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The Role of Local Communities of Southern Ethiopia in Curbing Irregular Migration

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia has been an origin, destination and transit country numerous types of migration particularly for irregular migration. This study mainly aimed to assess the impact of integrated regional efforts to deter irregular migration in the selected zones of South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, Ethiopia. These zones include Wolaita, Hadiya, Kambata-Tambaro, Gurage and Siltie. The study employed purely qualitative approach through the course of stages of the evaluation process ranging from data collection, analysis, discussion and interpretations. The tools used for collecting data were focus group discussions, key informant interviews and life history narratives. Secondary data were obtained through review of institutional documents and facts and figures. Findings of the study showed that different stakeholders are working with regional Labour and Social Affairs Agency to deter irregular migration. The key stakeholders were local community, educational institutions, Bureau of women and children affairs, media and religious organizations. Labour and Social Affairs Agency adopted three measures to control irregular migration: prevention, protection and prosecution. Therefore, attitudes of the community as well as leaders of religious organizations have to be reshaped by continuous public discussion and awareness creation programs.

Keywords: Ethiopia; human trafficking; labour; social affairs agency; smuggling.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

As a dynamic phenomenon, migration is continually evolving to meet changes in the global environment. New migration flows ever develop in response to economic, social and political structures in origin and destination countries often referred to as the push and pull factors of migration. International migration in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been extensive in the past decades, and it has received more attention of researchers, policy makers, and actors. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has experienced a noticeable increasing rate of migration in recent years (International Organization for Migration, [1]). The current environment in SSA has led to increasing migration movements from countries in the region in recent decades as people are pulled towards other countries and regions in search of better opportunities. SSA is a region that has strong migration dynamics stemming from a mix of different driving forces such as low human and economic development, political operation, persecution, false dream at destination, hopelessness at home country, unemployment, population pressure, weakening of social capital, weaker value for education, internal displacement, conflicts, income inequality and poverty, and environmental degradation [2]. A large portion of the migratory movements in SSA can be characterized as inter-African migration and cross continental migration.

Limited data is available, however, on migration dynamics in and from SSA, particularly to other regions of the world. According to the World Migration Report published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were an estimated 19 million international migrants in Africa in 2010, an increase of 1.5 million international migrants from 2005 [2]. It is estimated that Africa accommodates 9% of global immigrants, although this is considered to be an underestimate due to lack of data in the region [2].

Ethiopia, among the nations of SSA experiences many types of migration and it has been both a major origin country for both regular and irregular migrants and a destination and transit country mostly for shelter seekers and refugees. The main routes used by irregular Ethiopian migrants are the Southern and Eastern ones. The Eastern migratory route leads to the Gulf Nations, also a major destination country for irregular migrants

from Ethiopia. The problem of out-migration is a rising issue in the country at this time and has been attracting the focus of governmental, nongovernmental, national, regional, and international agencies. International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that about 1.2 million children are victims of trafficking in Ethiopia every year. International Labour Organization (ILO) [3] estimated that the number of trafficked Ethiopian women and children in the Middle East was as large as 130,000. In 2014, about 91,000 migrants arrived in Yemen from the Horn of Africa, of which 80% were Ethiopians who transited through Djibouti. Likewise, ILO reports indicate the presence of closer to 50,000 Ethiopians in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) where more than 95% of these young migrants entered the country through illegal cross-border migration.

The main institutional actors involved in terms of developing the first national policy and operational responses to migrant smuggling are the Ministry of Justice (in terms of exploring current legislative gaps on migrant smuggling and prosecuting migrant smugglers), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in terms of providing migrant workers with information and support while abroad and also in terms of anti-smuggling police operations), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (in terms of facilitating legal migration but also rehabilitation support for returned migrants) (RMMS, 2014). The federal police are also charged with investigating cases of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. A National committee against Trafficking was established in 2012 to develop the Ethiopian institutional response to irregular migration, and involves these actors as well as others [4,5]. Other partners like civil organizations and national agencies of United Nations (UN) also involved in the work against irregular migration in Ethiopia. Among the international and non-governmental actors in Ethiopia with involvement in addressing migrant smuggling, IOM concentrates on preventing trafficking and smuggling in Ethiopia through awareness raising, community discussion programs, and rehabilitating the returnees.

However, despite the abundance of migration information and combating efforts being undertaken by various stakeholders, there is extremely little empirical evidence on the impact and effectiveness of these deterring efforts. This study was, therefore, intended as a strategic evaluation of the role of integrated regional efforts to curb irregular migration out of southern

Ethiopia. This evaluation did not intend to be 'the wise up after the event', exhibiting perfect hindsight. Rather it is believed to give insights for further planning and way outs. Ultimately, this evaluation seeks to answer the questions: (1) What does the institutional setup look like and to what extent does it function towards deterring irregular migration? (2) To what extent are the Regional Migration Programs effective in building stakeholders' capacity to humanely manage irregular? And (3) what insights and lessons can be derived for the institutions and policy makers for their future programming of interventions against illegal migration and human trafficking in the region? From the set of research questions posed for the larger 'impact evaluation', this paper particularly focuses on the part which intends to: (1) evaluate the institutional framework focused on reducing irregular migration, and (2) analyze practical measures taken by stakeholders to reduce irregular migration.

1.2 Brief Overview of the Regional Program to Deter Irregular Migration

The recent mass expulsion of over 150,000 irregular Ethiopian migrants from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia highlighted the human challenges posed by people smuggling in the Horn of Africa [6]. Pushed by such trajectories, the Ethiopian government recognizes the need to improve public awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration and is taking action to remedy the problem. Since the recent years (particularly starting at 2014) the regional Labour and Social Affairs Bureau of South Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), in partnership with International Organization for Migration (IOM), has been implementing various activities that can broadly be analyzed on four key aspects.

Behavioral change communication (BCC) which involve list of awareness creation campaigns and media of actions is the first activity. The major of this set of activities, according to BoLSA (2014) is Community Conversations (CCs) which are held among the community at grassroot level. This has been launched as an initiative to engage the target community on the efforts to curb irregular migration and its adverse effects. These are intended to create a forum through which communities can discuss local alternatives to migration and ways to combat irregular migration. CC aimed at combating and preventing irregular migration through messaging on the positive aspects of regular migration and

the dangers and associated consequences of irregular migration.

In the CCs approach, first community conversation facilitators were identified at each administrative level starting from zonal structure to the grass root or kebele level. They include community representatives like religious and community leaders and representatives of vulnerable groups (potential migrant youth plus returnees), school directors, teacher's and student's representatives, the elderly and women representative. Then, these facilitators are recurrently trained and capacitated so that the facilitators will engage their communities to discuss about irregular migration and will report on community initiatives to ensure that the information reaches policy makers at regional and federal levels. The community conversation manuals are prepared by the expertise from BoLSA and shared to the facilitators.

BoLSA is also actively engaged in sensitizing the public through other channels, including regional and zonal workshops, radio programmes and touring theatre shows with tailored messages for specific groups. In 2016 it was presented a popular touring theatre show entitled '*Mutach*' in rural areas traditionally associated with irregular migration. TV shows and video production, community radio programs, print media including posters, newspaper articles, posters, and billboards were used to communicate the community with relevant massage about irregular migration and its adverse effects.

Enhancing inter-sectoral and institutional cooperation among the regional public organizations to establish joint efforts towards deterring irregular migration is also one of the mitigation strategies. BOLSA, being as major initiator of the agendum has attempted to establish horizontal as well as vertical integration between public institutions working on the agendum of irregular migration. The key stakeholders include local community, educational bureau and schools, technical and vocational colleges, bureau of women and children affairs, social and mass media and religious organizations.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Location of the study

This study was conducted in selected five zones (zone =state) administrations of southern Ethiopia, namely Kembata-Tambaro, Hadiya,

Wolaita, Siltie and Guragie (see Fig. 1). According to the 2007 census figures, the five zones selected for this study account for the most common characteristics environment of the Region with relatively fertile and humid midland which contains the densest rural populations in Ethiopia [7]. The intense population concentration within the zones can be noted from the distribution of high density woredas (woreda = district or country) of over 500 people per square kilometers. For instance, Damot Gale and Boloso Sore from Wolaita zone account for 649 and 506 people per square kilometers, respectively. Similarly, KachaBira, Angacha and KedidaGamela account for 550,543,514.8 people per sq. kilometer, respectively [8]. Despite the ethnic and other socio-economic diversities among them, significantly the zones are almost common in ever increasing land fragmentation and land scarcity. Accordingly, these administrative zones are identified as hotspot

origins for irregular migration of youth to the Middle East and South Africa (Animaw, 2011; Abebaw, [9]).

2.2 Types and Sources of Data

Given the qualitative design of the research, qualitative data were used to for this study. The data sources were both primary including community leaders functioning at public structures ranging from the grassroot level (kebele) to regional offices of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, Ethiopia. Life stories of returnee migrants and their family members were recorded. Various documents were reviewed as secondary sources of data. These include strategic plans, annual reports, archives of facts and figures on the migrants, returnees, deaths and various legal cases handled at each level, and manuals for capacity building trainings. Secondary data was

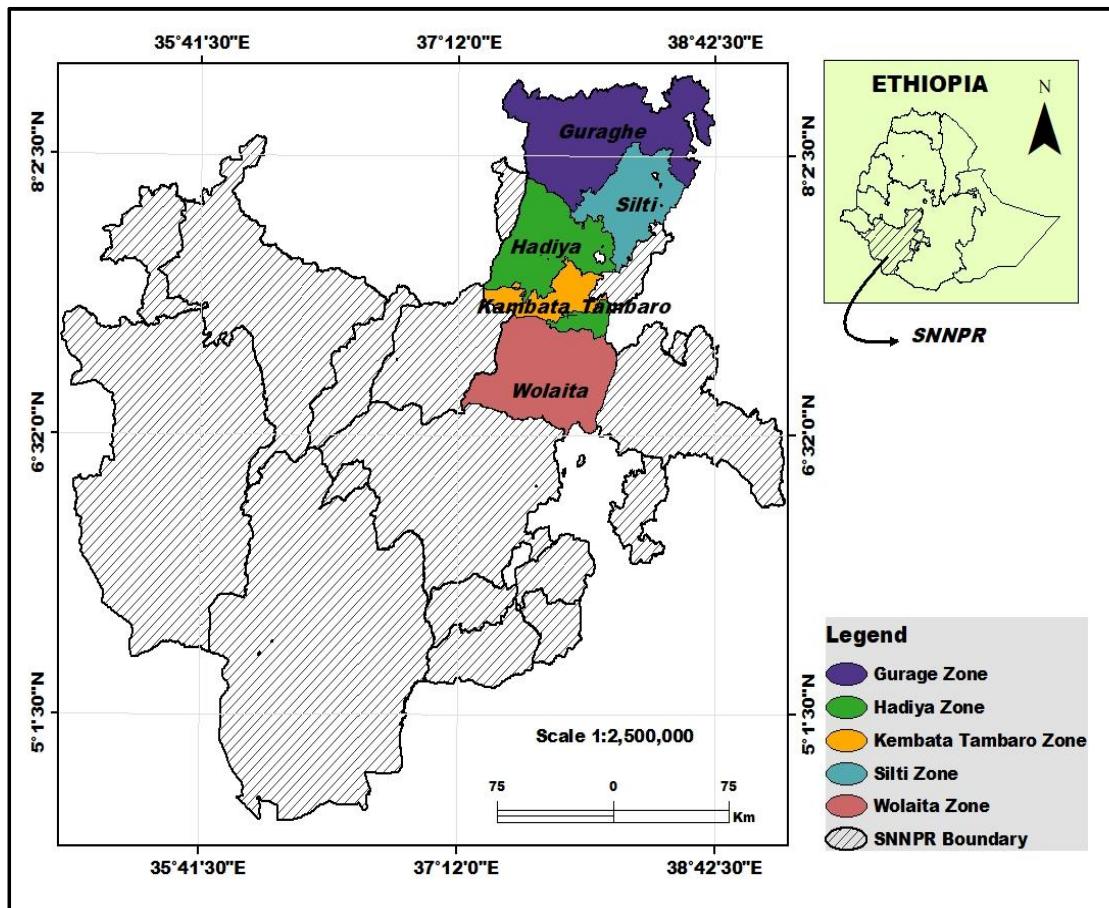


Fig. 1. Study area map

Source: GIS Data, 2020

also collected through review of policy documents, strategic plans, records and grey literature from respective public offices and NGOs working on the area.

2.3 The Study Population and Sampling Procedures

Multistage sampling technique was used to select the research districts and the sample respondents. First, five zonal administrations were purposively selected on the basis of their intensity as origin of irregular migration from southern Ethiopia. Out of the 5 zones two districts (1 from the rural and the other urban) per a zone (totaling 30) were included randomly. Next, out of the districts, two kebeles per woreda were selected using stratified random sampling technique. The kebeles in each woreda were listed based on their performance grade level on irregular migration deterring campaigns characteristic and stratified into three grade level namely, high achievers (A grade), mid-achievers (B grade) and least achievers (with C grade) issued by the zonal offices of Labor and Social Affairs. Based on this, 2 kebeles (1 with A and the other with C grade) were included in the study.

2.4 Methods of Data Collection

The tools used for collecting qualitative data include focus group discussion, key informant interview, storytelling through in-depth interviews, and secondary data sources. The fieldwork was undertaken from May to September 2018 (total of five months). This is because this period is generally quieter as farm activities are relatively less demanding.

2.4.1 Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews (KII) were conducted with community representatives including local government representatives, returnees, heads of youth and sport offices, women and children affairs offices, technical and vocational institutions offices, leaders of local institutions, presidents of regional and zonal administrations, chiefs of main stream media stations at zonal and regional level, authorities of legal affairs, and police officers. An interview lasted for an hour. They were asked questions such as aspirations for migration, the reason why people migrate, the factors and forces that force people to migrate, roles of brokers in the process of migration, and consequences of irregular migration. The

objective of this part of the interview was to gather an understanding of how the attitude building campaign has influenced their experience and decision-making of irregular migration choice.

2.4.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

A total of 15 focus group discussions were carried out. One FGD per Woreda comprised of 7-9 members per a group. The participants of FGDs religious leaders, opinion leaders, leaders of local institutions like *iddir*, school principals, students' representatives, school clubs' leaders, teachers' representatives and potential migrants. These members of FGD were purposely selected because they are believed as individuals who experienced irregular migration, potentially aspire to migrate and participate in the campaigns to control irregular migration.

2.4.3 Life stories

To get more data about life experience of people, the researchers individually approached to the purposefully selected 10 case participants (returnees). The returnees were asked to demonstrate their stories regarding their experience of irregular migration. The inquiries include antecedents which ask information about the role of social and personal contexts like family, brokers, friends, relatives, and mass media on their decision to migrate. It was also asked about the personal reasons, experiences on the route and at the destinations and internal locus of control (motivations) that shape their intentions and attitude towards irregular migration.

2.5 Methods of Data Analysis

The nature of inquiry demands the qualitative data analysis techniques independently. So as to answer the research questions, the procedure of data analysis and presentation followed purely qualitative approach. The qualitative data gathered through various techniques were translated and transcribed, and thematic analysis was used to present the result.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Evaluation of Institutional Frameworks

3.1.1 Institutional framework

The Labour and Social Affairs Agency is a regional sector responsible for working on

comprehensive mitigation strategy to reduce or prevent irregular migration, human trafficking and smuggling. The initial project period for this evaluation was from 2014/15 until 2017. The organization chart below shows the structure and linkages between the different levels. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) at the national level is responsible for the overall coordination and implementation. At the regional level, the then "Labour and Social Affairs" agencies were set up within MoLSA to provide managerial, technical and monitoring roles. At zonal levels, offices are established to carry out the comprehensive prevention activities in each zonal administration.

The Agency has administrative structures up to Woreda level. Their mandate was to collect information regarding the victims, build the attitude of people regarding problems of trafficking and smuggling, organize and rehabilitate returnees. The Agency and its structure at different levels have the mandate to capacitate stakeholders to mainstream irregular migration, human trafficking and smuggling. The stakeholders include media, religious organizations, elders and different governmental sectors. However, the Agency has no branch office at Kebele (the lowest administrative

structure) level, where the community reside. At Kebele level, the responsibility of the agency is overtaken by Kebele administrators, mainly chairman and manager. The Agency with the help of Kebele administrators plays significant role in building attitude through community conversation approach. The agency capacitated the chairman and manager by providing training regarding problem identification and preventive mechanisms at local context. This is because factors pulling and pushing youths towards irregular migration vary from Kebele to Kebele. The Agency has prepared training manual that enhance administrators to identify societies' attitude gap, guide the community conversations and devise intervention mechanism in the Kebele. Therefore, Kebele administrators are responsible for all activities carried out in their respective Kebeles. These activities may include identifying socio-economic problems that instigate migration, preventing irregular migration, challenges (injury, robbery, death, etc) faced by migrants, collecting information on the status of active and returnee migrants in Kebele. In addition, they are capacitated to take intervention activities on challenges (economic, social, psychological...) facing the returnees. Therefore, the Agency believes that irregular migration has become a top agenda of Kebele administrators.

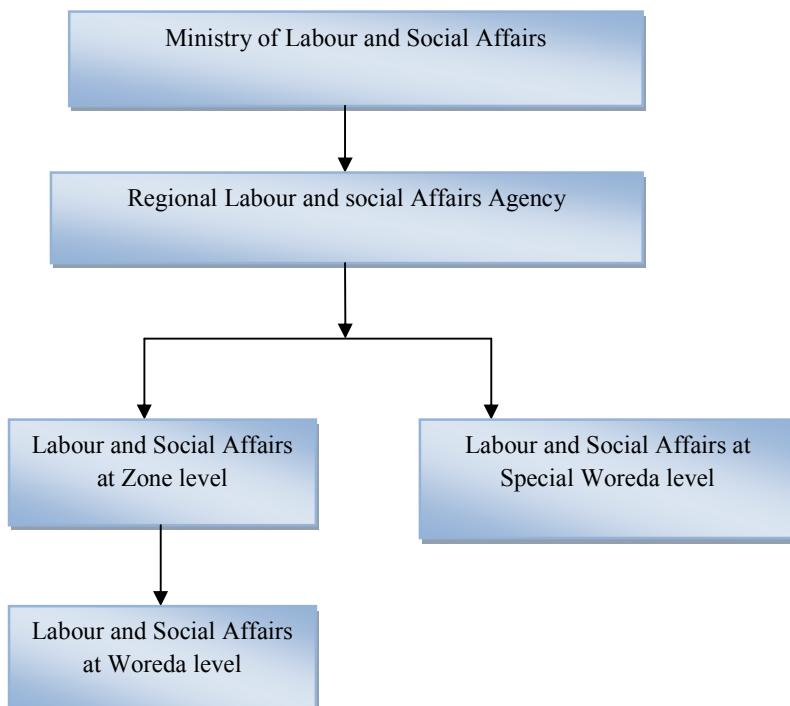


Fig. 2. The institutional framework of labour and social affairs (adopted from Strategic plan of the Ministry, 2019)

Another mandate of Kebele administrators were collecting statistics regard to irregular migrants. The number of migrants, death happened on the routes, number of returnees, the status/vulnerability of returnees to social crisis, job created for returnees, challenges and prospect facing the migrants are some of the information documented at Kebele level every year. Based on the above-mentioned information, the Agency designs strategies on how to follow-up and support Kebele administrators. Based on the feedbacks obtained from the Kebele, the Agency has provided regular trainings to the administrators, community and experts. As a result, regular workshops could be prepared to re-synthesize the agenda of irregular migration and mark the agenda as top political priority. This approach enhances the Agency to evaluate the impacts of government policy/strategy on changing the attitude of the community towards irregular migration.

3.1.2 Feedback from stakeholders on institutional framework

The key stakeholders can be local community, educational institutions, bureau of women and children affairs, social and mass media and religious organizations. However, the level of involvement of key stakeholders in formulating, implementing and enforcing migration legislation, policies and programmes varies from stakeholder to stakeholder. For instance, based on the information from the secondary data obtained from Labour and Social Affairs Agency, among the key stakeholders, media has played significant roles in changing attitude of youths towards irregular migration. In particular, south TV and Radio has put irregular migration on the top of societal agenda and prepared strategic plans to tackle it. The media has produced different documentaries and films that showed suffering of irregular migrants on the route and destination of migrants. According to the finding of the mainstream media including Southern Television and Radio broadcasting station, most of irregular migrants faced different types of challenges including death in deserts.

According to the managing director of South Radio and Television, the media is working on the challenges, consequences and key factors that pull and push youths to irregular migration. These factors include wrong perception of the migrants towards migration, the role of brokers (locally known as *Delala*), returnees' information,

family pressure, negligence of border security, weak justice system towards irregular migration and to some extent the participation of government officials in the process of irregular migration. Families encouraged their children to migrate by supplying huge amount of money that could cover transportation cost and could be shared among different bodies like *delala*, bribe for border securities of different countries crossed by the migrants, accommodation at destination and others. Consequently, most of migrant families have faced social crises and acute poverty. This forced the media to make irregular migration, smuggling and human trafficking as their regular duties.

Women and Children affairs of SNNPR responded to the question forwarded regarding whether their respective offices have strategic plan to combat irregular migration, they responded as "Yes, we do have a strategic plan. Most of our action plans and office activates are emanates from this strategic plan." Regarding the major activities performed by the office, the directors listed the following ones:

- Rehabilitating and providing Psycho-social support for trafficked and smuggled children before reintegrating with their parents or guardians. Besides, the office also makes a follow up about the status of reintegrated youth and children after rehabilitation and Psycho-social support.
- Building the financial capacity of those potential migrants and returnees in collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders who are interested in the same issue.
- Preventing further irregular migration with regional police force and justice office.
- Providing awareness regarding hot spots of irregular migration origins.

The other institutional stakeholder which was addressed with key informant interview was Technique and Vocational training office (TVTO). Accordingly, the office has strategic plan on the issues of combating irregular migration. Most of their activities are related with capacity building, creating job opportunities and life skill trainings. Their office is taking part both in prevention and rehabilitation activities of irregular migrants and returnees. The office has organized Anti-human Trafficking and smuggling clubs in Technical and Vocational Training colleges of the region. They emphasized on hotspot zone like Hadiya, Kambata-Tambaro, Wolaita, Gurage, Silte and Gamo-Gofa and Halaba special Woreda.

The other interesting finding from the interview with TVET director is that migration is dynamic and it cannot be stopped. For this reason, it is evident that stakeholders are involving in safeguarding and promoting safe migration. The responses of the director reads:

We all know that we cannot stop migration for good, what we can do is providing vocational and skill training for those potential migrants in those areas identified by Labor affair office like Household services and care giving. Thus, those who have trained and licensed migrants can legally migrate to those countries known for better job opportunities. Besides as a part of prevention mechanism we are providing skill training to those potential migrants in collaboration with rural job creation and food security office. Before we are providing vocational training, we have identified potential areas of employment for unemployed youth.

Therefore, it was noted that in one way or another, activities of the office have positive impact in mitigating irregular migration and integrating returnees.

On the other hand, the regional office of Youth and Sport Affairs was interviewed and reported they have performed different activities. The major lists of activities include preparation of strategic plan, identification of potential migrants and victims, giving various skill trainings, identification of main actors towards irregular migration, assisting returnees' integration with the community and conducting community events. They are mainly working in attitudinal change because they believe that the main factor for irregular migration is wrong perception and attitude towards irregular migration. Most youth and their families in the region believe that they can get better job opportunity and better life if they are able to out-migrate both through regular and irregular means. Even the church leaders and elders insist the youth to migrate through different actions and practices. Farewell ceremonies, extravagant feasts and blessing had been prepared by respective church members and pastors. In some parts of the region people began to believe that South Africa is "promised land" for the poor and destitute group. For this reason, the office have been giving capacity building training to all communities members including church leaders, elders, pastors and community representatives to enable them to believe potential migrants can work and change

their life and their families if they work hard in their home land.

Regarding the issue of horizontal integration of different stakeholders at the region on the issue of irregular migration, the key informants reported as they were working with each other. The regional Labour and Social Affairs Agency (LSAA) took the initiative to coordinate stakeholders in integrated way. It was believed that there is significant change among stakeholder in regulating irregular migration since 2014. It was also observed that effective works that have been done by the stakeholder were supported by the justice system of the region (police, the office attorney, court and other law enforcing bodies). The coordinated efforts of stakeholder have forced smugglers and brokers to change their approach/style of human trafficking and smuggling. Unlike their previous way of sending migrants they have accustomed with change in recruitment. For instance, smugglers make their base at neighbouring countries and receive money from Bank which is sent from local brokers and they used to experience daily contact through cell phone. Therefore, the stakeholders still believe that more works are expected to effectively address the problem of irregular migration.

Furthermore, the stakeholders were asked whether the changes do occur because of their coordinated effort or other reasons. They responded that the change was the outcome of both their effort and the dynamics observed in the countries of destination. On one hand, job opportunity is decreasing in the country of destination. On the other, many migrants are deported while they are travelling to South Africa and Gulf States. Besides, those who migrated recently have not benefited as it was assumed by migrants themselves and their families. Even some of them were not able to afford the cost they have spent for traveling, smugglers, and brokers. Thus, both legal measures at home and less job opportunity at destination can be considered as major factor for gradual decrease in irregular migration.

3.1.3 Limitations of institutional framework at lower levels

3.1.3.1 Institutionalizing practices for halting irregular migration

Institutionalizing does mean incorporating irregular migration as regular duties of the sectors. The Agency evaluated most sectors at

zone and Woreda level having limitation in institutionalizing irregular migration. This constraint varies from zone to zone or Woreda to Woreda. There are Woredas which allocated budget to halt irregular migration while others consider it additional/extra job. In this regard, according to the Agency report, Gurage and Kambata-Tambaro zones achieved progressive changes and significantly reduced number of migrants. In these two zones there are Kebeles which can be regarded as models in reducing the incidence of irregular migration.

According the Agency, there are inter-sectorial institutions that internalized the severity of irregular migration and mainstreamed it. These institutions include media, religious institution, justice system, TVET, youth and sport affairs, women and children affairs. Except these institutions, there are gaps among governmental institution in internalizing problems associated with strategically planning and implementing to control irregular migration.

3.1.3.2 Networking

According to the Agency, community networks have played and continue to play in facilitating irregular migration. Migrants, being new comer to the destination environment, are vulnerable to commitment problems that prevent them from participating fully in labour market. Migrants have yet to establish personal reputation, prospective employers don't know their worth and they are unable to provide security. As a result, prospective employers don't hire migrants and banks will not lend to them. Under these circumstances, communities can create pre-existing social ties to arrange migrant networks that overcome these constrictions in the destination economy. Migrants who have been in the destination labour market for a while can provide referrals to capable new arrivals who belong to their network.

Community networks at the origin can support irregular migration by backing the move up. It was noted from the focus group discussions that, government structure plays a significant role in regulating efficacy of networks. Government-sponsored networking begins with identification card issuance. Identification card is issued by the Kebele administrators. In most cases, according to the group discussants, Kebeles have issued identification card for youths under 18 years old. Such frauds even encompass issuing the card using false names and for the non-residents. This is an indication of corruption performed at

Kebele level. At the same time, families are responsible for the deceptions related to information filled in identification card. Kebele leaders claimed that they are helpless in controlling deceptions if families testified that their children are below 18 years old. Later, this identification card could be promoted to passport issued by Ethiopian Immigration and Nationality Affairs Department (EINAD). The department usually issues passport mainly based on the information available on the identification card, which are erroneously filled at Kebele level. Therefore, it is possible to reveal that both Kebele and EINAD have played a significant role in encouraging networks for irregular migration.

The Agency suggested that expanding registration of vital events to alleviate age related deception of the applicants and their compatriots at rural Kebeles of the region. Registration of vital events will enforce applicants to present birth certificate in order to get identification card. Another problem related to networking in irregular migration is issuance of VISA. As it is well known people would migrate to abroad in search for job in which employment VISA should be issued for the migrants. Nevertheless, this type of VISA was ceased in Ethiopia since 2006 E.C. The migrants received tourist and family visit VISA that permit migrants to stay for very short period of time at destination. Embassies issued these type of VISA knowingly that migrants intended to migrate in search of employment opportunities abroad. This showed that there is an indication of corruption tendency, which promote irregular migration in the Embassies of the destination countries. Recently, however, the office of Deputy Prime Minister has produced circulation letter and ordered embassies to stop issuing such types of VISA. According to the new directive, anyone who wants to go abroad for employment should leave legally by fulfilling necessary requirements/trainings including taking certificate of competence (COC). This directive is found to be difficult to implement given the lower level of skills and knowledge of jobbers. In general, the Agency disclosed that they have identified these complex networks and informed the government for actions. But, the response was so slow and the prosecution system is weak.

3.2 Practical Measures Taken to Reduce Irregular Migration

Activities to discourage irregular migration movements should be taken in the countries of origin of potential migrants. According to the

head of the office, Labour and Social Affairs Agency adopts three approaches to discourage irregular migration. The first approach is prevention. That is, preventing irregular migration to happen than arresting migrants while they are on move. Preventive actions have three main components: building attitude towards trafficking and smuggling, promoting legal migration (assisting legal migrants to find legal work permit abroad) and reducing vulnerable group (enhancing employment opportunities at local level). Another approach adopted by the Agency is protection (assisting victims). This approach deals with protecting the moral and welfare of returnees, which aimed at creating employment opportunities at their home land. There is working group acting on protective role which was established by the Agency. This working group is known as Victim Assistance Working Group (VAWG). The mandate of the working group is creating employment/job opportunities for the returnees in collaboration with Rural Job Creation and Food Security Office. In addition, the Agency coordinates other offices/concerned bodies to make illegal migration their top agenda and enhancing returnees to maintain their livelihood. The third approach is prosecution, which involves justice system and police. The main target of this approach is controlling traffickers and smugglers.

Besides, the Agency works to mainstream the agenda of irregular migration as a top priority of government institutions. Mainstreaming irregular migration means placing in regular missions of government offices so that they can tackle challenges associated with it. For the last five years, LSAA designed different strategic plans and carried out procedural activities to regulate illegal migration in SNNPR. This endeavour includes establishing councils at different government hierarchies or structures to control irregular migration as confirmed by interview conducted with director of Southern Radio and TV Agency. The council was chaired by the president at regional level and zone administrator at zonal level.

The list of practical measures taken commonly by the council includes:

- Establishing a group of facilitators involving 25 to 30 members (community representatives including *Kebele* chairman, religious leader, leader of local institutions like Iddir) at *Kebele* level.
- Preparation of a manual/module to guide community conversations.
- Conducting successive community conversations every two weeks.
- Conducting successive supervision and support to the facilitator groups in each *Kebele*.
- Giving appraisal for best performing *Kebeles* and officers.
- Establishing associations of job-less youth and equipping them with different opportunity maximizing skills, start-up capital, premises and life skill trainings.
- Establishing different customary laws to stop irregular migration, for example, excluding from local institutional membership any community member who sends his/her son irregularly.
- Identifying and safeguarding returnees.

In addition, the regional government has taken the following restrictive measures to stop irregular migration. These include: Actions against those who facilitate irregular migration: addressing irregular recruitment, trafficking and smuggling and employer sanctions; strengthening border controls and revising viable VISA policy; strengthening migrant surveillances; safeguarding irregular migrant workers in the country of destination; regularization or legalization of labour migration; and strengthening inter-state cooperation across the routes of migration.

The findings of this study go in line with results of many previous studies. Adopting and implementing adequate legislation and policy to hold traffickers responsible for their criminal act is an important response to fight the problem of human trafficking. In many countries (such as China) across the world, traffickers are severely punished and their assets are confiscated to fund victims and antitrafficking programs [10,11]. In fact, successful prosecution of traffickers often requires an intensive and systematic testimony of victims. Effective response should provide victims with adequate security for their safety when they witness for the prosecution of traffickers or criminal networks. In connection with this, previous studies indicated that the Government of Ethiopia is doing its level best in enforcing anti-trafficking laws that safeguard persons who give testimony on such issues. However, trafficking offenses remained a significant concern preventing the enforcement of anti-trafficking laws in Ethiopia because prosecution has been complicated as a result of bribery [12,13].

Table 1. Coverage of activities done by every zone 2016/17

Zone	Hadiya	Kembata-Tembaro	Guragie	Silte	Wolaita
Migrants identified	2719	2305	2417	2789	678
Death identified	79	58			
Returnees identified	383	350	250	300	28
Number of kebeles where facilitators were established and trained	319	146	123	75	85
Schools where anti-irregular migration clubs established and supported	5	10	7	8	0
Beneficiaries of job creation packages (returnees)	55	67	67	60	7
Mini media established in schools and supported	68	50	40	30	0
Local media coverage (radio programs) per year	13	15	6	5	2
Legal measures and sanctions against those who facilitate irregular migration	12	15	13	10	0

Source: Secondary data from zonal reports 2016/17

The other strategy used to deter irregular migration is awareness creation campaigns. These are public information and/or education campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, particularly on the dangers of falling into the hands of traffickers, smugglers or unscrupulous labour migration intermediaries or agents; and knowledge of laws and practices in destination countries. Table 1 presents results from reports organized by the respective zonal departments of Labour and Social Affairs.

4. CONCLUSION

Irregular migrants in Southern Nations, Nationalities Peoples Region (SNNPR) are diverse and significant. Most irregular migrants choose southern routes through Kenya (the main transit country) towards South Africa. Other transit countries on the route include Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique. Southern route is a popular and the most expensive one. Crossing borders out of Ethiopia is usually done using a combination of walking and vehicle. As a result of limited options for illegal migration as well as the organizational challenges related with it, migrants often choose illegal channels of migration, many being well aware of the dangers and vulnerabilities affiliated with this. Human smuggling and trafficking in persons contribute significantly to illegal migration in SNNPR. This exposes migrants to sizable risks, such as neglect, fierce exploitation and coercion. Evidence exists that irregular migration has institutional participation. The participation ranges from seldom acceptance of bribes at

border crossing to officials exposing migrants to domestic servitude or sexual exploitation.

However, current assessments demonstrate a decrease in the number of migrants following the southern route. Estimates of those arriving in South Africa from Ethiopia have subsequently also declined. There are factors that have contributed to the slightly reduced attraction of South Africa as a destination country for illegal migrants from Ethiopia. These include attitude change among prospective migrants, changing routes of migrants due surveillance in the southern routes, a general attraction to Europe and a perceived ease of entering the continent, continuous 'Xenophobic' attacks faced by migrants, cost of travel, increased border patrols and worsening of employment conditions. Several migrants chose alternative destinations due to growing labour opportunities in the mining, manufacturing and agricultural sectors along the southern route. However, overall the southern route is still an attractive option and South Africa is an important destination for migrants from Ethiopia which still make irregular migration as the top priority for the government and the community.

5. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- To be more successful in controlling irregular migration, federal government should play a key role in facilitating and

promoting legal migration in search of employment abroad. Ethiopia has signed bilateral agreement with few countries to facilitate/legalize oversee employment. A few of them include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Lebanon and Jordan. The target populations are female, mainly housemaid, which does not address males' demand. These agreements cannot authorize male migration for oversees legal employment. Therefore, such agreements should be scaled up with other countries of potential migration destinies which must be inclusive.

- Government is heavily dependent on civil society and international organizations like IOM in providing assistance to vulnerable returnee migrants. Therefore, government capacities and enforcement mechanisms should be improved in managing the cases of returnees.
- The government has to consider expanding vocational training institutions and agro-industrial firms to create various job opportunities to deter youth migration. In addition, vocational trainings can alleviate the problems of landlessness, shortage of agricultural land and improve communities' livelihood.
- Even though there is recorded attitudinal change within a community regarding irregular migration, it still demands further work of the government and the stakeholders. The attitude of the community as well as the leaders or preachers of the religious organizations have to be reshaped by continuous public discussions and awareness creation programs.
- Even though the role of public media in alleviating irregular migration is very significant, high accessible and influential media like social media not utilized in the process of attitude building campaigns towards irregular migration. Therefore, it is recommended that utilizing social media can deter irregular migration. Extensive and continuous information campaigns have to be done in order to promote public awareness concerning the threats of human trafficking, smuggling, sufferings of the migrants, deportation from the transit countries and human rights violations via print and electronic media like radio, television, Twitter, face book and videos.
- The role of stakeholders in controlling irregular migration is enormous. However,

educational organizations, particularly universities are not playing the roles as to the expected level. Therefore, universities should play the roles in research, outreach and human development towards deterring irregular migration.

- The legal and justice system at different levels have to take strong actions on human traffickers and smugglers, particularly in the SNNPR.
- Continuous public dialogues have to be established at grass root levels so that the public can be the source and actor of the solutions towards the government and other stakeholder actions to deter irregular migration.
- It is also strongly recommended that regulated and skill equipped out migration should be worked on as inevitable and alternative livelihood strategy of the region as well as the nation at large. Thus, overseas employment opportunities should systematically be scrutinized and necessary capacities and skills should be equipped with the potential migrants as well as the educated but largely unemployed/underemployed labour force of the country. Overseas employment opportunities for the university and vocational schools' graduates have to be identified and worked up on.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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