

## **Dedication**

To the memory of my father Berhanu Meshesha who died when I was away doing this field work. Thank you for all the good times you believed in me more than anyone Ababa. I am just proud to spell your name B-E-R-H-A-N-U.

To my mother Mulatework Tekleyesus for she made me and decorated my life.

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## **Abstract**

This study is about the female labour migration to the Middle East. It aims to explore the causes of migration. It looks at the various motivations a migrant could have to decide to migrate to the Middle East. It also aims to see into the consequences migration has on the migrant and the household in general. In so doing the study looks at the migration – development link.

In this study the structuration theory is used together with other theories to explain the causes and impacts of migration. The study employs qualitative methods of research. Snowball, opportunistic and expert sampling methods were used to select twelve migrant returnees, three migrant families, three private employment agents and two representatives of IOM and MOLSA.

In-depth interview was the main method used to collect data. This document was produced based on construction of knowledge between interviewees and the researcher through in-depth interviews supported by secondary data.

The study reveals that though it is not the poorest of the poor that migrate, often migrants are not satisfied with their individual or household income level. But motivations other than the income level including control of power and individual freedom of the migrant are seen to be important. As to the impact of migration the study shows that the appropriate use of remittance is a crucial factor for the successful migration concerning livelihood security. Depending on the background of the migrant the effect of remittance can be positive or negative. Migrants from economically unstable households suffer from unproductive consumption of remittance. In addition to this, migration has other positive and negative social and psychological consequences. Female migrant were seen to resist various factors to make the most out of migration.

## **List of acronyms**

CDR	: Centre for Development Research
CIA	: Central Intelligence Agency
GDP	: Growth Domestic Product
ILO	: International Labour Organization
IOM	: International Organization for Migration
MOLSA	: Ministry of Labour and Social affairs
UN	: United Nations
WCD	: Women, Culture and Development

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This study is about Ethiopian female labour migrants who have returned from the Middle East. It explores the various reasons that direct women into deciding to migrate, and also the aftermath of migration by seeing into the consequences migration has on their and their family's life.

In this chapter some introductory issues are discussed aiming to give a clear background. It starts by discussing the importance of the study in general terms and goes on by narrowing down the issues to the problem in hand. The main questions the research raises and the total structure of the thesis are also discussed.

### **1.1. Importance of the study**

Like many birds, but unlike most animals, humans are migratory species (Massey et al., 1998). Davis as cited in Ellis (2000) indicated that migration is as old as humanity itself. The spread of human beings to all the corners of the earth from their initial ecological niche in sub-Sahara Africa proves this assertion (ibid.). According to Ellis, migration refers to one or more family members leaving the resident household for varying periods of time, and in so doing are able to make new and different contributions to its welfare. He further noted that migration is an important type of livelihood diversification that links up with labour market factors in household and individual decision making for survival. People move from one place to another for a short visit or long period of time, over a short or long distance. As the world is divided into territories of sovereign states, some migration crosses a national border which is referred as international migration (Hammar et al., 1997).

Women comprised approximately half of all migrants worldwide for several decades in the mid 1900s, but were generally a small proportion of migrant workers. This pattern began shifting in the late 1970s (UN 2005). Traditionally, most women have migrated internationally to join husbands or fathers, but United Nation (2005) finds an increasing number of women who migrate on their own, and are principal wage earners for themselves and their families. Now feminization of international labour



migration has become a global trend. The percentage of women in the migrant population (both permanent immigrants and temporary migrants) has been increasing in the post-war period, and now women comprise the majority of international migrants. The number of female migrants across the world increased by 63% between the year 1965 and 1990. This is an increase 8% higher than that of male migrants (Oishi 2002).

The Mediterranean and Middle East constitute probably the most remarkable geographical region of the world with respect to labour migration movements (Edwards 2005). By the name Middle East, it is meant to refer the countries Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran (Persia), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Ethiopia is one of the countries known as main exporter of labour to the Middle East. Ethiopia, with an area of approximately 1,127,127 sq km and a population of 76,511,887 million inhabitants is the second most populated country in Sub-Saharan Africa (CIA 2007). About three-quarters of the population is occupied by women and children (Kebede, N.D.).

*There is a high birth rate and widespread poverty within the country. Due to a patriarchal culture women have very limited access to education and training opportunities (especially in the rural areas). As a result, women's access to employment is much more limited than that of men (Kebede N.D.: 1)*

The female labour migration takes different forms but various sources show that many women migrate through illegal channels. The data for women migrants indicates that most of them are employed as housemaids or nannies. In a very few cases, they are recruited to work as waitresses. Though most of the migrants have high school education, still the amount of illiterate migrants is high. This shows that workers migrating from Ethiopia to the Gulf States have minimum skills and are employed in positions that do not require advanced training as mentioned before as housemaids or nannies (Kebede, N.D.) Most of the girls migrate from Addis Ababa, while some are from the rural parts of the country.

Most of the literature about the female labour migration to the Middle East concentrates on the condition of female migrant workers. The information mostly transmitted implies the vulnerability of migrants. The Ethiopian female labour force is particularly concentrated in such occupations delimited by racialized and gender prescribed roles this impacts the lives of these women in countless way (Beyene 2004).

Ethiopia in October 1999 complained that young Ethiopian women were being enticed to go to the Middle East to work as maids, but wind up being abused by employers there. Now many Ethiopian women go abroad to the Middle East with Beirut a favoured destination. Many of the agencies charge the women 7,000 birr (\$875) for making arrangements to go abroad.

According to Human rights Watch report, more than one third of the migrant domestic workers are abused at the hands of employment agents in Singapore. Confiscation of passports, personal belongings, and religious items; threats and physical abuse; illegal or dangerous employment assignments; and refusal to remove women from abusive employment situations are some of the abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Between 1999 and 2005, at least 147 migrant domestic workers died from workplace accidents or suicide, most by jumping or falling from residential buildings (ibid).

Some migrants have heard about the abusive conditions while most are not aware of the condition that is waiting for them.

The decision to migrate, as mentioned above, is a result of various reasons. The assumption here is that migration is a livelihood strategy chosen by the female migrants. It is actually common to see people improving their life which is mostly indicated by improvement of the livelihood of their family back home, or by having better living conditions when they return home , for example, opening a shop.

This being the case, there is cultural and religious conflict due to the fact that the host countries are originally Arabic. And therefore it is common to observe negative attitude of the society towards female migration to the Middle East. More over initial

investments are not easy to make for all groups of migrants and their family. This might leave a trace on the lives of the migrants and the household in general restricting them from testing the full benefits of their journey.

## **1.2. Research problem**

People migrate to the Middle East despite the horror stories that are everyday mentioned, either being aware of the fact or not. The basis for these stories of abuse and vulnerability is not verified but despite this fact, as mentioned above the literature on female labour migration to the Middle East concentrates on the abuse of migrants. There is not so much said about the whys of migration. The most obvious reason given for migration is poverty. But as to Sørensen et al. (2002) state poverty, development and migration do not have direct correlation as mostly emphasized. Many studies on characteristics of migrants have pointed out that migrants are usually not the poorest in the area of origin (ibid). There are other dimensions of motivation which have to be taken into account.

So the aim of this research is to find out why women in Ethiopia, make such a livelihood decision as migration in spite of the abusive and vulnerable working condition and the negative attitude of the society, towards those migrants. How their decision is mediated by the different social attitudes, and whether at the end of the day they succeed in achieving their goals.

## **1.3. Research questions**

This research began with the aim of exploring the process of Ethiopian female labour migration to the Middle East. It looks at the whole process starting with the decision making and the process one goes through to achieve their goal and at the end see if the goals were met and what related consequences it has brought. With this objective in mind the research is set to answer two important questions:

- What motives drive Ethiopian females to migrate to Middle East Countries?

- What are the consequence of female migration to the Middle East on the livelihoods of the migrants and their households?

#### **1.4. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is made up of eight chapters including this introduction. Chapter two explains the concepts and theories that are important in explaining the findings later in the thesis. The selected theories and concepts are categorized into a pattern that makes them clearly relevant in the analysing and interpreting the findings.

In chapter three the methods used in the thesis are discussed. The sampling procedures, main data sources, methods used for collecting the data and at last the methods used for analysing the data are discussed. The chapter also justifies the reasons for using the specific methods.

Chapter four is about the Ethiopia. It includes issues about the study area that can enable the reader to understand the context of the study. It begins by giving a brief discussion about the geography of the country, and moves on by telling the Economic, social, cultural and religious situations. It also shows the position of women in different aspects in the country.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are analysis chapters. In these chapters the various findings of the study are discussed. The collected data in the field are explained using the theories discussed in chapter two. In chapter five, the characteristics of the migrants are discussed in detail. The purpose of his chapter is to clearly show the background of the migrants that is believed to be useful in clarifying things when looking at the causes of migration. In so doing the geographical, social and religious, and economic backgrounds are discussed. In addition to this, in this chapter, the causes of migration are treated together with the decision making process. The causes of migration are divided into two for discussion. The first section is about economic motivations for migration. This section shows the economic background of migrants that served as motivating factor for migration. But where economic motivations were not active, social and psychological motivations were important which are discussed in the next

section. In addition to this the decision making process is treated in this same chapter. This is meant to give additional reasons for a person to migrate to the Middle East. It shows the role of the household in the migration process.

Chapter six is where the whole picture of the process of migration is put forward. The processes that await a migrant in deciding to go to the Middle East are shown. Both legal and illegal routes of migration are discussed. The advantages and disadvantages one faces by choosing a certain route are also given attention.

Chapter seven is the last chapter in the analysis process. It concentrates on the end of migration though in some cases the migration process becomes like a cycle where the consequence acts as a motivation and the motivation leads to migration. In this chapter, socio economic and psychological impacts of migration are discussed. The observed structural changes are also considered. In explaining the economic consequences the use of remittance is given much attention. This discussion is based on both positive and negative impacts of migration. The chapter ends by looking at the past- migration. It tells how the migrants feel about their past migration. Was it worth migrating? Do they think of going back?

The last chapter i.e. chapter eight is where the study comes into conclusion. Some interesting conclusions are made about the causes and impacts of labour migration to the Middle East. Some recommendations are also given.

## **Chapter Two: Migration and development**

Social scientists construct theories as a tool to explain phenomena. In this chapter relevant theories concerning issues of female labour migration and development will be discussed. Multidisciplinary analysis of theories is found to be important because of the fact that no single theory can be used to fully explain the reality of migration. At times, especially in the case of impacts of migration, the already existing theories also fail to give a thorough explanation. In such cases analysis of empirical findings by other researchers will be carried out. The discussion will start by first defining major concepts and then proceed to the theoretical discussions that explain the different determinants and impacts of female labour migration on development.

### **2.1. Definition**

#### **2.1.1. Migration**

Hammar et al. (1997) defines migration as a spatial phenomenon where people move from one geographical area to another. In migration people move alone or with the company of others, for a short visit or long term stay, and over varying distances. According to Ellis, migration refers to one or more family members leaving the resident household for varying periods of time, and in so doing are able to make new and different contributions to its welfare (Ellis 2000).

When migration goes across the national borders it is called international migration (Hammar et al. 1997). A person that has moved from one country to another with the purpose of residing there for a relevant period of time is referred to as an international migrant (Ellis 2000). Population movements across national frontiers for the purpose of employment are referred to as international labour migration (Carling 1996).

It is a major change to their legal status, their rights to take up residence and work, as well as their social, economic and political rights when migrants leave the country where they are citizens and enter another country where they are aliens (Hammar et al. 1997).

### **2.1.2. Development**

The term development, despite various definitions, in this paper refers to human flourishing (Pieterse 2001), where human flourishing is growth in the economic, social and psychological dimensions.

*In development, all the modern advances in science, technology, democracy, values, ethics, and social organization fuse into the single humanitarian project of producing a far better world. It is improvement in a complex of linked natural, economic, social cultural and political conditions (Peet & Hartwick 1999:1).*

Development is not characterized by successive stages and levels. Rather it is a multidirectional process. The process of development usually includes change in the overall welfare, which incorporate social, economic and political conditions in time and space. Development results in changes that are appreciated subjectively by each individual or each community (Hammar et al. 1997:18).

In this study the term development is used to refer to the all rounded positive changes in the life of a woman and the household she is attached to. The economic, social, psychological independence, freedom and changes of women, is considered as development. Consequently referring to the definition of development as human flourishing, I will be looking at both economical livelihood security and social and psychological dimensions.

### **2.1.3. Migration –Development Link**

Does migration trigger development and/or development trigger migration? Hammar et al. (1997) calls these two guiding questions for the discussion of the relationship between migration and development. There are various attitudes towards the relationship between migration and development. According to Sorensen et al. (2002), the current relationship between migration and development is an ‘unsettled’ one.

Though the link between migration and development differs from context to context, varying with the extent and nature of migration streams, the migrants' experiences, and the economic, political and social setting in the home country; the interplay between the two is a two way process: development affects migration and migration affects development (Lucas 2005).

In this thesis I will explore the migration – development link further by looking at how the development process creates opportunities for migration and mostly how women's migration to the Middle east change their lives.

## **2.2. Migration and Levels of Analysis**

A persistent theme running through migration studies is the issue of analysis at different levels. Skeldon (1997) in his discussion of migration and development mentions that migration is the result of the behaviour of individuals but equally it has an aggregate social form. Migration can thus be analysed at the individual or family level or at the level of the broader social group, depending on what emphasis one gives to the key determining factors. The distinction is related to the actors and the level of aggregation.

### **2.2.1. Macro level**

The macro level of analysis is a broad structural level (Faist 2000). In macro level discussions, political, economic, and cultural structures present a range of motivations for migration. The motivations can be in countries of origin and destination and in the international political and economic systems of nation-states (Faist 2000). According to Faist, in macro analysis the focus is on the relationship between governments and authorities in the countries of origin, destination and international organizations.

Concerning the determinants of migration, along with all the above dimensions, it is possible to find degree of variation affecting migration decisions (Faist 2000). It is not possible to talk about international migration without nation states who are potential senders and receivers. There exists a difference in economic characteristics such as



living standards, jobs, working conditions, unemployment rates, and wages in the emigration and immigration countries. Where macro unit of analysis is emphasised, these differentials are preconditions for international migration to occur (ibid). In Macro theories, therefore, the total population acts in response to conditions at the place of origin and potential destinations (Hammar et al. 1997).

### **2.2.2. Micro level**

On this level the focus rests on the decision making individual. On the most fine-grained dimension, international movements can be characterized by a continuum along the degrees of freedom or choice for the potential migrants (Faist 2000).

In this level the whole focus is the decision making individual. All justifications depend on the behaviour of the individual and the decision made by the individual (Hammar et al. 1997 and Faist 2000).

Faist further explains the decision making at micro level of analysis as:

*The degree of freedom or autonomy circumscribed in a context in which the main sets of parties involved in migration decision making and the dynamics of migration are people themselves, enmeshed in a web of significant others in the place of origin and destination, collectives and social networks of potential and actual movers and kinship circles, neighbourhoods, ethnic, religious, and professional associations (Faist 2000:32)*

### **2.2.3. Meso level**

This is a relational analysis that goes between the macro micro distinctions. In this level, the emphasis clearly is on the ties people entertain with others. The form and content of the relationship is the unit of emphasis. The assumption is that migrants use resources inherent in the ties they entertain. These ties include various dimensions of social capital like exchange-based obligations, the norm of reciprocity and solidarity and benefits derived from them, such as access to the resources of others, information and control (Faist 2000).

Meso-level analysis focuses on resources such as social capital that people can muster to achieve goals. It also gives much emphasis on how social action is facilitated. Migration decision is considered to be a group decision in a household, in social networks, or in institutions (Hammar et al. 1997).

### **2.3. Determinants of migration and decision making**

Though the usual trend seems that it is people from the least developed areas of the world that are moving the most, migration does not always result from underdevelopment only but from development itself (CDR 2002). Development can stimulate migration in the short term by raising people's expectations and by enhancing the resources that are needed to move (Hammar et al 1997). Therefore it is found that the most important sending countries are not the poorest (ibid). The poorest of the poor lack the connections and resources needed to take part in international migration. Countries that are undergoing rapid changes as a consequence of their incorporation into global trade, information and production networks are the main origins for international migrants (CDR 2002).

According to Skeldon (1997), the work of E. G. Ravenstein (1885, 1889), makes the migration-development relationship clear: that 'migration increases in volume as industries and commerce develop and transport improves' and that 'the major causes of migration are economic'.

*Migration from Ravenstein's point of view thus appeared to be a consequence of development. It also symbolized development. 'Migration means life and progress, a sedentary population stagnation' (Skeldon 1997:19 quoting Ravenstein 1889)*

A number of 'environmental conditions' all have impact on whether people decide to 'go' or to 'stay' (Hammar et al. 1997). These environmental conditions include economic wealth, political systems, social regulations and networks or environmental amenities.

Often economic explanations for understanding motivations for migration supersede other reasons (Gamburd 2002). However economics is just one of the many forces that form the background for ideas of migration.

Gamburd found in a study about women migrants to the Middle East from Sri Lanka, that most women said financial necessity impelled their migration and that they wanted to help their families, but other more troubling and less socially acceptable motivations often emerged under the surface. At times migrants went abroad to get away from their families particularly (Gamburd 2002). Gamburd shows that there are times when women enjoy their life abroad. They enjoy the independence and the new sense of self gained. Some even fail to feel at home after spending long periods of time abroad. Some women worked abroad purely for the money, others left because of the 'push' of their social situations at home or the 'pull' of new destinations (ibid). What are the possible motivations that make people decide to get involved in international migration?

## **2.4. Decision making**

### **2.4.1. Push Pull Model**

A traditional push and pull model based on the assumption of neo-classical economics has remained a significant perspective within geography. In classical theory, migration is a result of a combination of supply-push and demand-pull factors (CDR 2002:14). This theory includes variables at various levels of analysis ranging from micro to macro levels as shown below.

As a macro theory according to Skeldon (1997), in the descriptive push-pull theory of migration, lack of job opportunities and other means of earning income in origin areas, as opposed to the existence of these opportunities in destination areas, was seen to cause migration. Therefore the basic ideas of this perspective are that migrants respond to primarily economic conditions in the place of origin and destination. Additionally an assumption is that migrants have adequate information about living conditions in the place of destination (Hammar et al. 1997).

In addition to focusing on differentials in wages and employment conditions between countries, this theory focuses on migration costs. It generally conceives of movement as an individual decision for income maximization (Massey et al. 1998). Individuals will move if the expected additional benefits of moving are greater than the expected additional costs of moving. Migrants act individually according to rationality of economic self-interest motivated by wage difference expected probability of employment at the destination (DeHaan 2000).

According to this model, international migration is caused by geographic differences in the supply and demand of labour. Workers migrate to where they can be most productive and earn the most (Massey et al. 1998). It generally regards migration as consequence of attraction in areas of destination and repulsive forces in areas of origin (Hammar et al. 1997). As a micro theory it emphasises on the immediate determinants of migration decisions (ibid).

#### **2.4.2. New economics of migration**

The new economics of migration is a meso level theory. According to the new economics of migration, households rather than individuals are the relevant decision makers and the important unit of analysis (DeHaan 2000). Households are motivated by desire to minimize risk and overcome market failures as well as desire to minimize expected income. It suggests that families may be willing to trade some income for lower risk. Households would make a decision to migrate when the net real income gain from migration is greater than zero.

According to Massey et al. (1998), this theory considers conditions in a variety of markets, not just labour markets. It views migration as a household decision taken to minimize risk and to overcome constraints on family production or consumption attributable to failures in insurance, capital, or consumer credit markets.

Some households do not have access to viable incomes and capital markets in the country of origin. Such households are often inclined to send a member or more abroad as insurance against risk and/or to assure access to capital (Kubursi 2006). In

this theory remittances are a major objective for sending a member of the household. And migration decisions depend on whether the family as a whole will benefit from the migration (Kubursi 2006). Following this assumption the decision to migrate may well be against the will of the migrant if it is supported by other members of the household.

## **2.5. Impact of migration**

When Economic motivations of migration have long been recognized, not so much has been said about economic development effects of migration on countries of origin and destination (Holdaway and DeWind 2005). Taking the case of areas of origin into consideration, migration may result in both positive and negative effects on development. CDR (2002:1) divides the consequence into different levels:

*At the family level, migration may improve household earnings, giving people better food, health, housing and educational standards. At the community level, home town associations may serve as platforms resulting in significant development, such as improvements in local health, education, sanitation, and infrastructure conditions, benefiting migrant and non migrant households alike. Positive effects might spread to wider communities and society (CDR 2002:1).*

The relationship between migration and livelihoods has remained to be an important issue of discussion. Migration has taken livelihood as its central concept. According to Sørensen and Olwig (2002), people migrate in the aim of diversifying livelihoods carried out at the place of origin. On such cases, livelihoods can be considered as mobile because people happen to make a living while they are on the move. Migrants continue to carry out their livelihoods while in migration. In so doing they develop socio economic relations and cultural values.

Now international migration is considered as having the potential to contribute to development. Many governments and development agencies are designing ways to maximize the gains of migration (Holdaway and DeWind 2005). Migrants face

negative experiences at times when they have to pay much for middle men in accessing documents, in paying to be smuggled across borders, and in sending money home. Despite these, migrants believe moving is more profitable than staying (Lucas 2005).

Considering the impact of migration, in this study, I will particularly use two perspectives: the economic impact of migration as a livelihood security and social psychological impact of migration.

### **2.5.1. Use of remittance and livelihood security**

As mentioned above by moving to a certain geographical area, a person can find a better economic opportunity than what they have in their original area (Faist 2000).

Remittances are transfers of money by migrants to their country of origin. Despite the fact that its effect is a matter of great controversy, remittances constitutes one of the most central links between international labour migration and the consequence for countries of origin (Carling 1996). Migrants influence the development of their home countries by the resources and assets they send or bring back with them (CDR 2002). Remittances are an important resource for many households in developing countries, and because they move directly from person to person, they may have a more direct impact than other resource flows.

Though the effect of remittance also extends to social and psychological issues, which will be treated in the next section, the direct connection of remittance is with the economic matters and livelihoods in general.

The benefits of remittances are selective. Often writers have implied that the effect remittance has on the livelihood of migrants depends on different factors and varies from situation to situation. The propensity of labour migrant to remit, the type of investment and saving; all tend to have effect on the use of remittance for livelihood security and the economic success of migration depends on the proper use of remittances.

According to Carling, there are different factors that affect the propensity of labour migrants to remit. Number of years since emigration, marital status, and household income level and income source, educational and occupational level are some (Carling 1996). Taking the income level into consideration, for instance, most poor migrants, largely female, keep their savings in cash or invest in consumer items than migrants of relatively better economic background (Gamburd 2002). High propensity to consume often leads to low propensity to save.

Migrants can be divided into three pre-migration employment categories of principal earner, supplementary earner, or non-contributor to the household finances. If the question of success is raised, most of the successful migrants are of the first category. But the majority of the total migrants are of the third category (Gamburd 2002). Households that are used to subsistence-level income flows do not find it easy to manage the new household budgets or to think in terms of a well designed plan of consumption, savings, and future investments. And sustainable improvements result only through income earning investments (ibid).

Carling also shares the view that remittance recipients and return migrants have very low propensity to undertake productive investment (cf. Stahl and Arnold cited in Carling 1996). Low propensity to save and invest is often an implication of the socio economic level of the vast majority of migrants. A period of an international migration results in making migrants wealthier but it will not transform migrants of the third category into entrepreneurs (ibid).

Women working overseas are often expected to remit a considerable amount of their earnings to their families at home, and it is believed that women are sending higher proportion of their money back home than men. However, more research is needed before this can be established as a fact.

The success of a migrant depends more on the choices of her family than on her hard work. A successful migration seems to involve detailed planning supported in a combined effort of all members of the household (Gamburd 2002). Success also requires that families continue to generate income in the country of origin in order to save foreign earnings.

Time is a crucial factor. Women often had to spend four to six years abroad before they could significantly bring significant change in their life. These observations suggest that poor families might require considerably longer time than rich ones to accomplish their goals (ibid). Remittances in developing countries are first spent on family maintenance, housing and later on conspicuous consumption before they are invested on productive activities (Sorensen et al. 2002).

### **2.5.2. Social and Psychological Impacts of Migration**

*The economic necessities which fuel these migration flows will alter the social relationships family units and society as a whole (R.B.M.Korale cited in Gamburd 2002:124).*

Together with the economic effect of migration on development there are other social and psychological changes that a migrant, household and nation in general experience. The economic development of the migrant and the dependence of other household members on this income will strengthen the social transformation of the migrant which later results in greater social and economic rights. Most scholars agree that economic change affect tastes, values, and concepts of identity. Therefore labour migration is seen to have profound implications on immediate human relations (Carling 1996). The interaction of migrants within the household and neighbours changes either positively or negatively. But contrary to this, other writers suggest that returnees take a passive approach to their return. They fit back into their households smoothly (Gamburd 2002).

In the aftermath of migration there might be lack of major changes in their home environments but migrants have gain certain self worth and dignity through their jobs which provided them with assurance in their struggle for power (Gamburd 2002). Migration is a much more liberating experience. Gamburd presents a middle ground for the above opposite views presented on the effect of migration. According to Gamburd, change comes through slow and painful struggle and it does not directly result from migrants' new control over financial resources (ibid).



Moreover receivers of remittances gain much more power than the migrant. Paradoxically the great independence and participation in the social and economic process is often in the hands of receivers of remittance than the migrants themselves.

The fact that returning migrants bring back new norms and behaviour, stimulating modernization and effect of remittance income used to finance education resulting in increased human capital are positive impacts that are worth a mention (Carling 1996).

In addition to this migration has effect on gender ideologies in the country of origin. Migration has provided a basic for changing negative gender stereotypes (Gamburd 2002). There are changing roles of females because of their involvement in international labour.

This being the positive effect, the fact that women are out of the control of their male family member may cause rejection in a society where control over women is still an issue (Carling 1996). This rejection may result in a decline of social esteem. Migration of women alone without the company of a male family member carries strong social stigma (Esim and Smith 2004).

Other negative impact is that migrants in the Middle East are sometimes confronted with difficult working conditions including physical abuses like beatings, burns; even rape (Gamburd 2002). Workers face physical, psychological and verbal abuse (Esim and Smith 2004). Another major negative impact that labour migrants to the Middle East are facing is, the fact that they are overqualified for their occupation (Carling 1996). Working conditions are often worse or less rewarding than in the country of origin though it yields a higher income to the worker (ibid).

The fact that migration results in increased age at marriage for single migrants and the repeated temporary separation for married migrants can also be mentioned a negative impact (Gamburd 2002).

Another impact is brought about by the self reinforcing cycle of emigration. It results in the initiation of emigration by others (Carling 1996). The presence of past migrant

lubricates present migration flows through transmitting information and providing for new arrivals. In addition, migrants often return as wealthy individuals, and this could encourage others to pursue the same avenue of social mobility through emigration (ibid).

## **2.6. Structuration as a means to understand women's migration to the Middle East**

*Giddens concept of structuration, replaces a static view of social structures as completely external to the individual with one that emphasises the process by which social structures are created and changed through the exercise of freedom of action (Richmond 1994:54).*

According to structuration theory, structures set the conditions for human action but structures are also the result of human actions. Society and its institutions affect individuals, but individuals are also skilled agents who direct their own lives through actions (Holt-Jensen 2004). This is what is meant by the term 'agency' which I will explain below.

The British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, who had the most profound influence on human geography in the late 80s/90s, was the author of structuration theory (ibid). For Giddens (1984), the concept of 'action' represents the routine action of daily life; Action is regarded as a continuous process rather than a series of single actions with specific intentions or aims. He argues that most intentions and aims develop in a continuous, reflexive process, in which we think through our own actions or actions of others (ibid).

Some points are found to be more relevant than others in the theory. Some of these are:

- People go through socialization processes and become dependent of the existing social structures.
- But at the same time social structures are the medium of human activities

- Social structures not only restrict behaviour but also create possibilities for human behaviour.

At this point it will be important to see into the concept of agency. Agency is defined as the human capacity to act in juxtaposition to structure, the social norms and values that regulate human behaviour (Gamburd 2002). Although instincts and biological imperatives govern the behaviours of most animals, humans live by the rules that they themselves create. Gamburd (2002) puts it in a way that, since humans create classes, they can also modify them; create different classification systems with different hierarchies, serving different political interest. They can change the institutions the created.

The fact that social structures not only constrain but enable is considered as the key element in the structuration theory (Richmond 1994). Structures shape human actions but at the same time human actions recreate and change the structures that govern them.

According to Skeldon (1997) the interaction and mutual dependence between individuals and structures have been captured in the theory of structuration of Anthony Giddens (1981), which has made a considerable impact in geography and social science in general since the early 1980s. And therefore this assumption of structuration theory has also penetrated migration studies. For structuration, migration is part of social structures, and migration movements are consistent with social norms and rules. But migration also influences these social structures and norms (DeHaan 2000).

Structuration functions both at the meso and micro levels of analysis. It considers migration decisions as an individual choice. But it acknowledges that decisions may be made in consultation with the family members or others in a close-knit community or religious group (Richmond 1994).

The migrants are the agents whose actions, which in this case is the decision to migrate and the act of migration, have consequences, either intended or unintended, upon social structure (Skeldon 1997). Migration decisions are made in a relatively

unconstrained situation. But such decisions are influenced by institutional and structural factors that limit voluntary migrants' freedom (Richmond 1994).

Structures as to Holt-Jensen (2004) should be understood as rules and resources for action. These rules can be either formal-as laws and bureaucratic regulations, economic trends and policies generally exogenous to the household – or informal – as social norms which are endogenous.

Among the institutional and structural factors constraining voluntary migration are governmental and non governmental factors (Richmond 1994). Passports, visas, work permits, health check requirements come into the first category of factors while questions relating language and cultural similarity or dissimilarity, climate, education and employment opportunities, etc. in the second category. In addition to this private sectors which recruit abroad or encourage the mobility of their own work force by providing special incentives are considered as structural facilitators (Richmond 1994). Subjective aspects such as a desire for travel, adventure, risk, and challenge, or even a wish to escape family responsibilities or social pressures also affect the decision making process.

Despite these structural factors affecting decision, it is also a characteristic of human condition that individually and collectively, we monitor our own actions and their consequences. As Gamburd puts it, although cultural rules, discourses and social institutions affect behaviour and shape identity, individuals do not accept every rule and hierarchy without questioning them first. Individuals constantly challenge, resist, and shape systems (Gamburd 2002).

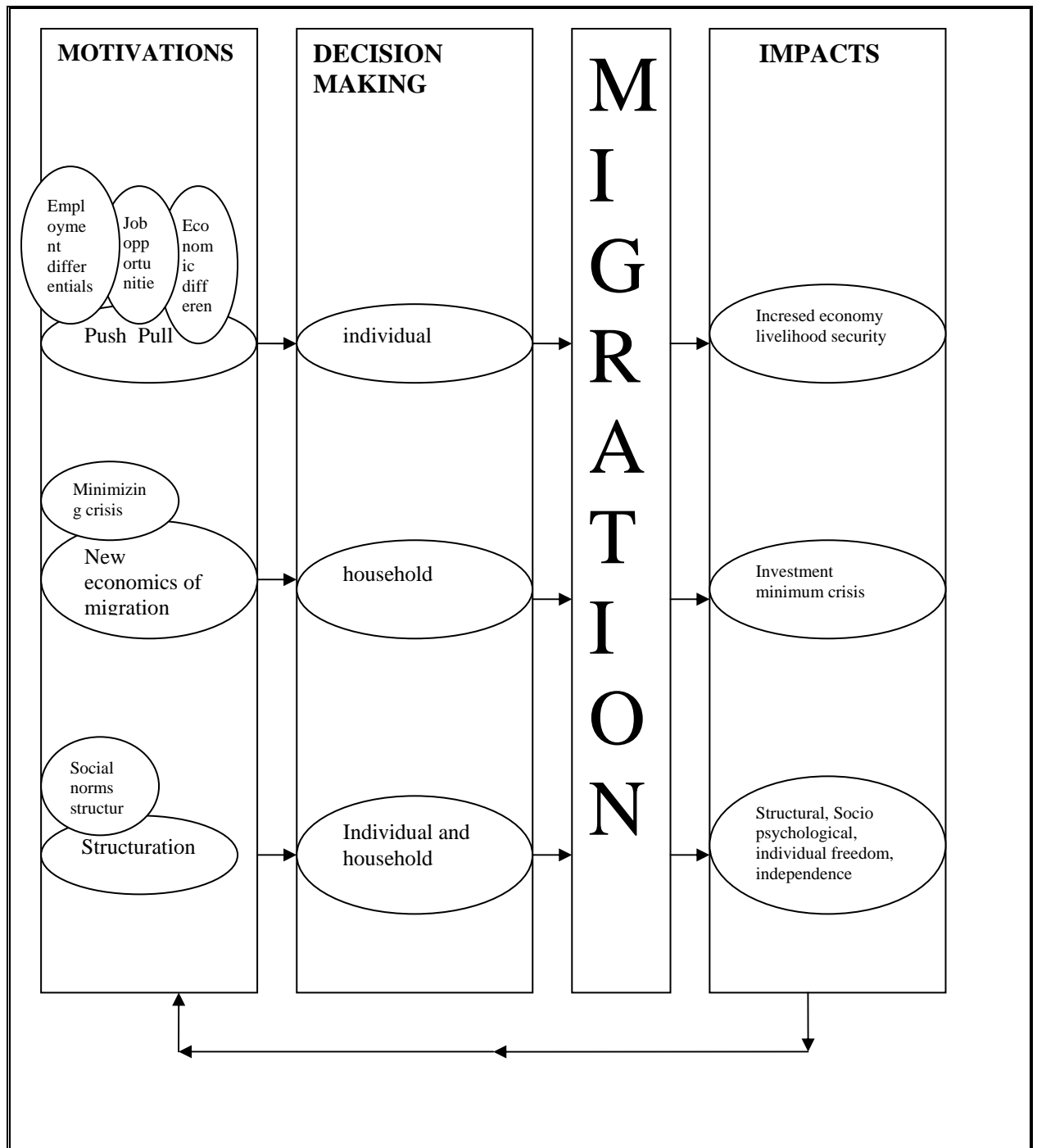
One of the major theories of women gender and development is women culture and development (WCD). According to WCD development is not something that comes on to people but people are actors who contribute to the construction of the discourse and practice of development. This theory suggests a new way of looking at women in the third world as people who resist and value the conditions in their life. Though the women's life may be surrounded by various problems their life and experience holds more than just the visible problems. The real life of women is filled with experience, emotions and creativity (Bhavnani 2003). Though the women have various aspects

that they share in common still they are heterogeneous and pass through varied experiences in life.

*By drawing on culture as lived experiences, a WCD lens brings women's agency into the foreground as a means for understanding how inequalities are challenged and reproduced (Bhavnani 2003: 8).*

It is important to include the concept of situated knowledge and positionality that is of great significance in the WCD. As mentioned above, people have different experiences. The knowledge is shaped by the social and cultural contexts one exists and it is produced by positioned actors.

The above assumption of structuration theory together other theories and concepts discussed above will be used to explain the causes and consequences of migration in following sections. How the structure and institutions influence the decision they make and also how their action contribute in changing social structures.



**Figure 1: Summary of theories and concepts**



## **Chapter three: Research Design and Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

Generally qualitative methods are utilized in this research. Selecting samples was done using snowball, opportunistic and expert sampling methods. The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources using in depth interviews from a sample of female migrants, migrant families and other concerned bodies which mainly includes private employment agents. The collected data was then analysed using qualitative narrative structuring.

Below methods of sampling, data collection, analysis and presentation are discussed in detail.

### **3.2. Choice of methodology and study design**

As mentioned above I have chosen to use qualitative techniques of study in this research. Usually research methods flow conceptually and logically from the research questions (Valentine 2001). In this research qualitative techniques are chosen on the basis of the extent they satisfy the research questions and generally the purpose of the study.

When using qualitative techniques, the emphasis is on the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Qualitative methodologies explore the feelings, understandings and knowledge of others through interviews, discussions or participant observation.

There are various advantages that one can find when using qualitative techniques. Of these the first is that, qualitative techniques emphasize quality, depth, richness and understanding, instead of statistical representativeness (Valentine 2001).

Qualitative methods do not start with the assumption that there is a pre-existing world that can be known or measured, but instead see the social world as something that is



dynamic and changing, always being constructed through the intersection of cultural, social, economic, and political processes (Limb and Dwyer 2001). The emphasis when using qualitative methodologies is to understand lived experience and reflect on and interpret the understandings and shared meanings of people's everyday social worlds and realities. Following this the knowledge produced in using qualitative methodology is by the encounter between researcher and participant.

Qualitative data is extremely varied in nature. It includes virtually any information that can be captured that is not numerical in nature.

Though qualitative methods have their own limitations and there are other methods available for study, above mentioned advantages of qualitative techniques have made it relevant for this study. The purpose of this research, as mentioned in the previous section, is to explore the causes and consequences of female labour migration to the Middle East by looking at both the pre and post migration lives of the migrants and the household in general. It is not the aim of the study to reach at one scientific conclusion that works for other migrant women. However it is the purpose of the study to tell untold stories taking into consideration the subjectivity of the issue by depending on first hand information considering the migrants as source and understanding the process the women go through.

This being the case, in order for the study to be valid and reliable I have chosen to use particular sampling, data collection and analysis methods that move hand in hand with the purpose of the study. Following this will be discussion on the sampling procedure.

### **3.3. Sampling procedure and justification**

Sampling involves selecting individual units to measure from a larger population. The population refers to the set of individual units which the research question seeks to find out about.

Selection of individuals from a given population can be done in a variety of ways. The specific method that one chooses to use depends on the purpose of the research,

research approaches and population, and on the available time and resources (Ennew and Plateau 2004).

According to the purpose of the study, the target population of the study comprises of females, originally from Ethiopia, who returned from labour migration to the Middle East. Out of this population, twelve female migrants were selected. In addition to this, three migrant families, three legal private employment agents, one broker/illegal private employment agent and two representatives from concerned organizations were added to the sample.

In this research generally non random sampling methods were used. Though random sampling methods is mostly preferred to that of the non random sampling, in that non random sampling is not objective, this is one of the circumstances where the use of random sampling is not feasible, practical or theoretically sensible.

Ennew and Plateau (2004) propose two most useful methods difficult to reach population, or on sensitive subjects. The population in this research was not to be found at a specific place. Female migrant returnees were not to be found in an organized form. It was 'a hard to reach' one. In addition to this due to the social stigma related to migration, it was not always possible to ask a returnee to be a participant. And therefore, I have chosen to use the two proposed sampling methods, opportunistic sampling and snowball sampling.

Snowball or chain sampling was the main method used to select respondents from the population and also families of female labour migrants to the Middle East. This type of sampling method is useful for rare or minority units (Nichols 2002). Nichols explains that this sampling method is normally done by first contacting one member of the target population and then it is expected that that the first contact will lead the researcher to another member of the target group.

In order to diversify the type of informants, four snowballs were started with each of them bringing three migrant returnees. The use of this sampling method was advantageous in this research in overcoming the anticipated problem of not getting all the population at a specific place. Female migrants have their own network which

made it easy for me to use snow ball method to select my sample. It was almost always that a migrant tend to lead me into meeting someone who can provide relevant information. In addition to that approaching the female migrants and their families through someone they know built their trust on me and helped me in getting information to the maximum possible depth. The issue I work on being a private mater for most migrants and their family, still this advantage made my interviewees open up for me. Presentation of me as a master's student from Norway by someone they know made my data collection easier.

In addition to this, expert sampling was used to choose authorities concerned with the female labour migration to the Middle East. Expert sampling, also called judgment sampling, involves the assembling of a sample of persons which are identified as having particularly high quality of information or known or demonstrable experience and expertise in some area (Trochim, 2002). In this case the chosen authorities included an officer in charge of female labour migration in the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs (MOLSA) - a governmental organization which controls most of the legal labour migration in the country (detail of the role of the bureau will be discussed in later chapters) and International organization for Migration (IOM).

A number of agents, which are the skeleton of the migration process, were also important samples selected by expert sampling method.

This sampling method was useful because it is the best way to elicit the views of persons who have specific expertise on the area. But even in the expert sampling one informant led me to another important informant. Contacting the MOLSA led me to most of my other important samples. I was able to get list of legal agents together with their addresses. And one agent also led me to an agent who he claims to have a better experience. It was more of an expert snowball sampling.

My private connections also provided me with important samples in the study (i.e.) opportunistic sampling. Especially due to the fact that in every neighbourhood it is possible to find a migrant returnee, it was not difficult to bump into people who happen to know or are a family of a returnee and share the experience with me.

As I mentioned above I was able to get list of legal agents form MOLSA but illegal ones were not easy to find. Even if found it was not possible to get them confirm that they were illegal. But I was fortunate enough to meet a man who happens to be an illegal agent and make him part of my sample. Ato Tewodros, and illegal agent, was taking care of his friend in the same hospital room I was with my father. Different forms of social interaction in the room led me into finding out that he was involved in arranging jobs for women who want to work in the Middle East without a license. Especially in this case the opportunistic sampling proved useful.

### **3.4. Sources of Data**

Both primary and secondary data were used in this research. Though secondary data was added to support the first hand information, much of the data concentrated on primary sources. In the following sections data sources and methods of collection are discussed.

#### **3.4.1. Primary Data sources and methods of collection**

Primary data sources are those that contain original, unevaluated information. Talking about primary data is about first hand knowledge.

Primary data depends on the response of the interviewees about the process of migration starting from decision making to its consequences. And its sources mainly included the selected female returnees, their families, agents and organizations that are in a way concerned with the female labour migrants.

As mentioned above, the primary data sources were the major sources of information for the research. Information about the process of migration starting from motivation to consequences all was gathered from this source. The required knowledge about the migration was constructed by the researcher and participants.

In gathering information from primary sources there are various techniques that are available to use. Interview being favourite methodological tool of the qualitative

research (Denzin and Lincoln 1994), in this research I have chosen to use in-depth interview. Of the various methods of data collection in-depth interview and focus group discussion was found to be relevant. But when I went home for my field work I arrived at a family situation where my father was seriously sick and later passed away. This situation made my field work much shorter and in a way distorted my field plan, was not able to pursue the focus group discussion and therefore only in- depth study was put into application. Below is the method of data collection discussed in detail.

### **In-depth Interview**

Interviews are rich sources of data on people's experience, opinions, aspirations and feelings. It is fundamentally a conversation that involves a face to face verbal interchange in which, the interviewer, attempts to draw information or expressions of opinions or beliefs from the interviewee (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lives prior to scientific explanations (Kvale 1996).

As mentioned above, in this study in-depth interview was conducted with the above listed samples. In-depth are interviews used to get people to talk about their personal experiences and feelings and opinions. In-depth interviews are used to determine individuals' perceptions and opinions. According to Valentine (2001), in-depth interview may vary from very conversational to more formal. And the data from an in-depth interview can be recorded in different ways including stenography, audio recording, video recording or written notes (Trochim, 2006).

In this particular case the interview was done using a tape recorder except while interviewing people who felt more comfortable without the recorder around. In such cases taking brief notes of the discussion was necessary. I was able to get data in the form of tape recordings and notes. I was also able to document my observations about the context of interview.

As any method in-depth interviews have their own advantage and disadvantages. The fact that it generates a lot of information and cover a wide variety of topics within a

short period of time can be seen as advantage. But in-depth interview requires the skills of the interviewer due to the fact that he/she can easily be misunderstood by the interviewee. In addition to this the generated information totally depends on the willingness of the participants and in case of sensitive topics, participants happen to refuse to share their experience especially on personal topics (Trochim 2006).

In doing the interviews I was advantageous with the method I chose. In-depth interview is a powerful method for understanding the experiences and lived meanings of the interviewees (ibid). By making in-depth interviews, I was able to see directly into the pre and post migration life of the migrants and the household in general. I can say I was advantageous in getting people to talk to me. I almost got all the information I needed to get.

Another advantage was In-depth interview is not of a restricted type that unexpected relevant findings may come into scene. By using in-depth interview I surely succeeded in getting totally unexpected relevant findings that could have gone unnoticed. Again the family situation I was in did not let me take much time for the interviews. But I had good contact with the women interviewed. As mentioned in the previous section I was able to build trust with the interviewees. They were open to tell me their stories. Therefore the few interviews were good quality. In addition to this, the fact that I am a female migrant away from home in Norway enabled me to understand the situation of the women under study.

The interviews were both formal and informal depending on situations. Often I went to the residential area of my interviewees. I was able to see the situation they live in. I also met their family and succeeded in getting additional information than expected. There was a time I found out the returnee and her mother had different view towards the extent the returnee was fitting back to the family structure. But at few times especially when they were in my neighbourhood I invited them over to my place for us to have an informal chat over a coffee. There was also time the interview was also held in a cafeteria in a rather relaxed situation. The interviews with the agents, except the illegal agent, and the authorities were entirely formal.

Generally in-depth interview was important to this study because it enabled me to see the full picture of the situation. The method used provided me with insights that can not be covered by questionnaire. Using the chosen method I was able to see the full livelihood realities, the background of the migrants and explore their life before and after migration. As I mentioned above the relationship between their backgrounds, the decision they made, how other institutions contributed to their choice and how the decision they made affected their livelihood is what this paper is aiming to address.

What was difficult was almost all interviewees were aware of the fact that there was a major concentration of attention at working situation of the migrants in the Middle East and the hardship they faced in the place of destination. And therefore often interviewees tend to take the direction of the discussion to issues of abuse in the Middle East and generally their working situation. Therefore in addition to posing questions and taking notes I had continuous responsibility of bringing back the discussion to the kind of information I was aiming to get.

### **3.4.2. Secondary data sources**

Secondary sources included documentation and statistics from governmental and non governmental organizations who deal with female labour migrants to the Middle East. In addition to this, literatures on the female labour migrants are secondary sources of information.

Secondary sources were used to get background information on the migrants and household in general. These sources provided information that can enable me to generalize about the general trend of female migration.

One limitation of secondary sources being that they might not be recorded with the research's purpose in mind, the recorded information I managed to get often concentrated on situation of migrants in Middle East. This made it difficult to get much information on the cause and general consequence of migration.

So far the methods used to collect data are discussed. Below is the discussion for the methods of analysis carried out in this research.

### **3.5. Data processing and analysis**

Data collected qualitatively was transcribed and qualitatively analysed using narrative structuring. This method of analysis focuses on the stories told during the interview and works out their structures and their plots. It contains a temporal sequence, patterning of happenings (Kvale 1996).

The above facts made it relevant for this study. It enabled me to analyse the collected data in a story form including a temporal perspective in the life of the female migrants and their family. It also enabled me to explore untold stories of why women migrate. It resulted in a, providing new convincing insights and opening new ways for understanding the cause and consequence of female labour migration to the Middle East.

The aim of this study is not, as mentioned before, generalizing about facts but narrating the motivations of migration and its consequences on livelihoods and therefore qualitative methods were found to be appropriate throughout the study.

As previously mentioned before I had data types that consist of tape recordings and brief note. This data had to pass through a series of steps before producing the required type of knowledge that Denzin and Lincoln (1994) called as self understanding inscribed in the experience of those studied.

To begin with field notes were expanded immediately after interview. And the recordings were transcribed by listening to the recorder and converting the words into written text.

The second step was to categorize the transcripts according to the relevant themes that emerged across the total collection of responses. The different categories were given titles that reflect the theme of the given category.



In the analysing step, I tried to make sense of the stories before linking it with theories and previous empirical findings that were chosen to be relevant. The chosen theories and empirical findings are discussed in detail in chapter two of this research paper. This linking of my findings with theories and previous empirical findings enabled me to address the planned objective of the study.

This being the case, was the total research process a piece of something? Were there any difficulties? The following section addresses limitations through out the research process of which some are already mentioned in discussion.

### **3.5. Limitations of the study**

During the days of proposal submission in Norway it did not appear difficult to design a research plan that could be followed through out my field work. But moving along with the plan back in Ethiopia was almost impossible for me. The reason is, as already mentioned, I happened to arrive at the most difficult family situation that I imagined I can be. Due to this problem I had much shorter time for my field work and my research plan was distorted. I was forced to abandon my plan of carrying out a focus group discussion and stick with in-depth interview. I also could not go to the planned depth of the research. I had a limited time for my field work so I had to come back to Norway leaving an unsettled family situation and an unfinished data gathering. But I was lucky enough to get a chance later in the year to go back to the field for additional data. I also had the chance to make phone calls to contact authorities for additional information. In addition to this the feeling of my being alone here as a migrant gave me the ability to understand the situation of the migrants I am studying. It made me understand the difficulties they go through being away from home.

The other limitation was that in-depth interview generates information that only respondents are willing to tell. And therefore, this research mainly depends on what the interviewees chose to tell. Some problems were faced in getting samples and the required information. This is because the migrants work as housemaids abroad and this is not a socially popular job in Ethiopia. There is a social stigma attached to it. Moreover the issue I was looking at was often a private matter. And therefore, some

migrants were not willing enough to participate and of those selected some were not so free to tell their stories. In addition to this most people migrate through illegal channels which again presented a restriction on the amount of information gathered.

But maximum effort was done to tackle these problems. As mentioned before the fact that most respondents were approached through someone they know and trust enabled me to get enough information. And most of the female migrants were almost my age and was not difficult to approach them friendly again to build their trust. I managed to get an offer to meet and chat after interview was over from a number of my interviewees.

Refusal of interviewees to be sound recorded is also worth mentioning as a limitation. In such cases the though brief notes were taken to the possible maximum efficiency, its efficiency is expected to be lesser than the recordings.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

Generally in this chapter I have tried to show the total research process starting from the sampling methods to data sources and collecting methods to the analysis.

Moreover I have tried to show the areas where I was advantageous and where I faced limitations due to different factors. I also explained the measures take to deal with the major limitations present throughout the research process.



## **Chapter four: Contextual Background**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In this section the background of the context of study is discussed. The discussion starts by giving insights to the physical geography of the country and continues by raising issues of the socio economic situation, demography, education and employment. I then discuss the position of women in relation to all the country specific conditions discussed here.

### **4.2. Geography of Ethiopia**

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a country located in the horn of Africa at 8° North, 38° East (Refer to figure 2). Ethiopia is a landlocked country surrounded by Eritrea in the north, Djibouti in the north east, Somalia in the east and south east, Kenya in the south and Sudan in the west. It has a total boundary length of 5,328 km and an area of approximately 1,127,127 sq km with a length of 1,639 km E–W and a width of 1,577 km N–S of which 7.444 sq km is water (CIA 2007).

The country is divided into nine ethnically based regions and the capital. Addis Ababa, the capital and largest city of the country is located near the centre of the total area of the country.

Ethiopia has a terrain of high plateau with central mountain range divided by Great Rift Valley and a number of rivers crossing the plateau. It has a tropical monsoon climate with wide topographic-induced variation which makes it unique among African countries. The temperature ranges from a maximum of 26° C to a minimum 4° C.



**Figure 2: Map of Ethiopia**

(Source: United Nations Development Programme, 2006)

### 4.3. Demography

According to CIA (2007) with an estimated population of 76,511,887 million, Ethiopia is the second largest country in sub-Saharan Africa. Of this number, 85 % are living in rural areas while only 15% goes for urban population (Zenebe 2006).

In addition to being on the top of the list with the total population, the population growth rate of Ethiopia, which is 2.8%, is among the highest in Africa (UNICEF 2005) with an average life expectancy of 48 years where life expectancy of women exceeds by 1.04%.

Looking at the age structure, the working age group in the country makes 53.8% of the total population where female population slightly exceeds that of the male population (CIA 2007).

The Ethiopian population is considerably diversified. There are more than 80 different ethnic groups within the country with Oromo taking the largest share, 40%, followed by Amhara and Tigre 32%, Sidamo 9%, Shankella 6%, Somali 6%, Afar 4%, Gurage 2%, and other making 1%. Adding to the diversity Ethiopia has eighty-four indigenous languages (CIA 2007).

Orthodox Christianity and Islam are the largest faiths in the country where each religion constitutes around 40 to 45 percent of the population (Zenebe 2006). Animist makes 12% of the population with other religions making 3%-8% (CIA 2007).

According to Zenebe (2006), although both Christianity and Islam are widely followed, orthodox Christianity has been the most dominant and historically old religion in Ethiopia. Following religious rules and rituals, is considered as appropriate and sometimes mandatory to fit into the social system. And therefore, the influence of orthodox Christianity is seen in the day to day activities of the people of Ethiopia. (Bahiru cited in Zenebe 2006). In relation to this, respect for tradition has been considered one of the dominant traits of Ethiopians. Talking about tradition, Ethiopia is also a country where harmful traditional practices still take place which often leaves women at a disadvantage (ibid).

#### **4.4. Socio-Economic Characteristics**

Agriculture is the main economic activity in the country, contributing to 52.3% of the GDP (WFP 2007). It accounts 60% of export in the country and is the main source of livelihood for more than 80 % of the total employment (CIA, WFP 2007). Other economic activities also depend on agriculture, including marketing, processing, and export of agricultural products.

More than half of the population in Ethiopia lives on less than 1\$ per day making the country one of the world's poorest (UNICEF 2005) which leaves 50% of the

population below poverty line. The country has been severely affected by chronic food insecurity and rural poverty through out the years (Zenebe 2006). Performance of growth in the urban sector shows better result than in the rural sector (Villanger 2006).

*Rapid population growth, political instability, economic mismanagement, and repeated natural disasters are all believed to be contributing factors in preventing Ethiopia's socio-economic development (Rachel cited in Zenebe 2006:32)*

According to Hellina (2006), Ethiopia ranks at the bottom of the gender development index and the inequality in gender affects the lives of women and girls in every aspects. The inequalities are seen in access to resources, entitlements and in the division of labour in the household. This has left women to be the poorest of the poor with fewer social, economic and constitutional rights (FAO cited in Hellina 2006). Women put up with an unequal share of the burden of poverty in the country. They happen to be responsible for all domestic chores (Lasone 2004).

In addition to this, harmful traditional practices related with women and children as mentioned above still have effect. These practices include early marriage, marriage by abduction, isolation during menstruation and delivery, not allowing pregnant women to eat nutritious food, and suturing the vagina after delivery are some (ibid).

This being the case mostly in rural areas, some changes are observed for women in urban areas, where education, health care, and employment outside the home have become more available (Lewis 2007). But in most cases, the high incidence of illiteracy among women makes it difficult for them to resist the harmful traditional practices and other inequalities mentioned above (Lasone 2004).

#### **4.5. Education**

According to CIA (2007) literacy defined as being able to read and write at the age 15 and over, 42.7% of the Ethiopian population is considered literate. Of this the female literate population makes 35.1% according to a 2003 estimate. The country also holds

one of the lowest primary education enrolment ratios (ibid). Added to this, Ethiopian primary education has high drop out and repetition rates (Lasonen 2004).

History of education in Ethiopia tells that the Orthodox Church and the mosque have played important parts in the formal education. But the involvement of girls in the educational system was secondary due to the fact that both institutions preferred educating boys over girls, and (Wilberg 2004).

Ethiopian schools fall short to act in response to educational needs of girls. They work with very limited facilities and so academic counselling and health clinics are not common. Moreover, female teachers are very few in number to serve as role models for girls. Only 3 out of 10 primary school teachers and hardly 1 out of 10 vocational teachers are women (Ministry of education cited on Lasonen 2004).

The fact that female students are under represented remains true at each level of formal education. But the gender disparities get bigger as one moves to higher education (ibid).

#### **4.6. Employment and occupation distribution**

As mentioned before, of the total labour force 80% is engaged in agriculture. This leaves 8% of the population in industry section and 12% in services (CIA 2007).

Considering the case of women, as mentioned elsewhere, women are responsible for all household chores. But few women with higher education have found professional employment in urban areas. Still most women are involved in low-paying jobs (Lewis 2007). Due to their lack of skills and training, for most Ethiopian women only the informal labour market is the only choice (Kebede N.D.)

According to Lewis (2007), about 40 percent of working women in urban areas work in the service sector, mainly in hotels, restaurants, and bars. 25% of the



female work force is engaged in production and related areas (such as textiles and food processing), this figure is followed by 11% that goes for sales.

*Overall, out of the available jobs in the professional and technical fields, only 13 percent of the posts go to women while 87 per cent of the posts go to men. In the “administrative and managerial” category, only 12 per cent of total posts are filled by women, while 87 per cent go to men (Kebede N.D.:2).*

#### **4.7. Migration in Ethiopia**

It is now estimated that one million Ethiopians live and work abroad (Ruphael 2004). The political disorder of 1970's is said to have significant effect on the migration history of the country. Migration increased following this period. Political and security concerns initiated many people into migrating to different parts of the world. But later economic reasons were more dominant motivations for emigration of many Ethiopians (IOM 2004).

Currently Ethiopia is first among African countries for losing its professional population. According to IOM (2004), about half of the Ethiopians who went overseas for training did not return home over the past 10-15 years. But through remittances and transfer of skills, the Ethiopian Diasporas contribute to their home countries (ibid). The total amount of remittance transferred unofficially, according to Ruphael (2004), from the Middle East, North America and Europe is estimated at 3.3 billion birr per annum. In addition to this the official remittances in the year 2002-2003 were estimated at about 1.07 billion birr (Ruphael 2004).

Though the migration of Ethiopian women to the Middle East is part of this global phenomenon, it stands exceptional in various ways. Sources indicate that migration to the Middle East is on the rise, especially among women. The number of people leaving for Lebanon has increased significantly (Kebede N.D.). It is estimated that more than 20,000 Ethiopians are working in Lebanon alone with an average monthly salary of 100\$.

## **Chapter five: Characteristics of migrants and the motivations behind migration**

### **5.1. Characteristics of migrants**

This chapter is about the study samples. In this chapter the characteristics of female migrant returnees in Ethiopia, who happened to participate in the study, are discussed. Of the characteristics of migrants only those characteristics that are considered to be important in responding to the research questions are included. The characteristics (background) of migrants can be seen from various perspectives which include geographical, educational, social, religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds. While discussing these backgrounds I will refer back to the theories and concepts discussed in Chapter 2.

#### **5.1.1. The women**

The data I gathered from the Ministry of Labour and Social affairs shows that female migrants from Ethiopia often are in their early 20s and single living with their family. But there are cases where women in the age of their 30s, married and even with children are seen migrating. Similar finding by Kebede (2002) shows that most migrant Ethiopian women are within the 20-30 age group. The migrant returnees interviewed are of similar background.

As mentioned in chapter two, most migrants originate from regions of the world that are relatively developed with more available connection with the outside world. A similar situation is observed in Ethiopia. Most migrants have their origin in Addis Ababa the capital of Ethiopia. And if not, often they happen to be from other smaller cities like Awasa, Bahir Dar, Diredawa, Dese, etc. The interviewees in this study are from Addis Ababa, the capital, and Bahir Dar located in north western Ethiopia approximately 578 km north-north west of Addis Ababa. But the fact stands clear that it is very rare that migrants come from the country side. "Except when the migrants happen to have connections in cities, country side women do not come here." Ato Girma, a legal agent, said.

Addis Ababa is the passing point to the Middle East. Anyone from anywhere in the country often passes through the capital due to various reasons which is often the concentration of facilities in the country. Some even find their time in Addis to be the most difficult part of the whole process and their journey. Aziza says it is very difficult to stay in Addis for the process unless you are from Addis, have a relative there or some one else close. She said it is very expensive and frustrating. According to Ato Kebede, a representative of MOLSA, this prior migration to the capital is mostly due to the fact that all the agents are concentrated in the capital and are totally not allowed to centre outside of the capital.

### **5.1.2. Educational background**

“I was ninth grade when I decided to migrate. I was just a freshman in high school.” Kedija. But there are also others who share a similar story. “My daughter decided to go to the Middle East after she stayed out of school for three years. She stopped school when she reached ninth grade. She could not resist seeing her family going through the entire problem that comes with poverty.” a mother of a migrant, Yetnayet, says.

Though there are cases like this where migrants stop school at earlier grades what mostly happens is migrants happen to come from the group of youngsters who finish high school and fail to get to the university level, which is a normal usual trend in the country. Only about 10-15% of those who complete high school education are admitted to higher education each year (Wondimu 2003). Most of the informants I met were high school graduates referred as ‘twelve complete’ in the country. As mentioned in Chapter 1, significant number of migrants have high school education.

But it is also possible to find people who managed to have a diploma from a college and still going to the Middle East to involve in house work. The story of Aberash, who used to be an elementary school teacher, can be a good example.

But the fact that the migrants did not pursue further education is often seen to have its own effect in their life after migration (return) this will be well treated in future

sections as opposed to the fact that, according to a research finding in Kuwait, most domestic workers have high school or above qualifications.

### **5.1.3. Social, Religious and Cultural Background**

As mentioned in chapter two, religious and cultural similarity or dissimilarity can be considered as institutional and structural factor constraining or enabling migration.

Considering the religion of female migrants to the Middle East, though the receiving countries are Muslim countries, the female labour migrants from Ethiopia are from various religious backgrounds. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the main religions that prevail in Ethiopia are the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Islam.

The migrants I happened to interview were from the two major religions. Though people from both religions migrate, the Muslim migrants have additional advantages. The first advantage is that because of the fact that the destination countries are Muslim countries, employers often prefer Muslim workers. As will be discussed in detail in the next section, Muslim migrants also have the advantage of using religious migration to stay and work in the Middle East. A similar finding in Sri Lanka shows that for Muslims and those who speak Arabic, it is possible to move to the Middle East with a minimum cost (Brun 2005).

Moreover there are other important advantage like minimum degree of religious cultural difference including their eating habits, choice of food, possibility of addressing religious rituals, (going to church ,fasting, etc. which is also common in orthodox but not possible to pursue) and dressing style which is often long dresses with the head covered, etc. (Refer to figure 3).

It is mostly a requirement that migrants should have their hair covered when they take picture for the application despite the religion of the migrant. And there are also times when Christian migrants are forced to change their Christian names to a Muslim name in order to increase their chances of being employed.

The fact that in the Orthodox religion there are consequent fasting times and various food specifications makes it difficult for Orthodox Christians. Whereas for Muslim migrants it presents a good experience to be able to exercise their religion in the area of origin of the religion.



**Figure 3: A woman dressed with long dress and the head covered**  
(Source: Author, fieldwork)

As to their roles, migrants have various contributions in the family though the degree and type might differ. But from the interview it was not difficult to see that this way or the other migrants were not satisfied with the contribution they made in the household and or the role they had. This is in most cases related to their employment situation and the income they had. But in other case it is possible to find migrants who are not satisfied because of the power relation they were in the household.

Fanta had a good job and was part of economically well to do family but under the strong rule of her husband. And Phosia says “My dad was very serious man and I was

not allowed to go out and do whatever I wish to do. I was so much tired of being treated like a prisoner. I had everything but was not free.” In Ethiopia, it is not rare to find families where girls are made to follow various rules that deprive them of their freedom.

Almost all female migrants interviewed had a role of helping with the house work in the family. And sometimes they carry the whole burden of the house work. Aziza tells her story saying “I am the eldest child in our family so I took care of almost all the house work. My brother and sister they were not old enough to help me.”

Besides their contribution in the house work, some migrants used to work and bring money home for the household even before migration. As will be discussed in the economic section, migrants are mostly involved in a not well paid job due to lack of education and skills but still manage to contribute to a certain extent. Other women took care of family business like Phosia, spent most of the time running the shop her family owns.

In other cases migrants happen to be one of the major contributors for the sustenance of the family. Fanta, who is a mother two girls, contributed much to the household before migration.

In addition to their role in the family, migrants also contribute in the outside society. They participate in school in different activities. Aziza was active in gymnastic club and she used to participate in theatre. She said she liked being involved in various social activities.

In talking about the social background of the migrants, looking at the neighbourhood they lived in will be important.

The neighbourhood where Aziza lived, and still lives in Bahir Dar, is called ‘kebele one’ also called ‘Beg Tera’ that means market place for sheep. It took its name from its history for being a market place. It is a crowded part of the city and is one of the town’s poorer neighbourhoods (Refer to figure 4). The residential houses in the neighbourhood are often government owned. People happen to know about their

neighbours very well because of the setting of the houses: They often share a compound with each other. In such a neighbourhood, the Ethiopian culture of drinking coffee together with the neighbours is experienced to a great extent.



**Figure 4: Government owned houses in a below average income neighbourhood**

(Source: Author, fieldwork)

And so as Aziza speaks of her childhood she says “When I was a kid I liked to have fun. I liked going to the river side and to the countryside I used to go swimming in Lake Tana. More fancy things did not impress me much. Rather I enjoyed a lot ‘the drinking coffee with neighbours’ culture”. ‘Drinking coffee with neighbours’ is a culture carried by such neighbourhoods all over the country. It’s normally housewives who are involved in the ceremony. Girls are responsible in making coffee and arranging the whole ceremony at home. When they are young they go to the neighbour’s house following their mother’s dress. Light food is served with the coffee

and that works for younger ones. But girls around the age of sixteen and above may fully participate in the ceremony. Finishing high school and not being able to join college, many girls in such neighbourhoods are engaged with such a culture.

The interviewees from Bahir Dar are all in the same neighbourhood and almost all share similar 'drinking coffee with the neighbours' culture in the neighbourhood. There is a great attachment between residents in the given area. Almost every social activity is taken care of with the neighbours. "Happy times, sad times and everything, we share it together" says Kedija. Phosia though she and her family live in their own house, the location of the house is not very far from the government owned houses that are mentioned above. And therefore she says it is possible for her to share similar activities if it was not for her father's unwillingness to let her out in the open world of sharing.

In Addis Ababa again more of the interviewees happened to be from a similar neighbourhood and similarly government owned houses. Though I used different snowballs for selecting the participants; still most of my interviewees happened to fall in this category of neighbourhoods. The reason is these are neighbourhoods are dwelling places for economically below average households. But again it follows the income level and was possible to get others in a quiet residential area where people have their own houses and boundaries and the social activity is quite different and at the lowest level.

#### **5.1.4. Economic background: Employment and income**

"I was working before I went to the Middle East, so I had a job. But the money I get from was not satisfying at all. So I decided why not try something else" said Alem. Often the migrants try to check the available means in town before they make the decision to migrate. They compare the advantages they could get and that often determine their decision to migrate as the writers of push – pull theory put it, workers migrate to where they can get most productive (see Chapter 2).

As mentioned above there are cases where migrants go straight out of school and sometimes even without completing. But in most cases migrants had a prior job at



home which often does not pay well. Meron used to work in a cafe after she graduated from high school. “I used to get between 8 and 9\$ per month and that was enough for nothing”.

Often migrants happen to be member of a family where the supporting member of the family gets very low income or there is no main income at all.

Yetinayet, a mother of six girls and two boys, she claims she supports the whole family by the money she gets from the fathers of the children and also her brothers. She says the money she gets is never enough for the household. And she has never succeeded in giving the children whatever their requirement is. When she speaks about her daughter who is in the Middle East now, she says “I had a very hard working daughter. She used to help the family by working in a café and also a bakery for sometime after she stopped school in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. But she could not get a job that pays better.”

Tsehay who now has her two daughters in the Middle East said “I used to support my family by selling ‘Tela’”, known traditional Ethiopian alcoholic drink. “But my daughters too, they used to work as a day labourer sometimes, sometimes in bakery, anything they get they used to try to help the family.”

But in other cases though migrants do not have their own income they happen to be from a well to do family where the supporting members of the family have a better paying job or manages to disperse the income sources into different directions where remittances might be one of the major sources.

Selam did not get any job after she completed school. But she said “I had no money problem. My uncle is in Canada and I have also other relatives out of Ethiopia who send me money that can keep me going.” Selam’s elder sister, Tigist, was in the Middle East by the time Selam decided to go there and work. The sisters agree that the money Tigist, was sending together with their income from other relatives was enough for the whole household. Selam’s relatives abroad were preparing the road for her to go out to the west and work when Selam made the decision to migrate. She says her decision was a surprise for both the household and the distant families.

Phosia is from a well to do family whose source of income is pension and a shop of their own. She proudly tells that her father is a hard worker and that her family does not expect anything from her.

Almost all the migrants and their families I interviewed presented the lack of enough income as their reason for migration. But is it really the very poor that migrate? Ato Abebe, a private employment agent, thinks it is not the very poor that migrates. He said “though we don’t take money from migrants and there is equal opportunity for all, the poor are not aware of the chance they got. They don’t have access to information.” This will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

## **5.2. Motivations behind Migration**

In responding to the question what produces migration, migrant motivation and facilitating factors and decision making process are important things to consider (CDR 2002). In this section the economic situation, freedom and control of power are motivations behind migration treated as the main three.

### **5.2.1. Economic motivations**

Though the data shows different economic levels of households, most interviewees present economic reasons for migration. As various writers have concluded, major causes of migration are economic (see Chapter 2). The below average economic status of the people of Ethiopia, as opposed to the economic status of the people in the Middle East can be seen as presenting the necessary differentials between the country of origin and destination preparing the economic motivations for migration.

Most migrants present financial problem before migration. And most migrants have a similar economic background. As already seen in the previous section, most have enough money only for daily food for the family and very few happen to have their own house and income more than 150 ETB which is 17\$ per month. In such families one member of the family mostly, in this case, mothers are seen to be supporting the household by doing different activities like selling ‘Tela’ or by being involved in ‘Gulit Nigd’ which is a small scale marketing of vegetables’ (Refer to figure 5).



**Figure 5: Women selling vegetables**  
**(Source: Author, fieldwork)**

A mother of a migrant, Zinash, said “We are 10 in the family, though right now my two daughters are in the Middle East. I used to sell ‘Tela’ to support the whole family. Their father is not around to help me. Whatever I get I use it in the house. But my daughters who are now in the Middle East used to help me with the preparation of ‘Tela’ and sometimes they used to work as daily labourers.” Total income of this family happens to be 35\$ on the average. The mother continues by saying that “we do not have our own house. We are renting this house that you see from the municipality. We did not even have electricity at home.”

Their economic status has surely been a motivation for considerable number of migrants. Most interviewees certainly had an economic push. Though it is not possible to say they are part of poorest people in the country they certainly had financial problems. Though they presented serious economic problems they still happen to be better off than the poorest people of Ethiopia. The poorest as mentioned

before are not in a position to make the initial investments and moreover do not have access to the information.

It is, however, again not possible to conclude that these economic differentials remain to be the only reasons for migration. I was able to interview returnees of above average economic background before migration (refer Section 5.1.) and therefore the data shows that migrants with better economic status also decide to migrate to the Middle East.

Fanta is now working in the Middle East. She used to be part of a well to do family. Both her husband and she were employed. They send their daughters to Nazareth School, which is an expensive girls' school in Addis Ababa. They have their own fully furnished house and also own a car, which can be taken as an expression of their economic condition. One of her daughters has now graduated and is employed. Phosia is also from a well to do family who owns a pension and also a shop

Such migrants presented other motivations for migration which will be discussed in detail in the next section.

### **5.2.2. Individual freedom and power**

Gamburd (2002) has clearly shown that there are other important motivations for migration that are often covered by economic reasons. In this discussion, the role of the migrant in the household and the power they exercise, are found to be important issues to consider as causes for migration.

Almost all the interviewees are found to be unemployed. These migrants are mostly helping at home and are usually supported by other members of the family. Aziza says “my mother supports the family. I tried very hard to get a job but it was not possible. So I always helped at home.”

The data also shows that some migrants though they have someone to support them and cover their economical needs they still want something of their own. They want the power over the money and they want an extended role in the family.

As I already mentioned in chapter two, there are times when migrants celebrate their independent life abroad. And there are also times when migration occurs because a migrant is wishing to escape family responsibilities. Phosia is from a well to do family. She expresses her role by saying “I used to help at home but mostly I worked at my father’s shop. I spent most of my time helping my family and I was not involved in social activities. I did not have so much freedom at home. My family was hard on me and this pushed me a little. Though my dad works hard and provides me with everything I needed something of my own. I wanted to change my own life.”

Senait has a similar story. “My husband is a civil servant and he supports me and my daughter. But now I’m getting tired of looking at his hand for money. And so I’m going back. I’m going to make my own money.”

### **5.2.3. Decision making and mediators**

I have tried to show in Chapter 2 that, although migrants make decisions on their own, decisions are often influenced by mediators and structures. Various institutional and structural factors shape the decision of women to migrate. But the actual decision takes place at levels ranging within the household. According to the data collected migrants tend to make decision to migrate in four major ways:

- decision is made by the individual migrant and the household in general

Households happen to have great role in making decision over migration. Many households make the decision in agreement with the migrant. “We talked about it together and we also made the decision together.” says Meron, a migrant to the Middle East.

It is again important to mention the discussion in Chapter 2 where migrants use resources they entertain in the ties with others like social capital. It is a meso level discussion where migration decision is considered as a group decision.

- Decision by individual migrant themselves despite the disagreement of the household in general

In other cases decisions are made without the agreement of the household, where migrants refuse to consider the idea of the members of the household, or totally without the know how of the household members. This kind of decision making subscribes to the micro level of analysis where the focus totally rests on the decision making individual (refer Chapter 2).

A migrant said “My family tried hard to make me stay. They were totally against it. But I refused and I went on my own decision”. Another mother of a migrant said “I did not support her going but she refused to listen. She said she will take her chances go work and bring money to the family”. Migrants face various limitations in their decision to migrate. But as discussed in the theory of structuration, migrants continuously challenge, resist and change the functioning of the system.

- Decision made by the household despite the disagreement of the individual migrant.

Some households look at the other families and force their daughter to go and work in the Middle East. Almaz is a good example of such a decision. After she graduated in high school she used to learn martial art. She even went through seven levels and she had a plan to be a trainer. But she said her family were tempted to force her into going by looking at change in other families. “‘what you are doing does not bring any money’ they said and forced me to go.” As shown in the new economics of migration (Chapter 2), a meso level analysis, migration decisions totally rest on the consent of the household. What is important here is whether the act of migration serves the interest of the household as a whole.

- Decision by the individual migrant but with encouragement from the household

Yet some households influence the decision of the migrant in different ways though they leave the decision to the migrant. This category subscribes to the thought of structuration theory where migration decision is considered as an individual choice though that it might be made by consulting members of the household.

‘At the time of my migration, migration to the Middle East was a new issue and was considered as good. So everyone was encouraging me to go. My family has influenced me but didn’t force me to go. It actually was my decision.’

‘Yes we kind of pushed her into going’ says a mother of a migrant. ‘There is nothing here for her, no employment. But she also agreed to go looking at the poverty in our family.’

The decision to select a route is often made together with the family but some households let the decision to the migrant herself. The decision to choose a channel does not always go with the decision to migrate. Some households make the decision to migrate together but choosing the channel might be left only to the migrant herself. But often when the household participates in deciding whether the migrant should migrate or not, then the decision of choosing a channel is also shared within the household.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

Migration process must be understood in accordance to the structural and individual factors initiating migration. People decide to migrate for individual and structural reasons. As discussed in chapter 2, in the discussion of structuration theory, structures social norms and values restrict behaviour and create possibilities for people’s actions but people also question and challenge what the structures have presented them with.

## **Chapter six: The process of migration to the Middle East**

This section explains about the various ways of reaching the Middle East and also the general process one has to go through to reach the Middle East.

There are two main routes to the Middle East. These are the legal and the illegal routes and trafficking. Legal migration is the one controlled by law while the illegal migration is against the law. Legal agents are those that got recognition from the government, pay tax and fulfil all the requirements set by the proclamation. In case of the illegal agents they do not have any recognition by the government.

Though many documents still show that there are no legal provisions against trafficking, I was able to find out that the government has made efforts to stop trafficking and right now there actually exist various legal agents in the country that legally carry out the migration process.

This being the case, there still are illegal agents available in the country and abroad who practice illegal migration.

The first decision one has to make while thinking of going to the Middle East is deciding which of the routes to take. The decision might not be made by the migrant alone, and differ from situation to situation as will be discussed below. Each route has its own advantages and disadvantages that can put a migrant in a dilemma of which to choose. But at the end some reasons happen to overweigh and so all migrants take one of the two. The different groups of agents also make arrangements to attract migrants and in so doing facilitate the process of migration and can be considered as structural facilitators as shown in Chapter 2. The requirements also differ when using the different channels of migration. Later in this section it will be clear to see that there are specific ways that happen to have features of legal migration but when taking a closer look, are illegal.



## **6.1. Illegal means of migration**

“The agent I used was an illegal one. He is just a broker. I paid him 850\$ and he arranged everything’ says Meaza who chose to take the illegal channel to go to the Middle East. Meaza that she could not find a legal agent that works on Dubai cases at the time she decided to go.

Illegal migration has been popular means of migration in Ethiopia since the start of labour migration to the Middle East. According to MOLSA, this might date back to 30 years of though the rate of migration has been changing so much since then.

In the case of illegal migration the migrant is believed to be disadvantageous and mostly this channel is not recommended. This is because a migrant has to own around 850 to 1000\$ for the agent either before migration or after migration which is deducted from her salary. She is also under the full control of the employer and still will be paying back her debt whether the migrant finds the working condition suitable or not. She is not allowed to change work places until her contract is over. In addition to this there is no body to check on the safety of the migrant worker and according to the MOLSA almost all abuse reports come from the illegal migrants. The situation of the migrant at the work place will be discussed in detail in future sections.

There are various means of illegal migration and the process might differ from one to the other. But what is mostly common is after the agent manages to get a visa for the migrant; the migrant goes to the country of destination and either goes to the collaborating agent abroad or stays in confined room in the terminal. Selam says “it is the lucky ones that go to the agent’s office. In the agent’s office, all we have to do is stand in line and smile. Employers come and if you are lucky you get chosen.” But as to Selam, the worst condition is the one she faced when she went on her second trip. When migrants reach the country of destination the chances of being held in a confined room in the terminal is really high. Selam was held there until her document was viewed and she got an employer. The employer must be there, show the necessary papers and take the migrant worker as her or his responsibility or else it is not possible for the migrant to go out on her own. Therefore the length of stay is dependent again on the chances of the migrant to be selected by a possible employer.

Selam stayed for 15 days in the same room. The room is in the airport terminal and therefore there is only electric light and is not possible to see the sun light at all. It could be around 50 women who stay in the room at the same time waiting for someone to come and get them. Selam says she was thinking of killing herself when she stayed there without basic provisions for three weeks. She said “no one served us food or anything. We used to eat whatever we had with us when we depart from home. Or we ask and beg others who have money to buy us something to eat. I remember that there was another room next to ours where migrant guys used to stay and there was an opening of hand size in between through where we send our hands to beg for some food and drinks. We even used straw and took some sip from their drinks. The guys had some money with them so they were better off.” She said she was not aware enough of the situation that she did not have enough money with her. “The most intense time was when the people came with list of names of selected people and when you are not in the list” she said.

And therefore illegal agents and illegal migration are counted as challenges in the migration process. As to the ministry of social affairs, there is a task force that is organized against illegal migration. But still the number of illegal migration exceeds the total number of legal migration.

People tend to choose the illegal channel for various reasons. One great advantage that attracts migrants to use illegal means of migration is that the total time that a migrant has to stay in Ethiopia after application is much shorter. Illegal migrants do not arrange jobs before migration and the visa is arranged and sent by an agent that resides in the Middle East. Therefore the migrant does not have to wait in Ethiopia until employment is arranged. In addition to this the employers do not have to pay for tickets and for visa because the agents get the money from the migrant herself. And so employers tend to prefer workers through illegal migration channels than the legal ones and this makes the time difference a lot greater.

## **6.2. Legal means of migration**

Though legal migration itself is not a recent phenomenon, it is no so long since additional efforts are put to combat trafficking. As mentioned above the government

of Ethiopia believes that people migrating through illegal channels are viable to many hardships and abuses and together with ILO the government of Ethiopia is right now trying hard to make all migrations through legal channel and completely do away with the illegal migration. There is a task force which is set up for the purpose of fighting trafficking. It is chaired by the Ministry of Justice and it is done in collaboration with the police, MOLSA, media and IOM.

In order to succeed with this aim the government has set up various private legal agents whose steps are controlled by a governmental organization, MOLSA.

MOLSA is the place where all the labour related affairs are carried out. If one is a foreigner wanting to work in Ethiopia or Ethiopian wanting to work abroad then everything goes through this bureau. The organisation is responsible to control all the steps of a legal migration. It starts from giving licence to the agents of migration.

### **6.2.1. Types of legal routes**

According to Ato Kebede there are two ways of legal migration. The first one is through a legal agent and the second is through one's own connections in the Middle East. In both cases the role of the organisation is checking the legality of the migration, and giving an approval to the migration. In the first case, the organization gives the licence to the agent and that is when the legality is confirmed. Therefore in this case the migrant applies to the agent and the organization makes sure that all the legal ways are being followed. But in the case of migration through one's own connection, where family members or friends find a job for a would-be migrant, the organisation makes contact with the migrant herself. It makes sure that the migrant get a job in the Middle East and checks the availability of all important documents for migration.

In both cases the organization later follows up on the safety and well being of the migrant and also with the help of ILO gives important pre migration information to migrants. In addition it also provides the would-be migrants with the list of all legal agents and their addresses.

The most common way of legal migration is the one carried through a legal agent. It is only few individuals who happen to have a connection in the Middle East. Even when people have connections, the migrants in the Middle East, referred to as potential connections are not secure enough for themselves, leave alone to find jobs for a relative or a friend back home. And therefore many people take the first way to migrate to the Middle East.

### **6.2.2. Legal agents and migration**

Most legal agents used to live in the Middle East for some time for various reasons that have resulted in a secure connection to find jobs for labour migrants. Most of them again are Muslims. These agents are legal under the law and they have a licence from the ministry of social affairs. There are certain requirements that they should fulfil to gain the licence. And there are also rules and regulations that they should follow as a legal agent and if they do not it is possible that they will lose their licence.

To be a legal agent one should show a certain amount of money in the bank. The amount of money to be deposited depends on the number of migrants that an agent plans to send. An agent who plans to send less than 500 people is supposed to deposit 3,500\$. If the agent plans to send up to 1000 people then he or she has to deposit 4,500\$. When the number of people exceeds 1000 then the deposit grows to 5,600\$. In addition to this the agent has to be registered and should be able to provide bureau facilities. The agents also need to check their finger prints to make sure that they have not been involved in any illegal activities earlier.

I was surprised to find out that a legal agent is not allowed to take money from a migrant because all the stories we use to hear were about how much money one pays when migrating to the Middle East. I was forced to ask, what is in it for a legal agent? Are they serving for free? Is it some kind of charity work? But then I found out that they get commission per each migrant from the agents abroad.

The agents back home and the agents abroad process the employment of the migrant in collaboration. They use various means of communication; mail, e-mail, telephone, fax or even through travellers.

If a legal agent is found taking money from a migrant then he or she will lose the licence. But I was able to find out that legal agents might be taking money from migrants underground though I did not get any legal agent who confirmed that he or she takes money. Consequently, the application of the legal provision may not be very effective after all. As will be mentioned in the next chapter, there are migrants who are made to pay by the agents that work with the name of legal agents. But the way the payment is made might be different in a way that the migrants might be obliged to pay after migration from their salary.

Another important point to consider is that a legal agent is supposed to take a follow up report on every migrant who went through its organisation. This is done to combat abuse of female migrant in the Middle East. According to MOLSA, this reporting system is not strong yet. “Though the agents have the obligation to send reports, some of them do not do that unless we continuously require them to do so. Agents have the obligation to report anytime we require them to. There is also a circular which requires the agent to report every 15 days. But things are not going according to the plan and the proclamation. It’s not practical yet” Ato Kebede said. The report includes the name and age of the migrant, the kind of job she is doing and usually includes the situation of the migrant. But the last one is included only when MOLSA asks them to do it. An example of a report sheet from a legal employment agency is included (Refer figure 6).



The main task of a legal agent is finding a job for an applicant and taking care of all the processes and at the end sending her to the country of work. But as mentioned above there are related responsibilities like doing follow ups on the migrant that a legal agent has to subscribe to (Refer figure 7).

Ato Mohammed, the manager and owner of a legal employment agency, summarizes the process of migration in short. “We first tell a migrant about the legality of our organisation and then what she needs to fulfil and where we will be sending her. So we collect all the information and send it to the agent that is based in the country of migration. If the applicant is selected, the employer and the agent abroad prepare her visa and air ticket. Then the Ethiopian embassy confirms if all the information is there and sends it to us. Then we pass it to the migrant”. According to Ato Mohammed the whole process takes two to three months on the average.

In a migration through a legal agent one has to first get a passport before registering at the agency. Then the agency takes the total information about the applicant in a formally prepared form. The information includes the educational and professional background of the applicant together with other background information. And the applicant need to bring in two pictures one showing the full length of the applicant and the other showing head and shoulder of the applicant. The applicant also needs to do a full medical check up to be liable for migration.

All the information is sent to the agent abroad and the biography and the pictures are kept in an album from which possible employers select. The time it takes after the information reaches the agent abroad depends on the chance of being selected. According to Ato Girma, a legal agent, it might take 15 days to six months but there are still cases where applicants might not get selected at all.

The process of getting a passport is not that difficult to handle. One gets a visa for three months at the first application. After the migrant entered the country of destination an extension of a visa up to two years is given.

1. To contact employers who are willing to take employees of different qualifications from Ethiopia at the terms and conditions to agreed upon.
2. To receive employees who are going to be sent to SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC and at their arrival and contract them with their respective employers.
3. To make sure that the employees are well received by their employers are to see it that they are given the employee against the employer.
4. To let the principal known of any complaints of the employer made against the Employee or that made the employee against employer.
5. To negotiate between the employer and employee to settle any of the disputes amicably
6. To make sure that employee's rights during work, leave, sickness and dispute are respected and in case or violation of rights in form such to the appropriate authorities concerned in the country to the Ethiopian Representative of Embassy and to the principal.
7. To make sure that the employers has the necessary work permit by the help of the employer.
8. To assist the employee in remitting his/her salary Ethiopia.
9. To inform the principal of any intentions of termination or renewal of contracts of employments due to various reasons and to facilitate their completion according to the terms and conditions of Contract of employment.
10. Generally to act as attorney of the principal in the said territory and without limitation of any of the forgoing powers to do cause to be done all things necessary or desirable in the interests of the Principal.
11. To assist the employees at the time of termination of a contract of employment to provide the worker free of charge with a certificate stating the type of works he performed, the length of the service, and the wage he was earning.
12. Inform to register the employee's names to the nearest Ethiopia embassy when the employees Arrive a country of employment.
13. If the employer violates this contract of employment the two parties has agreed to hold responsible jointly and severally.

And it is Hereby Declared that the said Attorney or of any substitute appointed by him performed on my behalf between the time of the revocation of other

- Communicated to the said Attorney of his substitute

Principal

*Tafesa Tadesse*



**Figure 7: Responsibilities of a legal private employment agent**  
**(Source: legal private employment agent, fieldwork)**



A person using a legal agent needs only 25\$ for medical check up, 22\$for aviation fee and 38\$ for passport, other personal expenses are not included.

There are certain advantages attached to a legal migration. Just to mention some:

- It is a lot cheaper means of migration because migrants are not expected to pay any money except for their own expenses.
- It is safer in a way that there are continuous follow ups done by the agency and also in a way that the total information of the employer is recorded and in case of bad incidents it is easy to check back.
- A legal migrant is free to apply for the agency for a change of work place in case of uncomfortable situation and is not forced to finish her contract.

### **6.3. Religious pretext**

Muslim migrants have the advantage of using religious pretext for migrating to the Middle East. Though the process of getting visa is legal, in a way the migration is illegal in that the religious pretext is used just for migration and so the migrant will not be coming back to Ethiopia after the religious ritual is over.

There are two main ceremonies that are mostly used by migrants. These are the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to mecca. These religious migration does not have so much requirements as long as the applicant has enough religious knowledge, wich is measured by the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Bureau, and if she is able to pay for all the expences including transport and living expenses abroad.

But when it comes to a female applicant, for religious migration, it is in the law of the religion that females are not allowed to migrate alone. A female migrant needs to be accompanied by her father, brother or husband or anyone whom she will not possibly marry in the future.

Hajj is a major and compulsory pilgrimage while Umrah is a minor and recommended one. The Hajji ritual is also for a longer period of time than the Umrah

ritual. There are cases where religious migrants go for both rituals at ones. Though there is a gap of around two months in between the two rituals, some people still chose to stay and do away with both rituals at the same time.

According to Ato Mohammed, most Hajj migrants are aged people though there is no age limit in the migration. But in the case of the Umrah ritual most migrants are young and mostly with a second purpose of migration which is to stay and work in the Middle East.

The Muslim migrants I happened to interview all used the religious pretext for going to the Middle East to work. Aziza says “I used legal means of migration to the middle east but I also used Hajji and Umrah as a pretext. I had to borrow 1000\$ both for me and my partner.” Such labour migrants are responsible to find a job by themselves after their arrival in the place of destination. If they have a connection in advance it will be a lot easier for them to get a job.

Migrants using a religious pretext are illegal and stay in hiding by renting a room often from other legal Ethiopians. They live together with other migrants in the same situation and if found can be deported or imprisoned immediately without being given a chance to take what they earned with them. In other cases a legal resident can take them as an employee and arrange a residence permit for them. But in such cases the migrant will be totally owned by the specific employer for as long as they want to keep their residence permit. In case of disagreements the employer has a right to refuse to give the permit and the migrant is illegal again.

Migrants in such illegal positions do not always work. They work for a while and rent a place with others spend their money and again go to find another job. It goes on like that. And at the end they probably do not make so much money.

## **6.4. Conclusion**

The different routes; legal, illegal and religious are seen facilitating migration in various ways. The advantages and disadvantages embedded in each steps in the process in all the channels shape the behaviour of the migrants. It affects the decisions

and actions of migrants. But as mentioned in Chapter 2, the women also resist the different rules and conditions and find ways to do away with the obstacles that stand in the way of their success.

## **Chapter Seven: Consequence of Migration**

While making a decision to migrate, migrants often have a goal they desire to meet in the future through migration. Sometimes migration leads to the meeting of expectation or goal or even more and it all ends up with a success story. But in some situations migrants fail to meet their expectations and possibly face undesired consequences which affect their life in a negative way.

Labour migration to the Middle East is seen as bringing positive consequence to the life of migrants and their families in Ethiopia though success stories are often not told about. And much concentration is given on the negative consequences which often come with bad stories telling the damage done on the migrant and creating a bad picture on the labour migration to the Middle East. But as discussed in chapter two, migration may have both positive and negative impacts on the country of origin. Consequences can be seen from various perspectives. A migrant can be affected in a various ways by migrating to the Middle East both positively and negatively.

We have seen migrants in dilemma of which route to take to maximize their advantage, but does the consequence differ on the different types of migrants? Often the route a migrant chooses to take results in different situations in the Middle East which in the extreme case might claim the life of the migrant. And the situation of the migrant might have effect on the propensity to remit. Legal migrants are in a position to start sending money starting from their first salary while illegal migrants have to pay for their debt first. In the case of religious migrants, the flow of remittance can vary with the unstable situation of the migrant which has been discussed in the previous chapter. Despite the above mentioned disparities, most of the consequences of migration are common to all types of migrants.

In this chapter I will discuss the most visible consequences labour migration has on the migrants, the household and the society in general as came out of the interview with migrant returnees and their family.

## **7.1. Use of Remittance and Livelihood Security**

Almost all migrants I interviewed send money home to their families. Meron says she used to send half of the money she got home to her family every five months.

The amount of money that migrants are paid varies from 80 to 150\$ in most cases. Meron used to get 100\$ as many other migrants. 100\$ is the starting amount of salary for many migrants though there are others who are paid a little more or a little less. Kebebush says her sister sends money home every year. “She sends 500-600\$ each year together and it is distributed to all of us in the family. Each of us get 100\$ per year.’ Meaza used to get 100\$ when she first got the job. But she says ‘my salary was later increased to 150\$.” Meaza got the job through a friend but the employer paid for all her ticket in an agreement that she would work for a lesser salary when she got there. And therefore Meaza worked for 100\$ per month for two years and forty five days till she pays off her ticket and her salary was increased to 150\$. “I started sending money after I finished my debt.” Meaza says. “I used to send money each year. And I often sent 600 to 1000\$.”

Some illegal or those who call themselves legal but are actually illegal agree to take migrants for free but they would arrange lesser salary in order to make the migrant pay back for her expenses. But after some months the migrant can have increased salary, after she paid of her debt. In some conditions the agents let the migrants know of this arrangement before hand as in the case of Meaza.

Here Meaza made it clear that she was supposed to pay for her ticket. According to the rules of legal migration, the employer is supposed to provide a ticket for the migrant. And the tickets are supposed to be free of charge for the migrant. But it often happens that the employer or the agent manages to make the migrant pay for her ticket. There are cases especially in the illegal migration where migrants do not get paid until they are done paying with their ticket. And in some case the migrants happen to borrow money from the agents or some outsider that still they are forced to pay their debt first before they get their hands on their money, use it or send to their family. But this way or the other migrants manage to send some amount of money to their family back home.

The amount of money and the interval within which migrants send money home, as mentioned above depends on different factors and differs from migrant to migrant. Back in Chapter 2, I have also pointed out that the benefits of remittance are selective. It is now clear that migrants are from various backgrounds. Migrants have different goals and plans that they aim to meet when they migrate. And often these plans and aims shaped their decision to migrate. The amount and interval of money that a migrant sends is affected by the background of the migrant and the economic level of the household the migrants remit to and especially the use of remittance. It is also affected by the goal and plan of the migrant and what they need the money to be used for.

Migrants might have their own plan and goal or aim for the money to be used, but not all migrants happen to meet their goal and not many migrants happen to find the money they send home being used to whatever purpose they dreamed of.

As mentioned before, there is one fact I happen to see from the various migrants I talked to. The fact is most of the migrants are from poor families. The economic background of the migrants and their household matters a lot in determining the way the remittance is used. Senait talks about how the money she was sending did not apply for what she aimed for. She says “when you send money to poor family, things do not happen the way you plan them. Poor families just spend the money on the day to day activities. My brother was responsible to receive the money I used to send. But he spent it all.” Gamburd (2002) in her study of Sri Lankan migrants to the Middle East, finds that migrants spend the majority of their remittance on consumption instead of investing in productive resources or commerce and in cases where families depend on remittances for daily consumption, little or nothing remained of the migrant’ wage except for what is invested on purchased goods.

In the economically poor households remittances that find their way to the household are often used for day to day expenses that the household needs to pay for. This might include payment for the provision of basic necessities like food, clothing for all the family members, school payments and payment for other school facilities like uniforms. It is not uncommon to find migrants sending money to finance their

siblings' studies at different levels. Yetinayet sent her daughter by borrowing money but after her daughter paid off her debt she started sending money. 'My daughter sends us money once in a while and we spend it. But we also use it to finance the study of her younger sisters' Yetinayet says. Poor families also spend the money to get additional facilities like telephone lines and phones, television, electricity, water supply and furniture, also to pay bills for the various facilities. But some even could use it for renewing the status of the house like the wall, painting and redoing it with better material like cement in the outside and the floor also often with cement or plastics. Doors and windows are often changed to metallic doors which are in most cases considered more classic (Refer figure 8).



**Figure 8: A typical returnee's house**  
(Source: Author, fieldwork)

Tsehay says she uses the money her daughter sends her to buy ' (read as Teff)' (staple crop in Ethiopia). But she is happy she succeeded in getting a telephone, in buying Television. "But the rest of it I don't know where it goes. I bought cloths and shoes for the kids. I am just spending it till now" Tsehay. I was also able to find out that Zinash has stopped making 'Tela' now that she can use the remittance money her

daughters send her. According to Gamburd's finding in Sri Lanka, many families turned to migration as main source of income.

And therefore money sent to the economically unstable households finds its way out through different minor expenditures and is often difficult to see a significant change. The use of the remittance money is all in all unproductive. And due to this unproductive consumption, after all the trouble a migrant goes through in the Middle East, when she comes back home she might end up getting nothing.

But for those migrants from a well to do family the money they earn from migration are often used for the planned purpose. As in the case of Phosia, she said "my father works real hard so my family does not expect money from me. Therefore the money I sent was saved for me."

Quite a number of migrants have informed me that they expected their families to save some of the money they were sending and when they come back home they expected they will have some money which can change their life somehow once and for all. But as discussed above especially in the poor households, families do not manage to save money for the migrants that the migrants end up having the same life as the one before migration. Similar findings from Gamburd (2002) show that only few women succeeded in getting what they expected when they return home. As opposed to case of Ethiopia, many female migrants in Sri Lanka left their family in the hands of their husbands and remit their income only to find they have been left with nothing when they come home.

Meaza says "I expected my family to save me some money but they did not. They told me that there were money problems in the household that forced them to use it all. So I could not say anything." Similarly Alem also says "I used to send money home every month. And of course some of it has been properly used but the rest was gone just like that without any significant use."

This result has forced many migrants into decision of second migration to the Middle East to make another effort for a change of life. Senayit can be considered a good example. She had a plan to open a small shop back home while she was working in



the Middle East she was sending money home thinking that it supported her family and that the rest would be saved for her. When she came back she found that there were some changes in her mother's house that the place was cleaned up and the furniture changed. But as mentioned above her brother who was responsible for doing this did not manage to save her any money. After three years since return, she is married and has a daughter. Her husband earns around 84\$ per month. She still thinks this is not enough. She says "life is expensive now. It is expensive to pay for school. I want my child to go to a good school and I am tired of looking at my husband's hand (to mean waiting for money from my husband). I am healthy so I can go to work, save money and come back." As discussed in Chapter 2, findings from other countries show that migrants often had to spend four to six years to significantly improve their life. Often when migrants decide to migrate for a second time they succeed more. This is because of mainly two reasons. One is because migrants have learned from their past experience in how to handle money, and the second is because they are quite well experienced now, and they can thus be hired for a better salary. Senayit says "I was not matured enough during my first migration and so I did not know so much how I could save money by myself." Alem and Meaza have similar aims for going back. They both claim they do not have enough money to continue their study, and therefore they have decided to go back to work and save some money for their studies back home.

It is necessary to mention that there are also migrants who have succeeded to save money and change their lives because of their first migration. As mentioned above this often happens when the household does not expect so much from the migrant for its daily expenditures. But it is also possible to find some from below average income groups succeeding and managing to save money to support their family and plot some investments that could bring visible changes in their life. "My sister was also in the Middle East. So we put some money together and bought a house" says Aziza.

Almaz is now running a telephone house with her husband after her return from migration. Kebebus said her sister bought a house and started a hair dresser's business but she did not get the money she expected from the business and so she decided to go to the Middle East, work a little more, and come back.

Success stories of migrants also result in initiating other members of the household or the society to migrate to the Middle East. The decision of women to migrate is to a significant stage affected by the success of other migrants.

Tough almost all the migrants I interviewed manage to support their families it was not enough to change their life. As mentioned above some, though they do not appreciate their previous migration, will still decide to go back for various reasons which are mainly related to the way the remittance from the previous migration was used. It was not made to meet the goal. And so, returnees happen to decide to go back to make up to the already made mistake.

Therefore the use of remittance is an important issue that could determine the life of the migrant in the long run.

Apart from what remittances do for livelihood security, there are other structural social psychological impacts of migration.

## **7.2. Migration as Empowerment**

As already discussed in Chapter 2, migration influences social structures and norms. According to the structuration theory, migrants are agents of change. The fact that they decide to migrate and actually migrate, results in intended and unintended consequences on social their position in the household and the society they live in.

The kind of life experience that migrants go through, make them more assertive in their life. Returnees are economically well off to a certain extent, they have a new way of seeing things after the experience which gives them the acknowledgment of the household and the society. Some of them manage to get the freedom they did not have before migration. Phosia, which migrated because of her strong father who did not let her out, claims that she is free now.

A similar finding from Gamburd (2002) shows that migrants sent ripples of changes through a variety of village social structures and forms of identity. Moreover they provided basis for changing gender stereotypes.

In addition to this migrants contribute to change in a way that they bring back new norms and behaviour. The use of remittance for education as mentioned in chapter two also contributes to an increase in human capital. It is important to remember here that remittances have been used to educating younger members of the family and also the migrant after return.

### **7.3. Social consequences and Psychological consequences**

Migration also affects the migrant psychologically and socially in various ways. According to empirical findings, mentioned in chapter two, there are some negative social and psychological impacts on migrants.

Kelima says “at the beginning when I came back, I had problems. I could not interact with people as I was used to before migration. I was under a lot of emotional stress and so I had some behavioural problems.” The working situation is not a usual one to a migrant from Ethiopia, where there is so much social interaction. Aziza even thinks returnees need a special treatment. She says “psychologically I think we are not ok. It might be because we live like prisoners there in the Middle East or maybe because we feel inferior to the society. But I think returnees should be given special treatment. For example, after return if they could be given priority in areas they have the capacity to participate.” She continues her view considering the attitude of the society at home by saying, “the people think we brought so much money with us. And some think we got the money through prostitution in the Middle East. But me and my sister we were doing our jobs.”

Often migrants pass through a lot of hardships at the place of migration, as mentioned elsewhere. There are similar findings in Sri Lanka where migrants are faced with varieties of abuses.

<p>I tried to get a job by a legal agent for five years but I did not succeed. Then a friend of my mother who worked in the Middle East managed to get me an employer. I was sent a visa and they paid both for my ticket and visa. Then I contacted an agent for the legal arrangements. I paid only for medical, vaccination, exit visa and passport. I borrowed some money for these expenses. I did not have to pay for the ticket and visa they sent but I had to work for a lesser salary in return. I was paid 100\$ for two years and then my salary was increased to 150\$.</p> <p>My employer met me at the airport when I arrived. So I went straight to her house. But I faced some problems at my arrival. There was problem of communication that I did not speak Arabic and they did not speak English. The food was another problem. I still did not get used to the food. The job was also difficult. I cooked cleaned and ironed. My employer had four houses at the time I was employed. So I used to clean all the houses she owned. And at times I also cleaned her son's house. I used to work until 23:00 at night and wake up at 06:30 in the morning.</p> <p>I told my family that I was having a hard time working at her son's place so they contacted the agent at home who passed the message to my employer that it was an illegal act. I was not forced to do that then after but her attitude towards me changed.</p> <p>She had three children and they were difficult. Each of them has different orders to one me. But I was strong and I stayed there for three years and six months. But through out that time all the children got married and culturally my employer considered me as her lucky servant and decided to treat me better then on. Now I do not feel bad about the job or my employer. That is why I am going back.</p>	<p>My friends introduced me to a broker. I made the decision with my family but my brother was totally against my decision. It did not affect me tough.</p> <p>When I reached there, I was held in the airport till a possible employer comes to take me. The room I was in was in the airport terminal. There was only electric lighting and no possible exposure to the sun light. I guess we were around fifty in the room waiting for employers. No one served us food or drinks. We ate whatever we had when we depart from home. There was also a possibility to ask or beg others who got money to buy us something to eat.</p> <p>I remember that there was another room next to ours where migrant men used to stay. There was an opening of hand size in between through which we send our hands asking for food and drinks. I also remember they used to send us straw through the opening so that we can take a sip from their drinks. The men had some money with them so they were better off. But we did not have any money.</p> <p>My passport was confiscated and I had to stay in that room for two weeks before I got an employer.</p> <p>After I was employed I had to work in a really bad condition. I slept for four hours per day. There was a lot to do while I was awake so there was not time to rest, no time to sit and take a breath. At sometime I got sick and I refused to work her place. I wanted to change an employer and try again. But my employer did not want me to work somewhere else in that country. She wanted to send me back home. So I was imprisoned for three days before I went back home.</p> <p>That was my situation. But now I gathered from my fellow migrants that it could have been worse.</p>	<p>I went through Umrah with a man I paid to go with me.</p> <p>When we arrive in Saudi Arabia, our relative who lives legally in the country came to take us from the airport. We stayed at their place for two weeks. After that each of us got a job.</p> <p>My first employers were good. They were polite and respectful. I stayed with them for two years. But my contract was stopped when they decide to move to India.</p> <p>After that I got another job. Here my employers were very difficult. They can ask you to clean the room while you are cooking. They never felt that I might get tired like any human being. When they are angry with me, they hit me or make me stay out of the house for a long time. I remember one night when I spent all the night outside of the house until i apologized in the morning and they let me inside. After six months I quit my contract and went to live with my relatives.</p> <p>I stayed there for a week and got another job which was also really bad. So I promised myself I will never come back to this country and come back home to my family.</p>
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**Figure 9: Situation of migrants in the Middle East**

(Source: Author, fieldwork)

Alem says her interaction with the neighbours is much less now than before. And Alem does not have friends now both because she does not interact well with people and because after return she could not find the people (friends) she left behind. She thinks she has also changed. And she says ‘even if I get in touch with my old friends it is often hard to get common things to talk about.’

But others find themselves to be happy after return, comparing their life back in the Middle East with the one they have back home. ‘I was depressed and lonely in the Middle East, and so now I am enjoying my social life here’ Almaz says.

It is also important to consider the relation of the migrant with the family after return. For Aziza it was difficult to again move in with her family after those years of loneliness (independent life). But this is not only for her. Often returnees find it difficult to have similar relation with their family as the one they had before migration. It is also connected with the emotional disturbance mentioned above. Genet talks about her daughter how she was not having a good relation with the family members.

And in other cases households have certain expectation from returnees financially probably a standard which the returnee could not meet. In such families conflicts are meant to occur.

Some families enjoy the attitude of the society about the migration of their daughter and the result it has on their life. Tsehay says “all my neighbours say I am now a new person because of my daughters.” And she appreciates the fact that her daughters are working and changing her life. She says “if my girls will be fine my life will keep on changing.” She always worries about their safety but enjoys the remittance. As mentioned in Chapter 2, those who spend the money in this case the mother of the migrants, is benefiting more from the scarifies her daughters make.

In case of marital relations, most of the returnees I talked to are postponing marriage. Migrants as mentioned in previous chapters are often a maximum of high school graduates. Therefore, returnees often decide to go to school to continue their study to a higher level to make the way easier for them to get a better job in their home land. And therefore they postpone other life plans like marriage and other commitments and

spend extra time in studying. Kelem, as many others, has a plan to learn and not marriage. This late study plan results in late marriage or no marriage at all.

But in other cases returnees happen to be happily married and even with children. Almaz, who is running a business with her husband, is a good example. Some migrants leave their boyfriends during migration and still keep their relationship alive till the time they come back. But the decision of getting married or not is quite personal in such cases.

In extreme cases, though my interviewees did not happen to be one of them, there are times when migrants return home with disabilities, and sever damage on their body. This might also extend to death.

#### **7.4. Looking back at migration**

Different reasons make the women to decide to migrate to the Middle East. But does their reason remain being valid to them after they have seen the consequence and passed through all the process of migration. Is migration worth the payment?

Quite a number of returnees I happened to interview consider their decision and their migration a mistake. And they claim they did not make a mature decision at the time of migration. Aziza says “when I look back now I think it was better if I did not go. Because if you live, learn and work hard in your country, you will get what you want. Generally seen my goal was not met. I brought only emotional problems and feeling of inferiority with me nothing else.” She continues her regret by saying “when I see my friends who stayed here and where they are now what I did was a total waste. And when I see the attitude of my neighbours towards me I hate myself for going there.” Alem agrees with Aziza. She says, “The job is really tiresome, and horrible. But you get paid for it. Then you send money home and spend some yourself and at the end when you come back you realize it was a waste. I do not advise anyone to go.” It is explained in chapter two that at times the economic benefit is neutralized by the decline in the migrant’s social esteem after return.

Kelima looks back and sees that her goal was half way met. 'But when I look back' she says 'I should not have gone. It was better if I continued with my studies.' And for Almaz going there was a bad experience. And she does not advise people to go if they have something to live on.

'I do not regret the fact that I went there' says Kelima 'it has given me a lesson. I have learned so much from it.'

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

### **8.1. Introduction**

This is the concluding chapter of the thesis. As aimed at the beginning of the study, the causes and consequences of migration at different levels have been treated in the previous chapters. The relationship between migration and development has also been assessed.

In this chapter the major findings of the study are discussed. The chapter also aim at answering the research questions of the study in trying to fulfil the purpose of the study. At last some recommendations are made for policy makers and practitioners.

### **8.2. Summary of findings**

Knowledge of the background of the female labour migrants was found to be necessary for the later explanation of the decision and act of migration and the consequence it has on migrants and their family. In Ethiopia migrant women are mostly from the relatively urbanized parts of the country economically below average but still not the poorest. This being the case, however, there are also migrants from the economically above average category. Often migrants have an average of high school education and prior to migration they check on the opportunities of employment in the country and most of them participated in low paying jobs. The labour market for these women presents a structural cause for migration.

Various motivation serve as driving forces for migration. Looking at the economic and social backgrounds, migrants decide to be involved in the act of migration. There is a range of motivations that extend from national level motivations to individual levels of motivation. This is also another main area where the action of mediators is visible. The decision to migrate is often made in four different ways based on the participants in the decision making process. Depending on the socio economic relationships in the household decisions are either made by migrant individuals without the consent of the household, together with the household, only by the



household members without the willingness of the migrant and by the migrant and with a push from the household.

In their way to the Middle East, migrants go through various processes where the different legal and illegal agents act to alter the functioning of the migration. Concerning the process in Ethiopia there are both legal and illegal private employment agencies and parallel legal and illegal migration. Accordingly there are also legal and illegal migrants. Unlike the illegal migration, legal migration is one that follows the rules that the government sets. In addition to this, there is the religious pretext that most Muslim migrants put into use for migrating to the Middle East. Each route has its own advantage and disadvantages that it presents to the migrants.

The consequence of migration has its effect both on the migrant and the household she is attached to. Migration can have both positive and negative consequences on human flourishing. Remittance has been found to be a powerful concept in the issue of migration. The propensity and use of the remittance has a profound effect on the economic life of the migrant and the household. Especially where remittance was put into investments it resulted in greater livelihood security. In addition to this there are other structural, social and psychological consequences that include mainly the individual freedom, empowerment of women, and challenge to the gender stereotyping in the country.

### **8.3. The causes and consequences of female labour migration to the Middle East**

- What triggers migration?

This study aimed at responding to the two major questions concerning the causes and consequences of migration.

The overall background of the migrants together with the external mediators adds up to give the motivations for migration. It is not possible to categorize migrants under one category of causes. Rather there exist various reasons for a woman in Ethiopia to decide to go work in the Middle East.

It has been said that it is not the poorest of the poor that migrate. In the case of female labour migration to the Middle East from Ethiopia, also it is not the poorest of the poor that migrate but it is mostly the poor. The poorest of the poor are not in a position to make initial investments and lack awareness of the opportunities. Though it is not the poorest that migrate, dissatisfaction with individual income level or the household in general has been a major cause for migration. But it is now visible that the socio cultural interactions in the lives of the migrant women and their family make much of a contribution in motivating migration. And therefore it is important to note that there are a number of reasons other than the income level that exists under the surface. The fact that people of above average economical situation are on the move indicates that control of power, individual freedom and independence can present important motivations for migration.

Therefore, it is possible to say that there are ranges of migrants who are motivated by different factors that exist at the various levels in their life which ranges from national to individual level.

- What consequence does migration brings about on the life of the migrant and her family?

Female labour migration to the Middle East has undeniable impact on the migrant and her family. As shown above consequences of migration can be intended or unintended and positive or negative though the positive effects of migration are often overshadowed by the negative out puts of migration.

The impact of migration depends on various factors which include the background of the migrant, the motivation for migration, the processes of migration that a migrant goes through including the route one chooses to take, the structures and various mediators throughout the process of migration.

The issue of remittance is an important point to consider. The propensity and use of remittance has a major effect on the success of migration. Migrants from a relatively better economical background are more succeeding with migration. This is because in such households, remittance is put to investment which again has effect on livelihood

security. On the other hand the use of remittance for consumption purposes, which is mostly a characteristic of economically unstable households, results in no significant change in livelihoods.

But other structural, social and psychological consequences arise from migration. Positive consequences in this area include structural changes and empowerment of migrant women, challenge to the gender stereotype, individual freedom and independence. Decline of social esteem is one major negative consequence of migration where migrants are faced with environment of social stigma attached to labour migration to the Middle East. Moreover most migrants are confronted with a difficult working situation in the Middle East. The working situation of the migrant has a profound negative social and psychological impact. In extreme cases physical damage and death are in existence. In addition the lack of significant change in their life after return from migration puts many migrants in a state of regret though they still claim they have had a positive change in their view towards their capability to change.

Generally female labour migration to the Middle East has a great potential in bringing about positive effects to the life of the migrant, her family and at a macro level to the nation in general. It is a fact that there are various factors that stand in the way of the success of migration. And there are also various factors that affect the development impact of human flourishing. Doing away with these setbacks is expected to have a much greater positive effect. It is also an option to strengthen the labour market in their country of origin so that women would prefer to stay home and work.

#### **8.4. Recommendations**

Migration can have a real positive effect on development of the individual the household and the nation in general. But as already seen there are various factors that bring about unintended negative consequences. These factors have to do with lack of proper enforcement of the law, the working conditions of the migrant abroad, the attitude of the society, the appropriate use of remittance together with ....

To solve these problems related with migration, certain measures must be taken. Firstly, empowerment of women with the required skill must be taken into account. Migrants should be aware of the social norms and culture of the countries of destination. To increase the success of the migrant with the migration and to minimize the unintended conflict with employers abroad, migrants must be endowed with skills and be clearly aware of the socio – cultural situation in their destination.

Secondly, trainings must be given about making the best out of migration both for migrants and their families who are responsible for handling the money. This might include issues of use of remittance and continued diversification of livelihoods back home together with the aim of saving and investing rather than unproductive consumption.

At last, the enforcement of laws is of greater importance. There are laws designed against the illegal private agents but there is no serious enforcement to make sure that illegal private agents are no more functioning and the functioning of the legal private agents is purely legal. There are various legal/illegal agents still in the country who normally take advantage of the migrants. In addition to this it is important to make the legal channels of migration more attractive to migrants by minimizing the disadvantages of the specific route.

Enforcing the laws must also include laws designed to the protection of the migrants in the Middle East. The regular follow up of the situation of the migrants in the Middle East must be implemented.



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Interview guide for migrant returnees**

1. Age, Religion, Place of origin, Educational background, Marital status
2. If married do you have any children?
3. What does your husband do?
4. If not married did you live with your family?
5. Were you employed before migration? If yes how much did you earn?
6. Tell me about the situation of your family
7. Who supports the family?
8. What is your source of income?
9. How many were you in the family? Any sisters or brothers?
10. Did you contribute in any way in the family?
11. Who makes the decision in the family?
12. Tell me about the neighbourhood you lived before migration?
13. Tell me about your childhood
14. Tell me about your friends
15. Did you participate in any social activities? What kind?
16. How did you find out about the chance to work in the Middle East?
17. Did you know anyone who migrated before?
18. If yes did it influence your decision in any way?
19. Did it help in the process?
20. Can you describe the process?
21. Tell me about the agency
22. How much money did you need for migration?
23. Did you have enough money to pay for the agency and generally the trip?
24. If not how did you manage to get it?
25. Did you have a special reason for migration?
26. What was the attitude of your family when you decide to move?
27. Did your family influence your decision in any way?
28. Why did you not try to get a job here?
29. What were you expecting when you decide to migrate?

30. Were you aware of the conditions in the Middle East?
31. What kind of job were you doing in the Middle East?
32. How much did you get paid?
33. Did you get what you expected to get? (Did you achieve your goal?)
34. Did you generally benefit from your journey? Was it worth migrating?
35. What did you do with the money you earned?
36. Did you bring any change in the family?
37. Has your status or role in the family changed in any way?
38. Tell me about your life now?
39. Do you think your stay in the Middle East has influenced your social relations?
40. Do you have a plan to get married or are you in a serious relationship? (for singles)
41. If you are living with your family, how do you find living with your family?
42. Do you think you have changed in any way? How?
43. Do you think of going back there? Why?
44. Do you advise others to migrate and work in the Middle East? Why?

## **Appendix 2: Interview guide for families of migrants**

1. How many are you in the family? The composition?
2. Who supported the family before migration?
3. Who makes the decision in the family?
4. What is your source of income?
5. Did the migrant contribute to the family before migration?
6. What was her role?
7. Did you contribute in anyway to her migration?
8. Did you participate in the decision making?
9. Did you contribute any money?
10. Did you have to borrow any money? How much?
11. What do you think of her migration?
12. Do you think it is ok for a woman to go abroad for work? Why?
13. Does she send you any money? How much?
14. How do you spend the money she sends?
15. Do you think you're benefiting from her migration?
16. Did it have any negative effect on the family? How?
17. Would you say it changed your life?



### **Appendix 3: Interview guide for the authorities and other key informants**

1. What is the role/responsibility of the organisation/department?
2. People of which back ground migrate more? (Place of origin, marital status, educational background, economic status, employment, etc.)
3. Tell me about the process
4. How much time does it take?
5. How much money do migrants need to complete the process?
6. Do you lend money to migrants? On what condition?(for agents)
7. Do you have information on the cost and benefit of the migrants and their family?
8. Are you against the migration of female labour to the Middle East? Why?  
(except for agents)
9. How do you assist the migrants?
10. What do you think of illegal agents and illegal migration?
11. How do you see migration contributing to the families, local, communities, national economy?
12. What are the main challenges they see in dealing with the issue of migration
13. Could the situation for the migrants be improved, how?