slight decrease compared to the year before.

Although Kuwait was still the preferred destination for female migrant workers three years ago (with 81% of all registered female migrant workers going there) this trend has now changed dramatically with few going to Kuwait. During the last reporting period 88% of female migrant workers went to Saudi Arabia and only 11.7% to Kuwait.

Migration flows to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are comparably insignificant. Between July 2012 and July 2013, no migrant workers migrated to the UAE legally because of a ban imposed on Ethiopian migrant domestic workers by the Government of UAE.

In the 1990s and early 2000s most Ethiopian domestic workers went to Lebanon and to a lesser extent Syria.⁵⁹ Partly due to a ban by the Ethiopian government on labour migration to these countries, this subsequently shifted to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

At the time of writing, the Ethiopian government decided to withdraw the licenses of all PEAs and ban unskilled migration to the Gulf States for at least 6 months. The aim of this ban was to allow the Ethiopian government to further develop its strategy to prevent human trafficking, deal with the large number of Ethiopian migrants who were deported from Saudi Arabia in November and December 2013, and to put a structure in place to better

58 The agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabian and Ethiopian government is still not formalized by a bilateral labour agreement.

59 Messele, 2006.

manage future labour migration from Ethiopia to the Gulf States.⁶⁰ Many observers, however, expect that this will not stop migration but rather push workers to migrate irregularly to these countries as long as there is demand for cheap labour in the Gulf States and supply of migrants in Ethiopia.

The above-mentioned numbers do not include the irregular migration of Ethiopians travelling the so-called ‘desert and sea routes’ through Somaliland, Djibouti, Yemen and further on to Saudi Arabia. As mentioned in Chapter 1, irregular Ethiopian labour migration to Saudi Arabia is estimated to be double the size of regular migration.⁶¹ The US Department of State reports that the Ethiopian MoLSA estimates that the 200,000 regular labour migrants who travelled in 2012 represent just 30 to 40% of all Ethiopians migrating to the Middle East, implying that the remaining 60 to 70% (between 300,000-350,000) are either trafficked or smuggled with the facilitation of illegal brokers.⁶²

Potential migrants who were surveyed do not show a strong preference for either irregular or regular migration, although more (49%) consider the option of irregular migration, compared to 36% who would not consider irregular migration and prefer regular migration. The reasons for preferring irregular migration are⁶³:

- **Potential migrants** think the cost of irregular migration will be lower (89%);
- The availability of the services of local brokers who facilitate irregular migration (74%);
- Low accessibility to regular channels (54%);
- It is the most commonly used channel in their community (54%);
- The regular channel is more bureaucratic (52%);
- It would enable them to find better jobs and payment (44%);
- The risks and obstacles are similar whether they use irregular or regular channels (26%).

Current migrants provide almost similar reasons for choosing the option of irregular migration. Interestingly, among **current migrants** – who actually experienced irregular migration – only 29% think the success rate of migrants who travel the irregular route is higher, while almost half (48%) disagree with this statement.

Potential migrants who do not prefer irregular migration, say there are too many protection risks (37% said so) or they have witnessed a close friend or family member who suffered using the irregular routes.

During the FGDs it was confirmed that, at the community level, irregular migration is perceived as less bureaucratic and time consuming, cheaper and more rewarding. According to youth in Mekele, those who migrate through the irregular channel have better chances of getting higher wages. Other perceived advantages include keeping their passports with them, enjoying weekly breaks and more favourable working conditions. These perceptions seem to influence the decision to use the regular or the irregular route. Apparently, in their migration decisions **potential migrants**

60 RMMS, 2014a.

61 Ibid.

62 US Department of State, 2013, p. 165.

63 Respondents could choose multiple reasons.

attach relatively more weight to these perceived benefits than to the risks involved with irregular migration. Interestingly, however, as will be discussed in section 3.4, a substantial proportion of **current migrants** and **returnees** (31% and 40%) say they would opt for the regular route next time, now that they experienced the risks.

The gender dimension of regular versus irregular migration

As the figures above show, the large majority of regular labour migrants going to Saudi Arabia are female (96% between July 2012 and July 2013), with only a small proportion of males (7127, or 4%). Interestingly, the majority of Ethiopian migrant workers who were recently deported from Saudi Arabia were males (97,666 out of 158,125, or 62%) instead of females (52,119 or 33%)⁶⁴. As described in section 2.1, the survey results showed similar proportions among **current migrants** and **returnees** (64% males). This shows that migration of female migrant workers predominantly occurred through regular migration channels, while men more often appear to opt for irregular migration to Saudi Arabia. One reason is that PEAs mostly offer jobs for domestic workers and do not have employment opportunities for men, forcing them to use irregular migration routes. Thus, the regular migration route is mostly limited to female migrant workers.

In the period between July 2011 and July 2012, almost all females migrating to these countries (99.7%) were employed in menial occupations. For men, this number was 39%, while a significant proportion of men (58.9%) were employed as plant and machine operators and assemblers. The demand for regular labour migration from most receiving countries is mainly for domestic workers, which is predominately filled by young unskilled female workers.

3.2 Migration routes and destinations

Routes

There are several overland routes for irregular migration out of Ethiopia:⁶⁵ through Moyale to Kenya and then to South Africa.

- through Metema to Sudan, from there potentially further on to Libya and Europe (or Egypt and Israel, although stringent Israeli immigration measures put in place in 2012 and finalised in 2013 have reduced the number of Horn of Africa migrants entering Israel to almost zero).⁶⁶
- through Afar to Bossaso, Puntland, into Yemen (and from there potentially further on to Saudi Arabia).
- through Afar to Djibouti, into Yemen and from there potentially further on to Saudi Arabia.

It is reported that Ethiopians are increasingly using a new route to South Sudan through Benishengul, Gumuz or Gambela. However, while no details are available, it can be assumed that the unrest in South Sudan which began in late 2013 has significantly halted this new mixed migration flow. This study focuses on the latter two routes towards Yemen.

64 IOM, 2014a; the remaining 5% are children.

65 ILO, 2011, p. 44-50.

66 For a full account on migration from the Horn of Africa through Sudan and Libya towards Europe, refer to RMMS (2014) *“Going West: contemporary mixed migration trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya & Europe”*.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the majority of Ethiopians migrating to Yemen irregularly transit through Djibouti (83% of Ethiopians in 2012). Ethiopians travel on foot, by bus and in lorries to Obock in Djibouti and then embark on the smugglers' boats operating across the narrow point in the Gulf of Aden, to Bab El Mandab in Yemen, on the border between Taiz and Lahj governorates. There are many different landing sites and a recent trend reveals that landing sites are moving further up the coast, with new sites identified every month in Hodeidah and Hajjah governorates. The sea crossing from Obock is faster (four to eight hours), but more expensive than the route through Bossasso, Puntland.⁶⁷

Ethiopian migrants also use Somaliland as a transit country to Puntland or Djibouti. Loya'ade, on the border between Somaliland and Djibouti is a major transit point for the smuggling of migrants.⁶⁸ Some are smuggled to Yemen directly from the Somaliland coastlines. However, this has become more difficult as a military base has been established on the Somaliland coast between Zeila and Lughaya. The town of Hargeisa is another major hub in Somaliland where migrants from different places of origin are regrouped to be smuggled directly to Yemen or through Puntland or Djibouti.⁶⁹

Even though the overland route through Somaliland and Puntland is cheaper than that through Djibouti, irregular migrants run a higher risk of being attacked by criminal gangs, villagers and bandits. However, there are reports that the Ethiopian and Djiboutian authorities are cooperating to detain and return irregular migrants using the Djibouti route, forcing smugglers and irregular migrants to take another route.⁷⁰ As mentioned in chapter 1, in early 2014 Djiboutian and Ethiopian authorities increased surveillance along migration routes and departure points.

Although there are Ethiopians in Yemen who report that they face persecution in Ethiopia, a large majority of the tens of thousands of Ethiopians who arrive in Yemen by boat are primarily motivated by economic reasons such as securing employment, which is confirmed by the figures presented in the previous chapter examining drivers of migration. As a result, most travel onwards to Saudi Arabia and beyond almost immediately after landing on Yemeni beaches.⁷¹ Some make prior arrangements with smugglers to guide them directly to the Saudi border in the north. However, many are unable to reach Saudi Arabia because of the Saudi crackdown on irregular migration and consequently become stranded in Yemen. Some men seek work in *qat* plantations or tending herds, or car washers in major cities, in order to raise money to pay for the remainder of their journey.⁷²

Within Yemen, there are smuggling routes from Aden and Sana'a towards Saudi Arabia. Smugglers may take migrants all the way to a destination in Saudi Arabia or may leave them at the border. Once at the Saudi border the migrants must walk to their destination which can sometimes take as long as 17 days.⁷³

67 Human Rights Watch, 2009, p. 16.

68 MMTF Somaliland, 2012.

69 RMMS, 2013b, p. 57

70 Ibid, p. 36.

71 Human Rights Watch, 2009.

72 DRC and RMMS, 2012.

73 Soucy, 2011.

Survey results on preferred and travelled routes

Compared to the actual arrival figures, which show that over 80% of Ethiopians in recent years departed from Djibouti, the survey shows a slightly different pattern. Among **potential migrants** who consider irregular migration:

- 36% state they are planning to take the Dira Dawa-Djibouti-Yemen route and another 17% the Afar-Djibouti-Yemen route.
- 33% are planning to take the Jijiga-Bossaso-Yemen route.
- 13% are planning to take the Metema route into Sudan.

These figures show that compared to actual arrival figures on Yemen's coast, among the survey respondents more **potential migrants** are considering the route via Puntland (Bossaso) and fewer consider taking the Djibouti route.

Although these are still intentions of **potential migrants** and actual routes might differ once they start their journey, the survey results for **current migrants** also show routes that deviate from the coastal monitoring figures. More than half of the **current migrants** (57%) stated they used the Jijiga-Bossaso-Yemen route, while 38% travelled through Djibouti. It should be noted, however, a significant number of **current migrants** were surveyed in Abyan-Ahwar, which is opposite from Bossaso in Puntland.

Among **returnees**, the figures are somewhat closer to the coastal monitoring figures. Of those who travelled the 'desert and sea route' (96% of the total), 61% transited through Djibouti (32% via Afar and 29% via Dire Dawa), while 31% used the Jijiga-Bossaso-Yemen-Saudi Arabia route. A small percentage (4%) transited through Somaliland, using the Jijiga-Loya'ada-Yemen-Saudi Arabia route.

As the research deliberately focused on **returnees** who travelled to or through Yemen to Saudi Arabia, almost all survey participants (96%) travelled the 'desert and sea route'. Among **returnees** who were deported from Saudi Arabia and spent time in the transit centres in Addis Ababa (see chapter 4) are also many who travelled to Saudi Arabia directly by plane. However, no **returnees** were surveyed in Addis Ababa.⁷⁴ All of them were surveyed in their place of origin or the place to which they wished to return.

Duration of the journey

The majority of the **current migrants** in Yemen, reached it within 2 months of setting out.

- 42% stated it took them 2-4 weeks to reach Yemen;
- 22% travelled 1-2 months;
- For some (19%) it took more than 4 months to reach Yemen.

These overland journeys can often take a long time because migrants have to wait along the route to contact smugglers for the next stretch of the journey, or have to work to earn some money to pay for it. Almost half of the **current migrants** (48%) made a stopover somewhere along the journey to contact individuals to facilitate the remaining journey.

74 RMMS, 2014a.

The majority of the **returnees** (75%) indicated it took them between a week to two months to reach the country of destination: 28% travelled between 1-2 months; 21% for one month and 15% two weeks.

Destination

Saudi Arabia is the most preferred destination country for 76% of the **potential migrants**, followed by the UAE (15%), Yemen (4%), Djibouti (1%) and other destinations, such as Kuwait and Qatar (4%).

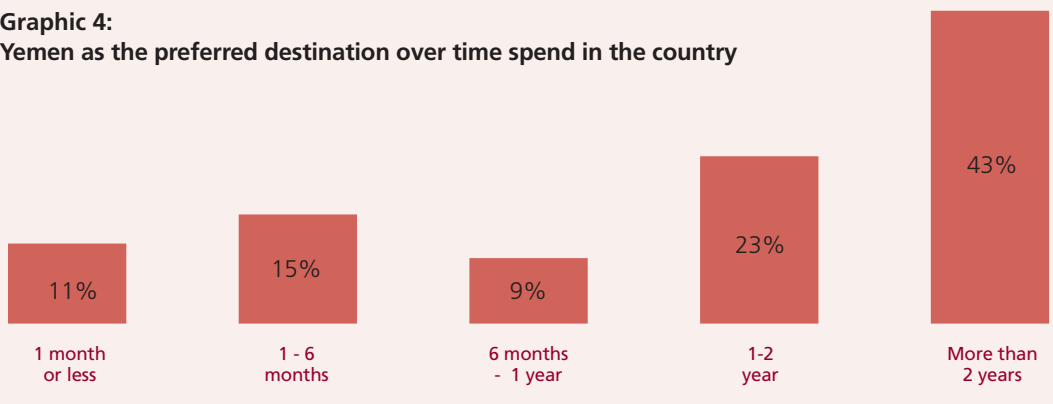
Among **current migrants**, Yemen is the preferred country of destination (51%; note that **current migrants** were surveyed in Yemen). For those who do not consider Yemen their preferred country of destination, Saudi Arabia is the preferred destination (73%), while 10% want to reach European countries.

For 92% of the **returnees** who participated in the survey, Saudi Arabia was the final destination.

Three interesting findings stand out here:

- First, despite the mass deportations of Ethiopians from Saudi Arabia – which were ongoing by the time of data collection – Saudi Arabia is still by far the preferred destination country.
- Second, while only 4% of **potential migrants** prefer Yemen as a country of destination, half of all **current migrants** in Yemen consider that country as their preferred country of destination. One explanation could be that a substantial number of migrants in Yemen, after having already spent a long time in that country, gave up their dream of reaching Saudi Arabia, which as discussed has become increasingly difficult to enter because of restrictive migration policies. About 39% of the **current migrants** surveyed had been in Yemen for 1-2 years already and another 11% had been in Yemen for about a year. Those who had been living in Yemen for a longer time may have succeeded in making lives for themselves, and so abandoned their plans to travel further. The following chart shows that migrants who have been in Yemen for a longer time more often consider Yemen their preferred destination.

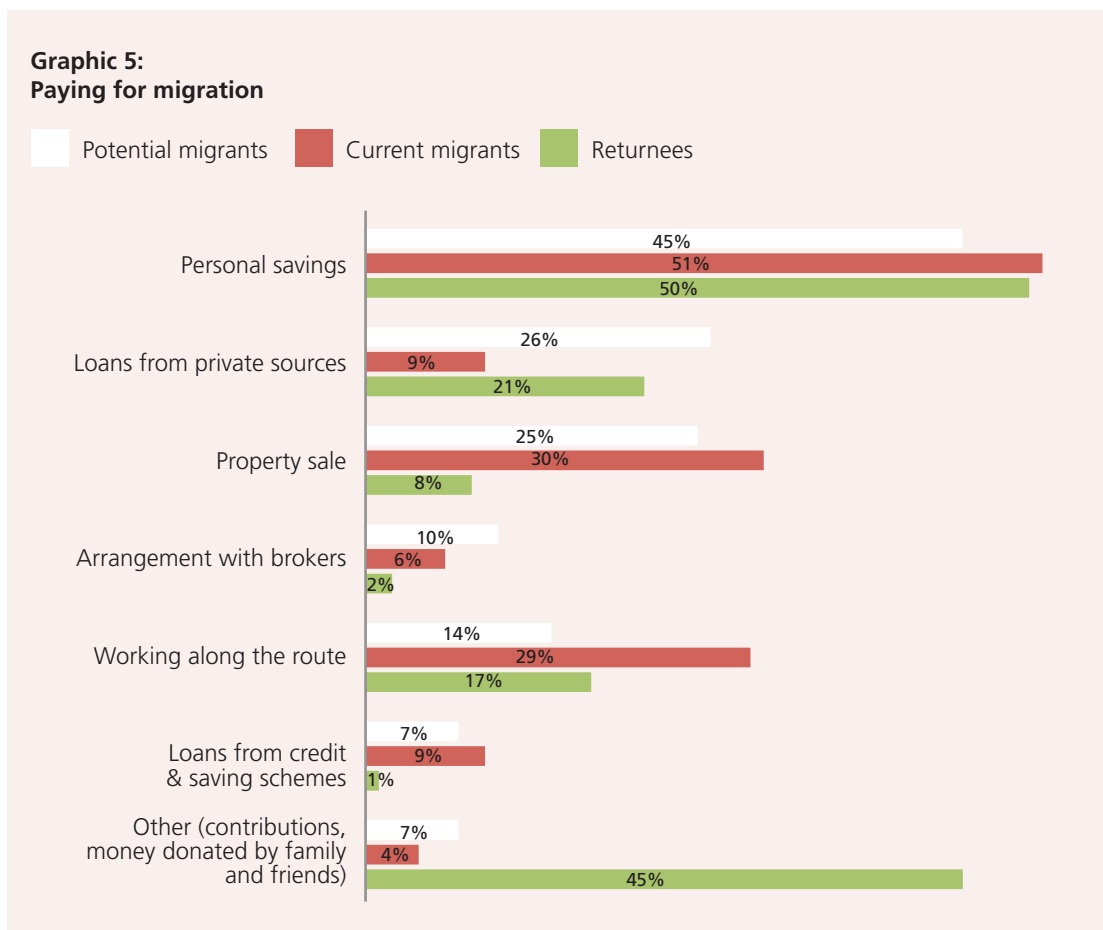
Graphic 4:
Yemen as the preferred destination over time spend in the country



- Third, compared to the preferred migration routes of **potential migrants** – as discussed above – it is striking that while 13% plan to take the Metema route (into Sudan), none of the **potential migrants** prefer a destination that will require them to travel into Sudan. All **potential migrants** prefer destinations along the ‘eastern route’ out of the Horn of Africa. This might indicate that many migrants lack knowledge about routes and destinations, or alternatively that they knew of other locations but actively chose the eastern route / destination.

3.3 Migration costs

The chart below shows how **potential migrants** are planning to cover the cost of migration and how **current migrants** and **returnees** actually covered their costs.



For each respondent group, personal savings are most commonly mentioned to cover the cost of migration: 45% of **potential migrants** plan to use personal savings, while 51% of **current migrants** and 50% of **returnees** actually used personal savings.

Interestingly, not many **potential migrants** plan to use contributions from others to cover the cost and not many **current migrants** did so. However, among **returnees**, money donated by family members is the second most important source. On the other hand, fewer **returnees** sold property to fund their migration, while 30% of **current migrants** did and 25% of **potential migrants** are planning to sell property (including cattle, furniture, etc.) to cover the cost of migration.

Another common source of funding for **potential migrants** and **returnees** are loans from private sources. Also more common among **current migrants** was working along the route (29%). Only 14% of **potential migrants** are planning to work along the route. Among **returnees**, 17% worked along the route.

The actual costs **returnees** paid for their migration to Saudi Arabia are as follows:

- For over half of the **returnees** (59%) their migration costs ranged between 5,001 and 20,000 Ethiopian birr [USD 259-1034].
- 23% paid between 1,000 and 5,000 Birr [USD 52-259]
- Only 3% paid less than 1,000 Birr [USD 52].
- 16% paid more than 20,000 Birr [USD 1034],
- 4% paid more than 40,000 Birr [USD 2,069].

The cost of migration might have been inflated in some circumstances due to the fact that some migrants face theft, bribery or kidnapping for ransom during the journey to Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

As described in section 3.1, the cost of migration is an important factor that pushes migrants towards choosing irregular migration over regular migration. Community members and youth who participated in FGDs also expressed the belief that irregular migration is cheaper than regular migration.

Interestingly, irregular migration is not cheaper, but reportedly that is the impression that brokers impose on the communities. There is very little opportunity for **potential migrants** to learn about the actual costs, and so they are reliant on the information disseminated at a local level by brokers. According to a recent assessment on labour migration conducted for IOM, the costs of regular migration to Saudi Arabia are approximately 9,520 Birr [USD 495], of which:

- Migrants are supposed to pay only 1,160 Birr [USD 60] for a passport, police clearance and taking a fingerprint and medical examination.
- PEAs are supposed to pay 745 Birr [40] for a life and disability insurance, the authentication of the employment contract and an availing medical report online.
- The employer is supposed to pay 7,615 Birr [USD 395] for a Saudi entry visa and the plane ticket.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Based on an ongoing (unpublished) assessment by IOM Ethiopia on Labour Migration.

It should be noted though that regular migrants who come from outside of Addis Ababa (and there are many), have to cover some additional costs, such as transportation to and from Addis Ababa, in-town transportation, accommodation and subsistence costs in Addis Ababa. They are expected to travel from their place of residence to Addis Ababa a minimum of two times to get their passport, which may require staying in Addis Ababa for 3-5 days or even more, then get recruited by a PEA, undergo a medical examination, get police clearance and attend the pre-departure orientation at the MoLSA.

The actual costs might thus be higher than the above mentioned USD 60, although still much lower compared to what most irregular migrants paid for their migration.

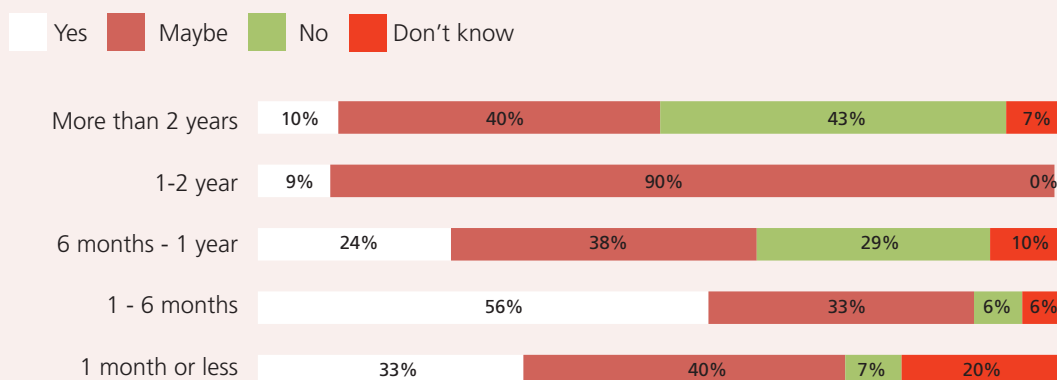
3.4 Migration experiences and protection risks

Goals and expectations versus experiences

Asked whether **current migrants** think they can still realize their migration goals, only 26% stated they can, while 44% stated they might be able to realize them; 22% declared that they do not think they will be able to realize their migration goals.

However, it makes a difference whether **current migrants** have just arrived in Yemen or have been in Yemen for a longer time. As the chart below shows, generally among migrants who have just arrived, more think they are still able to realize their migration goals, compared to those who have been in Yemen for a longer time.

Graphic 6:
Realizing migration goals: Do you still think you would realize your migration goals?



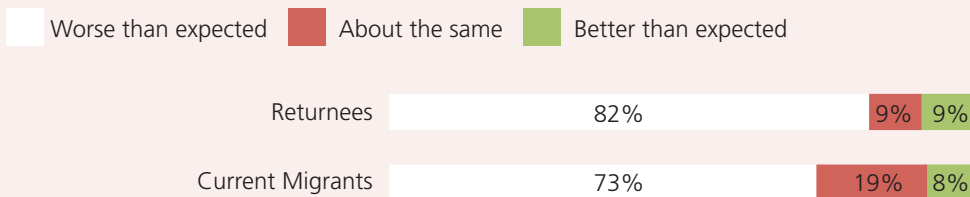
Among **returnees** 70% did not achieve any of their goals by migrating, while 27% achieved some of their goals, and only 4 per cent achieved most of their goals of migration.

The sex-disaggregated data does not show any variation between female and male **returnees** in this regard. However, the regional-disaggregated data shows that none of the **returnees** from Amhara Region and Dire Dawa City Administration felt they achieved most of their goals.

72% of the **returnees** said the job they got was much worse than anticipated, 15% stated the job was worse and 13% thought the job was about the same as expected. Interestingly, none of the respondents thought they got a better job than expected.

Even though these results clearly show that few migrants achieve their goals, many in migrant-sending communities, influenced by parents, peers and brokers, still see migration as the only viable option to escape poverty and the lack of employment opportunities at home.

Graphic 7:
Migrants' expectations vs. experience



Asked how they rate their experience of migration compared to their expectations, 73% of **current migrants** stated that it is worse than they expected, while 19% said it is about the same; 8% thought their migration experience is better than expected. **Returnees** report similar figures: 82% rated their experience worse than expected; about 9% indicated that their experience was about the same as their expectations, while another 9% stated that their experience was better than they expected.

BOX 4 **Mehar's Case from Mehoni –
Raya Azebo, Tigray**

The reason I migrated was because of the deterioration of living conditions my family was experiencing. I grew up in a very poor family. As days passed by our lives were getting harder. When everything seemed impossible, my brother and I decided to migrate. The only hope we had was a friend in Saudi who was willing to assist us. The journey to Djibouti and onwards to Yemen was very difficult. The fact that I migrated with my brother was comforting for me.

Even if for most of the journey we were hungry, tired and in need of water we made it to Yemen. We then called a friend and he paid the money for us which was by then around 15, 000 Birr [770 USD].

After reaching Yemen we were able to make some money but not enough to cover our living expenses and pay our debt. I was unable to face the hardship of working in Saudi with the hot weather and the kind of work I was engaged in. I used to work long hours in different households to make as much money as possible. My health condition was getting worse so I came back home the first time the KSA government called for irregular migrants to leave the country.

My brother stayed there and we recently heard the news that he died in the desert, where he had been working. My life after returning back hasn't changed. I feel ashamed and useless. I hate and regret the first day I migrated with my brother. I feel guilt over his death. Life is so bad here. Even though I have no intention of migrating anymore, I am scared about what the future holds for me.

Experiences regarding protection risks

In addition to not achieving their goals (as discussed above), **returnees** experienced various types of serious protection risks. The table below summarizes the protection risks **returnees** personally encountered or witnessed within Ethiopia and in Yemen or en route to Yemen.

Table 3:
Witnessing or experiencing abuse: the returnees

Protection risks	Within Ethiopia	In Yemen or en route
Mild to moderate physical abuse like slapping, beating, punching, whipping by brokers, smugglers and traffickers	37%	80%
Extreme physical abuse, including burning, gunshot wounds, suspension of food for days by brokers, smugglers and traffickers	10%	70%
Exhaustion, dehydration, starvation and deprivation of sleep	65%	93%
Criminal kidnapping for ransom	15%	75%
Extortion and robbery	34%	74%
Unlawful arrest and detention	18%	66%
Sexual abuse including rape	19%	49%
Degrading treatment and verbal abuse	43%	78%

Murder of migrants, or threat of it by being thrown overboard, shot at, tortured or other means	10%	49%
Being stranded, abandoned and cut off	27%	63%
Seizure, detention and deportation by border officials	31%	62%
Forced labour, slavery, or exploitative labour practices	7%	45%
Forced prostitution or commercial sexual exploitation	10%	38%

The results show that exhaustion, dehydration, starvation and deprivation of sleep are very common, both in or en route to Yemen (93%) or within Ethiopia (65%).

Within or en route to Yemen mild to moderate psychological abuse (like slapping, beating, punching and whipping by brokers, smugglers and traffickers), as well as extreme physical abuse, criminal kidnapping for ransom, extortion and robbery and degrading treatment and verbal abuse are also very common. Overall, the **returnees** experienced less protection risks within Ethiopia.

Almost half of the **returnees** personally encountered or witnessed sexual abuse, including rape, during their journey to or in Yemen. As discussed in the previous chapter, migrants are well aware of this risk and 59% of the female **returnees** stated they had taken contraceptives in preparation of their migration.

BOX 5 15 year old girl in Addis Ababa

My family is very poor. My father does not own land and he borrowed money so that I could go to Saudi Arabia. I paid 4,000 Birr [USD 206] to a broker. [She starts crying] They are very poor; they gave money for me to work in Saudi Arabia. How can I see my father's face now? I spent 7 months in Saudi Arabia and worked with a family. They gave me medicine, I don't know if they slept with me then, but before that they wanted me. I'm feeling they raped me. The family threw me on the street and then the police arrested me and took me to prison. I came back only with these clothes, no money. Seven months I worked for the family, but they gave me nothing. I want to work in Addis Ababa and earn money and then go back to the village. I will never go to Saudi Arabia again.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Based on interviews conducted in Addis Ababa at the shelter for returnee women run by the Good Samaritan Association. The interviews were conducted by RMMS in the context of another recent (2014) RMMS study: *The Letter of the Law: regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change*.

The results show that the probability of criminal kidnapping for ransom is high in Yemen. 75% of the **returnees** personally encountered or witnessed this. As described in chapter 1, the number of kidnappings has increased since 2012.

Returnees also indicated the protection risks they personally encountered or witnessed which they found most difficult to accept and tolerate. For **returnees**, these were the following:

- exhaustion, dehydration and starvation
- robbery and torture
- extreme physical abuse
- sexual abuse, including rape

Current migrants found physical abuse and torture, arrest, detention and deportation, sexual abuse, including rape and forced labour the four most difficult to tolerate protection risks.

Consistent with findings in most reports that indicate the level of abuse against irregular migrants in the region is rising, almost all **returnees** (92%) believe the risks of irregular migration have increased over the past few years. Among **current migrants** 60% think the risks have increased, while – although they have not yet personally experienced any migration related risks – 80% of the **potential migrants** think so. Knowing about the risks, 45% of the **current migrants** in Yemen and 68% of **returnees** believe that the benefits of irregular migration are not worth the protection risks faced during the journey and upon arrival in the transit and destination countries.

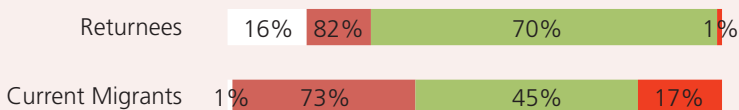
Future migration intentions

Both **current migrants** and **returnees** have been asked whether they would migrate again, knowing what they know today.

Graphic 8:

Aspirations and hindsight: would you still migrate knowing what you know now?

Yes Maybe No Don't know



Only 1% of **current migrants** would have migrated, if they would know everything they know today about migration. Close to half (45%) would not have migrated and 37% are undecided. Compared to **current migrants**, fewer **returnees** are undecided. Although more would still migrate (12%), the majority (76%) state they would not have migrated. It seems **current migrants** are more ambivalent, because they do not know yet how their migration is going to turn out. They have not yet reached the point where they are definitively staying in Yemen, or in Saudi Arabia or are returning home, so they do not have a fixed view yet. Whereas the **returnees** know

how their migration ended. Therefore they know with more certainty what they would do. It should be noted, however, that a substantial percentage of new arrivals on the shores of Yemen from Ethiopia are in fact repeating migrants. Approximately 25% are estimated to have tried (and succeeded) to make the journey before. On board the boats crossing the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea are migrants who have made the trip once, twice and three times before. Despite the risks, they continue to migrate.

BOX 6 24-year old women in Addis Ababa

I am from Dessie, the capital of Wollo province. About a year ago I went to Saudi Arabia. I was living in the country side in Ethiopia and was working as a domestic worker. After my father died, I just wanted to work very hard, earn a good salary and make life better for my mother. That is why I went to Saudi Arabia. I went through a broker and paid 5,000 Birr [USD 258]. There was no legal agency involved. When I arrived in Saudi Arabia, the people were good to me at first. I worked as a domestic worker for a family with 5 members. I had to work for 16 hours a day. It changed, however, in the middle. I became sick, I think they poisoned my food. After I got sick, the owner took me to hospital and left me there. They did not visit me, I did not get my salary or my passport back. They just left me there. The Saudi government collected me and deported me to Ethiopia. I was very sick and stayed in hospital for 5 months, only going out to the mosque sometimes. I don't really remember what happened afterwards. When I left the hospital, I just followed some other Ethiopians and went to a camp where the Ethiopian returnees were and spent 8 days in the camp. There were many people, but I was held in a different place. They thought I was possessed by Satan, or something. Then I was deported and screened as suffering from mental illness at the mobile clinic in the Transit Center at the Airport. Now I want to see my mother, I feel homesick. But after that I will go again. I want to make my life better; I will go back to Saudi Arabia or Dubai, because there is nothing here. My first priority is to get out of the country again. But if that is closed, I want to stay in Addis. I am not going back to my village.⁷⁷

The results above are remarkable as the survey shows that quite a large proportion of **potential migrants** believe that they have adequate knowledge about risks. In advance they think they are aware about the risks, yet they will still go (in the case of **potential migrants**) or actually migrated (in the case of **current migrants**). However, when asked if they would migrate again, knowing the extent of the risks, most state they

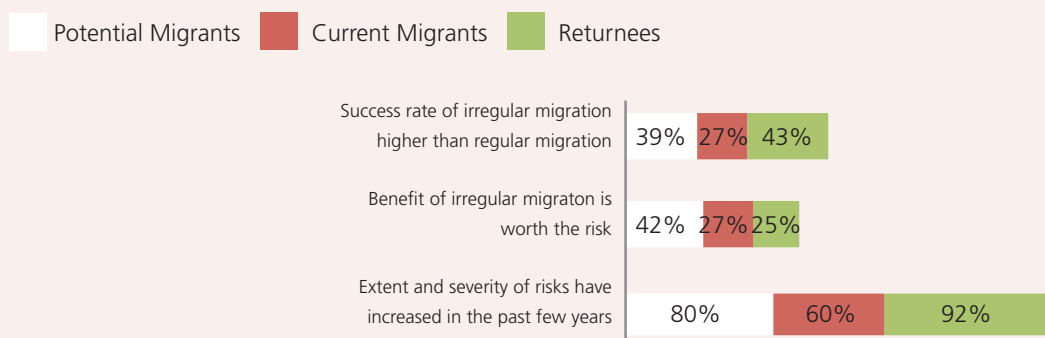
⁷⁷ Based on interviews conducted in Addis Ababa at the shelter for returnee women run by AGAR Ethiopia. The interviews were conducted by RMMS in the context of another recent (2014) RMMS study: *The Letter of the Law: regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change*.

would not migrate again. It should be noted, however, that it is difficult for respondents to assess whether they would have migrated again with the knowledge they have today. Forced to focus on what they know about migration today (and, given the preceding questions on the risks, it is likely that they would still migrate. But it impossible for them to accurately define what they would have decided in the past if they had to make the migration decision again. This might explain why these results seem to be contradictory to some of the other survey results presented in this report. Furthermore, these results again seem to imply that migrants, although aware of the risks, are prepared to take the chance.

Perceptions versus practices

As mentioned above, when comparing migration perceptions and actual practices, some of the results seem contradictory. For example, taking the results in the figure below into account, it seems surprising so many Ethiopians are still opting for irregular migration or even migrate to Yemen several times.

**Graphic 9:
Perception of irregular migration**



The figure clearly shows that among all three groups:

- A majority think that the extent and severity of risks have increased in the past few years;
- A minority think that the success rate of irregular migration is higher than regular migration;
- A minority think that the benefit of irregular migration is worth the risk.

In addition to some of the reasons already mentioned – such as the lack of regular migration options for men and the perceived advantages of irregular migration – this also points to a complex interplay between knowledge and practices. The actual practice of irregular migration does not always seem to reflect the common perception at the community level. This could be explained by the lack of openness about actual experiences, people's desperation which makes them act contrary to their rational consideration and the influence of the culture of migration in shaping migration decisions.

When **returnees** were asked whether they would recommend that a close family member migrate irregularly, 97% stated they are not sure. Only 1% would not recommend irregular migration, while 2% would. Considering that many people rely on information about migration provided by family and friends this is a point of concern.

Moreover it is surprising, as the results also show that **returnees** say their migration experience was worse than expected and 76% would not migrate again themselves. One explanation, although speculative, might be the shame associated with their return. **Returnees**, many of whom have been deported, often feel they have failed. In fact, the survey among **returnees** shows that 98% of the **returnees** feel they were considered as a failure. Advising everyone around them not to go, might place too much emphasis on their own 'failure'. In order to save face, most of them will not strongly discourage migration. Moreover, this supports the culture of migration notion. It is very difficult for people to go against the prevailing social norms. If migration is considered a good and necessary act in society, individuals may find it difficult to refute that, which is why they would not actively discourage migration.

BOX 7 18-year old girl in Addis Ababa

I paid 10,000 Birr [USD 515] to a broker. Somebody in my village knew this broker in Addis Ababa. I left my village after my father died and I flew to Saudi Arabia where I worked as a housemaid with a Saudi family. During the pre-departure training in Ethiopia I learned that you have to work 8 hours, but I had to work 20 hours a day. They tried to rape me, but I didn't want it and became aggressive. They put me in a room and tried to rape me. I have been in Saudi Arabia for only one month and 15 days. I have been deported and came back mentally ill. Now I am feeling better, my mother came to visit me. I want to get some skills training and work in Addis. I don't want to go back to my village, but will definitely not go back to Saudi Arabia.⁷⁸

78 Based on interviews conducted in Addis Ababa at the shelter for returnee women run by the Good Samaritan Association. The interviews were conducted by RMMS in the context of another recent (20014) RMMS study: *The Letter of the Law: regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change*.

Finally, both **current migrants** and **returnees** were asked what they would do differently if they were to migrate again.

Table 4:
Under what conditions would they migrate again?

	Current migrants	Returnees
Use a legal channel	31%	40%
Gather more information	22%	5%
Exhaust all available local opportunities	4%	31%
Go to another country of destination	9%	7%
Use another local broker	9%	0%
Other	25%	16%

31% of the **current migrants** and 40% of the **returnees** would opt for the legal migration channel. Among **current migrants**, 22% noted they would gather more information about migration risks and the country of destination (as described, in hindsight, only 6% of **current migrants** thought they had adequate knowledge about the risks).

4 Return and reintegration

4.1 Saudi crackdown on irregular migration

In 2013, Saudi Arabia implemented strong measures to protect the labour market and curb irregular migration in the context of its ‘Saudization’ policy. It was first formulated in the mid-1990s and refers to a policy of replacing migrant workers with Saudi citizens. It aims to encourage Saudi citizens, particularly the young, to work.⁷⁹ Despite limited effectiveness in the past, observers have argued that ‘Saudization’ policy has been put into practice as of late 2013.⁸⁰ This time the policy has turned out to be more strictly implemented, with the threatened mass deportations of irregular migrants coming into effect.

Since the beginning of Saudi King Abdullah’s “corrective period”, it is estimated that approximately 1 million migrants have been deported or have willingly left Saudi Arabia.⁸¹ After the deadline of 4 November 2013 passed (which King Abdullah set for migrant workers to either regularise their status or leave the country without a penalty)⁸² Saudi authorities started to carry out labour inspections and arrest irregular migrants. Actual deportations of Ethiopians started slowly. However, at the end of November, the numbers increased dramatically and by early December 2013 the number of deported Ethiopian migrants had exceeded 100,000.⁸³ As of early February 2014, the total number of **returnees** who had arrived at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa was 158,125, of which 97,666 were male, 52,119 female, and 8,340 children, including 514 Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs). 90% received post arrival assistance from IOM.⁸⁴

4.2 Thoughts about return (current migrants)

Asked whether they are willing to go back to Ethiopia in the coming 12 months, 22% of the **current migrants** in Yemen stated that they are, while 23% think that they might consider the option of going back. However, 44% of the **current migrants** declared that they are not willing to return in the coming year. The remaining 11% are undecided.

79 Fargues, 2006, p. 21; COMPAS, 2013.

80 COMPAS, 2013.

81 Migrant Rights, 2013.

82 Human Rights Watch, 2013; COMPAS, 2013.

83 Al Jazeera, 2013.

84 IOM, 2014a.

Many **current migrants** are worried about the obstacles they might face upon return. The obstacles most mentioned are that they: May find themselves in the same situation as before, which led them to migrate in the first place (36%).

- May not be able to find viable employment opportunities (33%).
- May be considered a failure (31%).
- May find themselves in debt, with no job and without adequate resources (19%).

4.3 Return and reintegration experiences

Considering the timing of the survey – during a period when Saudi Arabia deported almost 160,000 undocumented Ethiopian migrants – it is not surprising that the most cited reason by **returnees** for their return to Ethiopia is that they were detained and deported (68%). Other reasons include:

- Harsh working and living conditions (10%);
- Health issues (7%);
- Failure to achieve migration goals (6%);
- Inability to find employment (4%);
- To start/join family (1%); completion of contract (1%); to seek local opportunities (1%).

In 79% of the cases, the return was financed by either the country of origin or destination. Only 11% of the **returnees** paid for their return to Ethiopia themselves, while for 3% of them, their employer paid their return costs.

Irregular migrants are usually known to bring money with them when they return. However, the sudden nature of the deportations did not allow many of them to collect their belongings. The majority of **returnees** (74%) did not bring money with them upon return. Only 26% were able to bring back some money/savings.

BOX 8 17-year old girl in Addis Ababa

I am from Wollo province and went to Saudi Arabia in February 2013. I wanted to do domestic work in Saudi Arabia, because the salaries are better there. I paid 8,000 birr [USD 412] to a broker. I did cooking, washing, cleaning, ironing for a Saudi family with 10 family members and was working for 16 hours a day. The owners of the house were kind, but the children were mistreating me, insulting me. The boys were sexually harassing me and insulted me because I did not accept it. I protected myself by informing the women in the house. She told her husband and then it stopped. They kept my passport, but they paid my salary. I have been paid for six months and sent four months of my salary to my family and gave two months of my salary to someone from the Ethiopian embassy, who would help me because I was sick. But he did not help me. There were many people there at the embassy.

I got sick in Saudi Arabia, mentally ill. I was having auditory hallucinations and sometimes saying strange words. They took me from the house because I was sick. They wanted to send me back to my country, but I refused because I was afraid they would take me to the police. Then they just left me in the middle of the road. The police took me to a camp with other returnees. All my belongings are still with the family in Saudi Arabia. The police treated me well, but they locked me in a small room because I was sick. I want to see my family first then I want to take a training course and leave the country again. I will not go to Saudi Arabia again because I came back with nothing. I want to go to another country.⁸⁵

Reports have been received from the detention centres in Saudi Arabia that Ethiopians who had transferred their assets into gold for ease of transport had it confiscated by the Saudi authorities before being loaded into buses and driven directly to the aeroplanes used for deportation. During the first weeks of the deportation operation, luggage was transported separately from the detention centres to Ethiopia and was not appropriately tagged by Saudi authorities. **Returnees** often did not know whether their baggage had actually been put onto planes.⁸⁶ Although it can be assumed that most have been able to send at least some money home, this was not canvassed in the survey.

Among those who brought some money, most (32%) say they used or will use it to cover their living expenditures; 22% say they used or will use the money to start a business. Other purposes are to buy property (14%), to buy furniture and household goods (4%) or to rent property (2%).

The survey results show that the **returnees** are very worried about their reintegration in Ethiopia:

- 98% of the **returnees** felt they were considered as failures.⁸⁷
- 98% were not able to find viable employment opportunities in their community.
- 32% per cent of the **returnees** find themselves in debt, unemployed and without resources.
- 22% feel they are in the same situation that led them to migrate in the first place.
- 13% are considering re-migration.

85 Based on interviews conducted in Addis Ababa at the shelter for returnee women run by AGAR Ethiopia. The interviews were conducted by RMMS in the context of another recent (2014) RMMS study: *The Letter of the Law: regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change*.

86 RMMS, 2014a.

87 Note that all returnees have been surveyed in their place of origin or the place where they wanted to be returned.

"I have stopped school, it's been a while since I farmed and I have stayed long outside my country; I don't fit here anymore."

A young person during a FGD for youth in Senbete, Amhara Region

"Returned girls are not comfortable with staying in the country. Most of them are victims of rape, including gang rape and many other physical and sexual abuses and hence still suffer from the trauma. Consequently, they are unable to mix easily and get reintegrated. They have no money of their own as their parents have used all the money they sent from abroad. They have no suitors for marriage. There are no development programs they could benefit from. And they don't have enough money to start their own business, which increases the likelihood of their re-migration."

Community leader during a FGD in Mekelle

“The route through Yemen is the worst scenario. There are organized groups which make our lives a living hell. Knowing all this we use the route in search of a better life. We don’t have a future here.”

A young person during a FGD for youth in Senbete, Amhara Region

“I have used the Somali route twice and the Djibouti twice in total I have migrated four times by sea. It’s not because I don’t know the challenge ahead of me; my situation forces me to migrate and look for a better opportunity. Unless there is immediate support at this point I will take my fifth trip.”

A male returnee during a FGD for youth in Senbete, Amhara Region

Returnees were asked to compare their situation to the situation of themselves and other **returnees** before they left Ethiopia.

- Regarding employment opportunities, 35% believe they are worse off, while 41% thinks they are about in the same position as the rest of the community.
- In terms of finances and other resources, 42% thought they are in about the same situation as the rest, while 30% believe they are better off than those who never migrated.
- In terms of winning the respect of the community, 48% think they are about in the same situation as those who did not migrate, while 30% believe they are better off.
- In terms of life skills and standards, 76% think they are better off than the rest of the community.⁸⁸

During FGDs it became clear that the recent deportations by the Saudi government of many Ethiopian migrants who came back without any savings, created some doubt at the community level about the veracity of migration success stories. **Returnees** feel they are considered as failures and are ashamed. They are called ‘*Tiriz*’ (literally deportee) by others in the community, a name with negative connotations and face problems such as:

- Meeting financial and material expectations of parents and family members
- Financial constrain to cover their travel cost
- Feeling ashamed
- Lack of assistance
- Difficult socio-economic reintegration

During FGDs in Mekelle, Kobo, Bati and Senbete, community leaders and **returnees** also expressed their concern about **returnees** who came back from Saudi Arabia with addictions to smoking shisha and chewing qat.

Many respondents in the FGDs expect that a large number of **returnees** will migrate again. They are waiting for the situation to calm down and try again. Some of the statements expressed during the FGDs reflected the determination among a number of **returnees** to try again.

Interestingly, not many **returnees** themselves think they will migrate again. One explanation may be that the trauma of deportation is still very recent for **returnees**. Once the memory has faded, they might be more inclined to migrate again. Another explanation could be that those in the communities know the conditions in the villages better than the **returnees**. They may believe that the villages will not contain the **returnees** for long.

⁸⁸ Life skills refer to communication skills, handling relationships, assertiveness, awareness about health matters including HIV/AIDS. Life standards refer to availability, accessibility and quality of basic necessities and services.

5 Bibliography

- Al Jazeera (2013). Saudis expel 100,000 Ethiopians. Available: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/12/saudis-expel-100000-illegal-ethiopians-201312591727221329.html>. Accessed 13 December 2013.
- COMPAS. (2013). *Saudi Arabia and its immigrants*. Available: <http://compasoxfordblog.co.uk/2013/08/saudi-arabia-and-its-immigrants/>. Accessed 11 September 2013.
- De Haas, H. (2006). *The Social and Cultural Impacts of International Migration on Moroccan Sending Communities: A Review*. In Bos, P.H.F. and Fritschy, W. (eds.), Morocco and the Netherlands: *Society, Economy, Culture*. Amsterdam: VU publishers.
- DRC and RMMS. (2012). *Desperate Choices. Conditions, risks & protection failures affecting Ethiopian migrants in Yemen*. Nairobi: Danish Refugee Council and Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat.
- Fargues, P. (2006). *International Migration in the Arab Region: trends and Policies*. Beirut: United Nations Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region. Population Division. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat.
- Fernandez, B. (2010). *Cheap and disposable? The impact of the global economic crisis on the migration of Ethiopian women domestic workers to the Gulf*, Gender & Development, 18:2, 249-262.
- Human Rights Watch. (2009). *Hostile Shores: Abuse and Refoulement of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Yemen*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Human Rights Watch. (2013). Saudi Arabia: Protect Migrant Workers' Rights. Available: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/01/saudi-arabia-protect-migrant-workers-rights>. Accessed 11 September 2013.
- ILO. (2011). *Trafficking in Persons Overseas for Labour Purposes: The Case of Ethiopian Domestic Workers*. Addis Ababa: International Labour Organisation.
- IOM. (2014a). *Emergency Post-Arrival Assistance to Vulnerable Ethiopian Migrants Returning from Saudi Arabia. External Situation Report. 18 January – 7 February 2014*. Addis Ababa: International Organization for Migration.
- IOM. (2014b). Nine Ethiopian migrants die at sea, eight others missing. Available: <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/press-briefing-notes/pbn-2014/pbn-listing/nine-ethiopian-migrants-die-at-s.html>. Accessed 5 March 2014.
- Messele, R. (2006). *Study on Private Employment Agencies ILO in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs*. Addis Ababa: ILO Ethiopia Office.
- Migrant Rights. (2013). 656 thousand migrants deported from Saudi Arabia. Available: <http://www.migrant-rights.org/2013/08/03/656-thousand-migrants-deported-from-saudi-arabia/>. Accessed 11 September 2013. Aug 2013
- MMTF Somaliland. (2012). *Mixed Migration in Somaliland. MMTF Joint Assessment Mission in Wajaale, Borama, Lowyado and Zeila Draft Report*. Mixed Migration Taskforce Somaliland.
- RMMS. (2013a). Alarming Abuse of Migrants in Yemen. Available: http://www.regionalmms.org/index.php?id=45&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=171&cHash=c99cb2384f3f93959692c600db541840. Accessed 23 May 2013.
- RMMS. (2013b). *Migrant Smuggling in the Horn of Africa and Yemen: The Political Economy and Protection Risks*. Nairobi: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat.
- RMMS. (2013d). *Responses to mixed migration in the Horn of Africa & Yemen: policies and assistance responses in a fast-changing context*. Nairobi: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat.
- RMMS. (2013e). Disappearing girls: new findings from Yemen. Available: http://regionalmms.org/index.php?id=45&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=190&cHash=458094d14c1f5b6dfce8b2f441bf15e5. Accessed 17 March 2014.

- RMMS. (2014a). *The Letter of the Law: regular and irregular migration in Saudi Arabia in a context of rapid change*. Nairobi: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat.
- RMMS. (2014b). *Going West: contemporary mixed migration trends from the Horn of Africa to Libya & Europe*. Nairobi: Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat.
- Soucy, A. (2011). *Mixed Migration From The Horn Of Africa To Yemen: Protection Risks and Challenges*. Nairobi: Danish Refugee Council.
- UNHCR. (2013). *New Arrivals in Yemen Comparison 2010-2013 As of December 2013*. Yemen: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- UNHCR. (2014). More than 40 missing and feared drowned in latest Gulf of Aden boat tragedy. Available: <http://www.unhcr.org/531eec806.html>. Accessed 13 March 2014.
- US Department of State. (2013). *Trafficking in Persons Report 2013*. Washington: US Department of State.

When working with mixed migration flows in the Horn of Africa there are some assumptions made by many in the sector that may never have been tested. *Blinded by Hope: Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of Ethiopian migrants* is a joint study by the Danish Refugee Council (Yemen) and the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat that examines in detail the knowledge, attitudes and practices of Ethiopian migrants who currently make up the largest number of people on the move in the region. It is the 6th study in RMMS's explaining *people on the move* research series.

Perhaps the most dramatic findings of this survey are those that illustrate the level of awareness and knowledge migrants have of the risks and violations they will almost certainly face in their journeys as they leave Ethiopia and move through Yemen. As this report goes to print, new data suggests that after a sudden fall in numbers of Ethiopians going to Yemen and Saudi Arabia at the end of 2013 (coinciding with the Saudi crackdown and immediate expulsion of up to 160,000 irregular Ethiopian migrants and over a million others), Ethiopians are once again arriving in significant and increasing numbers along this route.

Equally dramatic is the scale of abuse experienced and/or witnessed by migrants as they pass through Ethiopia, other parts of the Horn of Africa, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Governments of the countries involved may also be shocked by the fact that so many criminal violations against undocumented foreigners / irregular migrants repeatedly take place within their territory with virtual impunity.



RMMS Regional
Mixed Migration
Secretariat



DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC