

Causes and Consequences of Irregular Migration in Bale Zone, Oromia Regional State, South Eastern Ethiopia

Henok W/Yohannes

Recently, irregular migration has become a global concern due to the various consequences it is entailing on migrants and on source and destination countries. In source countries like Ethiopia, the issue is being brought to the forefront of political debates, academic researches and international and national summit. Over the past decade, Bale Zone, found in the regional state of Oromia, is one the principal areas in Ethiopia which has seen a surge in the number of irregular migrants. For this purpose, four Districts and one City administration, namely Ginir, Gassera, Agarfa, Sinana and Robe town were selected purposefully based on the severity of problem.

Hence, in light of these points, the aim of this study is to examine the causes and consequences of irregular migration and its socio-economic consequences on migrants in Bale administrative Zone. For this purpose, four Districts and one City administration, namely Ginir, Gassera, Agarfa, Sinana and Robe town were selected purposefully based on the severity of problem. In consideration of the multi-disciplinary nature of the issue studied, both qualitative and quantitative research approaches employed. Furthermore, the study used in depth interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaire as data collection instruments.

For the qualitative data analysis part, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling technique were employed to identify people who have direct and indirect experiences on migration. With regarding to the sampling techniques for the quantitative data analysis, purposive, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used. Accordingly, the study took 326 (20 %) return migrants based on sample size determination formula. Moreover, the quantitative data analysis part of the study uses a linear binary logistic regression model of

migration decision and its individual and household level covariates and Chi-square tests of significance.

Accordingly, the study results revealed that male returnees comprised the majority of respondents in both the general returnee group (63%) and the irregular returnee group (75%) with the overwhelming majority (73%) of the returnee migrants being youths in the age between 20 and 29 years of age.

Furthermore, 57% of irregular returnees and 41% of regular returnees came from families with a size of 4-6 members. 51% of irregular returnees and 48% of regular returnees, from the second study, have attended secondary general education.

With respect to source of income, about 69% of all migrants and 81% of non-migrants rely on their current employment whereas about 18% of migrants and 9.4% of non-migrants have reported remittances as their source of income. These returnees in general have had a monthly income in the range of 100 and 3000 ETB (birr etiopi, la valuta dell’Etiopia) before the incidence of migration.

Furthermore, the research identified that the causes of migration are significantly associated with economic reasons which exerted push or pull forces in the migration decision process. Accordingly, the descriptive analysis on reported pull and push factors of migration suggested that economic opportunity, its absence in the place of origin or its presence in the destination country, play a vital role in motivating or pulling people to migrate. Unemployment and poverty together account for 79% of reported push factors among the entire class of migrant returnees.

Moreover, the data suggested that the influence of brokers as a push factor is not negligible. About 15% of all returnees, 15% of irregular returnees and 14% of regular returnees have reported the persuasion of brokers as a push factor of immigration. It can, in general, be said that, for the study areas, economic reasons (unemployment and poverty) were the most important reported push factors of immigration for both regular and irregular types of migrants. Economic reasons in general account for about 79% - 82% of the reported push factors of migration across all categories of migrant returnees. In addition, brokers were also reported to possess a non-negligible role in fueling migration decisions.

Moreover, the regression analysis from the second research suggested that migration route choices and vulnerability to irregular migration vary across individual's gender, age, educational status, family size and perception towards employment opportunities in the home versus destination countries. More specifically, in the areas studied male youngsters dominate out-migration both through legal and illegal mechanisms. Males are also more prone to irregular migration than females. The likelihood of migrating irregularly is 6 times higher for males than females whereas females were 3 times more likely to migrate regularly than their male counterparts were. In terms of educational status, it was found that as the educational qualification of migrants increase from primary to secondary and to college degree, the likelihood of irregular mode of immigration decreases. This indicates that individuals with lower educational qualifications are more vulnerable to irregular migration than those who attend college or some other advanced education.

In addition, being young further adds to the vulnerability problem as established by the finding that the likelihood of irregular migration was 4 times higher for the age group 21-25 than individuals with the age of 35 years or more.

Concerning migrants' choice of destination a significant majority of irregular out migration is found to be towards the Middle East Arab state through irregular route due to its low cost as compared to the regular route.

Specifically, the main reported reasons, in the study, for choosing irregular travel modes showed that these modes are popular in view of their cheapness as compared regular modes of travel. About 33% of irregular migrant returnees reported that they chose irregular routes due to their relative cheapness. Additionally, accessibility of irregular routes (or inaccessibility of regular routes), the non-existence or little bureaucracy involved in irregular routes and the persuasion of brokers were considered as the main reasons for choosing irregular routes by 27%, 18% 15% of irregular migrant returnees respectively.

Further, the study also identifies the consequences of irregular migration on migrants both in negative and positive aspects. Similarly, for the question asked, "Have you ever had encountered trouble during your journey or immediately after your destination country?" . Of which 151(70.2 %) respondents from the total 215 return migrants answered "Yes" for the question. And the

majority around 104 (42.9%) encountered financial exploitation followed by Psychological assault (14.04%), Hunger and thirst (14.04%) and Physical assault (11.1%).

In addition, labor exploitation, involuntary servitude, kidnaping for the sake of ransom, forced confinements and loss of lives at extreme case were what migrants encountered resulted from out migration.

Finally, in due consideration of the key finding of the study, it is recommended that reducing the volume and negative consequences of irregular migration requires the joint efforts of different stakeholders including but not limited to local community and religious leaders, government and non-governmental organization (at local, national and international levels). The areas of intervention should mainly include expanding vocational training institutions, reshaping the attitude of the community and providing the necessary arrangement and entrepreneur training for vulnerable sections of the community.

In addition to this, creating job opportunity at place of origin, eradicating poverty, and effective persecution of illegal brokers ought to be the primary concerns for of concerned government and non-government agents.

Further, providing effective and efficient assistance and protective measures for victims of migrants resulted from migration in general and irregular migration in particular should also be given emphasis.